THE *Black Jacobins*

TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE AND THE SAN DOMINGO REVOLUTION

SECOND EDITION, REVISED

C. L. R. JAMES

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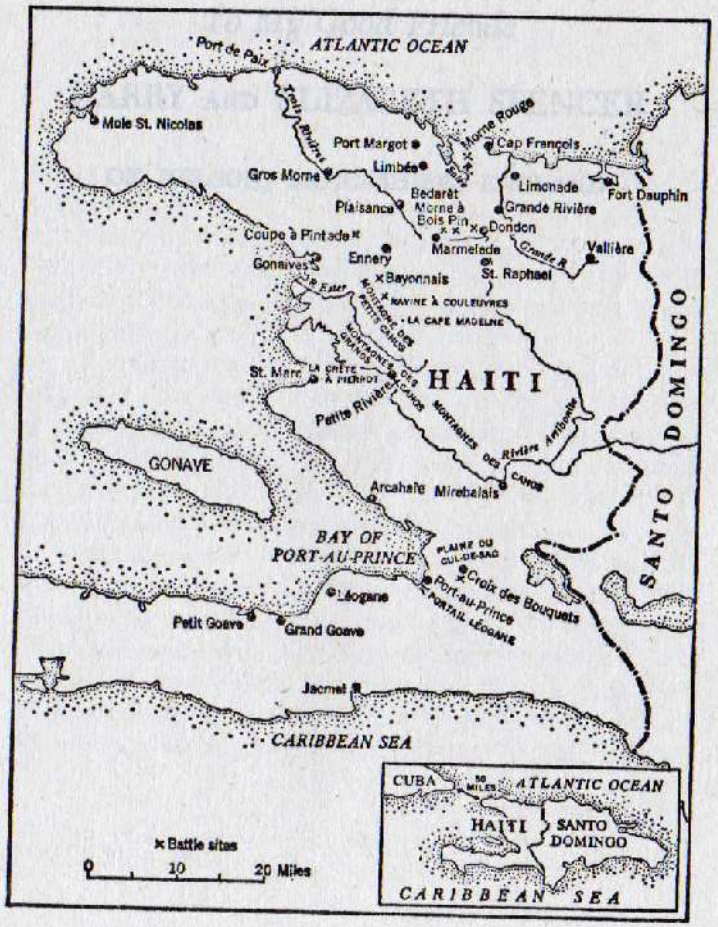

PROLOGUE

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS landed first in the New World at the island of San Salvador, and after praising God enquired urgently for gold. The natives, Red Indians, were peaceable and friendly and directed him to Haiti, a large island (nearly as large as Ireland), rich, they said, in the yellow metal. He sailed to Haiti. One of his ships being wrecked, the Haitian Indians helped him so willingly that very little was lost and of the articles which they brought on shore not one was stolen.

The Spaniards, the most advanced Europeans of their

day, annexed the island, called it Hispaniola, and took the backward natives under their protection. They introduced Christianity, forced labour in mines, murder, rape, bloodhounds, strange diseases, and artificial famine (by the destruction of cultivation to starve the rebellious). These and other requirements of the higher civilisation reduced the native population from an estimated half-a-million, perhaps a million, to 60,000 in 15 years.

Las Casas, a Dominican priest with a conscience, travelled to Spain to plead for the abolition of native slavery. But without coercion of the natives how could the colony exist? All the natives received as wages was Christianity and they could be good Christians without working in the mines.

The Spanish Government compromised. It abolished the *repartimientos*, or forced labour, in law while its agents in the colony maintained it in fact. Las Casas, haunted at the prospect of seeing before his eyes the total destruction of a population within one generation, hit on the expedient of importing the more robust Negroes from a populous Africa; in 1517, Charles V. authorised the export of 15,000 slaves to San Domingo, and thus priest and King launched on the world the American slave-trade and slavery.

The Spanish settlement founded by Columbus was on the south-east of the island. In 1629 some wandering Frenchmen sought a home in the little island of Tortuga, six miles off the north coast of San Domingo, to be followed by Englishmen, and Dutchmen from Santa Cruz. Tortuga was healthy and in the forests of western San Domingo roamed millions of wild cattle which could be hunted for food and hides. To Tortuga came fugitives from justice, escaped galley-slaves, debtors unable to pay their bills, adventurers seeking adventure or quick fortunes, men of all crimes and all nationalities. French, British and Spaniards slaughtered one another for nearly 30 years, and the British were actually in possession of Tortuga at one time, but by 1659 the French buccaneers prevailed. They sought the suzerainty of France and demanded a chief and some women. From Tortuga they laid a firm basis in San Domingo and moved there. To drive away these persistent intruders the Spaniards organised a great hunt and killed all the bulls they could find in order to ruin the cattle business. The French retaliated by the cultivation of cocoa; then indigo and cotton. Already they knew the sugar-cane. Lacking capital they raided the English island of Jamaica and stole money and 2,000 Negroes. French, British and Spaniards raided and counter-raided and burnt to the ground, but in 1695 the Treaty of Ryswick between France and Spain gave the French a legal right to the western part of the island. In 1734 the colonists began to cultivate coffee. The land was fertile, France offered a good market. But they wanted labour. In addition to Negroes, they brought whites, the *engagés*, who would be freed after a period of years. So little did they bring the Negroes because these were barbarous or black, that the early laws prescribed similar regulations for both black slaves and white *engagés*. But under the regimen of those days the whites could not stand the climate. So the slavers brought more and more Negroes, in numbers that leapt by thousands every year, until the drain from Africa ran into millions.

I

The Property

THE SLAVERS scoured the coasts of Guinea. As they devastated an area they moved westward and then south, decade after decade, past the Niger, down the Congo coast, past Loango and Angola, round the Cape of Good Hope, and, by 1789. even as far as Mozambique on the eastern side of Africa. Guinea remained their chief hunting ground. From the coast they organised expeditions far into the interior. They set the simple tribesmen fighting against each other with modern weapons over thousands of square miles. The propagandists of the time claimed that however cruel was

the slave traffic, the African slave in America was happier than in his own African civilisation. Ours, too, is an age of propaganda. We excel our ancestors only in system and organisation: they lied as fluently and as brazenly. In the sixteenth century, Central Africa was a territory of peace and happy civilisation.[1] Traders travelled thousands of miles from one side of the continent to another without molestation. The tribal wars from which the European pirates claimed to deliver the people were mere sham-fights; it was a great battle when half-a-dozen men were killed. It was on a peasantry in many respects superior to the serfs in large areas of Europe, that the slave-trade fell. Tribal life was broken up and millions of detribalised Africans were let loose upon each other. The unceasing destruction of crops led to cannibalism; the captive women became concubines and degraded the status of the wife. Tribes had to supply slaves or be sold as slaves themselves. Violence and ferocity became the necessities for survival, and violence and ferocity survived.[2] The stockades of grinning skulls, the human sacrifices, the selling of their own children as slaves, these horrors were the product of an intolerable pressure on the African peoples, which became fiercer through the centuries as the demands of industry increased and the methods of coercion were perfected.

The slaves were collected in the interior, fastened one to the other in columns, loaded with heavy stones of 40 or 50 pounds in weight to prevent attempts at escape, and then marched the long journey to the sea, sometimes hundreds of miles, the weakly and sick dropping to die in the African jungle. Some were brought to the coast by canoe, lying in the bottom of boats for days on end, their hands bound, their faces exposed to the tropical sun and the tropical rain, their backs in the water which was never bailed out. At the slave ports they were penned into "trunks" for the inspection of the buyers. Night and day

[1] See the works of Professor Emil Torday, one of the greatest African scholars of his time, particularly a lecture delivered at Geneva in 1931 to a society for the Protection of Children in Africa.

[2] See Professor Torday's lecture mentioned above.

thousands of human beings were packed in these "dens of putrefaction" so that no European could stay in them for longer than a quarter of an hour without fainting. The Africans fainted and recovered or fainted and died, the mortality in the "trunks" being over 20 per cent. Outside in the harbour, waiting to empty the "trunks" as they filled, was the captain of the slave-ship, with so clear a conscience that one of them, in the intervals of waiting to enrich British capitalism with the profits of another valuable cargo, enriched British religion by composing the hymn "How Sweet the Name of Jesus sounds!"

On the ships the slaves were packed in the hold on galleries one above the other. Each was given only four or five feet in length and two or three feet in height, so that they could neither lie at full length nor sit upright. Contrary to the lies that have been spread so pertinaciously about Negro docility, the revolts at the port of embarkation and on board were incessant, so that the slaves had to be chained, right hand to right leg, left hand to left leg, and attached in rows to long iron bars. In this position they lived for the voyage, coming up once a day for exercise and to allow the sailors to "clean the pails." But when the cargo was rebellious or the weather bad, then they stayed below for weeks at a time. The close proximity of so many naked human beings, their bruised and festering flesh, the foetid air, the prevailing dysentery, the accumulation of filth, turned these holds into a hell. During the storms the hatches were battened down, and in the close and loathsome darkness they were hurled from one side to another by the heaving vessel, held in position by the chains on their bleeding flesh. No place on earth, observed one writer of the time, concentrated so much misery as the hold of a slave-ship.

Twice a day, at nine and at four, they received their food. To the slave-traders they were articles of trade and no more. A captain held up by calms or adverse winds was known to have poisoned his cargo.[3] Another killed some of

[3] See Pierre de Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue* (1629-1789). Paris, 1909. This contains an admirable summary.

his slaves to feed the others with the flesh. They died not only from the régime but from grief and rage and despair. They undertook vast hunger strikes; undid their chains and hurled themselves on the crew in futile attempts at insurrection. What could these inland tribesmen do on the open sea, in a complicated sailing vessel? To brighten their spirits it became the custom to have them up on the deck once a day and force them to dance. Some took the opportunity to jump overboard, uttering cries of triumph as they cleared the vessel and disappeared below the surface.

Fear of their cargo bred a savage cruelty in the crew. One captain, to strike terror into the rest, killed a slave and dividing heart, liver and entrails into 300 pieces made each of the slaves eat one, threatening those who refused with the same torture.[4] Such incidents were not rare. Given the circumstances such things were (and are) inevitable. Nor did the system spare the slavers. Every year one-fifth of all who took part in the African trade died.

All America and the West Indies took slaves. When the ship reached the harbour, the cargo came up on deck to be bought. The purchasers examined them for defects, looked at the teeth, pinched the skin, sometimes tasted the perspiration to see if the slave's blood was pure and his health as good as his appearance. Some of the women affected a curiosity, the indulgence of which, with a horse, would have caused them to be kicked 20 yards across the deck. But the slave had to stand it. Then in order to restore the dignity which might have been lost by too intimate an examination, the purchaser spat in the face of the slave. Having become the property of his owner, he was branded on both sides of the breast with a hot iron. His duties were explained to him by an interpreter, and a priest instructed him in the first principles of Christianity.[5]

The stranger in San Domingo was awakened by the cracks of the whip, the stifled cries, and the heavy groans

[4] De Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue*, p. 162.
[5] This was the beginning and end of his education.

of the Negroes who saw the sun rise only to curse it for its renewal of their labours and their pains. Their work began at day-break: at eight they stopped for a short breakfast and worked again till midday. They began again at two o'clock and worked until evening, sometimes till ten or eleven. A Swiss traveller [6] has left a famous description of a gang of slaves at work. "They were about a hundred men and women of different ages, all occupied in digging ditches in a cane-field, the majority of them naked or covered with rags. The sun shone down with full force on their heads. Sweat rolled from all parts of their bodies. Their limbs, weighed down by the heat, fatigued with the weight of their picks and by the resistance of the clayey soil baked hard enough to break their implements, strained themselves to overcome every obstacle. A mournful silence reigned. Exhaustion was stamped on every face, but the hour of rest had not yet come. The pitiless eye of the Manager patrolled the gang and several foremen armed with long whips moved periodically between them, giving stinging blows to all who, worn out by fatigue, were compelled to take a rest—men or women, young or old." This was no isolated picture. The sugar plantations demanded an exacting and ceaseless labour. The tropical earth is baked hard by the sun. Round every "carry" of land intended for cane it was necessary to dig a large ditch to ensure circulation of air. Young canes required attention for the first three or four months and grew to maturity in 14 or 18 months. Cane could be planted and would grow at any time of the year, and the reaping of one crop was the signal for the immediate digging of ditches and the planting of another. Once cut they had to be rushed to the mill lest the juice became acid by fermentation. The extraction of the juice and manufacture of the raw sugar went on for three weeks a month, 16 or 18 hours a day, for seven or eight months in the year.

Worked like animals, the slaves were housed like animals, in huts built around a square planted with provisions

[6] Girod-Chantrans, *Voyage d'un Suisse en différentes colonies*, Neufchâtel, 1785, p. 137.

and fruits. These huts were about 20 to 25 feet long, 12 feet wide and about 15 feet in height, divided by partitions into two or three rooms. They were windowless and light entered only by the door. The floor was beaten earth; the bed was of straw, hides or a rude contrivance of cords tied on posts. On these slept indiscriminately mother, father and children. Defenceless against their masters, they struggled with overwork and its usual complement—underfeeding. The Negro Code, Louis XIV's attempt to ensure them humane treatment, ordered that they should be given, every week, two pots and a half of manioc, three cassavas, two pounds of salt beef or three pounds of salted fish—about food enough to last a healthy man for three days. Instead their masters gave them half-a-dozen pints of coarse flour, rice, or pease, and half-a-dozen herrings. Worn out by their labours all through the day and far into the night, many neglected to cook and ate the food raw. The ration was so small and given to them so irregularly that often the last half of the week found them with nothing.

Even the two hours they were given in the middle of the day, and the holidays on Sundays and feast-days, were not for rest, but in order that they might cultivate a small piece of land to supplement their regular rations. Hard-working slaves cultivated vegetables and raised chickens to sell in the towns to make a little in order to buy rum and tobacco; and here and there a Napoleon of finance, by luck and industry, could make enough to purchase his freedom. Their masters encouraged them in this practice of cultivation, for in years of scarcity the Negroes died in thousands, epidemics broke out, the slaves fled into the woods and plantations were ruined.

The difficulty was that though one could trap them like animals, transport them in pens, work them alongside an ass or a horse and beat both with the same stick, stable them and starve them, they remained, despite their black skins and curly hair, quite invincibly human beings; with

the intelligence and resentments of human beings. To cow them into the necessary docility and acceptance necessitated a régime of calculated brutality and terrorism, and it is this that explains the unusual spectacle of property-owners apparently careless of preserving their property: they had first to ensure their own safety.

For the least fault the slaves received the harshest punishment. In 1685 the Negro Code authorised whipping, and in 1702 one colonist, a Marquis, thought any punishment which demanded more than 100 blows of the whip was serious enough to be handed over to the authorities. Later the number was fixed at 39, then raised to 50. But the colonists paid no attention to these regulations and slaves were not unfrequently whipped to death. The whip was not always an ordinary cane or woven cord, as the Code demanded. Sometimes it was replaced by the *rigoise* or thick thong of cow-hide, or by the *lianes*—local growths of reeds, supple and pliant like whalebone. The slaves received the whip with more certainty and regularity than they received their food. It was the incentive to work and the guardian of discipline. But there was no ingenuity that fear or a depraved imagination could devise which was not employed to break their spirit and satisfy the lusts and resentment of their owners and guardians—irons on the hands and feet, blocks of wood that the slaves had to drag behind them wherever they went, the tin-plate mask designed to prevent the slaves eating the sugar-cane, the iron collar. Whipping was interrupted in order to pass a piece of hot wood on the buttocks of the victim; salt, pepper, citron, cinders, aloes, and hot ashes were poured on the bleeding wounds. Mutilations were common, limbs, ears, and sometimes the private parts, to deprive them of the pleasures which they could indulge in without expense. Their masters poured burning wax on their arms and hands and shoulders, emptied the boiling cane sugar over their heads, burned them alive, roasted them on slow fires, filled them with gunpowder and blew them up with a match; buried them up to the neck and smeared their heads with sugar that the flies might devour them; fastened them near

to nests of ants or wasps; made them eat their excrement, drink their urine, and lick the saliva of other slaves. One colonist was known in moments of anger to throw himself on his slaves and stick his teeth into their flesh.[7]

Were these tortures, so well authenticated, habitual or were they merely isolated incidents, the extravagances of a few half-crazed colonists? Impossible as it is to substantiate hundreds of cases, yet all the evidence shows that these bestial practices were normal features of slave life. The torture of the whip, for instance, had "a thousand refinements," but there were regular varieties that had special names, so common were they. When the hands and arms were tied to four posts on the ground, the slave was said to undergo "the four post." If the slave was tied to a ladder it was "the torture of the ladder"; if he was suspended by four limbs it was "the hammock," etc. The pregnant woman was not spared her "four-post." A hole was dug in the earth to accommodate the unborn child. The torture of the collar was specially reserved for women who were suspected of abortion, and the collar never left their necks until they had produced a child. The blowing up of a slave had its own name—"to burn a little powder in the arse of a nigger": obviously this was no freak but a recognised practice.

After an exhaustive examination, the best that de Vaissière can say is that there were good masters and there were bad, and his impression, "but only an impression," is that the former were more numerous than the latter.

There are and always will be some who, ashamed of the behaviour of their ancestors, try to prove that slavery was not so bad after all, that its evils and its cruelty were the exaggerations of propagandists and not the habitual lot of the slaves. Men will say (and accept) anything in order to foster national pride or soothe a troubled conscience. Undoubtedly there were kind masters who did not indulge in these refinements of cruelty and whose slaves

[7] *Saint-Domingue*, p. 153-194. De Vaissière uses chiefly official reports in the French Colonial archives, and other documents of the period, giving specific references in each case.

merely suffered over-work, under-nourishment and the whip. But the slaves in San Domingo could not replenish their number by reproduction. After that dreaded journey across the ocean a woman was usually sterile for two years. The life in San Domingo killed them off fast. The planters deliberately worked them to death rather than wait for children to grow up. But the professional white-washers are assisted by the writings of a few contemporary observers who described scenes of idyllic beauty. One of these is Vaublanc, whom we shall meet again, and whose testimony we will understand better when we know more of him. In his memoirs[8] he shows us a plantation on which there were no prisons, no dungeons, no punishments to speak of. If the slaves were naked the climate was such as not to render this an evil, and those who complained forgot the perfectly disgusting rags that were so often seen in France. The slaves were exempt from unhealthy, fatiguing, dangerous work such as was performed by the workers in Europe. They did not have to descend into the bowels of the earth nor dig deep pits; they did not construct subterranean galleries; they did not work in the factories where French workers breathed a deadly and infected air; they did not mount elevated roofs; they did not carry enormous burdens. The slaves, he concluded, had light work to do and were happy to do it. Vaublanc, in San Domingo so sympathetic to the sorrows of labour in France, had to fly from Paris in August, 1792, to escape the wrath of the French workers.

Malouet, who was an official in the colonies and fellow-reactionary of Vaublanc against all change in the colonies, also sought to give some ideas of the privileges of slavery. The first he notes is that the slave, on attaining his majority, begins to enjoy "the pleasures of love," and his master has no interest in preventing the indulgence of his tastes.[9] To such impertinent follies can the defence of property drive even an intelligent man, supposed in his time to be sympathetic towards the blacks.

[8] Quoted extensively in de Vaissière, pp. 198-202.
[9] De Vaissière, p. 196.

The majority of the slaves accommodated themselves to this unceasing brutality by a profound fatalism and a wooden stupidity before their masters. "Why do you ill-treat your mule in that way?" asked a colonist of a carter. "But when I do not work, I am beaten, when he does not work, I beat him—he is my Negro." One old Negro, having lost one of his ears and condemned to lose another, begged the Governor to spare it, for if that too was cut off he would have nowhere to put his stump of cigarette. A slave sent by his master into his neighbour's garden to steal, is caught and brought back to the man who had only a few minutes before despatched him on the errand. The master orders him a punishment of 100 lashes to which the slave submits without a murmur. When caught in error they persisted in denial with the same fatalistic stupidity. A slave is accused of stealing a pigeon. He denies it. The pigeon is discovered hidden in his shirt. "Well, well, look at that pigeon. It take my shirt for a nest." Through the shirt of another, a master can feel the potatoes which he denies he has stolen. They are not potatoes, he says, they are stones. He is undressed and the potatoes fall to the ground. "Eh! master. The devil is wicked. Put stones, and look, you find potatoes."

On holidays when not working on their private plots, or dancing, they sat for hours in front of their huts giving no sign of life. Wives and husbands, children and parents, were separated at the will of the master, and a father and son would meet after many years and give no greeting or any sign of emotion. Many slaves could never be got to stir at all unless they were whipped.[10] Suicide was a common habit, and such was their disregard for life that they often killed themselves, not for personal reasons, but in order to spite their owner. Life was hard and death, they

[10] Incredible as this may sound Baron de Wimpffen gives it as the evidence of his own eyes. His record of his visit to San Domingo in 1790 is a standard work. A good selection, with very full notes, is published, under the title, *Saint-Domingue à la veille de la Révolution*, by Albert Savine, Paris, 1911.

believed, meant not only release but a return to Africa. Those who wished to believe and to convince the world that the slaves were half-human brutes, fit for nothing else but slavery, could find ample evidence for their faith, and in nothing so much as in this homicidal mania of the slaves.

Poison was their method. A mistress would poison a rival to retain the valuable affections of her inconstant owner. A discarded mistress would poison master, wife, children and slaves. A slave robbed of his wife by one of his masters would poison him, and this was one of the most frequent causes of poisoning.[11] If a planter conceived a passion for a young slave, her mother would poison his wife with the idea of placing her daughter at the head of the household. The slaves would poison the younger children of a master in order to ensure the plantation succeeding to one son. By this means they prevented the plantation being broken up and the gang dispersed. On certain plantations the slaves decimated their number by poison so as to keep the number of slaves small and prevent their masters embarking on larger schemes which would increase the work. For this reason a slave would poison his wife, another would poison his children, and a Negro nurse declared in court that for years she had poisoned every child that she brought into the world. Nurses employed in hospitals poisoned sick soldiers to rid themselves of unpleasant work. The slaves would even poison the property of a master whom they loved. He was going away; they poisoned cows, horses and mules, the plantation was thrown into disorder, and the beloved master was compelled to remain. The most dreadful of all this cold-blooded murder was, however, the jaw-sickness—a disease which attacked children only, in the first few days of their existence. Their jaws were closed to such an extent that it was impossible to open them and to get anything down, with the result that they died of hunger. It was not a natural disease and

[11] See *Kenya* by Dr. Norman Leys, London, 1926, p. 184. "Some rivalry for a native woman is probably the explanation of most crimes of violence committed by Africans against Europeans in Kenya."

never attacked children delivered by white women. The Negro midwives alone could cause it, and it is believed that they performed some simple operation on the newly-born child which resulted in the jaw-sickness. Whatever the method this disease caused the death of nearly one-third of the children born on the plantations.

What was the intellectual level of these slaves? The planters, hating them, called them by every opprobious name. "The Negroes," says a memoir published in 1789, "are unjust, cruel, barbarous, half-human, treacherous, deceitful, thieves, drunkards, proud, lazy, unclean, shameless, jealous to fury, and cowards." It was by sentiments such as these that they strove to justify the abominable cruelties they practised. And they took great pains that the Negro should remain the brute beast they wanted him to be. "The safety of the whites demands that we keep the Negroes in the most profound ignorance. I have reached the stage of believing firmly that one must treat the Negroes as one treats beasts." Such is the opinion of the Governor of Martinique in a letter addressed to the Minister and such was the opinion of all colonists. Except for the Jews, who spared no energy in making Israelites of their slaves, the majority of the colonists religiously kept all instruction, religious or otherwise, away from the slaves.

Naturally there were all types of men among them, ranging from native chieftains, as was the father of Toussaint L'Ouverture, to men who had been slaves in their own country. The creole Negro was more docile than the slave who had been born in Africa. Some said he was more intelligent. Others doubted that there was much difference though the creole slave knew the language and was more familiar with his surroundings and his work. Yet those who took the trouble to observe them away from their masters and in their intercourse with each other did not fail to see that remarkable liveliness of intellect and vivacity of spirit which so distinguish their descendants in the West Indies to-day. Father du Tertre, who knew them

well, noted their secret pride and feeling of superiority to their masters, the difference between their behaviour before their masters and when they were by themselves. De Wimpffen, an exceptionally observant and able traveller, was also astonished at this dual personality of the slaves. "One has to hear with what warmth and what volubility, and at the same time with what precision of ideas and accuracy of judgment, this creature, heavy and taciturn all day, now squatting before his fire, tells stories, talks, gesticulates, argues, passes opinions, approves or condemns both his master and everyone who surrounds him." It was this intelligence which refused to be crushed, these latent possibilities, that frightened the colonists, as it frightens the whites in Africa to-day. "No species of men has more intelligence," wrote Hilliard d'Auberteuil, a colonist, in 1784, and had his book banned.

But one does not need education or encouragement to cherish a dream of freedom. At their midnight celebrations of Voodoo, their African cult, they danced and sang, usually this favourite song:

Eh! Eh! Bomba! Heu! Heu!
Canga, bafio té!
Canga, mouné de 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."

The colonists knew this song and tried to stamp it out, and the Voodoo cult with which it was linked. In vain. For over two hundred years the slaves sang it at their meetings, as the Jews in Babylon sang of Zion, and the Bantu to-day sing in secret the national anthem of Africa.[12]

[12] Such observations, written in 1938, were intended to use the San Domingo revolution as a forecast of the future of colonial Africa.

All the slaves, however, did not undergo this régime. There was a small privileged caste, the foremen of the gangs, coachmen, cooks, butlers, maids, nurses, female companions, and other house-servants. These repaid their kind treatment and comparatively easy life with a strong attachment to their masters, and have thus enabled Tory historians, regius professors and sentimentalists to represent plantation slavery as a patriarchal relation between master and slave. Permeated with the vices of their masters and mistresses, these upper servants gave themselves airs and despised the slaves in the fields. Dressed in cast-off silks and brocades, they gave balls in which, like trained monkeys, they danced minuets and quadrilles, and bowed and curtseyed in the fashion of Versailles. But a few of these used their position to cultivate themselves, to gain a little education, to learn all they could. The leaders of a revolution are usually those who have been able to profit by the cultural advantages of the system they are attacking, and the San Domingo revolution was no exception to this rule.

Christophe, afterwards Emperor of Haiti, was a slave —a waiter in a public hotel at Cap François, where he made use of his opportunities to gain a knowledge of men and of the world. Toussaint L'Ouverture[13] also belonged to this small and privileged caste. His father, son of a petty chieftain in Africa, was captured in war, sold as a slave and made the journey in a slave-ship. He was bought by a colonist of some sensibility, who, recognising that this Negro was an unusual person, allowed him a certain liberty on the plantation and the use of five slaves to cultivate a plot of land. He became a Catholic, married a woman who was both beautiful and good, and Toussaint was the eldest of his eight children. Near to the household lived an old Negro, Pierre Baptiste, remarkable for his integrity of character and a smattering of knowledge. The Negroes spoke a debased French known as creole. But Pierre knew French, also a little Latin and a little geometry, which he had learned from a missionary. Pierre Baptiste became Toussaint's godfather and taught his godson the rudiments

[13] As a slave he was called Toussaint Bréda.

were woven tight into the economics of the eighteenth century. Three forces, the proprietors of San Domingo, the French bourgeoisie and the British bourgeoisie, throve on this devastation of a continent and on the brutal exploitation of millions. As long as these maintained an equilibrium the infernal traffic would go on, and for that matter would have gone on until the present day. But nothing, however profitable, goes on forever. From the very momentum of their own development, colonial planters, French and British bourgeois, were generating internal stresses and intensifying external rivalries, moving blindly to explosions and conflicts which would shatter the basis of their dominance and create the possibility of emancipation.

II

The Owners

OF THE THREE, San Domingo planters, British bourgeoisie and French bourgeoisie, the first and most important were the planters of San Domingo.

On such a soil as San Domingo slavery, only a vicious society could flourish. Nor were the incidental circumstances such as to mitigate the demoralisation inherent in such a method of production.

San Domingo is an island of mountain ranges rising in places to 6,000 feet above sea-level. From these flow innumerable streams coalescing into rivers which water

the valleys and not inconsiderable plains lying between the hills. Its distance from the equator gives an unusual lusciousness and variety to the natural exuberance of the tropics, and the artificial vegetation was not inferior to the natural. Field upon field, the light green sugar-cane, low and continually rippled in the breeze, enclosed the factory and the dwelling houses like a sea; a few feet above the cane-stalks waved the five-foot leaves of the banana-trees; near the dwelling-houses the branches of the palm, crowning a perfectly rounded and leafless column of 60 or 70 feet, gave forth, like huge feathers, a continuous soothing murmur; while groups of them in the distance, always visible in the unclouded tropical air, looked like clusters of giant umbrellas waiting for the parched and sun-baked traveller. In the season, mango and orange trees, solitary or in groves, were a mass of green leaves and red or golden fruit. Thousands of small, scrupulously tidy coffee-trees rose on the slopes of the hills, and the abrupt and precipitous mountain-sides were covered to the summits with the luxuriant tropical undergrowth and precious hardwood forests of San Domingo. The traveller from Europe was enchanted at his first glimpse of this paradise, in which the ordered beauty of agriculture and the prodigality of Nature competed equally for his surprise and admiration.

But it was monotonous. Year in year out, day after day, it was the same, a little greener in the wet season, a little browner in the dry. The wilder scenery was constantly magnificent, but in the colonist who had seen the same domestic landscape from his earliest hour, it awakened little response. To the emigrant who was at first charmed and exhilarated, monotony bred indifference, which could develop into active dislike, and longing for the seasons returning with the year.

The climate was harsh, and for the Europeans of the eighteenth century without modern knowledge of tropical hygiene almost intolerable. The burning sun and humid atmosphere took heavy toll of all newcomers, European and African alike. The African died, but the European ailments were dreaded by the planters whose knowledge and

habits were powerless to combat them. Fever and dysentery in the hot season; cold, rheumatism, nasal catarrhs and diarrhoea in the wet; at all times a disinclination for sustained labour, fostered by the gluttony and lasciviousness bred by abundance and scores of slaves waiting to perform any duty, from pulling off shoes to spending the night.

Indulgence had the white colonial in its grip from childhood. "I want an egg," said a colonial child. "There are none." "Then I want two." This notorious anecdote was characteristic. To the unhealthiness of the climate and the indulgence of every wish were added the open licentiousness and habitual ferocity of his parents, the degradation of human life which surrounded the child on every side.

The ignorance inherent in rural life prior to the industrial revolution was reinforced by the irascibility and the conceit of isolation allied to undisputed domination over hundreds of human beings. The plantations were often miles apart and, in those days of horse-traffic and few or bad roads in a mountainous country, communication with neighbours was difficult and rare. The planters hated the life and sought only to make enough money to retire to France or at least spend a few months in Paris, luxuriating in the amenities of civilisation. With so much to eat and drink, there was a lavish hospitality which has remained a tradition, but the majority of the great houses, contrary to the legend, were poorly furnished, and their owners looked on them as rest-houses in the intervals of trips to Paris. Seeking to overcome their abundant leisure and boredom with food, drink, dice and black women, they had long before 1789 lost the simplicity of life and rude energy of those nameless men who laid the foundation of the colony. A manager and an overseer, and the more intelligent of their slaves were more than sufficient to run their plantations. As soon as they could afford it they left the island, if possible never to return, though they never formed in France so rich and powerful a social and political force as the West Indian interest in England.

The women were subjected to the same evil influ-

ences. In the early years of the colony they had been imported like slaves and machinery. Most of the first arrivals were the sweepings of the Paris gutter, bringing to the island "bodies as corrupt as their manners and serving only to infect the colony." [1] Another official, asking for women, begged the authorities not to send the "ugliest they could find in the hospitals." As late as 1743 official San Domingo was complaining that France still sent girls whose "aptitude for generation was for the most part destroyed by too great usage." Projects for some educational system never came to fruition. With increasing wealth the daughters of the richer planters went to Paris where, after a year or two at a finishing-school, they made distinguished matches with the impoverished French nobility. But in the colony they passed their time attiring themselves, singing stupid songs, and listening to the gossip and adulation of their slave attendants. Passion was their chief occupation, stimulated by over-feeding, idleness, and an undying jealousy of the black and Mulatto women who competed so successfully for the favours of their husbands and lovers.

To the men of divers races, classes and types who formed the early population of San Domingo had been added as the years passed a more unified and cohesive element, the offshoots of the French aristocracy. Deprived of political power by Richelieu and converted by Louis XIV into a decorative and administrative appendage of the absolute monarchy, the younger sons of French noblemen found in San Domingo some opportunity to rebuild their shattered fortunes and live the life of the country magnate now denied them in France. They came as officers in the army and officials, and stayed to found fortunes and families. They commanded the militia, administered a rude justice. Arrogant and spendthrift, yet they were a valuable section of white San Domingo society and knit together more firmly a society composed of such diverse and disintegrating elements. But even their education, traditions and pride were not proof against the prevailing corruption, and one could see a "relation of the

[1] De Vaissière, pp. 77-79.

de Vaudreils, a Châteauneuf, or Boucicaut, last descendant of the famous marshal of France, passing his life between a bowl of rum and a Negro concubine." [2]

Town life is the nurse of civilisation. But apart from Port-au-Prince, the capital, and Cap François, the towns of San Domingo at the height of its prosperity were little more than villages. In 1789 St Marc had only 150 houses, Môle St Nicholas, the Gibraltar of the Caribbean Sea, had only 250; Léogane, one of the most important towns in the West Province, consisted of between 300 and 400 houses laid out in 15 streets; Jacmel, one of the key towns in the South, had only 40. Even Cap François, the Paris of the Antilles, and the entrepôt of the European trade had a population of only 20,000, of whom half were slaves. Yet Le Cap, as it was familiarly called, was a town famous in its time and in its way unique. An incessant activity reigned there, with its harbour always filled with ships and its streets with merchandise. But it too bore the imprint of savagery which seemed inseparable from everything connected with San Domingo. One of the most distinguished colonial historians, Moreau of Saint-Méry, admits that the streets were sewers and that people threw all their garbage into them. The Government begged people in vain not to commit nuisances in the street, to be careful of the disposition of "faecal matter," not to let sheep, pigs and goats wander loose. No one paid any attention to these injunctions.

In Port-au-Prince, the official capital of the colony, the population washed their dirty linen, made indigo and soaked manioc in the water of the only spring which supplied the town. Despite repeated prohibitions they continued to beat their slaves in the public streets. Nor were the authorities themselves more careful. If it rained at night, one could not walk in the town the next day, and streams of water filled the ditches at the side of the street in which one could hear the croaking of toads. De

[2] De Vaissière, p. 217.

Wimpffen called Port-au-Prince a Tartar camp, and Moreau de Saint-Méry, himself a colonial, deprecates the sharpness of the expression but admits that it was not entirely inapplicable.

Such culture as there was centred in these towns. In Le Cap there were various masonic and other societies, the most famous of which was the Philadelphia Circle, a body devoting itself to politics, philosophy and literature. But the chief reading of the population consisted of lascivious novels. For amusement there were theatres, not only in Le Cap and Port-au-Prince, but in such small towns as Léogane and St Marc, where the melodramas and the thrillers of the day were played to packed houses. In 1787 there were three companies in Port-au-Prince alone.

What the towns lacked in intellectual fare they made up for in opportunities of debauchery—gambling-dens (for everyone in San Domingo played and great fortunes were won and lost in a few days), dance-halls, and private brothels whereby the Mulatto women lived in such comfort and luxury that in 1789, of 7,000 Mulatto women in San Domingo, 5,000 were either prostitutes or the kept mistresses of white men.

The regular clergy of San Domingo instead of being a moderating influence were notorious for their irreverence and degeneracy. In the early years they consisted chiefly of unfrocked monks. Later came a better class of priests, but in that turgid, overheated society few were able to withstand the temptations of easy money, easy living, and easy women; many of them lived openly with their concubines. Their greed for money led them to exploit the Negroes with the same ruthlessness as the rest of white San Domingo. About the middle of the eighteenth century one of them used to baptise the same Negroes seven or eight times, for the ceremony amused the slaves and they were willing to pay a small sum for each baptism. As late as 1790 another was competing with the Negro obeah-men for the coppers of the slaves, by selling charms against illness and talismans to insure the success of their petty ventures.

In the towns the great merchants and the wealthy agents of the maritime bourgeoisie were included with the planters as big whites. On the plantations the managers and the stewards were either agents of the absentee owner, or were under the eye of the planter himself and, therefore, subordinate to him. These in the country, and in the towns the small lawyers, the notaries, the clerks, the artisans, the grocers, were known as the small whites.[3] Included among the small whites was a crowd of city vagabonds, fugitives from justice, escaped galley slaves, debtors unable to pay their bills, adventurers seeking adventure or quick fortunes, men of all crimes and all nationalities. From the underworld of two continents they came, Frenchmen and Spaniards, Maltese, Italians, Portuguese and Americans. For whatever a man's origin, record or character, here his white skin made him a person of quality and rejected or failures in their own country flocked to San Domingo, where consideration was achieved at so cheap a price, money flowed and opportunities of debauchery abounded.

No small white was a servant, no white man did any work that he could get a Negro to do for him. A barber summoned to attend to a customer appeared in silk attire, hat under his arm, sword at his side, cane under his elbow, followed by four Negroes. One of them combed the hair, another dressed it, a third curled it and the fourth finished. While they worked the employer presided over the various operations. At the slightest slackness, at the slightest mistake, he boxed the cheek of the unfortunate slave so hard that often he knocked him over. The slave picked himself up without any sign of resentment, and resumed. The same hand which had knocked over the slave closed on an enormous fee, and the barber took his exit with the same insolence and elegance as before.

[3] These should not be confused with the modern "poor whites" in America or South Africa. Some of these, especially in America, live at a standard almost as low as that of the Negroes in their community.

This was the type for whom race prejudice was more important than even the possession of slaves, of which they held few. The distinction between a white man and a man of colour was for them fundamental. It was their all. In defence of it they would bring down the whole of their world.

Big whites and small whites did not exhaust the white population of San Domingo. Over them both was the bureaucracy, composed almost entirely of Frenchmen from France, who governed the island. The heads of the bureaucracy were the Governor and the Intendant. The Governor was the official representative of the King, with all that this implies even to this day in the administration of distant colonies. His official salary might be as much as 100,000 livres[4] a year, besides the profits common to such posts in the twentieth as well as in the eighteenth century: the granting of concessions, the acting on the quiet as agent for European merchandise in the colonies and for colonial merchandise in Europe. A French nobleman was as greedy for a governorship of San Domingo as his British counterpart for a viceroyalty of India. In 1787 the Governor was a brother to the French Ambassador in London, and he left the post of Governor to become Minister of Marine.

Next to the Governor was the Intendant, who was responsible for justice, finance and general administration, and sometimes drew a salary of 80,000 livres a year. The Governor was a soldier and aristocrat, the Intendant was a bureaucrat, and the military and the civil were constantly at variance. But against the local whites they and their staff, the commandants in the districts and the senior officials, represented the King's authority and the commercial privileges of the French bourgeoisie. They could arrest without warrant, they could refuse to carry out the instructions of the Minister, they could force the members of the local advisory councils to resign, could grant favours, pronounce confiscations, increase taxes, in fact their

[4] About ⅘ of a franc.

arbitrariness had no legal bounds. "God was too high and the King too far."

The colonists hated them. In addition to their absolute power they were wasteful and extravagant, their malversations were constant and enormous, and they treated the local whites with an arrogance and superciliousness that galled these little potentates with their two or three hundred slaves. There were good and bad Governors, good and bad Intendants, as there were good and bad slave-owners. But this was a matter of pure chance. It was the system that was bad.

There was some pretence at local self-government. Both at Le Cap and at Port-au-Prince there were local councils which registered the royal edicts and the decisions of the local government. Shortly before the revolution there was also appointed a council of the richest and most powerful of the whites who were supposed to represent local opinion. But the Intendant, like the Governor in the British Legislative Councils of to-day, could accept or reject their advice as he pleased.

The bureaucracy, with the source of its power so many thousands of miles away, could not depend only on the two French regiments in the colony. In 1789 the functionaries in San Domingo, where the white population was about 30,000, numbered only 513. Without some mass support government would have been impossible. Bringing with them from France the traditional hostility of the absolute monarchy to the political power of the feudal nobility, the bureaucrats sought a counterweight to the power of the planters in the small whites of town and country. The chief complaint of the small whites was against the militia which policed the districts and frequently encroached on the Intendant's administration of justice and finance. To these complaints the Intendant was always sympathetic. In 1760 one Intendant went so far as to dissolve the militia altogether and appointed syndics to carry on the local government. The colony was thrown into disorder, the Home Government had to re-establish the militia and restore its former powers to the military. Straight-

way an insurrection broke out in the island, led by the local justices of the peace, lawyers, notaries and prosecutors. The planters complained that the supporters of this rebellion were the lowest sections of the population, in one district three Portuguese Jews, a notary, a steward, a tailor, a shoemaker, a butcher's assistant and a former soldier of the ranks. The scorn of the planters is overwhelming for "these rascals who have occasioned these troubles and of whom we can say with justice that they are the vilest *canaille*, whose fathers and mothers have been lackeys or domestic servants, or even of an origin still lower." [5] It was not their low origin which justified the attack of the planters upon the small whites. Tailors, butchers and soldiers from the ranks were to play the decisive part in the French Revolution—and by their spontaneous efforts save Paris from the counter-revolution at home and abroad. But most of the small whites were a rabble and filled no important function in the economy of the colony. If every single one of them had been deported from the country, such work as they did could have been done by free Mulattoes, free blacks, or even slaves. They were not an integral part of San Domingo society, either by function, birth or tradition. But they were white, and as such of use to the bureaucracy. In 1771 we find the Intendant again complaining of military tyranny. "Since the militia are re-established," he complains, "the officers are every day depriving the ordinary judges of all their prerogatives."

Here then was the first great division, that between great whites and small whites, with the bureaucracy balancing between and encouraging the small whites. Nothing could assuage or solve this conflict. The moment the revolution begins in France these two will spring at each other and fight to a finish.

There was another class of free men in San Domingo, the free Mulattoes and free blacks. Neither legislation, nor the growth of race prejudice, could destroy the attraction

[5] De Vaissière, pp. 145-147.

of the black women for the white men of San Domingo. It was characteristic of all classes; the rabble on the shorefront, the planter or overseer who chose a slave to pass the night with him and drove her from his bed to the lash of the slave-driver next morning; a Governor of the colony, newly arrived from France, who was disturbed at finding himself seized with a passion for the handsomest of his four black maids.

In the early days every Mulatto was free up to the age of 24, not by law, but because white men were so few in comparison with the slaves that the masters sought to bind these intermediates to themselves rather than let them swell the ranks of their enemies. In those early years race prejudice was not strong. The Negro Code in 1685 authorised marriage between the white and the slave who had children by him, the ceremony freeing herself and her children. The Code gave the free Mulattoes and the free Negroes equal rights with the whites. But as the white population grew larger, white San Domingo discarded the convention, and enslaved or sold their numerous children like any king in the African jungle. All efforts to prevent concubinage failed, and the Mulatto children multiplied, to be freed or to remain slaves at the caprice of their fathers. Many were freed, becoming artisans and household servants. They began to amass property, and the whites, while adding unceasingly to the number of Mulattoes, began to restrict and harass them with malicious legislation. The whites threw as much as possible of the burdens of the country upon them. On attaining their majority they were compelled to join the *maréchaussée*, a police organisation for arresting fugitive Negroes, protecting travellers on the high road, capturing dangerous Negroes, fighting against the maroons, all the difficult and dangerous tasks which the local whites might command. After three years' service in the *maréchaussée*, they had to join the local militia, provide their own arms, ammunition and accoutrements, and, without pay or allowance of any kind, serve at the discretion of the white commanding officer. Such duties as the forced upkeep of the roads were made to fall on them with

extra severity. They were excluded from the naval and military departments, from the practice of law, medicine, and divinity, and all public offices or places of trust. A white man could trespass on a Mulatto's property, seduce his wife or daughter, insult him in any way he chose, certain that at any hint of resentment or revenge all the whites and the Government would rush out ready to lynch. In legal actions the decision nearly always went against the Mulattoes, and to terrorise them into submission a free man of colour who struck a white man, whatever his station in life, was to have his right arm cut off.

But by some fortunate chance, the amount of property that they could hold was not, as in the English islands, limited. Of fine physique and intelligent, administering their enterprises themselves without exhausting their fortunes in extravagant trips to Paris, they began to acquire wealth as master-artisans and then as proprietors. As they began to establish themselves, the jealousy and envy of the white colonists were transformed into ferocious hatred and fear. They divided the offspring of white and black and intermediate shades into 128 divisions. The true Mulatto was the child of the pure black and the pure white. The child of the white and the Mulatto woman was a quarteron with 96 parts white and 32 parts black. But the quarteron could be produced by the white and the marabou in the proportion of 88 to 40, or by the white and the sacatra, in the proportion of 72 to 56 and so on all through the 128 varieties. But the sang-mêlé with 127 white parts and 1 black part was still a man of colour.

In a slave society the mere possession of personal freedom is a valuable privilege, and the laws of Greece and Rome testify that severe legislation against slaves and freedmen have nothing to do with the race question. Behind all this elaborate tom-foolery of quarteron, sacatra and marabou, was the one dominating fact of San Domingo society —fear of the slaves. The mothers of the Mulattoes were in the slave-gangs, they had half-brothers there, and however much the Mulatto himself might despise this half of his origin, he was at home among the slaves and, in addition to his wealth and education, could have an influence among them which a white man could never have. Furthermore, apart from physical terror, the slaves were to be kept in subjection by associating inferiority and degradation with the most obvious distinguishing mark of the slave—the black skin. Few of the slaves being able to read, the colonists did not hesitate to say openly: "It is essential to maintain a great distance between those who obey and those who command. One of the surest means of doing this is the perpetuation of the imprint that slavery has once given." No Mulatto, therefore, whatever his number of white parts, was allowed to assume the name of his white father.

But despite these restrictions the Mulattoes continued to make progress. By 1755, little more than three generations after the Negro Code, they were beginning to fill the colony, and their growing numbers and riches were causing alarm to the whites.

They lived (ran a report)[6] like their forebears, on the local vegetables, drinking no wine, confining themselves to the local liquors brewed from the sugar cane. Thus their personal consumption contributed nothing to the maintenance of the important trade with France. Their sober ways of living and their small expenditure enabled them to put away most of their income every year, they accumulated immense capital, and grew more arrogant as their wealth increased. They bid for all properties on sale in the various districts, and raised prices to such fantastic heights that the whites who were not wealthy could not buy, or ruined themselves by attempting to keep pace with them. Thus, in some districts, the finest properties were in the possession of the half-castes, and yet they were everywhere the least ready to submit to statute labour and the public dues. Their plantations were the sanctuary and asylum of the freedmen who had neither work nor profession and of numerous fugitive slaves who had run away from their gangs. Being so rich they imitated the style of the whites and sought to drown all traces of their origin. They were

[6] De Vaissière, p. 222.

trying to get high commands in the militia. Those who had ability enough to make them forget the vice of their origin were even seeking places in the judiciary. If this sort of thing went on, they would soon be making marriages with distinguished families, which would bind these families in alliance with the slaves in the gangs, whence the mothers of these upstarts came.

This was no cantankerous croak from a jealous colonist. It was an official memorandum from the bureaucracy to the Minister. Increasing numbers, increasing wealth were giving the Mulattoes greater pride and sharpening their resentment against their humiliations. Some of them were sending their children to France to be educated, and in France, even a hundred years before the revolution, there was little colour prejudice. Up to 1716 every Negro slave who touched French soil was free, and after an interval of fifty years another decree in 1762 reaffirmed this. In 1739 a slave served as trumpeter in the royal regiment of Carabineers; young Mulattoes were received in the military corps reserved to the young nobility and in the offices of the magistracy; they served as pages at court.[7] Yet these men had to go back to San Domingo and submit to the discriminations and brutality of the San Domingo whites. And as the Mulattoes began to press against the barriers, white San Domingo passed a series of laws which for maniacal savagery are unique in the modern world, and (we would have said up to 1933) not likely to be paralleled again in history. The Council of Port-au-Prince, holding up the race question as a screen, wanted to exterminate them. Thus the whites could purge their system of a growing menace, get rid of men from whom they had borrowed money, and seize much fine property. The Council proposed to banish all the half-castes up to the degree of quarteron to the mountains ("which they would bring into cultivation"), to forbid the sale of all property on the plains to half-castes, to deny them the right of acquiring any house-property, to force all those up to the degree of quarteron and all those

[7] Lebeau, *De la Condition des Gens de Couleur Libres sous l'Ancien Régime*, Poitiers, 1903.

whites who had married people of colour to that degree, to sell all their slaves within a year. "For," said the Council, "these are dangerous people, more friendly to the slaves, to whom they are still attached, than to us who oppress them by the subordination which we demand and the scorn with which we treat them. In a revolution, in a moment of tension, they would be the first to break the yoke which weighed on them, the more because they are richer and are now accustomed to have white debtors, since when they no longer have sufficient respect for us." But the colonists could not carry out these sweeping plans. The Mulattoes, unlike the German Jews, were already too numerous, and the revolution would have begun there and then.

The colonists had to content themselves with throwing on these rivals every humiliation that ingenuity and malice could devise. Between 1758 and the revolution the persecutions mounted.[8] The Mulattoes were forbidden to wear swords and sabres and European dress. They were forbidden to buy ammunition except by special permission with the exact quantity stated. They were forbidden to meet together "on the pretext" of weddings, feasts or dances, under penalty of a fine for the first offence, imprisonment for the next, and worse to follow. They were forbidden to stay in France. They were forbidden to play European games. The priests were forbidden to draw up any documents for them. In 1781, eight years before the revolution, they were forbidden to take the titles of Monsieur and Madame. Up to 1791, if a white man ate in their house, they could not sit at table with him. The only privilege the whites allowed them was the privilege of lending white men money.

Short of insurrection, there was no way out of this. And until the Bastille fell the efforts of the Mulattoes to emancipate themselves assumed strange forms. De Vaissière has unearthed a story, which we can understand better after Hitlerism than we could have done before. In

[8] Lebeau, *De la Condition . . .*; De Vaissière, Chapter III; *Saint-Domingue à la veille de la Révolution. Souvenirs du Baron de Wimpffen*, Edited by Savine, pp. 36-38 etc.

1771 the Sieur Chapuzet had obtained from the Council of Le Cap a decree which gave him the privileges of a white man, his obscure career preventing any questions begin raised about his origin. A little later he attempted to become an officer in the militia. Four lieutenants in the militia of the North Plain made minute researches into the records and presented an exact genealogy of the Chapuzet family, proving that a maternal ancestor, 150 years back, was a Negro from St. Kitts. De Chapuzet defended himself, "in law and in fact," in law because the power of deciding on the status of a citizen was the prerogative of the Government and not of private individuals, in fact because in 1624 there were no Negroes in St Kitts. Colonial history was now the terrain. With extracts from the historians the whites proved that there were slaves in St Kitts in 1624. Chapuzet admitted defeat and left for France.

Three years after, he returned, calling himself M. Chapuzet de Guérin, or familiarly M. le Guérin. Aristocrat at least in name, by means of a sponsor he again brought his case for being considered a white man before the courts. Once more he was defeated. But Chapuzet was a man of resource. He claimed that this ancestor, "the St Kitts Negro", was no Negro, but a Carib, a free-born Carib, a member of "that noble race on whom the French and Spaniards had imposed the law of conquest." Chapuzet triumphed. In 1779 two decrees of the Council declared that his claims were justified. But he did not get his rank. The local officials dared not appoint him. Following the publication of the decrees, the people of colour abandoned themselves to such demonstrations of joy and foolish hopes that the consequences of Chapuzet's appointment might have been very dangerous. The doors of Chapuzet's lawyer were besieged with quarterons and other fair-skinned Mulattoes seeking to have their remote slave ancestors transformed into free and noble Caribs.

The advantages of being white were so obvious that race prejudice against the Negroes permeated the minds of

the Mulattoes who so bitterly resented the same thing from the whites. Black slaves and Mulattoes hated each other. Even while in words and, by their success in life, in many of their actions, Mulattoes demonstrated the falseness of the white claim to inherent superiority, yet the man of colour who was nearly white despised the man of colour who was only half-white, who in turn despised the man of colour who was only quarter white, and so on through all the shades.

The free blacks, comparatively speaking, were not many, and so despised was the black skin that even a Mulatto slave felt himself superior to the free black man. The Mulatto, rather than be slave to a black, would have killed himself.

It all reads like a cross between a nightmare and a bad joke. But these distinctions still exercise their influence in the West Indies to-day.[9] While whites in Britain dislike the half-caste more than the full-blooded Negro, whites in the West Indies favour the half-caste against the blacks. These, however, are matters of social prestige. But the racial discriminations in Africa to-day are, as they were in San Domingo, matters of Government policy, enforced by bullets and bayonets, and we have lived to see the rulers of a European nation make the Aryan grandmother as precious for their fellow-countrymen as the Carib ancestor was to the Mulatto. The cause in each case is the same—the justification of plunder by any obvious differentiation from those holding power. It is as well to remind the reader that a trained observer travelling in the West Indies in 1935 says of the coloured men there, "A few at the top, judges, barristers, doctors, whatever their shade of colour, could hold their own in any circle. A great many more are the intellectual equals or superiors of their own white contemporaries."[10] Many of the Mulattoes and free blacks were backward in comparison to the whites but their capacity was perfectly obvious in San Domingo in the years before

[9] Still true, in 1961.
[10] Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies*, London, 1936, p. 49.

1789. It took gunpowder and cold steel to convince the San Domingo whites. And if, as we have seen, the most intelligent of them did not delude themselves about the materialist origins of their prejudice against the Mulattoes, we yet will make a great mistake if we think that they were hypocrites when they claimed that a white skin guaranteed to the owner superior abilities and entitled him to a monopoly of the best that the colony afforded.

"Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence as foundation, there is built a superstructure of diversified and characteristic sentiments, illusions, habits of thought, and outlooks on life in general. The class as a whole creates and shapes them out of its material foundation, and out of the corresponding social relationships. The individual in whom they arise, through tradition and education, may fancy them to be the true determinants, the real origin of his activities." [11] On this common derivation of prejudice, small whites, big whites and bureaucracy were united against Mulattoes. It had been so for one hundred and fifty years, and therefore it would always be so. But would it? The higher bureaucrats, cultivated Frenchmen, arrived in the island without prejudice; and looking for mass support used to help the Mulattoes a little. And Mulattoes and big whites had a common bond—property. Once the revolution was well under way the big whites would have to choose between their allies of race and their allies of property. They would not hesitate long.

Such was the society of this famous colony. These were the people, and this the life, for whom in part so much blood was shed and so much suffering borne. The best minds of the time had no illusions about it. Baron de Wimpffen, who saw the colony in 1790 at the very summit of its prosperity, one day saw a slave leaning on the handle of his hoe, looking sadly into the sunset. "What are you doing, Nazimbo?" he asked. "What are you looking at?"

[11] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire.*

Nazimbo extended his hand towards the setting sun. "I see my own country," he replied, and tears rolled from his eyes. "I saw my own country there also," said de Wimpffen to himself, "and I have the hope of seeing it again one day, but you, poor Negro, will never see yours again." Educated Liberal and common slave alike detested the place. A few months later de Wimpffen left and put his opinion on record. It is a fitting epitaph of that society which within three years was to be destroyed. "Do you wish to know my final word on this country? It is that the more I get to know the men who inhabit it, the more I congratulate myself on leaving it. . . . When one is what the greater part of the planters are, one is born to own slaves. When one is what the greater part of the slaves are, one is born to be a slave. In this country everybody is in his place."

Prosperity is not a moral question and the justification of San Domingo was its prosperity. Never for centuries had the western world known such economic progress. By 1754, two years before the beginning of the Seven Years' War, there were 599 plantations of sugar and 3,379 of indigo. During the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) the French marine, swept off the sea by the British Navy, could not bring the supplies on which the colony depended, the extensive smuggling trade could not supply the deficiency, thousands of slaves died from starvation and the upward rise of production, though not halted, was diminished. But after the Treaty of Paris in 1763 the colony made a great stride forward. In 1767 it exported 72 million pounds' weight of raw sugar and 51 million pounds of white, a million pounds of indigo and two million pounds of cotton, and quantities of hides, molasses, cocoa and rum. Smuggling, which was winked at by the authorities, raised the official figures by at least 25 per cent. Nor was it only in quantity that San Domingo excelled but in quality. Each coffee tree produced on an average a pound weight, equal sometimes to that of Mocha. Cotton grew naturally, even without care, in stony ground and in the crevices of the

rocks. Indigo also grew spontaneously. Tobacco had a larger leaf there than in any other part of the Americas and sometimes equalled in quality the produce of Havana. The kernel of San Domingo cocoa was more acidulated than that of Venezuela and was not inferior in other respects, experience proving that the chocolate made of the two cocoas in combination had a more delicate flavour than that made from the cocoa of Venezuela alone.

If on no earthly spot was so much misery concentrated as on a slave-ship, then on no portion of the globe did its surface in proportion to its dimensions yield so much wealth as the colony of San Domingo.

And yet it was this very prosperity which would lead to the revolution.

From the beginning the colonists were at variance with the French Government and the interests it represented. The French, like every other Government in those days, looked upon colonies as existing exclusively for the profit of the metropolis. Known as the Mercantile system in England, the French called this economic tyranny by a more honest name, the Exclusive. Whatever manufactured goods the colonists needed they were compelled to buy from France. They could sell their produce only to France. The goods were to be transported only in French ships. Even the raw sugar produced in the colonies was to be refined in the mother-country, and the French imposed heavy duties on refined sugar of colonial origin. "The colonies," said Colbert, "are founded by and for the metropolis." This was not true. The colonists had founded San Domingo themselves, and the falsehood of the claim made the exploitation all the harder to bear.

In 1664 the French Government, in accordance with the custom of those days, handed over the rights of trade with San Domingo to a private company. But the monopolists either could not or would not send out all the goods that the colonists wanted, and charged them nearly twice as much as they were accustomed to pay. The colonists revolted and the Governor was compelled to ease the restrictions. In 1722 the same thing happened. Agents received from the company the exclusive grant of the African trade, in return for supplying San Domingo with 2,000 Negroes every year. But by 1720 the colonists were needing 8,000 slaves a year, and they knew that in addition to supplying them with only one-quarter of their needs, the company would raise the price. There was another insurrection. The colonists arrested the Governor and put him in prison, and the Government had to modify the privileges of the company. The colonists saw themselves held in check by the Exclusive for the benefit of the metropolis, and as their prosperity grew they found the restrictions more and more intolerable. Political dependence on the mother-country was now retarding the economic growth of San Domingo. The colonists wished to shake off these shackles as Britain's American colonies were to shake off theirs. Thus if big whites and small whites were in permanent conflict with each other, they were united against the Mulattoes on the one hand and against the French bourgeoisie on the other. They could persecute the Mulattoes, but against the French bourgeoisie they could do nothing but rage. Long before 1789 the French bourgeoisie was the most powerful economic force in France, and the slave-trade and the colonies were the basis of its wealth and power.

The slave-trade and slavery were the economic basis of the French Revolution. "Sad irony of human history," comments Jaurès. "The fortunes created at Bordeaux, at Nantes, by the slave-trade, gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which needed liberty and contributed to human emancipation." Nantes was the centre of the slave-trade. As early as 1666, 108 ships went to the coast of Guinea and took on board 37,430 slaves,[12] to a total value of more than 37 millions, giving the Nantes bourgeoisie 15 to 20 per cent on their money. In 1700 Nantes was sending 50 ships

[12] This section is based on the work of Jaurès, *Histoire Socialiste de la Révolution Française*, Paris, 1922, pp. 62-84.

a year to the West Indies with Irish salt beef, linen for the household and for clothing the slaves, and machinery for sugar-mills. Nearly all the industries which developed in France during the eighteenth century had their origin in goods or commodities destined either for the coast of Guinea or for America. The capital from the slave-trade fertilized them; though the bourgeoisie traded in other things than slaves, upon the success or failure of the traffic everything else depended.[18]

Some ships took on the way wine from Madeira for the colonists and dried turtle from Cape Verde for the slaves. In return they brought back colonial produce to Nantes whence Dutch vessels took it to Northern Europe. Some made the return journey by way of Spain and Portugal, exchanging their colonial cargo for the products of those countries. Sixty ships from Rochelle and Oberon brought their salted cod to Nantes, to go to the inland market or out to the colonies to feed the slaves. The year 1758 saw the first manufactory of Indian cloth, to weave the raw cotton of India and the West Indian islands.

The planters and small manufacturers of San Domingo were able to establish themselves only by means of the capital advanced by the maritime bourgeoisie. By 1789 the Nantes merchants alone had 50 millions invested in the West Indies.

Bordeaux had begun with the wine industry which gave its ship-builders and navigators an opportunity to trade all over the world; then came brandy, also to all ports, but above all to the colonies. By the middle of the eighteenth century, 16 factories refined 10,000 tons of raw sugar from San Domingo every year, using nearly 4,000 tons of charcoal. Local factories supplied the town with jars, dishes and bottles. The trade was cosmopolitan—Flemings, Germans, Dutchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen came to live in Bordeaux, contributing to the general expansion and amassing riches for themselves. Bordeaux traded with Holland, Germany, Portugal, Venice, and Ire-

[18] Gaston-Martin, *L'Ère des Négriers* (1714-1774), Paris, 1931, p. 424.

land, but slavery and the colonial trade were the fount and origin and sustenance of this thriving industry and far-flung commerce.

Marseilles was the great centre for the Mediterranean and Eastern trade, and a royal decree at the beginning of the century had attempted to exclude it from the trade with the colonies. The attempt failed. San Domingo was the special centre of the Marseilles trade. Marseilles sent there not only the wines of Provence: in 1789 there were in Marseilles 12 sugar refineries, nearly as many as in Bordeaux.

In the early years most of this trade had been carried in foreign-built or foreign-owned ships. But by 1730 the maritime bourgeois began to build themselves. In 1778 Bordeaux ship-owners constructed seven vessels, in 1784 they constructed 32, with a total of 115 for the six years. A Marseilles ship-owner, Georges Roux, could fit out a fleet on his own account in order to take vengeance on the English fleet for the prizes it had taken.

Nantes, Bordeaux and Marseilles were the chief centres of the maritime bourgeoisie, but Orleans, Dieppe, Bercy-Paris, a dozen great towns, refined raw sugar and shared in the subsidiary industries.[14] A large part of the hides worked in France came from San Domingo. The flourishing cotton industry of Normandy drew its raw cotton in part from the West Indies, and in all its ramifications the cotton trade occupied the population of more than a hundred French towns. In 1789 exchanges with the American colonies were 296 millions. France exported to the islands 78 millions of flour, salted meats, wines and stuffs. The colonies sent to France 218 millions of sugar, coffee, cocoa, wood, indigo and hides. Of the 218 millions imported only 71 millions were consumed in France. The rest was exported after preparation. The total value of the colonies represented 3,000 millions, and on them depended the livelihood of a number of Frenchmen variously estimated at between two and six millions. By 1789 San Domingo

[14] Deschamps, *Les Colonies pendant la Révolution*, Paris, 1898, pp. 3-8.

was the market of the new world. It received in its ports 1,587 ships, a greater number than Marseilles, and France used for the San Domingo trade alone 750 great vessels employing 24,000 sailors. In 1789 Britain's export trade would be 27 million pounds, that of France 17 million pounds, of which the trade of San Domingo would account for nearly 11 million pounds. The whole of Britain's colonial trade in that year amounted to only five million pounds.[15]

The maritime bourgeoisie would not hear of any change in the Exclusive. They had the ear of the Minister and the Government, and not only were the colonists refused permission to trade with foreign countries, but the circulation of all French currency, except the very lowest, was forbidden in the islands, lest the colonists use it to purchase foreign goods. In such a method of trade they were at the mercy of the bourgeoisie. In 1774 their indebtedness was 200 millions, and by 1789 it was estimated at between 300 and 500 millions.[16] If the colonists complained of the Exclusive, the bourgeoisie complained that the colonists would not pay their debts, and agitated for stricter measures against the contraband.

Rich as was the French bourgeoisie, the colonial trade was too big for it. The British bourgeois, most successful of slave-traders, sold thousands of smuggled slaves every year to the French colonists and particularly to San Domingo. But even while they sold the slaves to San Domingo, the British were watching the progress of this colony with alarm and with envy. After the independence of America in 1783, this amazing French colony suddenly made such a leap as almost to double its production between 1783 and 1789. In those years Bordeaux alone invested 100 millions in San Domingo. The British bourgeois were the great rivals of the French. All through the eighteenth century

[15] Brougham, *The Colonial Policy of the European Powers*, Edinburgh, 1803, vol. II, pp. 538-540.
[16] Deschamps, *Les Colonies pendant . . .*, p. 25.

they fought in every part of the world. The French had jumped gleefully in to help drive them out of America. San Domingo was now incomparably the finest colony in the world and its possibilities seemed limitless. The British bourgeoisie investigated the new situation in the West Indies, and on the basis of what it saw, prepared a bombshell for its rivals. Without slaves San Domingo was doomed. The British colonies had enough slaves for all the trade they were ever likely to do. With the tears rolling down their cheeks for the poor suffering blacks, those British bourgeois who had no West Indian interests set up a great howl for the abolition of the slave-trade.

A venal race of scholars, profiteering panders to national vanity, have conspired to obscure the truth about abolition. Up to 1783 the British bourgeoisie had taken the slave-trade for granted. In 1773 and again in 1774, the Jamaica Assembly, afraid of insurrection and seeking to raise revenue, taxed the importation of slaves. In great wrath the British Board of Trade disallowed the measures and told the Governor that he would be sacked if he gave his sanction to any similar Bill.[17] Well-meaning persons talked of the iniquity of slavery and the slave-trade, as well-meaning persons in 1938 talked about the native question in Africa or the misery of the Indian peasant. Dr. Johnson toasted the next slave insurrection in the West Indies. Stray members of parliament introduced Bills for the abolition of the slave-trade which the House rejected without much bother. In 1783 Lord North turned down a petition against the trade:[18] the petition did credit to the Christian feelings, and to the humane breast, etc., etc., but the trade was necessary. With the loss of America, however, a new situation arose.

The British found that by the abolition of the mercantile system with America, they gained instead of losing. It

[17] *House of Commons: Accounts and Papers*, 1795-1796, vol. 100.
[18] *Parliamentary History*, XXIII, pp. 1026-1027.

was the first great lesson in the advantages of free trade. But if Britain gained the British West Indies suffered. The rising industrial bourgeoisie, feeling its way to free trade and a greater exploitation of India, began to abuse the West Indies, called them "sterile rocks," [19] and asked if the interest and independence of the nation should be sacrificed to 72,000 masters and 400,000 slaves.[20]

The industrial bourgeois were beginning their victorious attack upon the agricultural monopoly which was to culminate in the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. The West Indian sugar-producers were monopolists whose methods of production afforded an easy target, and Adam Smith [21] and Arthur Young,[22] the forerunners of the new era, condemned the whole principle of slave-labour as the most expensive in the world. Besides, why not get sugar from India? India, after the loss of America, assumed a new importance. The British experimented with sugar in Bengal, received glowing reports and in 1791 the first shipments arrived.[23] In 1793 Mr. Randle Jackson would preach to the company's shareholders a little sermon on the new orientation. "It seemed as if Providence, when it took from us America, would not leave its favourite people without an ample substitute; or who should say that Providence had not taken from us one member, more seriously to impress us with the value of another." [24] It might not be good theology, but it was very good economics. Pitt and Dundas

[19] *The Right in the West Indian Merchants to a Double Monopoly of the Sugar Market of Great Britain, and the expedience of all monopolies examined.* (n.d.)
[20] Chalmers, *Opintons on Interesting Subjects of Law and Commercial Policy arising from American Independence,* London, 1784, p. 60.
[21] Smith, *Wealth of Nations,* vol. I, p. 123. "It appears from the experience of all ages and nations . . . that the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves."
[22] Young, *Annals of Agriculture,* 1788. Vol. IX, pp. 88-96. "The culture of sugar by slaves is the dearest species of labour in the world."
[23] *East India Sugar,* 1822, appendix I, p. 3.
[24] *Debate on the Expediency of cultivating sugar in the territories of the East India Company,* East India House, 1793

saw a chance of capturing the continental market from France by East India sugar. There was cotton and indigo. The production of cotton in India doubled in a few years. Indian free labour cost a penny a day.

But the West Indian vested interests were strong, statesmen do not act merely on speculation, and these possibilities by themselves would not have accounted for any sudden change in British policy. It was the miraculous growth of San Domingo that was decisive. Pitt found that some 50 per cent of the slaves imported into the British islands were sold to the French colonies.[25] It was the British slave-trade, therefore, which was increasing French colonial produce and putting the European market into French hands. Britain was cutting its own throat. And even the profits from this export were not likely to last. Already a few years before the slave merchants had failed for £700,000 in a year.[26] The French, seeking to provide their own slaves, were encroaching in Africa and increasing their share of the trade every year. Why should they continue to buy from Britain? Holland and Spain were doing the same. By 1786 Pitt, a disciple of Adam Smith, had seen the light clearly. He asked Wilberforce to undertake the campaign.[27] Wilberforce represented the important division of Yorkshire, he had a great reputation, all the humanity, justice, stain on national character, etc., etc., would sound well coming from him. Pitt was in a hurry—it was important to bring the trade to a complete stop quickly and suddenly. The French had neither the capital nor the organisation to make good the deficiency at once and he would ruin San Domingo at a stroke. In 1787 he warned Wilberforce that if he did not bring the motion in, somebody else would,[28] and in 1788 he informed the Cabinet that he

[25] *Report of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade and Plantations,* 1789, Part IV, Tables for Dominica and Jamaica. See also Dundas' statistics, April 18, 1792.
[26] Clarkson, *Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade,* London, 1784, p. 29.
[27] Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement,* London, 1933, p. 74.
[28] Coupland, *Wilberforce,* Oxford, 1923, p 93

would not stay in it with those who opposed.[29] Pitt was fairly certain of success in England. With truly British nerve he tried to persuade the European Governments to abolish the trade on the score of inhumanity. The French Government discussed the proposal amicably, but by May, 1789, the British Ambassador wrote sadly that it seemed as if all the French Government's negotiations had been to "compliment us and to keep us quiet and in good humour." [30] The Dutch, less polite, gave a more abrupt negative. But here a great stroke of luck befell Pitt. France was then stirring with pre-revolutionary attacks on all obvious abuses, and one year after the Abolitionist Society had been formed in Britain, a group of Liberals in France, Brissot, Mirabeau, Pétion, Condorcet, Abbé Grégoire, all the great names of the first years of the revolution, followed the British example and formed a society, the Friends of the Negro. The leading spirit was Brissot, a journalist who had seen slavery in the United States. The society aimed at the abolition of slavery, published a journal, agitated. This suited the British down to the ground. Clarkson went to Paris, to stimulate "the slumbering energies" [31] of the society, gave it money, supplied France with British anti-slavery propaganda.[32] Despite the names that were to become so famous and a large membership, we must beware of thinking that the Friends of the Negro represented a force. The colonists took them seriously, the maritime bourgeoisie did not. It was the French Revolution which, with unexpected swiftness, would drag these eloquent Frenchmen out of the stimulating excitement of philanthropic propaganda and put them face to face with economic reality.

[29] *Fortescue MSS.* (Historical Manuscripts Commission, British Museum). Pitt to Grenville, June 29, 1788. Vol. I, p. 342.
[30] *Liverpool Papers* (Additional Manuscripts, British Museum). Lord Dorset to Lord Hawkesbury. Vol. 38224, p. 118.
[31] R. I. and S. Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, London, 1838, vol. I, p. 228.
[32] *Cahiers de la Révolution Française*, Paris, 1935, No. III, p. 25.

These then were the forces which in the decade preceding the French Revolution linked San Domingo to the economic destiny of three continents and the social and political conflicts of that pregnant age. A trade and method of production so cruel and so immoral that it would wilt before the publicity which a great revolution throws upon the sources of wealth; the powerful British Government determined to wreck French commerce in the Antilles, agitating at home and intriguing in France among men who, unbeknown to themselves, would soon have power in their hands; the colonial world (itself divided) and the French bourgeoisie, each intent on its own purposes and, unaware of the approaching danger, drawing apart instead of closer together. Not one courageous leader, many courageous leaders were needed, but the science of history was not what it is to-day and no man living then could foresee, as we can foresee to-day, the coming upheavals.[33] Mirabeau indeed said that the colonists slept on the edge of Vesuvius, but for centuries the same thing had been said and the slaves had never done anything.

How could anyone seriously fear for such a wonderful colony? Slavery seemed eternal and the profits mounted. Never before, and perhaps never since, has the world seen anything proportionately so dazzling as the last years of pre-revolutionary San Domingo. Between 1783 and 1789 production nearly doubled. Between 1764 and 1771 the average importation of slaves varied between ten and fifteen thousand. In 1786 it was 27,000, and from 1787 onwards the colony was taking more than 40,000 slaves a year. But economic prosperity is no guarantee of social stability. That rests on the constantly shifting equilibrium between the classes. It was the prosperity of the bourgeoisie that started the English revolution of the seventeenth century. With every stride in production the colony was marching to its doom.

The enormous increase of slaves was filling the colony with native Africans, more resentful, more intractable,

[33] Written in 1938.

more ready for rebellion than the creole Negro. Of the half-a-million slaves in the colony in 1789, more than two-thirds had been born in Africa.

These slaves were being used for the opening up of new lands. There was no time to allow for the period of acclimatisation, known as the seasoning, and they died like flies. From the earliest days of the colony towards the middle of the eighteenth century, there had been some improvement in the treatment of the slaves, but this enormous number of newcomers who had to be broken and terrorised into labour and submission caused an increase in fear and severity. In 1784 the administrators, who visited one of the slave shops which sometimes served as a market-place instead of the deck of the slaver, reported a revolting picture of dead and dying thrown pell-mell into the filth. The Le Jeune case took place in 1788. In 1790 de Wimpffen states that not one article of the Negro Code was obeyed. He himself had sat at table with a woman, beautiful, rich and very much admired, who had had a careless cook thrown into the oven.

The problem of feeding this enormous increase in the slave population was making the struggle between the planters and the maritime bourgeoisie over the Exclusive more bitter than ever, and the planters after 1783 had forced a slight breach in the strait jacket which clasped them. Having tasted blood, they wanted more.

Mulattoes educated in Paris during the Seven Years' War had come home, and their education and accomplishments filled the colonists with hatred and envy and fear. It was these last years that saw the fiercest legislation against them. Forbidden to go to France, where they learnt things that were not good for them, they stayed at home to increase the strength of the dissatisfied.

With the growth of trade and of profits, the number of planters who could afford to leave their estates in charge of managers grew, and by 1789, in addition to the maritime bourgeois, there was a large group of absentee proprietors in France linked to the aristocracy by marriage, for whom San Domingo was nothing else but a source of revenue to be spent in the luxurious living of aristocratic Paris. So far had these parasites penetrated into the French aristocracy that a memoir from San Domingo to the King could say: "Sire, your court is creole," without too much stretching of the truth.

The prosperity affected even the slaves. More of them could save money, buy their freedom, and enter the promised land.

This was the San Domingo of 1789, the most profitable colony the world had ever known; to the casual eye the most flourishing and prosperous possession on the face of the globe; to the analyst a society torn by inner and outer contradictions which in four years would split that structure into so many pieces that they could never be put together again.

It was the French bourgeoisie which pressed the button. This strange San Domingo society was but a garish exaggeration, a crazy caricature, of the *ancien régime* in France. The royalist bureaucracy, incompetent and wasteful, could not manage the finances of France; the aristocracy and the clergy bled the peasantry dry, impeded the economic development of the country, gobbled up all the best places, and considered themselves almost as superior to the able and vigorous bourgeois as the white planters considered themselves superior to the Mulattoes.

But the French bourgeoisie too was proud and no members of it were prouder than the maritime bourgeois. We have seen their wealth. They knew that they were the foundation of the country's prosperity. They were buying up the land of the aristocracy. They built great schools and universities, they read Voltaire and Rousseau, they sent their linen to the colonies to be washed and to get the right colour and scent, they sent their wine for two or three voyages to the colonies and back to give it the right flavour. They, along with the other bourgeois, chafed at their social disadvantages; the chaotic state of French administration and finance handicapped them in their business. A hard

winter in 1788 brought matters to a head. The monarchy was already bankrupt, the aristocracy made a bid to recover its former power, the peasants began to revolt, and the bourgeoisie saw that the time had come for it to govern the country on the English model in collaboration with its allies, the radical aristocracy. In the agitation which began the French Revolution, the maritime bourgeoisie took the lead. The bourgeoisie of Dauphiné and Britanny, with their ports of Marseilles and Nantes, attacked the monarchy even before the official opening of the States-General, and Mirabeau, the first leader of the revolution, was the deputy for Marseilles.

From all over the country the cahiers, or lists of grievances, poured in. But the French people, like the vast majority of Europeans to-day, had too many grievances of their own to be concerned about the sufferings of Africans, and only a few cahiers, chiefly from clergymen, demanded the abolition of slavery. The States-General met. Mirabeau, Pétion, Mayor of Paris, Abbé Grégoire, Condorcet, all members of the Friends of the Negro, were deputies, all pledged to abolition. But abolition for the maritime bourgeois was ruin. For the moment, however, the States-General grappled with the King.

While the French bourgeoisie led the assault on the absolute monarchy at home, the planters followed suit in the colonies. And, as in France, the geographical divisions of San Domingo and their historical development shaped the revolutionary movement and the coming insurrection of the slaves.

The pride of the colony was the great North Plain of which Le Cap was the chief port. Bounded on the north by the ocean, and on the south by a ridge of mountains running almost the length of the island, it was about 50 miles in length and between 10 and 20 miles in breadth. Cultivated since 1670, it was covered with plantations within easy reach of each other. Le Cap was the centre of the island's economic, social and political life. In any revolutionary upheaval, the planters of the North Plain and the merchants and lawyers of Le Cap would take the lead. (But the slave-gangs of the North Plain, in close proximity to each other and the sooner aware of the various changes in the political situation, would be correspondingly ready for political action.)

Very different was the West Province, with its isolated plantations scattered over wide areas. In districts like the Artibonite, Verrettes, Mirabelais, and St Marc, there were many Mulatto proprietors, some of great wealth.

The South Province was a sort of pariah, somewhat sparsely populated, with a majority of Mulattoes. The eastern end, Cape Tiburon, was only some 50 miles from Jamaica and here the contraband trade was particularly strong.

Early in 1788 the North Province took the lead. It formed a secret committee to secure representation in the States-General. In Paris the group of wealthy absentee noblemen formed a committee for the same purpose, the two groups collaborated and the Paris noblemen refused to accept the veto of the King. At the end of 1788 the colonists summoned electoral assemblies and elected a delegation, some of whom consisted of their allies in Paris. In their cahier they claimed abolition of military justice and the institution of a civil judiciary; all legislation and taxes to be voted by provincial assemblies subject only to the approval of the King and a Colonial Committee sitting at Paris but elected by themselves. By restricting political rights to owners of land the planters effectively excluded the small whites who took little interest in all this agitation. Of the slaves and Mulattoes, they said not a word. Slaves did not count, and the Mulattoes secured permission from the frightened bureaucracy to send a deputation to Paris on their own account. But a number of the planters at home, and quite a few in Paris, the Club Massiac, viewed this desire to be represented in the States-General with distrust. The agitation for abolition of the slave-trade in England, the propaganda of the Friends of the Negro, the revolutionary temper of France, filled them with forebod

ing. Representation in the States-General by a few deputies could effect nothing, and it would bring the full glare of publicity and awakening political interest on the state of society in San Domingo, which was exactly what they did not want. But while the pro-representation group were in a minority, having a positive aim they were bold and confident. Their opponents, with bad consciences and aiming only at avoiding trouble, could oppose no effective resistance. Colonial representation in a metropolitian assembly was an innovation unheard of at that time, but the San Domingo representatives, profiting by the revolutionary ferment in Paris, circumvented the objections of the King and Minister. They petitioned the nobility who cold-shouldered them. But when Louis tried to intimidate the Third Estate, and the deputies went to the tennis-court and swore that being the representatives of the people they would never adjourn, Gouy d'Arsy, leader of the colonists, boldly led his group of colonial noblemen into this historic meeting. Out of gratitude for this unexpected support, the bourgeoisie welcomed them, and thus France admitted the principle of colonial representation. Full of confidence these slave owners claimed 18 seats, but Mirabeau turned fiercely on them: "You claim representation proportionate to the number of the inhabitants. The free blacks are proprietors and tax-payers, and yet they have not been allowed to vote. And as for 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 electors and eligible for seats; if the contrary is the case, have we, in apportioning deputies according to the population of France, taken into consideration the number of our horses and our mules?"

San Domingo was allowed only six deputies. In less than five minutes the great Liberal orator had placed the case of the Friends of the Negro squarely before the whole of France in unforgettable words. The San Domingo representatives realised at last what they had done; they had tied the fortunes of San Domingo to the assembly of a people in revolution and thenceforth the history of liberty in

France and of slave emancipation in San Domingo is one and indivisible.

Unaware of these portentous developments the colonists in San Domingo were going from victory to victory. As in France, the last months of 1788 in San Domingo had been hard. France had had to prohibit the export of grain, and under these circumstances the Exclusive was a tyrannical imposition threatening the island with famine. The Governor opened certain ports to foreign ships; the Intendant, Barbé de Marbois, agreed to the first small breaches but refused to sanction their extension. The matter went to the King's Council who repudiated the Governor, recalled him, and appointed a new Governor, with the colonists calling for the blood of the Intendant. This was the situation when on a day in September a boat sailed into the harbour, and the captain, hurrying ashore, ran down the streets of Le Cap, shouting the news of July 14th. The King had been preparing to disperse the Constituent Assembly by force, and the Paris masses, arming themselves, had stormed the Bastille as the symbol of feudal reaction. The great French Revolution had begun.

during a revolution, and by April 1791, the Paris masses were once more on the offensive. On April 18th Louis and his family wanted to leave Paris for Saint-Cloud. For two hours a great crowd refused to let the carriage pass, and the royal family had to turn back. In these turbulent days came the news of Ogé's martyrdom. Paris, in a ferment, greeted it with revolutionary rage. Soon a tragedy with Ogé as hero would be played to crowded houses. When on April 7th the colonial question again came before the House, Abbé Grégoire took the floor and demanded an adjournment of four days in preparation for a debate. Moreau de Saint-Méry at once opposed, calling for an immediate vote in the old way. But that could work no longer. The proposal for an adjournment was carried and a date fixed. The bourgeoisie was face to face with the colonial question at last.

The debate was one of the greatest which ever shook the Constituent. Robespierre made the deputies aware of the dangerous game they were playing in so flagrant a breach of the very principles on which their own position rested:

"If I should suspect that among those who have opposed rights for the men of colour there was any one who detested liberty and the Constitution, I would believe that they are merely seeking ways and means of attacking with success your decrees and your principles. Whenever a question arises in which the interest of the metropolis is directly concerned they will tell you: You urge without ceasing the Rights of Man, but you believe in them so little yourselves that you have sanctified slavery constitutionally (there was murmuring in the Assembly). The supreme interest of the nation and of the colonies is that you remain free and that you do not overturn with your own hands the foundations of liberty. Perish the colonies (violent interruptions) if the price is to be your happiness, your glory, your liberty.[6] I repeat it—perish the colonies

[6] Robespierre never said: "Perish the colonies rather than our principles." That was a typical lie of the reaction and has lasted to this day.

if the colonists wish by menaces to force us to decree that which is most suitable to their interests. I declare in the name of the Assembly, in the name of those members of this Assembly who do not wish to overturn the Constitution, in the name of the entire nation which desires freedom, that we will sacrifice to the colonial deputies neither the nation nor the colonies nor the whole of humanity."

It was magnificent but it was not abolition. It was only the word slavery Robespierre was objecting to—not the thing. All had agreed to leave that alone, though it was in all minds.

Raimond, admitted to the bar of the House to speak for his people, stated crudely that Mulattoes must be given rights so as to unite with the whites to keep down the slaves.

Hour after hour declamation and argument, abuse and applause, testified to the magnitude of the interests presumed to be at stake and the depths of the passions aroused. Four days it lasted with all political Paris taking sides. Among the spectators the commercial representatives of the maritime bourgeois had a special place. They wrote notes to speakers, made gestures of dissent or approbation, and on account of their prestige and business experience exercised an immense influence on the uninformed and undecided of the deputies. But all the popular bodies, The Jacobins, the Friends of the Constitution, etc., detested the Club Massiac and its disgraceful pro-slavery propaganda; the political rank and file were wildly for the Mulattoes: the defence of the Rights of Man abroad was the defence of them at home. The parties were evenly matched and the voting on resolutions and amendments went now one way, now the other. At last on the evening of the fourth day, with the deputies worn out and unable to arrive at a decision, Rewbell rose and proposed a compromise. Every Mulatto whose parents were both free should have the vote. There were only 400 of these but it seemed a way out. The compromise proposal was carried by an overwhelming majority and the spectators cheered a hard-won victory, small in itself but of far-reaching im-

fly on the Aubry Plantation . . . and in order that everybody should know about it had them fixed on pikes along the hedges of his plantation, palm-tree fashion." To such men the news of the May decree giving rights to 400 Mulattoes was a dangerous symptom and outrage unspeakable. They lynched Mulattoes, they stamped upon the French flag, they abjured France, they could not mention France or Frenchmen without oaths and curses. The new Assembly which was to replace the broken Assembly of St Marc met at Léogane in early August and passed a series of resolutions designed to ensure independence. In order to be nearer the centre of affairs the members decided to transfer to Le Cap where the Governor was. But some of the deputies never reached there, being killed on the way by the revolting Negroes of the North. These, luckily for themselves, had no deputies in Paris listening to parliamentary promises and weakening their will. Neglected and ignored by all the politicians of every brand and persuasion, they had organised on their own and struck for freedom at last.

IV

The San Domingo Masses Begin

Eh ! Eh ! Bomba ! Heu ! Heu !
Canga, bafio té !
Canga, mouné de lé !
Canga, do ki la !
Canga, do ki la !
Canga, li !

THE SLAVES worked on the land, and, like revolutionary peasants everywhere, they aimed at the extermination of their oppressors. But working and living together in gangs

of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the North Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at the time, and the rising was, therefore, a thoroughly prepared and organised mass movement. By hard experience they had learnt that isolated efforts were doomed to failure, and in the early months of 1791 in and around Le Cap they were organising for revolution. Voodoo was the medium of the conspiracy. In spite of all prohibitions, the slaves travelled miles to sing and dance and practise the rites and talk; and now, since the revolution, to hear the political news and make their plans. Boukman, a Papaloi or High Priest, a gigantic Negro, was the leader. He was headman of a plantation and followed the political situation both among the whites and among the Mulattoes. By the end of July 1791 the blacks in and around Le Cap were ready and waiting. The plan was conceived on a massive scale and they aimed at exterminating the whites and taking the colony for themselves. There were perhaps 12,000 slaves in Le Cap, 6,000 of them men. One night the slaves in the suburbs and outskirts of Le Cap were to fire the plantations. At this signal the slaves in the town would massacre the whites and the slaves on the plain would complete the destruction. They had travelled a long, long way since the grandiose poisoning schemes of Mackandal.

The plan did not succeed in its entirety. But it very nearly did, and the scope and organisation of this revolt shows Boukman to be the first of that line of great leaders whom the slaves were to throw up in such profusion and rapidity during the years which followed. That so vast a conspiracy was not discovered until it had actually broken out is a testimony to their solidarity. In early August the slaves in Limbé, then and to the end of the revolution one of the storm-centres, rose prematurely and were crushed. This Limbé rising showed that it was dangerous to delay. Three days after, representatives from parishes all over the plain assembled to fix the day. Deputies on their way to Le Cap for the first session of the Colonial Assembly, to begin on August 25th, met throngs of slaves on the road who

abused and even attacked them. On August 21st some prisoners were taken and de Blanchelande, the Governor, examined them himself the next day. He did not get much from them, but he understood vaguely that there was to be some sort of rising. He took precautions to safeguard the city from the slaves within and he ordered patrols to cover the outskirts. But these whites despised the slaves too much to believe them capable of organising a mass movement on a grand scale. They could not get from the prisoners the names of the leaders, and what precautions could they take against the thousands of slaves on the hundreds of plantations? Some of the white rabble in Le Cap, always ready for loot and pillage, were revealed as being connected with a plot of some sort. De Blanchelande was more concerned about these than about the Negroes.

On the night of the 22nd a tropical storm raged, with lightning and gusts of wind and heavy showers of rain. Carrying torches to light their way, the leaders of the revolt met in an open space in the thick forests of the Morne Rouge, a mountain overlooking Le Cap. There Boukman gave the last instructions and, after Voodoo incantations and the sucking of the blood of a stuck pig, he stimulated his followers by a prayer spoken in creole, which, like so much spoken on such occasions, has remained. "The god who created the sun which gives us light, who rouses the waves and rules the storm, though hidden in the clouds, he watches us. He sees all that the white man does. The god of the white man inspires him with crime, but our god calls upon us to do good works. Our god who is good to us orders us to revenge our wrongs. He will direct our arms and aid us. Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites who has so often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks in the hearts of us all."

The symbol of the god of the whites was the cross which, as Catholics, they wore round their necks.

That very night they began. The slaves on the Gallifet plantation were so well treated that "happy as the Negroes of Gallifet" was a slave proverb. Yet by a phenomenon noticed in all revolutions it was they who led the way.

Each slave-gang murdered its masters and burnt the plantation to the ground. The precautions that de Blanchelande had taken saved Le Cap, but the preparation otherwise had been thorough and complete, and in a few days one-half of the famous North Plain was a flaming ruin. From Le Cap the whole horizon was a wall of fire. From this wall continually rose thick black volumes of smoke, through which came tongues of flame leaping to the very sky. For nearly three weeks the people of Le Cap could barely distinguish day from night, while a rain of burning cane straw, driven before the wind like flakes of snow, flew over the city and the shipping in the harbour, threatening both with destruction.

The slaves destroyed tirelessly. Like the peasants in the Jacquerie or the Luddite wreckers, they were seeking their salvation in the most obvious way, the destruction of what they knew was the cause of their sufferings; and if they destroyed much it was because they had suffered much. They knew that as long as these plantations stood their lot would be to labour on them until they dropped. The only thing was to destroy them. From their masters they had known rape, torture, degradation, and, at the slightest provocation, death. They returned in kind. For two centuries the higher civilisation had shown them that power was used for wreaking your will on those whom you controlled. Now that they held power they did as they had been taught. In the frenzy of the first encounters they killed all, yet they spared the priests whom they feared and the surgeons who had been kind to them. They, whose women had undergone countless violations, violated all the women who fell into their hands, often on the bodies of their still bleeding husbands, fathers and brothers. "Vengeance! Vengeance!" was their war-cry, and one of them carried a white child on a pike as a standard.

And yet they were surprisingly moderate,[1] then and afterwards, far more humane than their masters had been or would ever be to them. They did not maintain this revengeful spirit for long. The cruelties of property and privilege are always more ferocious than the revenges of poverty and oppression. For the one aims at perpetuating resented injustice, the other is merely a momentary passion soon appeased. As the revolution gained territory they spared many of the men, women, and children whom they surprised on plantations. To prisoners of war alone they remained merciless. They tore out their flesh with red-hot pincers, they roasted them on slow fires, they sawed a carpenter between two of his boards. Yet in all the records of that time there is no single instance of such fiendish tortures as burying white men up to the neck and smearing the holes in their faces to attract insects, or blowing them up with gun-powder, or any of the thousand and one bestialities to which they had been subjected. Compared with what their masters had done to them in cold blood, what they did was negligible, and they were spurred on by the ferocity with which the whites in Le Cap treated all slave prisoners who fell into their hands.

[1] This statement has been criticised. I stand by it. C.L.R.J.

As usual the strength of the mass movement dragged in its wake revolutionary sections of those classes nearest to it. Free blacks joined them. A planter of Port Magot had taught his black foreman to read and write, had made him free, had left him in his will 10,000 francs, had given to the foreman's mother land on which she had made a coffee plantation. But this black raised the slaves on the plantations of his master and his own mother, set them on fire, and joined the revolution, which gave him a high command. The Mulattoes hated the black slaves because they were slaves and because they were black. But when they actually saw the slaves taking action on such a grand scale, numbers of young Mulattoes from Le Cap and round about rushed to join the hitherto despised blacks and fight against the common enemy.

They were fortunate in that the troops in Le Cap were few, and de Blanchelande, afraid of the slaves and the white rabble in the town, preferred to act on the defensive. One attack was made by the regulars, who drove the slaves before them, but de Blanchelande, yielding to the nervous fears awakened in the city, recalled the detachment. This

left the revolution master of the countryside. Gaining courage the blacks extended their destruction over the plain. If they had had the slightest material interest in the plantations, they would not have destroyed so wantonly. But they had none. After a few weeks they stopped for a moment to organise themselves. It is at this period, one month after the revolt had begun, that Toussaint Bréda joined them, and made an unobtrusive entrance into history.

It seems certain that he had been in secret communication with the leaders, but like so many men of better education than the rank and file, he lacked their boldness at the moment of action and waited to see how things would go. Meanwhile, hating destruction, he kept his master's slaves in order and prevented the revolutionary labourers from setting fire to the plantation. While all the other whites in the neighbourhood made a dash for Le Cap, Madame Bayou de Libertas remained on the plantation, protected by Toussaint. Bayou de Libertas himself was with a camp of planters not far off, on guard against the slaves, but came every day to the plantation. Toussaint, then as always master of himself and of all near to him, maintained this untenable situation for over a month. But as the insurrection grew, worn out by the strain of defending the property, his master and his mistress, and learning that Madame de Libertas' life was now in danger, he decided that the old life was over and a new one had begun. He told Madame de Libertas that the time had come for her to go to Le Cap, packed her and some valuables in a carriage and sent her off under the care of his brother, Paul. He sent his own wife and the two children of the household into a safe spot in Spanish San Domingo. Then he slowly made his way to the camp of the revolted slaves.

The man who so deliberately decided to join the revolution was 45 years of age, an advanced age for those times, grey already, and known to everyone as Old Tous-

saint. Out of the chaos in San Domingo that existed then and for years to follow, he would lay the foundations of a Negro State that lasts to this day. From the moment he joined the revolution he was a leader, and moved without serious rivalry to the first rank. We have clearly stated the vast impersonal forces at work in the crisis of San Domingo. But men make history, and Toussaint made the history that he made because he was the man he was.

He had had exceptional opportunities, and both in mind and body was far beyond the average slave. Slavery dulls the intellect and degrades the character of the slave. There was nothing of that dullness or degradation in Toussaint.

His post as steward of the livestock had given him experience in administration, authority, and intercourse with those who ran the plantation. Men who, by sheer ability and character, find themselves occupying positions usually reserved for persons of a different upbringing, education and class, usually perform those duties with exceptional care and devoted labour. In addition to this practical education, he had, as we have seen, been able to read a little. He had read Caesar's Commentaries, which had given him some idea of politics and the military art and the connection between them. Having read and re-read the long volume by the Abbé Raynal on the East and West Indies, he had a thorough grounding in the economics and politics, not only of San Domingo, but of all the great empires of Europe which were engaged in colonial expansion and trade. Finally he had had the exceptional experience of the last three years of the revolution in San Domingo. The plantation was only two miles from Le Cap, and his duties took him often into the town. The masses of the people learn much during a revolution, far more a man like Toussaint. His superb intellect had therefore had some opportunity of cultivating itself in general affairs at home and abroad: from the very beginning he manœuvred with an uncanny certainty not only between local parties in San Domingo but between the international forces at work.

ciation and the temporary equality meant that the old spell was broken and things would never be the same again.

The Colonial Assembly in addition to war with the slaves and war with the Mulattoes had started a fierce row with the Commissioners over precedence. In Le Cap the Patriots actually had the Governor under arrest for some time and were plotting to murder Mirbeck who sailed for home on February 30th. Saint-Leger had gone to Port-au-Prince. The Patriots there, spurred on by the Assembly in Le Cap, threatened to deport him, and he took refuge with the Confederates. Saint-Leger and Roume were now seriously alarmed, not at revolting slaves, but at the growth of the counter-revolution. In the same way as Barnave, the Lameths and their friends in France, white San Domingo was growing tired of the red cockade and beginning to look once more to the royal authority. The Confederate Army seemed all white cockade. But just at this time Pinchinat had a meeting with Saint-Leger, and what he told that gentleman made him fly post-haste to France. Roume also was due to leave three days after, but in a chance conversation he smelt a royalist plot and stayed to ward it off. The royalists indeed thought that San Domingo was now ripe for the picking. But they were mistaken. Pinchinat had played an astute game. The royalists had hoped to use the Mulattoes. Now they found that they had been used instead. As Beauvais told Roume afterwards, "We were never the dupes of the white cockades. We had to conquer our rights, we needed auxiliaries. If the Devil had presented himself we would have enrolled him. These gentlemen offered and we used them, while allowing them to believe that we were their dupes."

The decree of April 4th now came to clinch the victory of the Mulattoes and allow them openly to support the French Revolution—for a time.

The colonial question had frayed the nerves and exhausted the Constituent, all of whose members were excluded by law from the Legislative which met on October 1st. The new deputies were no better off as far as the colonial question was concerned for in addition to the Rights of Man for Mulattoes they now faced a slave revolt.

On the Right were the Feuillants, or King's Party, led on the colonial question by Vaublanc, who approved the condition of slaves, even Mulattoes. The Left was stronger since the elections. But though there were over a hundred Jacobin deputies in the Legislative they were split; on the extreme Left were Robespierre and the Mountain, on the Right were the Brissotins, or followers of Brissot, better known in history as the Girondins. The Paris masses organised in the Commune were following the Jacobins. Robespierre and the Mountain would fight for Mulatto rights. So would Brissot, but Brissot's group was composed of Vergniaud, Guadet, and others, actual deputies of the maritime towns. The Girondins were so called after the Gironde province, whose chief town was Bordeaux. Vergniaud was deputy for Bordeaux and all the maritime towns were still firmly against the Rights of Man for Mulattoes.

What first frightened them was the way the news of the insurrection reached France. Paris heard of it from an English paper. The English Ambassador gave information about the seriousness of the uprising—he had got it from Jamaica through London. The *Moniteur*, day after day, asked, why no news from de Blanchelande? On November 7th the *Moniteur* printed a copy of the letter the colonists had written to the Governor of Jamaica. Only on the 8th was a letter from de Blanchelande asking for troops read in the House. The maritime bourgeois began to look at these colonists with a different eye: the Mulattoes at least were faithful to France, and they were strong supporters of slavery.

The first question was for troops to quell the revolt. But in a revolution the revolution comes first. Right and Left wing of the Legislative wanted to know how many

troops were to be sent and who would control them. The King was still head of the Army and Navy. The officers were royalist and centres of the counter-revolution. The King's Ministers and officials were still functioning, in Paris and in San Domingo. To put an army and a fleet into the hands of these people was to be putting weapons which, after the suppression of the insurrection, perhaps before, might be used against the revolution itself, and place the richest colony of France entirely in royalist hands. Jacobins and Feuillants fought it out day after day. But though it was a question of repressing a slave revolt, the Legislative, like the Constituent, would not tolerate the use of the word slave. When a deputy in the course of a speech happened to say "But the slaves are the property of the colonists . . ." there were the usual protests and demands that the speaker be called to order. The Legislative, more to the Left, was, perhaps for this reason, even more sensitive than the Constituent. The Colonial Commission, wishing as usual to have everything settled in the ministry, would not make any report. But the Friends of the Negro were far more powerful now, and Brissot gave warning. If the Commission did not present its report in ten days, he was going to open a debate on December 1st. During the interval delegates from the Colonial Assembly arrived in Paris, and on November 30th one of them, Millet, put the colonists' case. It is probable that never, in any parliamentary assembly, was so much impudent lying and dishonesty packed into any single speech.

Millet's description of slavery proved it to be the happiest form of society known in either ancient or modern times. "We live in peace. gentlemen, in the midst of our slaves. . . . Let an intelligent and educated man compare the deplorable state of these men in Africa with the pleasant and easy life which they enjoy in the colonies. . . . Sheltered by all the necessities of life, surrounded with an ease unknown in the greater part of the countries of Europe, secure in the enjoyment of their property, for they had property and it was sacred, cared for in their illnesses with an expense and an attention that you would seek in

vain in the hospitals so boasted of in England, protected, respected in the infirmities of age; in peace with their children, and with their family . . . freed when they had rendered important services: such was the picture, true and not embellished, of the government of our Negroes, and this domestic government perfected itself particularly during the last ten years with a care of which you will find no model in Europe. The most sincere attachment bound the master to the slave; we slept in safety in the middle of these men who had become our children and many among us had neither locks nor bolts on our doors."

This was supposed to be the lot of the slaves up to 1787, the year before the Le Jeune case. Terror, to keep the slaves in subjection, attested in a thousand documents? No such thing. True, there were a small number of hard and ferocious masters. "But what was the lot of these wicked men? Branded by public opinion, looked upon with horror by all honest people, shut out from all society, without credit in their business, they lived in opprobrium and dishonour and died in misery and despair. . . ."

What was it that changed this idyllic state of affairs? At this point enter the villain.

"However, gentlemen, a Society takes shape in the bosom of France and prepares from afar the destruction and the convulsions to which we are subjected. . . . And far from being able to continue with our work, this society forced us to renounce it by sowing the spirit of insubordination among our slaves and anxiety among us."

Having hurled his bomb at the Friends of the Negro, Millet turned to the Assembly itself. He knew the tender spot. "Soon they say this Society will demand that the slave-trade be suppressed, that is to say, that the profits which can result from it for French commerce will be delivered to foreigners, for never will its romantic philosophy persuade all the powers of Europe that it is their duty to abandon the cultivation of the colonies and to leave the inhabitants of Africa a prey to the barbarity of their tyrants rather than to employ them elsewhere. Under kind masters they exploit a territory which would remain uncultivated

without them, and of which the rich productions are, for the nation which possesses them, a great source of industry and of prosperity."

The Mulattoes? They and the whites had lived peaceably—nay happily. "The bonds of affection and of good feeling which existed between these two classes of men" would be strengthened by the just and humane laws a Colonial Assembly would pass. But here too the Friends of the Negro falsely represented the attitude of the whites as the pretensions of vanity and an endeavour to resist just claims.

But no man can keep it up for ever, least of all men trained in the French intellectual tradition. Before Millet concluded he suddenly let slip the elegant drapery and gave a glimpse of white San Domingo in all its bloated nakedness.

"These coarse men [the blacks] are incapable of knowing liberty and enjoying it with wisdom, and the imprudent law which would destroy their prejudices would be for them and for us a decree of death."

The Legislature listened in silence. This was no juggling with the word slavery—it was the thing itself, presented to the bourgeoisie for their endorsement through all eternity. Jaurès notes that there was no applause, none even of those disgusted interruptions with which the Legislative was wont to express its disapproval of the mere word slavery. When Millet was finished, the President invited the delegates to the honours of the session. But this was too much. One of the extreme Left jumped up in a rage. "What, Mr. President, you invite to the session men who have just outraged philosophy and liberty, men who have just insulted. . . ." But the profits of the slave trade were too much for the Assembly and the Left itself had no heart for this business.

Next day Brissot took the floor, and on behalf of the Mulattoes made a masterly and celebrated speech. He showed the rich whites anxious to have peace and ready to give political rights to the Mulattoes; the Patriots, for the most part heavily indebted to France and bent on independence, jealous of the Mulattoes who did not owe, and determined to maintain the privilege of race, all the more dear to them in that it rested now on such insecure foundation.

"It is by this that we can explain the existence all at the same time in the heart of the same colonist, of hatred against the man of colour who claims his rights, against the merchant who claims his debts, against a free Government which wishes that justice be done to all."

Once more the bourgeoisie battled over Mulatto rights. This time the contest lasted for weeks, in and out of the House. Vaublanc took the place of the absent Barnave, but the Friends of the Negro had a new argument in the concordats between whites and Mulattoes, and the maritime bourgeois were now convinced that the only way to save the colony was to give the Mulattoes their rights: the negotiations of the Patriots with other countries had opened their eyes as to the real nature of these gentlemen. Vergniaud and Guadet were able to convince their patrons that the old policy was false. The great ship-owners, merchants and traders threw over the colonists. Barnave's group, the Feuillants, formed the governing Ministry, but the revolution was taking courage again. The Feuillants were overthrown on March 10th and a Girondin ministry came in, with Roland at its head, but Madame Roland and Brissot as its leading spirits. On March 24th, by a large majority, the Legislative passed a decree, giving full political rights to the men of colour. Some tried to argue that the decisions of the Constituent were sacrosanct, but a deputy of the Left, to the accompaniment of great applause, challenged the theory that the Legislative was forever bound by the decrees of the Constituent and boldly asserted the sovereignty of the people over the rights of formal assemblies. Three new Commissioners were appointed with supreme powers and large forces to enforce the decree and restore order, and on April 4th the King's signature made the decree law.

But what of the slaves? The slaves had revolted for freedom. The revolt was to be suppressed. But at least there might be a promise of pardon, of kind treatment in the future. Not a word. Neither from Vaublanc on the Right nor Robespierre on the Left. Robespierre made an ass of himself by violently objecting to the word slavery, when proposed as a substitute for non-free. Brissot made a passing reference to them as being unfortunate, and that was all.

"The cause of the men of colour is then the cause of the patriots of the old Third Estate and finally of the people so long oppressed." So had spoken Brissot, and Brissot, representative of the Third Estate, was prepared to help the Third Estate of the Mulattoes and give the people, in France as well as in San Domingo, phrases. The French peasants were still clamouring for the Assembly to relieve them of the feudal dues. The Brissotins would not do it. They would not touch property, and the slaves were property. Blangetty, a deputy, proposed a motion for gradual enfranchisement. The Legislative would not even discuss it. On March 26th, two days after the decree in favour of the Mulattoes, Ducos dared to propose that every Mulatto child be free, "whatever the status of its mother." The Legislative in wrath voted the previous question, and Ducos was not even allowed to speak on his motion. The Friends of the Negro, good Liberals, were now in power and were as silent about slavery as any colonist. The slaves, ignorant of politics, had been right not to wait on these eloquent phrase-makers. Toussaint, that astute student of French politics, read and noted.

Toussaint alone among the black leaders, with freedom for all in his mind, was in those early months of 1792 organising out of the thousands of ignorant and untrained blacks an army capable of fighting European troops. The insurgents had developed a method of attack based on thei verwhelming numerical superiority. They did not rush forward in mass formation like fanatics. They placed themselves in groups, choosing wooded spots in such a way as

to envelop their enemy, seeking to crush him by weight of numbers. They carried out these preliminary manœuvres in dead silence, while their priests (the black ones) chanted the wanga, and the women and children sang and danced in a frenzy. When these had reached the necessary height of excitement the fighters attacked. If they met with resistance they retired without exhausting themselves, but at the slightest hesitation in the defence they became extremely bold and, rushing up to the cannon, swarmed all over their opponents. At first they could not even use the guns they captured, and used to apply the match at the wrong end. It was from these men "unable to speak two words of French" that an army had to be made. Toussaint could have had thousands following him. It is characteristic of him that he began with a few hundred picked men, devoted to himself, who learnt the art of war with him from the beginning, as they fought side by side against the French troops and the colonists. In camp he drilled and trained them assiduously. By July 1792, he had no more than five hundred attached to himself, the best of the revolutionary troops. These and not the perorations in the Legislative would be decisive in the struggle for freedom. But nobody took much notice of Toussaint and his black followers. Feuillants and Jacobins in France, whites and Mulattoes in San Domingo, were still looking upon the slave revolt as a huge riot which would be put down in time, once the division between the slave-owners was closed.

X

Toussaint Seizes the Power

TOUSSAINT in his twelve years of politics, national and international, made only one serious mistake, the one which ended his career. Strategic necessities he always saw early, and never hesitated in carrying out whatever policies they demanded. Now that he had dismissed Hédouville, the official representative of the French Government, and his acknowledged superior, he saw that he had now to crush the Mulatto state of Rigaud. The great danger now was a French expedition and it was suicidal to allow Rigaud

and his Mulattoes to remain in control of the South and West. They would most certainly welcome a French force and ensure the ruin of the black state.

It is easy to misjudge Rigaud. For him France was the mother-country still, who had made free men of Mulattoes and blacks. "I grieve to see this, the most cruel blow that has ever been struck against those of us in San Domingo whom the Revolution has made to live again. The Directory will see its authority nullified in this colony. The whole of France will believe that we wish *to make ourselves independent*,[1] as a crowd of fools already say and believe."

Rigaud sent in his resignation to Toussaint. If it were accepted, then inevitably Beauvais would succeed him, and Beauvais, Toussaint and Roume would be able perhaps to make unity a reality. Rigaud pleaded: "He [Roume] will no doubt consult you as to the choice of my successor. I once more assure you, Citizen General, of my fidelity to France and my respect and untarnished regard for your person." The waste, the waste of all this bravery, devotion and noble feeling on the corrupt and rapacious bourgeois who were still, in the eyes of the misguided Rigaud, the banner-bearers of liberty and equality.

Roume refused to accept Rigaud's resignation and thenceforth civil war was inevitable. With the packet that contained Roume's appointment were two other packets. What did they contain? We do not know. But it may well have been instructions to keep the two parties apart at all costs. Roume did not want war, but he acted as if his business was to prevent a close understanding.

Rigaud's effort to resign—he intended to retire to France—and the tone of his letters to Toussaint show how uncertain he was. But the French Government did its diabolical work with skill. Hédouville suggested that the Directory should even place the blame for the breach on him publicly so as not to alarm Toussaint. The Directory expressed its regret to Toussaint at seeing Hédouville re-

[1] Rigaud's emphasis.

turn, but professed to retain confidence in Toussaint. Yet Bruix, the Colonial Minister, wrote cordially to Rigaud.[2] Talleyrand, Minister for Foreign Affairs, wrote encouragingly both to Toussaint[3] and to Rigaud.[4] Thus France kept the pot boiling merrily.

Maitland left San Domingo in October or November 1798 and on December 12th the following appeared in the *London Gazette*.

"No event has happened in the history of the present war of more interest to the cause of humanity or to the permanent interests of Great Britain than the treaty which General Maitland has made with the black general Toussaint upon the evacuation of San Domingo.

"By this treaty the independence of that most valuable island is in fact recognised and will be secured against all the efforts which the French can now make to recover it. Not merely without the expense to England of fortifications or of armies but with the benefit of securing to us its exclusive commerce.

"Toussaint L'Ouverture is a negro and in the jargon of war has been called a brigand. But according to all accounts he is a negro born to vindicate the claims of this species and to show that the character of men is independent of exterior colour. The late events in San Domingo will soon engage the public attention. They are such as are calculated to please all parties. It is a great point to rescue this formidable island from the grasp of the Directory, from whence, if they had regained their footing, they might have incessantly menaced and perhaps assailed the most favourite of our West Indian possessions; and on the other hand it is a great point gained to the cause of humanity that a negro domination is in fact constituted and organised in the West Indies under the command of a

[2] 4 Ventôse An VII (Feb. 22nd, 1799). *Les Archives du Ministère de la Guerre*. B.[7] 1.
[3] Sannon: *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. II, p. 148.
[4] 19 Germinal An VIII (April 8th). *Les Archives du Ministère de la Guerre*. B.[7] 1.

negro chief or king. That the Black Race whom the Christian world to their infamy have beer accustomed to degrade. . . . Every Liberal Briton will feel proud that this country brought about the happy revolution. . . ."

The British, after having been driven out of the island in September, were posing in December as the authors of "the happy revolution," and rejoicing at the freedom of a people, to enslave whom they had just lost 100,000 men. In addition to soothing the national vanity this lying notice would also, of course, be read by the Directory. Having thus driven another wedge between Toussaint and the French, Maitland then set out for America to negotiate the division of the trade with that country.

Harcourt was sent on in advance to San Domingo but Toussaint did not want to negotiate with the British at all. He challenged Harcourt about the notice which had appeared in the Press. Harcourt returned an evasive answer, and had the unbelievable stupidity to tell Toussaint that the British were making these arrangements with him "not so much for any military or commercial advantage, but to witness to him their satisfaction at his good faith and punctuality in the execution of his engagements. . . ."[5]

When Maitland got to America he found that Toussaint had been making his own arrangements with the American Government. The President had already authorised a trade agreement and appointed a trade representative to San Domingo. From no classes of people have Negroes suffered more than from the capitalists of Britain and America. They have been the most pertinacious preachers of race prejudice in the world. Yet the Americans vied with the British in compliments to black Toussaint and San Domingo trade. John Hollingsworth of John Hollingsworth and Co. wrote to Toussaint that "in you I place the most implicit confidence and have moreover the pleasure to add that, as far as my information goes, I find the same to be prevalent, which to me is no small consola-

[5] For these negotiations see the correspondence of Toussaint seized by the French. *Les Archives du Ministère de la Guerre*, B.[7] 1.

tion as I have advocated the proposed negotiation with my utmost endeavour." [6]

When the British agents learned how far Toussaint had gone with the Americans, they forgot their protestations of negotiating only to please Toussaint, turned nasty, and threatened that if their ships were not allowed in the harbours on the same terms as the Americans, British cruisers would blockade the island. That was Toussaint's dilemma. France was at war with Britain. Like all the French blacks he detested the British. But the San Domingo economy was on the verge of collapse. And though he tried to evade a trade agreement with the enemies of France, he had in the end to admit British ships flying the American or Spanish flag into the San Domingo harbours. Roume suggested that he should arrest Maitland, as would have been very easy. Toussaint refused. Instead he read Roume's letter to Maitland and read him also his own reply to Roume indignantly repelling the base suggestion. Maitland was much impressed.

This whole Convention was in every way irregular. Maitland knew that Toussaint had no authority. Toussaint knew that he had none. At the peace all these problems would be resolved. In any case to treat thus with Britain, actually at war with France, was a dangerous thing to do, but it was an act of wise and courageous statesmanship. Even Roume, the Agent of the French Government, whom it placed in a very difficult position, had to admit that Toussaint was justified. The Directory itself approved of the arrangement with the United States in the *Moniteur* of 26 Vendémiaire, An VIII (October 19th, 1799).[7] Toussaint attempted no secrecy. He openly admitted there were secret clauses in the Convention [mutual promises not to attack each other], but that these secret clauses were necessary for the salvation of San Domingo and were no treason to France.[8] Even Rigaud joined the chorus of praise: "Although my enemies, always active to harm me, have managed to diminish your friendship for me, I am not the less an admirer of your talent and of your merit. . . . I offer my tribute of praise which you deserve."

[6] *Les Archives du Ministère de la Guerre*, B.[7] 1.
[7] Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire de Haiti* (Paris, 1853), Vol. IV, p. 46.
[8] Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. II, pp. 151-152. The Convention is printed in full in Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, pp. 416-419.

But the trade with America could not have been arranged without the consent of the British. Rigaud, however, said nothing about this. Toussaint, on the other hand, excluded the ports of the South from the agreement. And even before he actually signed with Maitland on June 13th, 1799, he once more took the offensive against Rigaud.

In a public proclamation Rigaud defended himself with moving passion against the charge that he did not wish to obey Toussaint because Toussaint was a Negro.

"Indeed, if I had reached the stage where I would not wish to obey a black, if I had the stupid presumption to believe that I am above such obedience, on what grounds could I claim obedience from the whites? What a grievous example would I be giving to those placed under my orders? Besides, is there so great a difference between the colour of the Commander-in-Chief and mine? Is it a tint of colour, more or less dark, which instils principles of philosophy or gives merit to an individual? And if one man is a little lighter in colour than another, does it follow that one must obey him in everything? I not willing to obey a black! Why, all my life from my cradle I have been obedient to blacks. Isn't my birth the same as that of General Toussaint? Isn't my mother who brought me into the world a Negro? Have I not a black elder brother for whom I have always had a profound respect and whom I have always obeyed? Who has given me the first principles of education? Is it not a black who was schoolmaster in the town of Les Cayes? Isn't it clear that I have been accustomed to obedience to blacks all my life? And everyone knows that first principles remain eternally graven in our hearts. I have consecrated my life to the defence of the blacks.

From the beginning of the revolution I have braved all for the cause of liberty. I have not betrayed my principles and I shall never do so. Besides, I am too much a believer in the Rights of Man to think that there is one colour in nature superior to another. I know a man only as a man."

These words could not have been written before July 14th, 1789. A true son of the revolution, Rigaud was hurt in his soul that people might think his quarrel with Toussaint was due to Toussaint's colour. Toussaint was equally emphatic, and though he accused the Mulatto class of conspiring against him, yet he disdained the charge of hating Mulattoes by pointing to the great number of them who were fighting in his army against Rigaud.

"Without doubt the susceptibilities, the jealousies born of the differences of colour, manifested themselves sometimes to an unreasonable degree, but the exigencies of the service and a severe discipline had more than ever fused the three colours in the ranks of the army. The same state of things existed in the civil administration and this was one of the happiest consequences of political equality consecrated by the principles of the revolution. The rivalries of colour were not then the initial cause of the conflict which was beginning. They complicated it and became one of its elements, when many officers of colour, in several parts of the country, took Rigaud's side, and Toussaint had to treat them as traitors. . . ." [9]

This is the opinion of M. Pauléus Sannon, himself a Haitian, and no one has written more wisely and profoundly on the San Domingo revolution and Toussaint L'Ouverture. Very clearly also he sees the Mulattoes as a typical intermediate class with all the political instability of that class.

"There was always also more of a political tradition among the men of colour, and a peculiar disposition, often noticed, which tended to make them particularly susceptible to all the hopes or anxieties which grew out of public events. It is this mental attitude which caused the struggle

[9] *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. II, p. 140.

between the military chiefs to assume all the tendencies of a war of colour."

And he concludes: "Toussaint L'Ouverture did not detest the Mulattoes any more than Rigaud hated the blacks. And if each of them defended himself badly from the contrary sentiments which they attributed to each other in this respect, it was because they needed, each of them, the united force of a party in a conflict where the parties were confounded with the classes and the classes with the colours."

Toussaint for a moment seems to have thought of winning over Beauvais to his side and through Beauvais of binding the colony together. He published a proclamation attacking Rigaud and praising Beauvais. Beauvais, through the very amiability of character which made him so beloved by everybody, played a miserable rôle in this crisis. Had he declared boldly for Toussaint, such was his influence and the strategic importance of his command that Rigaud could hardly have fought at all. Had he declared for Rigaud, Toussaint would have been in serious danger. But so slight was the class bitterness and colour feeling at the beginning of the struggle that Beauvais, a Mulatto of the Mulattoes, could not decide. Finally he threw up his command and sailed for France, honest to the last and unable to take sides in this fratricidal struggle maliciously kindled by the eternal enemies of peace in San Domingo.

Rigaud struck first and took Petit-Gôave. But this fine soldier, so brilliant against the English, at once audacious, tenacious and careful, was at his worst in this crucial campaign.

Where Rigaud hesitated and looked to France, Toussaint looked to France for nothing. Sending Dessalines into the South, he travelled North to crush the revolts. Free blacks of the North were revolting for Rigaud and even Pierre Michel, ancient slave, joined the revolt against

Toussaint and was shot. Before the speed of Toussaint's movements and his ruthless execution of traitors, the rebels quailed. "Punish even with death those who attempt the least movement."

Despite Rigaud's vacillation, the Mulatto South fought magnificently at first. All their pride was roused, and their bitterness can be understood. There was all the old hatred between Mulattoes and blacks. Toussaint had striven to moderate it, but it still remained. The Rigaud brothers and the other Mulatto leaders had a great record of military and administrative success from the very first days of the revolution. Rigaud's achievements against the British were nearly as fine as Toussaint's. The morale of the Mulatto population was high: when towns were besieged by the British, the women ran along the ramparts assisting the men with a fearlessness and disregard that showed their revolutionary temper. All the Mulattoes were devoted to the Republic. Rigaud had shot without mercy Mulattoes who were traitors, even though Mulatto women begged him on their knees to spare them. He had deported the émigré whites. To them it seemed that Toussaint, deceived by the old whites whom they hated, and sold to the British, against whom they had shed so much blood, was at once a traitor to the Republic and a tyrant seeking to establish a black domination. They fought like tigers.

The war at last rested on the fate of Jacmel, blockaded by land and sea. For five months Jacmel held out under Pétion, an unusually able officer who had deserted from Toussaint. The besieged ate horses, dogs, cats, rats, old leather, the grass in the streets, until there was nothing more to eat. Rigaud, strangely inactive, fought irresolutely, waiting for France. At last Jacmel could hold out no longer. The starving garrison cut its way through Dessalines' men and Toussaint's ultimate victory grew nearer.

Bonaparte, victorious in the internal struggle of the bourgeoisie for power, was still too busy in Europe to deal with San Domingo. But Hédouville assured him that Toussaint was sold to the British. Toussaint's talk to Moïse had been copied down by Moïse's white secretary[10] and sent to France. Vincent's report,[11] however, was wholly favourable to Toussaint. This did not change Bonaparte's plans, but Toussaint for the time being had to be humoured. Bonaparte appointed a new Commission consisting of Vincent, Raimond, and General Michel, to make peace between the two combatants. Bonaparte had learned from Vincent that Toussaint was the protector of Europeans, and, much more important, the most powerful man in the colony. He confirmed Toussaint in his post as Commander-in-Chief and Governor, but carefully avoided taking any side in the quarrel. He did not write direct to Toussaint, but addressed a letter from the Consuls to the citizens of San Domingo, assuring them of their liberty but notifying them that by the new Constitution he had given to the French, the colonies would no longer be represented in the French Parliament but would be governed by "special laws." He asked that on the flags of the army an inscription should be written telling them that they owed their liberty to France.

When Vincent landed in San Domingo race feeling was high. All over the colony blacks and Mulattoes were saying that the civil war had been kindled by the whites to weaken both sides and restore slavery.[12] The whites had taken Toussaint's side, but they were not pleased when he drafted them into the army and made them go and fight against Rigaud. But the black labourers were heartily sick of Commissioners from France. They said they did not want any white people to govern them, they would be governed by Toussaint. Moïse, who did not like Vincent, arrested him, and Vincent suffered great privations and was nearly shot by his guards. Toussaint apologised to Vincent, but the arrest could hardly have taken place without

[10] Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. II. See notes on pp. 121 and 126.
[11] *Précis sur l'état actuel de la colonie de Saint-Domingue. Les Archives Nationales*, A.F. III, 1187.
[12] *Précis de mon voyage à Saint-Domingue*, 20 Pluviôse, An X. *Les Archives Nationales*, A.F. IV, 1212.

his orders, though the indignities were probably due to spontaneous race feeling.

Toussaint was glad to get confirmation of his post as Commander-in-Chief from the new régime. In the war of proclamations that he was waging with Rigaud it was an unanswerable argument against the charge that he was a traitor to France. But the vagueness of the letter confirmed his worst suspicions. What were these "special laws"? Why had not Bonaparte written to him personally? He refused to inscribe the words on the banner.

The first thing, however, was the war. The inhabitants of the South were tiring of the struggle. Toussaint said that someone ought to go to Rigaud, and asked Vincent whether he would dare. But when Vincent said yes, Toussaint was embarrassed. He feared a trap. It was on this visit that, for the first time, Vincent noticed that his presence was distasteful to Toussaint.[13]

Yet Vincent did go to Rigaud. The ruler of the South, for so many years second in San Domingo history to Toussaint alone, was like a man distracted. During the interview hatred for Toussaint overmastered his reason, and he seemed on the verge of committing suicide. How could France confirm the traitor Toussaint in his command? He would continue his resistance. But Rigaud no longer had the confidence of his followers. Vincent was not only Toussaint's envoy. He was the representative of France, and the population welcomed his coming. Why should they go on fighting? Why had they ever fought at all? Even during the truce which Vincent arranged, the inhabitants of one town, St Louis, admitted Dessalines and his officers and entertained them to dinner. Vincent at one time feared for his own life, so violent were the rage and despair of the cheated and deceived Rigaud. Rigaud planned to blow up Cavaillon, the official capital of the South, but the captain of the garrison refused to allow it. Realising at last that all was over, the unfortunate Rigaud set sail for France, refusing to meet Toussaint. He was shipwrecked and reached Paris only on April 7th, 1801. He sought an

[13] *Précis de mon voyage.*

interview with Bonaparte, who listened in silence to his lengthy recital, then told him, "General, I blame you for only one thing, not to have been victorious."

In the years of its history as an independent State the Mulattoes and blacks of San Domingo have fought the unceasing struggle of the classes, sometimes rising to civil war, as is common to all societies whether homogeneous in colour or not. But at the slightest threat of foreign invasion they have always presented a solid front to the enemy. This lesson they were to learn by hard experience. Yet never was there so favourable an opportunity for a working arrangement as at the very beginning of their history under two such men as Toussaint and Rigaud, between whom there was such mutual admiration and understanding until Hédouville's arrival in the island. Hédouville's rôle does not concern us. The fatal error was Rigaud's. He could not see as far as Toussaint saw when he politely but firmly declined to play the fly to Maitland's spider.

With victory, by August 1800, Toussaint had only half-solved his problem. Hitherto he had been distinguished for his humanity toward beaten opponents and his conciliatory policy toward enemies, even the émigré whites whom all republican San Domingo hated and distrusted. But the garrisons in the South, the officials, were still mainly Mulatto. To leave them as they were, after the bitterness of the civil war, meant that if a French expedition landed they would welcome it even more eagerly than when under Rigaud. Seven hundred of Rigaud's finest soldiers left the South and went to Cuba rather than serve under Toussaint. He asked Clairveaux, one of his Mulatto commanders, to govern the South. It was a concession to Mulatto sentiment, but Clairveaux refused. Thus the task of pacification fell unfortunately to Dessalines.[14]

Toussaint did not confiscate property, not even the property of those who had followed Rigaud and aban-

[14] He was commander of the West Province but the South was subordinate to him.

doned the colony. One-fourth of the revenue from these plantations he gave to the labourers, one-half he turned over to the public treasury, and the other quarter was kept for the owners. Mulatto women had conspired against him, but even during the war he said that he did not make war on women, would not pay much attention to their "cackle"; if they were proved guilty he would merely imprison them and see that no harm befell them. All through the privations of the war and immediately after he treated them with special care. But he could not trust the army that Rigaud had made, which was as loyal to Rigaud as his own army was to him. Despite the amnesty, therefore, he commanded Dessalines to purge the troops. Three hundred prisoners in Léogane were shot, and 50 others in Port-Républicain, nearly all officers. Toussaint had to put a stop to it. "I said to prune the tree, not to uproot it." All things considered he had been singularly humane.[15] But the population of the South had made peace on Toussaint's word, which he had the reputation of never breaking. He had fought the British and the Spaniards and strictly observed all the rules of war. Many white émigrés, traitors to their country, now enjoyed their plantations and lived happily and peacefully under his protection after four years' service in the British Army; while the South saw the brothers Rigaud driven away and men who had shed their blood against these same whites for the Republic shot down in cold blood by Toussaint's soldiers. A great bitterness against Toussaint and Dessalines smouldered in the hearts of the Mulattoes of the South. Toussaint knew what he had done and the danger. But he could not help it. At all costs he

[15] It is often stated that Toussaint had thousands of Mulattoes massacred. It is a godsend for historians inimical to the Negro race. Unfortunately for them it is not true. If ever a man hated Toussaint, it was the Mulatto historian Saint-Remy, who collected everything evil that he could find about Toussaint in the biography of him which he wrote. Yet Saint-Remy, himself a Haitian, who wrote in 1850, records that the "moderation of L'Ouverture was astonishing after the triumph that he had just won." Lacroix's figure of 10,000 Mulattoes murdered is just nonsense. For a discussion of this often-repeated lie see Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, pp. 268-269.

had to have an army in the South on which he could depend when a French expedition landed.

The South was now under control. The next danger-spot to be safeguarded was Spanish San Domingo. Bonaparte had expressly forbidden Toussaint to annex that colony. Toussaint would then be master of the whole island, all its resources and all its forts. But this was exactly the reason why Toussaint was going to take it. He was not going to leave his flank exposed to the French expedition.

Roume had hitherto supported Toussaint against Rigaud. Even when the Commission of Vincent, Raimond, and Michel was on its way, Roume had written privately to them[16] expressing his admiration for and faith in Toussaint, his fear lest power might turn his head, but his confidence that Toussaint would not embark on the mad adventure of independence. Roume had had secret instructions to encourage Toussaint to make an attack on Jamaica.[17] This would still further tie Toussaint's hands and cause a clear breach with Britain. Roume proposed the scheme to Toussaint, but Toussaint, though he did not oppose it,[18] was not going to entangle himself with Britain to please France. Emissaries were sent to Jamaica to stimulate a revolt, though it is not certain whether they went from Roume or from Rigaud. The British, however, were so incensed that they seized armaments which Toussaint was transporting by sea for the siege of Jacmel. Immediately Toussaint protested, the British paid him a million and a half francs in compensation, and good relations were restored.[19] Toussaint was determined not to quarrel with the British, and the British were determined not to quarrel with Toussaint. The scheme to embroil Toussaint with

[16] Michel, *La Mission du Général Hédouville . . .*, p. 139.
[17] Letter of Ventôse, An VII. *Les Archives du Ministère des Colonies.*
[18] Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint-L'Ouverture.* Notes on pp. 270-271.
[19] Sannon. *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. II, p. 207.

Jamaica had failed. It was over Spanish San Domingo that the clash came.

The Spaniards still retained control; Roume, before he succeeded Hédouville as Commissioner, had been merely a sort of resident minister. In the last days of December, while still besieging Jacmel, Toussaint asked Roume for authority to annex the colony. The Spaniards, he said, were stealing Negroes from the French part of the island and selling them as slaves. This was true but obviously only a pretext. Roume had done his best, but he could support Toussaint no longer, for Bonaparte's orders were rigid. Roume had to defend himself, and Toussaint having allowed British trade representatives in San Domingo, Roume published a proclamation calling on him to chase them from the colony and prove that the accusations of infidelity to France were untrue. Toussaint refused, and Roume demanded permission to return to France. Toussaint could have marched into Spanish San Domingo, but he had to the full that care of dictators to legalise their most arbitrary acts. He wanted Roume's authority. Suddenly some thousands of blacks, set in motion by Toussaint's agents, chiefly Moïse, marched on Le Cap, threatening to pillage the town if Roume did not sign the decree which would save their brothers from slavery. Roume refused. For nearly a fortnight Le Cap stood in fear of destruction. To get him out of the way, Moïse commanded Vincent to go to Môle St Nicholas. The labourers, though adamant, were disciplined and maintained perfect order. At last Toussaint came and demanded that Roume sign. "My choice is made," Roume replied. "France will avenge me." Toussaint threatened him: "If you do not sign the decree . . . it means the end of all the whites in the colony, and I shall enter Spanish territory with fire and sword." Roume signed, but he wrote secretly to the Spanish Governor encouraging him not to hand over the colony to Toussaint's agents. Toussaint arrested Roume and sent him to Dondon, where with his wife and two

daughters he was kept under supervision. Then with Roume's official authority he and Moïse marched on Spanish San Domingo. The Spanish troops were routed, and on January 21st, 1800, the Spanish Governor formally handed over the colony.

Toussaint used his usual conciliatory methods. He appointed Clairveaux the Mulatto to be ruler of the province and his brother Paul to be commander of the garrison at Santo Domingo. He addressed proclamations to the inhabitants promising full amnesty and these were scrupulously observed.

He was now complete master of the whole island, a territory nearly as large as Ireland, and he had become so in less than ten years. "I found the colony dismembered, ruined, over-run by the bandits of Jean François, by the Spaniards and by the English, who fought over the bits. It is to-day purged of its enemies, quiet, pacified, and advances toward its complete restoration." He had made the boast after the departure of Maitland. Now it was more than ever true.

But there was still Bonaparte with his "special laws." Before he left Santo Domingo he wrote to Bonaparte asking for approval of what he had done. He accused Roume of intriguing against him and impeding his wish to take possession of the former Spanish colony. "Having decided to take possession by force of arms I found myself obliged before setting out to invite Citizen Roume to desist from the performance of his duties and retire to Dondon until further orders. . . . He awaits your commands. When you want him, I will send him to you."

This was defiance. Toussaint attempted no defence: "Whatever may be the calumnies that my enemies have seen fit to write to you against me, I shall abstain from justifying myself; but although delicacy enforces silence upon me my duty prescribes that I prevent Roume from doing harm." This was more than defiance. It bordered perilously on impertinence, and Bonaparte was the last man in the world to be trifled with.

Toussaint had burnt his boats. With vision, courage

and determination he was laying the foundations of an independent nation. But, too confident in his own powers, he was making one dreadful mistake. Not with Bonaparte nor with the French Government. In nothing does his genius stand out so much as in refusing to trust the liberties of the blacks to the promises of French or British Imperialism. His error was his neglect of his own people. They did not understand what he was doing or where he was going. He took no trouble to explain. It was dangerous to explain, but still more dangerous not to explain. His temperament, close and self-contained, was one that kept its own counsel. Thus the masses thought he had taken Spanish San Domingo to stop the slave traffic, and not as a safeguard against the French. His silence confused them and did not deceive Bonaparte. Dessalines, his fearless lieutenant, had no such scruples. After the war with Rigaud, Dessalines told his soldiers, "The war you have just won is a little war, but you have two more, bigger ones. One is against the Spaniards, who do not want to give up their land and who have insulted your brave Commander-in-Chief; the other is against France, who will try to make you slaves again as soon as she has finished with her enemies. We'll win those wars." That was and still is the way to speak to the masses, and it is no accident that Dessalines and not Toussaint finally led the island to independence. Toussaint, shut up within himself, immersed in diplomacy, went his tortuous way, overconfident that he had only to speak and the masses would follow.

XI

The Black Consul

SO LONG as the war lasted between France and Britain Toussaint was safe. But peace might come at any moment now, and with the peace would come Bonaparte's "special laws."

The colony was devastated by 12 years of civil and foreign war. Of the 30,000 whites in the colony in 1789, only 10,000 remained. The rest had been killed or had emigrated. Of the 40,000 free Mulattoes and free blacks there were still about 30,000, while of the 500,000 Negro

In a community where so many were still primitive and simple-minded, the personal character and conduct of the leader, sprung from the people, was not without social significance. Despite Toussaint's despotism, his ruthlessness, his impenetrability, his unsleeping suspicion of all around him, his skill in large-scale diplomacy and petty intrigue, to the end of his life he remained a man of simple and kindly feelings, his humanity never drowned by the rivers of blood which flowed so plentifully and so long. His "no reprisals" sprang from a genuine horror of useless bloodshed. Women and children in particular he hated to see suffer. While his army starved in the campaign against the British, he gave food to the destitute white women of the district. After the civil war he paid the same careful attention to the Mulatto women and children. He was incapable of meanness, pettiness or vindictiveness of any kind. Biassou, his old enemy and rival, had been murdered, and left a widow in Spanish San Domingo. Toussaint gave her a pension, and when he went to Santo Domingo he saw that she returned to her home with honours and dignities. To the widow of Chavannes, the Mulatto who had perished with Ogé, he gave a pension of 6,000 francs a year. Often, where a modern dictator would shoot, he preferred to deport. He had that curious detachment and inward scorn of men which distinguished Bonaparte, who forgave his family over and over again when they deceived him, and without any personal bitterness watched Murat, Talleyrand and Fouché intriguing and plotting against him. Toussaint could strike without mercy at men like Rigaud who imperilled his plans, but when one day a white officer who had deserted to the English was captured and brought back, he merely smiled at him: "Ah, I see that we are too good friends for fortune to keep us apart any longer," and did no more.

He was fortunate in his family, and they helped to give him prestige. His brother Paul was a distinguished officer. Moïse and Belair, his nephews, were famous for their bravery. His nephew, Chancy, was his aide-de-camp. No one could say that any of them owed his position to

anything but conspicuous ability. His wife lived on a plantation in the interior, and devoted herself to the cultivation of coffee. Whenever Toussaint could escape from his duties he went there. Visitors saw them sitting hand in hand as in the old days when they were slaves together. Her sister married a French officer; old Pierre Baptiste, who lived to be over a hundred, would not accept any honours or riches but lived simply in Le Cap. Whenever Toussaint went to the town, his first visit was always to the old man who had given him the rudiments of an education.

He loved children and they loved him. Riding one day from Gonaïves to Ennery, a little orphan named Rose, ten years of age, ran after him calling, "Papa, papa, take me away with you." He dismounted, took her up and carried her home to his wife. "Here is an orphan who has just called me her father. I have accepted the title. Accept also the title of her mother." And Rose became a member of the L'Ouverture household. This was the sort of thing that bound him to a simple agricultural people. He did not do it for propaganda. It came naturally to him, as did also his respect for old people, to whom he always gave way in the street. He loved music, and always had flowers in his room.

The basis of his power was the support of the black labourers. Its framework was the army. But from the simplest black labourer to the French generals and the best educated and most travelled and experienced of the local whites, all recognised that both in his work and personal idiosyncracies he was the first man in San Domingo, and such a man as would have been in the first rank in any sphere. He demanded, and they gave, unquestioned obedience. He had his advisers, but his proclamations, laws and addresses have his own personal quality and all accounts of him and tradition agree that he left nothing to anybody, working at everything himself, consulting friends and well-wishers, but evolving his schemes in his own secretive manner and then checking every small detail himself.

After a time he never questioned the future. Of unbounded energy and will, he had the fatalism of men who know that their cause is equipped to meet whatever dan-

gers impend. For himself he expected the usual end of revolutionaries. An impudent Spaniard of Spanish San Domingo once pointedly referred to the fate of Columbus in an answer to a question. Toussaint did not deny the parallel.

"I know very well that Columbus suffered ingratitude from Spain, and that such is the destiny of men who serve their country well; they have powerful enemies. As for me, it is the fate which is reserved for me, and I know I shall perish a victim of calumny." In this Roman stoicism he was, despite his Catholicism, a typical representative of the French Revolution.

With the exception always of Bonaparte, no single figure in the whole period of the French Revolution travelled so fast and so far.

But Toussaint was no phenomenon, no Negro freak. The same forces which moulded his genius had helped to create his black and Mulatto generals and officials. Agé, his Chief of Staff, was a white man, but all the senior generals were black or Mulatto, chiefly black. There were two Generals of Division, one Dessalines, the other Clairveaux, a Mulatto. Dessalines was the most famous of the black generals. By some he was thought to excel Toussaint in military genius; yet it was late in life before he learned to sign his name. He governed the Department of the West with a rod of iron, and though having no constructive capacity for government he had a shrewdness, cunning and ruthless determination which were to be of inestimable service to his people before long. He had no sympathy with Toussaint's policy of reconciliation with the whites, but dazzled by Toussaint's gifts he worshipped his chief and obeyed him implicitly. Late in 1801 he married one of the most notable women in San Domingo, a Negro of remarkable beauty and intelligence, the former mistress of a planter who had given her a good education. She was very sympathetic toward the whites, and she and Toussaint kept Dessalines in check.

Of the other seven Generals of Brigade, Vernet was a Mulatto, the last to be appointed. All the others were blacks. Toussaint's favourite was his nephew, Charles Belair, and it was believed that he destined Belair to be his successor. In 1801 he was only 23, and had been aide-de-camp to Toussaint when he was only 18. He had fought with distinction against the British and in the civil war against the South. Handsome, with distinguished manners, he loved military parade and display. He did not like the whites, and Sanite, his wife, hated them and encouraged him to treat them harshly.

Moïse was a different type, a "bonny lad," a dashing soldier, fond of women, the most popular soldier in the army, beloved by the blacks of the North for his ardent championship of them against the whites. He stood high in Toussaint's favour until he refused to carry out Toussaint's severe labour legislation in the North. Cultivation in his district suffered, and Toussaint sent observers to watch his administration and listen to the criticisms Moïse indiscreetly made of Toussaint's policy toward the whites. At first it was thought he would be the successor, and the whites decided that if Moïse ever ruled they would leave.

In one way the most remarkable of the black generals was Maurepas. He was the only one who had not been a slave, and came from an old free family. He read widely, was a man of great culture, and knew the military art to the last point. He governed his district with justice and fairness to all.

Christophe, ex-waiter, could neither read nor write, but he also astonished the French by his knowledge of the world and the ease and authority with which he ruled. He was an English Negro, but unlike Toussaint he learned to speak French with remarkable fluency. He loved luxury, was friendly with the whites, and governed well.

Laplume (the same who had arrested Dieudonné) was an old incompetent, a poor soldier, but easy-going and beloved by all in the South, blacks and whites alike.

They lived in houses costing millions, which would have been beautiful in Paris. When Maurepas entertained

General Ramel, the Frenchman could not believe his eyes at his manners, conversation and patent ability.[13] French generals, officials and colonists who wrote reports and memoirs about these generals and other officials when at the height of their power, all noted the ease and quickness with which they had learned to command. Pamphile de Lacroix said of these old slaves that they had learned more quickly than French workers or peasants in a similar position could have done.[14] This was probably true, and it was because the black leaders were not so permeated by the ideas of the ruling class as a French worker or peasant would have been. Mass support had elevated them and maintained them in supreme power, and the responsibility gave them confidence. In one report drawn up for Hédouville's private use, the author noted the colour of each officer and official in a long list, and good, bad and indifferent soldiers and administrators are divided equally among the three colours.[15] But many of the blacks, illiterate, had to have white secretaries. Toussaint was sending black and Mulatto children to France at the public expense to be educated, so that they might return and govern. All he wanted was time.

But San Domingo was not destined to have peace. The white slave-owners were a cause of discord at home, while the maritime bourgeois in France remembered always the fabulous profits of the slave trade. The whites, having no other choice, accepted Toussaint's régime. With

[13] Reminiscences of General Ramel. See introduction to *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, a play by Lamartine, Paris, 1850, p. xxiv.

[14] After 400 years of carrying civilisation to the Native the British and Dutch in South Africa cannot find one Native to represent the Africans in the Cape Parliament. In 1936 the South African whites deprived the Native of the vote which he had had in Cape Province for generations.

[15] Notes of a colonist for the use of Hédouville. Reprinted in Michel, *La Mission du Général Hédouville* . . . , pp. 85-103.

For notes and memoranda on the black generals by white men, French and colonials, who knew them well, *see also* Gaston Nogerée, Report to the French Government, 1801. *Les Archives Nationales*, F. 7, 6266; Lamartine, *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, pp. xvi-xxviii; Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir* . . . , Vol. II, pp. 308-345; Idlinger, *Les Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Fonds divers, Section Amérique*, No. 14.

the sensitiveness of property-owners they saw that as long as Toussaint was there their lives were safe, and they talked and behaved as if they were devoted to him. When he came back to Le Cap after the campaign in the South they took the leading part in the celebrations. He was welcomed by a great triumphal arch, verses composed in his honour were read by a white woman of great beauty who placed on his head a crown of laurel. Old Toussaint, always gallant, embraced the charming diseuse. There were also other embracings of a less public nature. The creole ladies of San Domingo, members of some of the most distinguished families of the old régime, were carried away by his singular personality and his power. In less than a dozen years they had managed to overcome the cast-iron prejudices in which they had been reared. They fought among each other for his notice and sent him passionate letters, locks of hair, and keepsakes of all kinds. Toussaint was not averse, although with discretion. Open immorality in high places, he told his generals, had an evil effect on public morals.[16] It was exactly the sort of thing Toussaint would say and think.

And yet, despite all this intimacy between whites and the new black ruling class, Toussaint knew that, unlike Sonthonax, Laveaux, Roume, and Vincent, all the revolutionaries of the first period, these old slave-owners and their women did not like the labourers, whatever the pre-

[16] When the French captured Port-au-Prince in 1802, Lacroix, who was left in command, found among Toussaint's effects, "locks of hair of all colours, rings, golden hearts crossed by arrows, latchkeys . . . and an infinity of love-letters . . ." (*Mémoires pour Servir* . . . , Vol. II, p. 105). This does not suit Mr. Lothrop Stoddard's racial theories. On p. 388 of his book, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, he writes as follows about the relations of white women with the black generals: "The negro generals had greatly abused their power in this respect. For Toussaint's gross misconduct in this regard, see Lacroix II, 104-105." How many will look up Lacroix? Naturally they believe after reading Stoddard that Toussaint and his generals raped white women or forced them to sleep with them through fear. Thiers, in his famous *History of the Consulate and the Empire*, actually says so. It is a typical example of the cloud of lies which obscure the true history of imperialism in colonial countries.

tended devotion of the men and the liking the women might have for him as an individual. It was in 1798 that he wrote so courteously to the white women who asked for a return of their property, and all through that year he and Hédouville quarrelled about the policy to be adopted toward the white émigrés. Yet at that very period when the whites of Port-au-Prince were bowing and scraping before him, an incident took place which lets us see what Toussaint thought of the whites as whites.

A white colonist wanted a post as storekeeper and asked Toussaint for it. Toussaint said no. The colonist's wife tried many times to approach Toussaint, but was unsuccessful. Some time after she gave birth to a son and asked Toussaint to be the godfather. Toussaint, usually so suave and conciliatory, for some reason or other, decided to let this woman know his mind.

"Why, Madame, do you wish me to be godfather of your son—your approach to me has no other aim than to get me to give a post to your husband, for the feelings of your heart are contrary to the request that you make of me."

"How can you think so, General? No, my husband loves you, all the whites are attached to you."

"Madame, I know the whites. If I had their skin—yes, but I am black and I know their aversion to us. Have you reflected well on the request which you make of me? If I accept, how do you know that when he reaches the age of reason, your son may not reproach you for giving him a Negro as godfather?"

"But, General . . ."

"Madame," Toussaint interrupted her, pointing to the sky, "He who governs all is alone immortal. I am a general, it is true, but I am black. After my death, who knows if my brothers will not be driven back into slavery and will yet perish under the whip of the whites. The work of men is not durable. The French Revolution has enlightened Europeans, we are loved and wept over by them, but the white colonists are enemies of the blacks. . . . You wish your husband to get a post Well, I give him the employment

that he demands. Let him be honest and let him remember that I cannot see everything, but that nothing escapes God. I cannot accept your offer to be godfather to your son. You may have to bear the reproaches of the colonists and perhaps one day that of your son." [17]

These were his views; he never changed them. Yet he set his face sternly against racial discrimination. He guarded his power and the rights of the labourers by an army overwhelmingly black. But within that wall he encouraged all to come back, Mulattoes and whites. The policy was both wise and workable, and if his relations with France had been regularised he would have done all he hoped to do. But San Domingo did not know where it stood in relation to France. There were still fears for liberty, and the black labourers did not approve of Toussaint's policy. They felt that he showed too much favour to their old enemies.[18]

These anti-white feelings of the blacks were no infringement of liberty and equality, but were in reality the soundest revolutionary policy. It was fear of the counter-revolution. They had loved Sonthonax, called down blessings on his head, and made their children pray for him at night. Fifty years afterwards their old eyes would glow as they told travellers of this wonderful white man who had given them liberty and equality, not only in words but in deeds. But men like Sonthonax, Vincent, Laveaux, and Roume were few and with the decline of the revolution in France had come a man like Hédouville. The black labourers had their eyes fixed on the local whites and resented Toussaint's policy. It was not the whites at home whom Toussaint feared. It was the counter-revolution in France. But the blacks could see in the eyes of their former owners the regret for the old days and the hatred. Shortly after Toussaint issued one of his stern proclamations confining the blacks to the plantations, some of these whites issued a

[17] Malenfant, *Des Colonies et porticulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, 1819.
[18] Proclamation of Christophe I, 1814, Printed in Beard, *Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, p. 326.

proclamation of their own to the labourers. "You say that you are free. Yet you are going to be forced to come back to my house and there I shall treat you as before and shall show you you are not free." [19] This was the spirit which so constantly provoked massacres of the whites. Toussaint fined the culprits heavily, ordered that all who could not pay should be imprisoned, even women, and reduced such officers as were concerned to the ranks. But he still continued to favour the whites. Every white woman was entitled to come to all "circles." Only the wives of the highest black officials could come. A white woman was called madame, the black woman was citizen. Losing sight of his mass support, taking it for granted, he sought only to conciliate the whites at home and abroad.

What would Bonaparte do? Toussaint, pursuing his policy, made gestures of friendship to all abroad. Madame de Beauharnais, Josephine's mother, had a plantation at Léogane. After the evacuation by the British, Josephine wrote to Toussaint about the plantation, which was in ruins. A correspondence began. Toussaint repaired and restored the plantation at the expense of the colony, and sent the revenues to Madame Bonaparte. Josephine befriended his two boys, and they went often to luncheon and dinner at her house. But Toussaint wanted his sons back and Bonaparte would not send them. Toussaint prepared for the inevitable war. That was one of the reasons which drove him to demand that his generals be mercilessly strict with the labourers.

He bought 30,000 guns from America. He armed the labourers. At reviews he would snatch a gun, wave it, and shout, "Here is your liberty!" He was not afraid to arm the masses. He trusted them for he had no interests apart from theirs. He hid stocks of ammunition and supplies in secret places in the interior. He called up the able-bodied for military training, and drilled the regular army. Bold in innovation, he introduced a system of commands by whistles. In every conceivable way (except one) he prepared. The blacks would have to fight. This war would devastate San

[19] Ardouin. *Études sur l'histoire . . .*, Vol. IV, p. 256.

Domingo as no war had ever devastated it before, ruin his work and let loose barbarism and savagery again, this time on an unprecedented scale. But any large expedition could have no other aim than the restoration of slavery. In that cruel dilemma he worked feverishly, hoping against hope, writing to Bonaparte, begging for skilled workmen, teachers, administrators, to help him govern the colony.

Bonaparte would not answer, and Toussaint could guess why. If Bonaparte wrote a personal letter he would have either to accept or condemn. If he accepted, then Toussaint's position would receive the final sanction. If he condemned, then Toussaint would openly declare independence and perhaps clinch a bargain with the British if one were not made already.

Toussaint, however, immediately after the victory in the South, had decided to regularise his own position and put an end to internal troubles for the future by giving San Domingo a Constitution. For this purpose he summoned an assembly of six men, one from each province, consisting of rich whites and Mulattoes: there was not one black. As always now, he was thinking of the effect in France, and not of the effect on his own masses, feeling too sure of them. The members of his assembly were merely figureheads. The Constitution is Toussaint L'Ouverture from the first line to the last, and in it he enshrined his principles of government.[20] Slavery was forever abolished. Every man, whatever his colour, was admissible to all employments, and there was to exist no other distinction than that of virtues and talents, and no other superiority than that which the law gives in the exercise of a public function. He incorporated in the Constitution an article which preserved their rights to all proprietors absent from the colony "for whatever reason" except if they were on the list of émigrés proscribed in France. For the rest, Toussaint concentrated all power in his own hands.

[20] The Constitution is printed in full in Nemours, *Histoire Militaire . . .*, Vol. I, pp. 95-112.

Every municipal administration was composed of a mayor and four administrators. They were nominated by the Governor for two years from a list of 16 submitted to him.

The Church was strictly subordinate to the State. The Governor apportioned to each minister of religion the extent of his administration, and the clergy were not allowed under any pretext whatever to form an association in the colony. Laws were to be preceded by this formula: "The Central Assembly of San Domingo, on the proposal of the Governor . . ." They were to be promulgated with the formula: "The Governor commands . . ." Every department of administration, finance, police, army, was confided to him, and he corresponded directly with France on everything relating to the colony. He had the censorship of all printed matter.

The Central Assembly could accept or reject laws, but the Assembly was in the hands of the Governor, being elected by the principal administrators, whom he nominated. The Constitution appointed Toussaint Governor for life, with power to name his successor.

Constitutions are what they turn out to be. France in 1802 could have no quarrel with Toussaint over this Constitution on the score of despotism. What would strike any Frenchman, however, was that the Constitution, though swearing allegiance to France, left no room for any French official. Toussaint wanted them to come out and help govern, but under the local government. It was virtual independence, with France as elder brother, guide and mentor. He had no precedents to guide him, but he knew what he wanted. When remonstrated with as to where was the place of France in such a government, he replied, "The French Government will send Commissioners to speak with me." Absolute local independence on the one hand, but on the other French capital and French administrators, helping to develop and educate the country, and a high official from France as a link between both Governments. The local power was too well safeguarded for us to call the scheme a protectorate in the political content of that dishonest word. All the evidence shows that Toussaint, working alone, had reached forward to that form of political allegiance which we know to-day as Dominion Status.

Firm as was his grasp of reality, old Toussaint looked beyond San Domingo with a boldness of imagination surpassed by no contemporary. In the Constitution he authorised the slave-trade because the island needed people to cultivate it. When the Africans landed, however, they would be free men. But while loaded with the cares of government, he cherished a project of sailing to Africa with arms, ammunition and a thousand of his best soldiers, and there conquering vast tracts of country, putting an end to the slave-trade, and making millions of blacks "free and French," as his Constitution had made the blacks of San Domingo. It was no dream. He had sent millions of francs to America to wait for the day when he would be ready.[21] He was already 55. What spirit was it that moved him? Ideas do not fall from heaven. The great revolution had propelled him out of his humble joys and obscure destiny, and the trumpets of its heroic period rang ever in his ears. In him, born a slave and the leader of slaves, the concrete realisation of liberty, equality and fraternity was the womb of ideas and the springs of power, which overflowed their narrow environment and embraced the whole of the world. But for the revolution, this extraordinary man and his band of gifted associates would have lived their lives as slaves, serving the commonplace creatures who owned them, standing barefooted and in rags to watch inflated little governors and mediocre officials from Europe pass by, as many a talented African stands in Africa to-day.[22]

Too much importance has been attached to the Constitution. It was merely a formal embodiment of the position to which Toussaint had been moving steadily since his expulsion of Hédouville. His method of publishing it was his usual one of mystery. He summoned his white and Mu-

[21] Saint-Anthoine, *Vie de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, p. 325.
[22] Written in 1938.

latto Assembly to prepare the document. He then left them to it, and set off to capture Spanish San Domingo. On his return the Constitution was ready. Nobody knew its contents except himself and his Assembly. He suddenly told Vincent that he would allow him to leave for France if he would take the Constitution to Bonaparte. Vincent agreed, because there seemed no chance of getting away otherwise. Toussaint told him to go to Gonaïves and bid Madame L'Ouverture good-bye, Vincent being very friendly with the family. As soon as Vincent left, Toussaint published the Constitution, in July, 1801. There was a religious ceremony, a great banquet, and illuminations and public rejoicings. Toussaint's Constitution was a despotism, and the Mulattoes and the free blacks did not like it. But what cared those thousands who sang and danced?

When Vincent returned he went to Toussaint and reproached him for publishing so far-reaching a document without the sanction of the French Government and when he saw the details he was horrified. He consulted Pascal, and both agreed that Toussaint ought to withdraw it. They might as well have asked the island of San Domingo to withdraw itself from the Caribbean Sea and attach itself to France.

Toussaint listened very patiently. "There is no room in it for any official from France," said Vincent. "France will send Commissioners to speak with me," said Toussaint.[23] "What is really required is that France send you chargés d'affaires and ambassadors, as the Americans and the Spaniards will certainly do. And even the British."

This was a crude innuendo. Even Vincent (at times) suspected Toussaint. How difficult it was for them to understand that Toussaint was using the British and playing the diplomatic game with them, but detested these bulwarks of European reaction just as much as any other true son of the revolution.

"I know that the English Government is the most dangerous for me and the most perfidious for France. It did all it could to get the sole right of trade with the island, but I

23 *Précis de mon voyage. . . .*

gave it only what I could not help giving. I needed it." Why doesn't Bonaparte write to me? he asked Vincent: he writes to the King of England.

Pascal, until this time another devoted follower, also disapproved of the Constitution and Toussaint dropped him. Vincent complained to Moïse and Christophe: they also condemned it. Christophe said Toussaint had gone too far, and Moïse called Toussaint an old fool. "He thinks he is King of San Domingo!"

The printing of the Constitution particularly startled Vincent. To have had it printed meant (in those days) that an irrevocable decision had been taken. Toussaint agreed. It would have cost him nothing to send a written copy. But he was going his way. There was one last painful interview between the two men. Vincent did all he could to make Toussaint reconsider his action. All the blacks were free. He could not withdraw the right of governing the island from France.

"Give me a list of your comrades in arms, who have contributed most to driving out the English and restoring cultivation. The Government, I am certain, will prove to them its gratitude."

Toussaint, usually calm, was violently agitated. He replied that he would see with infinite pleasure some of his comrades rewarded. But when Vincent asked him what he wanted for himself, he replied sharply that he wanted nothing; that he knew his destruction was the ultimate aim, that his children would never enjoy the little that he had amassed, but that he was not yet the victim of his enemies. To this personal outburst he added some reflections which so hurt the conscience of the sensitive Vincent that he would not even write them down. But we can guess what they were. Bitterness at the insults and neglect which he felt were caused by his colour, the impossible position in which he and his people were placed: submission, which would mean the restoration of slavery; or defiance, which would mean war and the complete devastation of the island; his isolation, white and black friends against him; all these must have wrung the words out of him who ordi-

narily never spoke but when he thought it necessary, and then said only what he wanted to say. He turned abruptly from Vincent, and evading about a hundred persons who were waiting for him, he sprang on his horse and rode away so quickly that even his guard was taken by surprise.

For these fews weeks Vincent seems to have doubted Toussaint. Vincent was a white man. He could never dread slavery as a black man could, never have that unsleeping fear of white treachery so strong in that generation of San Domingo Negroes. Honest himself, Vincent took it for granted that the rulers of France would act with common decency toward those black men whose services to France he had witnessed. To him it seemed that Toussaint was merely pursuing a personal ambition. Before he left he sounded Christophe. Would he leave Le Cap, where he commanded, and go to St Iago to welcome the French expedition which would certainly come? It would save a great deal of trouble. Christophe, evasive, said he would do his best for peace. With this equivocal answer Vincent had to be satisfied. He did not know what to do. He went home via America and from Philadelphia he wrote to Toussaint, warning him against projects of independence.

Vincent did all that a man could do. Even in trying to detach Christophe from Toussaint he was acting, as he thought, in the best interests of France and of San Domingo. To him the restoration of slavery was unthinkable. He expected it as little as millions of British people expected the intrigues of Baldwin, Hoare and Eden with Laval and Mussolini after the denial of arms to Abyssinia and the grandiose promises of fidelity to the League of Nations and the idea of collective security. Many an honest subordinate has in this way been the unwilling instrument of the inevitable treachery up above; the trouble is that when faced with the brutal reality he goes in the end with his own side, and by the very confidence which his integrity created does infinitely more harm than the open enemy.

XII

The Bourgeoisie Prepares to Restore Slavery

TOUSSAINT was perfectly right in his suspicions. What is the régime under which the colonies have most prospered, asked Bonaparte, and on being told the *ancien régime* he decided to restore it, slavery and Mulatto discrimination.

Bonaparte hated black people. The revolution had appointed that brave and brilliant Mulatto, General Dumas,[1] Commander-in-Chief of one of its armies, but Bonaparte

[1] Father of Alexandre père and grandfather of Alexandre fils. France has erected a monument to these three in the Place Malesherbes, Paris.

detested him for his colour, and persecuted him. Yet Bonaparte was no colonist, and his anti-Negro bias was far from influencing his major policies. He wanted profits for his supporters, and the clamorous colonists found in him a ready ear. The bourgeoisie of the maritime towns wanted the fabulous profits of the old days. The passionate desire to free all humanity which had called for Negro freedom in the great days of the revolution now huddled in the slums of Paris and Marseilles, exhausted by its great efforts and terrorised by Bonaparte's bayonets and Fouché's police.

But the abolition of slavery was one of the proudest memories of the revolution; and, much more important, the San Domingo blacks had an army and leaders trained to fight in the European manner. These were no savage tribesmen with spears, against whom European soldiers armed with rifles could win undying glory.

Occupied with his European campaigns, Bonaparte never lost sight of San Domingo, as he never lost sight of anything. His officers presented plan after plan, but the British fleet and the unknown strength of the blacks prevented action. Yet early in March 1801, a shift in his policy nearly compelled him to leave Toussaint in complete charge of San Domingo.

French and British bourgeoisie were in the middle of that struggle for world supremacy which lasted over twenty years and devastated Europe. Bonaparte aimed at India, and having missed his first spring by way of Egypt, he won over the Tsar Paul, and these two arranged to march overland and steal from the British what these had stolen from the Indians. Bonaparte could not fight in two hemispheres at once, and on March 4th he wrote a letter to Toussaint, a letter beaming with goodwill.[2] He had been busy, but now that peace was near he had had time to read Toussaint's letters. He would appoint him Captain-General of the island. He asked Toussaint to develop agriculture and build up the armed forces. "The time I hope will not be far when a division from San Domingo will be able to contrib-

[2] Correspondence of Napoleon.

ute in your part of the world to the glory and the possessions of the Republic."

But the British bourgeoisie, driven out of America, now fully realised the importance of India. Pitt, in collusion with Paul's son Alexander, organised the murder of the pro-French Paul.[3] Seven days after the letter to Toussaint was written, Paul was strangled, and on the following day the British fleet sailed into the Baltic. When Bonaparte heard he knew at once that Pitt had beaten him, and the Indian raid was off. The letter and instructions to Toussaint were never sent, and Bonaparte prepared to destroy Toussaint. It is Toussaint's supreme merit that while he saw European civilisation as a valuable and necessary thing, and strove to lay its foundations among his people, he never had the illusion that it conferred any moral superiority. He knew French, British, and Spanish imperialists for the insatiable gangsters that they were, that there is no oath too sacred for them to break, no crime, deception, treachery, cruelty, destruction of human life and property which they would not commit against those who could not defend themselves.

When Vincent arrived in Paris preparations were well under way, but the Constitution gave Bonaparte a convenient excuse. Poor Vincent had attempted to persuade Toussaint to give way to Bonaparte by condemning the Constitution as treason. Now he tried to persuade Bonaparte to give way to Toussaint by denying that the Constitution was treason. Bonaparte accused Toussaint of being sold to the British. Stoutly Vincent defended him. Bonaparte swore at Vincent, cursed the "gilded Africans," said that he would not leave an epaulette on the shoulders of a single nigger in the colony. Vincent put it to him that Britain might assist Toussaint. Bonaparte boasted that Britain had shown some inclination to oppose the expedition, but when he threatened to clothe Toussaint with unlimited powers and acknowledge his independence, the

[3] Eugene Tarlé, *Bonaparte*, London, 1937, pp. 116-117.

British had kept silence. (Bonaparte thought that they dreaded the effect of an independent San Domingo on their own slave colony of Jamaica. But Pitt, Dundas and Maitland were laughing in their sleeves and rubbing their hands in anticipation.) Vincent tried to point out the dangers of the expedition. Bonaparte called Toussaint a "revolted slave," called Vincent a coward and drove him from his presence. Vincent was appalled at Bonaparte's violence. If this was the spirit in which the French were going to San Domingo, they were heading for a fall. As anxious now for France as for San Domingo, he took the bold step of addressing a memoir to the Minister, in which he tried to paint the strength of the colony and the extraordinary genius of the man who ruled there.

"At the head of so many resources is a man the most active and tireless of whom one can possibly have any idea; it is the strictest truth to say that he is everywhere and, above all, in that spot where a sound judgment and danger make it essential for him to be; his great sobriety, the faculty accorded to him alone of never taking a rest, the advantage he enjoys of being able to start at once with the work in his office after wearisome journeys, of replying to a hundred letters a day and tiring out his secretaries; more than that, the art of tantalising and confusing everybody even to deceit: all this makes of him a man so superior to all around him that respect and submission reach the limits of fanaticism in a vast number of heads. He has imposed on his brothers in San Domingo a power without bounds. He is the absolute master of the island and nothing can counteract his wishes, whatever they may be, although some distinguished men, but very few blacks among them, know what are his plans and view them with great fear."

Vincent described Toussaint as superior to everyone in San Domingo, but if one reads that extract again it becomes clear that this brave, honest, intelligent, and experienced officer was obviously describing the most extraordinary human being he had ever met in his life, with powers beyond what he thought possible. In the writings of contemporaries describing the great figures of the French

Revolution and Napoleonic era, one finds this note of astonishment, this "I can't believe my own eyes" attitude, in writings about only three men, Bonaparte, Nelson the sailor and Toussaint.

Bonaparte was so angry that he banished Vincent to the island of Elba.

Personally loved and respected by all their contemporaries, Vincent and Beauvais failed, as will fail all who do not understand that in a revolution each must choose his side and stick to it.

But though Bonaparte might shout "nigger" in the best slave-owning manner, more than anyone in France he divined the difficulties. At first he had thought it easy. The colonists who had fled in the early days of the revolution thought of the slaves as a motley crowd of black brigands who would fly at the first sight of white men. How could such cowed and trembling niggers ever be anything else? They had defeated the British? Nonsense. That was fever. General Michel of the last Commission, who had not seen Toussaint's armies in action, called his officers a collection of conceited incompetents.

But Roume, Pascal, and Vincent, all of whom liked the blacks and therefore knew what they were capable of, were against any expedition. Pascal said that the more enlightened of the blacks, i.e. those who had been free before the revolution, did not love Toussaint, but forty-nine-fiftieths of the population followed him blindly, regarding him as being inspired by God. Roume's attitude was most astonishing. Roume was not even a Frenchman, but a creole from Tobago. Yet, despite his rough treatment at the hands of Toussaint, he still retained his belief in Toussaint's devotion to France. He wrote that Toussaint had acted irregularly because of his fear of slavery. Let Bonaparte clothe him with full civil and military power and reassure him about the future. At the end of the war he would hand back the colony.[4]

[4] To the Minister. *Les Archives Nationales*. AF. IV, 1187.

Malenfant, an old colonist who was now an official in San Domingo, was offered a post in the expedition. He drafted a memorandum full of praise for Toussaint and the labourers, and warned Bonaparte against the catastrophe he was preparing. When he met Leclerc, the Captain-General, a few days before the fleet sailed, Leclerc accused him of cowardice. "All the niggers, when they see an army, will lay down their arms. They will be only too happy that we pardon them."

"You are misinformed, General . . ."

"But there is a colonist who has offered to arrest Toussaint in the interior of the country with 60 grenadiers."

"He is bolder than I, for I would not attempt it with 60,000."

"He is very rich, Toussaint. He has more than 40 millions."

Patiently Malenfant pointed out to him that it was impossible for Toussaint to have this sum. Malenfant shared Roume's opinion of Toussaint. He said afterwards that if Bonaparte had sent Laveaux to San Domingo with 3,000 men all would have been well. Toussaint was an eminently reasonable man, and he and Laveaux would have worked out a *modus vivendi* whereby French capital would have had full opportunity in the island. It was not to be. Leclerc pooh-poohed Malenfant's remonstrances and dismissed him.

Bonaparte never had any such foolish ideas. Vincent had told him of the strength of Toussaint's army, with its soldiers and officers tried and experienced by ten years of constant fighting, and the great soldier added more and more men to the force. So as to avoid too much talk, he distributed his preparations in every harbour in France, Holland and Belgium. The preliminaries of peace were signed on October 1st, 1801. Eight days after Bonaparte gave the word, and even the delay of adverse winds held up the expedition only until December 14th.

It was the largest expedition that had ever sailed from France, consisting of 20,000 veteran troops, under some of Bonaparte's ablest officers. The Chief of Staff was Dugua, whom Bonaparte had left in charge of Egypt when he set

out on the march to Palestine. Boudet had commanded the advance-guard of Dessaix, whose last minute attack had saved Bonaparte from a disastrous defeat at Marengo. Boyer had commanded the mobile guards which patrolled Upper Egypt; Humbert had commanded the expedition against Ireland. There were men who had experience of guerrilla warfare in La Vendée. General Pamphile de Lacroix, who sailed with the expedition and wrote a valuable history of the campaign and the San Domingo revolution, has left us his opinion. "The army of Leclerc was composed of an infinite number of soldiers with great talent, good strategists, great tacticians, officers of engineers and artillery, well educated and very resourceful."[5] At the last moment Bonaparte changed the command, putting his brother-in-law, Leclerc, at the head, a sign of the importance he attached to the venture. Pauline, Leclerc's wife, and their son went with the expedition. She carried musicians, artists, and all the paraphernalia of a court. Slavery would be re-established, civilisation restarted, and a good time would be had by all.

And in these last crucial months, Toussaint, fully aware of Bonaparte's preparations, was busy sawing off the branch on which he sat.

In the North, around Plaisance, Limbé, Dondon, the vanguard of the revolution was not satisfied with the new régime. Toussaint's discipline was hard, but it was infinitely better than the old slavery. What these old revolutionary blacks objected to was working for their white masters. Moïse was the Commandant of the North Province, and Moïse sympathised with the blacks. Work, yes, but not for whites. "Whatever my old uncle may do, I cannot bring myself to be the executioner of my colour. It is always in the interests of the metropolis that he scolds me; but these interests are those of the whites, and I shall only love them when they have given me back the eye that they made me lose in battle."

[5] *Mémoires pour Servir . . . .* Vol. II, p. 319.

Gone were the days when Toussaint would leave the front and ride through the night to enquire into the grievances of the labourers, and, though protecting the whites, make the labourers see that he was their leader.

Revolutionaries through and through, those bold men, own brothers of the Cordeliers in Paris and the Vyborg workers in Petrograd, organised another insurrection. Their aim was to massacre the whites, overthrow Toussaint's government and, some hoped, put Moïse in his place. Every observer, and Toussaint himself, thought that the labourers were following him because of his past services and his unquestioned superiority. This insurrection proved that they were following him because he represented that complete emancipation from their former degradation which was their chief goal. As soon as they saw that he was no longer going to this end, they were ready to throw him over.[6]

This was no mere riot of a few discontented or lazy blacks. It was widespread over the North. The revolution-

[6] Georges Lefebvre: *La Convention*, Volume I., p. 45, mimeographed lectures delivered at the Sorbonne (see Bibliography, p. 379). "The Jacobins, furthermore, were authoritarian in outlook. Consciously or not, they wished to act with the people and for them, but they claimed the right of leadership, and when they arrived at the head of affairs they ceased to consult the people, did away with elections, proscribed the Hébertistes and the Enragés. They can be described as enlightened despots. The sansculottes on the contrary were extreme democrats: they wanted the direct government of the people by the people; if they demanded a dictatorship against the aristocrats they wished to exercise it themselves and to make their leaders do what they wanted."

The sansculottes, of Paris in particular, saw very clearly what was required at each stage of the revolution at least until it reached its highest peak. Their difficulty was that they had neither the education, experience nor the resources to organise a modern state if only temporarily. *This was pretty much the position of the revolutionaries of Plaisance, Limbé and Dondon in relation to Toussaint. Events were soon to show how right they were and that in not listening to them Toussaint made the greatest mistake of his career.*

For a balanced account of the way in which the sansculottes themselves worked out and forced upon an unwilling Robespierre the great policies which saved the revolution, see Lefebvre (mimeographed lectures), *Le Gouvernement Revolutionnaire* (2 Juin 1793-9 Thermidor II), Folio II.

aries chose a time when Toussaint was away at Petite-Rivière attending the wedding of Dessalines. The movement should have begun in Le Cap on September 21st, but Christophe heard of it just in time to check the first outbursts in various quarters of the town. On the 22nd and 23rd the revolt burst in the revolutionary districts of Marmelade, Plaisance, Limbé, Port Margot, and Dondon, home of the famous regiment of the sansculottes. On the morning of the 23rd it broke out again in Le Cap, while armed bands, killing all the whites whom they met on the way, appeared in the suburbs to make contact with those in the town. While Christophe defeated these, Toussaint and Dessalines marched against the rising in Marmelade and Dondon, and it fell to pieces before him and his terrible lieutenant. Moïse, avoiding a meeting with Toussaint, attacked and defeated another band. But blacks in certain districts had revolted to the cry of "Long Live Moïse!" Toussaint therefore had him arrested, and would not allow the military tribunal even to hear him. The documents, he said, were enough. "I flatter myself that the Commissioners will not delay a judgment so necessary to the tranquillity of the colony." He was afraid that Moïse might supplant him.[7]

Upon this hint the Commission gave judgment, and Moïse was shot. He died as he had lived. He stood before the place of execution in the presence of the troops of the garrison, and in a firm voice gave the word to the firing squad: "Fire, my friends, fire."

What exactly did Moïse stand for? We shall never know. Forty years after his death Madiou, the Haitian historian, gave an outline of Moïse's programme, whose authenticity, however, has been questioned. Toussaint refused to break up the large estates. Moïse wanted small grants of land for junior officers and even the rank-and-file. Toussaint favoured the whites against the Mulattoes. Moïse sought to build an alliance between the blacks and the Mu-

[7] Toussaint himself admitted this not very long afterwards. See Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, 1899, p. 228.

lattoes against the French. It is certain that he had a strong sympathy for the labourers and hated the old slave-owners. But he was not anti-white. He bitterly regretted the indignities to which he had been forced to submit Roume and we know how highly he esteemed Sonthonax. We have very little to go on but he seems to have been a singularly attractive and possibly profound person. The old slave-owners hated him and they pressed Toussaint to get rid of him. Christophe too was jealous of Moïse and Christophe loved white society. Guilty or not guilty of treason, Moïse had too many enemies to escape the implications of the "Long Live Moïse" shouted by the revolutionaries.

To the blacks of the North, already angry at Toussaint's policy, the execution of Moïse was the final disillusionment. They could not understand it. As was (and is) inevitable, they thought in terms of colour. After Toussaint himself, Moïse, his nephew, symbolised the revolution. He it was who had led the labourers against Hédouville. He also had led the insurrection which extorted the authority from Roume to take over Spanish San Domingo, an insurrection which to the labourers had been for the purpose of stopping the Spanish traffic in slaves. Moïse had arrested Roume, and later Vincent. And now Toussaint had shot him, for taking the part of the blacks against the whites.

Toussaint recognised his error. If the break with the French and Vincent had shaken him from his usual calm in their last interview, it was nothing to the remorse which moved him after the execution of Moïse. None who knew him had ever seen him so agitated. He tried to explain it away in a long proclamation: Moïse was the soul of the insurrection; Moïse was a young man of loose habits. It was useless. Moïse had stood too high in his councils for too long.

But so set was Toussaint that he could only think of further repression. Why should the blacks support Moïse

against him? That question he did not stop to ask or, if he did, failed to appreciate the answer. In the districts of the insurrection he shot without mercy. He lined up the labourers and spoke to them in turn; and on the basis of a stumbling answer or uncertainty decided who should be shot. Cowed by his power they submitted.

He published a series of laws surpassing in severity anything he had yet decreed. He introduced a rigid passport system for all classes of the population. He confined the labourers to their plantations more strictly than ever, and he made the managers and foremen responsible for this law under pain of imprisonment. Anyone fomenting disorder could be condemned to six months' hard labour with a weight attached to his foot by a chain. He prohibited the soldiers from visiting a plantation except to see their fathers or mothers, and then only for a limited period: he was now afraid of the contact between the revolutionary army and the people, an infallible sign of revolutionary degeneration.

And while he broke the morale of the black masses, he laboured to reassure the whites. Some of them rejoiced openly at the rumours of the expedition, and Toussaint, instead of treating them as he had treated the labourers, merely deported them. There were others, we need not doubt, who, holding the same views, thought it wiser to keep their mouths shut. A substantial number, however, accepted the new order, and viewed with dismay the violence and destruction which they knew were inevitable if a French expedition came. Some began to leave, and asked for passports. One of the most notable creoles in San Domingo, a man of good education and judgment, who fully accepted the new San Domingo,[8] came to Toussaint and asked him for a passport. Here was what Toussaint dreaded: the break-up of the unstable régime before it had had a chance to acquire cohesion. He went quickly to the door to see that he was not likely to be overheard (a char-

[8] We know this from his report to Bonaparte. *Les Archives Nationales*, F. 7, 6266.

acteristic action). Then coming back, he looked de Nogerée full in the face and asked him: "Why do you want to go away, you whom I esteem and love?"

"Because I am white, and notwithstanding the kindly feelings you have for me, I see that you are about to become the irritated chief of the blacks."

With some injustice he accused Toussaint of deporting those whites who had rejoiced at the coming of the expedition. Toussaint justified his action with warmth:

"They have had the imprudence and folly to rejoice at such news, as if the expedition was not destined to destroy me, to destroy the whites, to destroy the colony."

With a mind such as his, essentially creative and orderly, this was the prospect which preoccupied him and warped his judgment.

"In France I am represented as an independent power, and therefore they are arming against me; against me, who refused General Maitland's offer to establish my independence under the protection of England, and who always rejected the proposals which Sonthonax made to me on the subject."

He knew that the expedition was on its way, but still he hoped that somehow the coming catastrophe might be averted.

"Since, however, you wish to set out for France, I consent, but at least let your voyage be useful to the colony. I will send letters to the First Consul by you, and I will entreat him to listen to you. Tell him about me, tell him how prosperous agriculture is, how prosperous is commerce; in a word, tell him what I have done. It is according to all I have done here that I ought and that I wish to be judged. Twenty times I have written to Bonaparte, to ask him to send Civil Commissioners, to tell him to dispatch hither the old colonists, whites instructed in administering public affairs, good machinists, good workmen: he has never replied. Suddenly he avails himself of the peace (of which he has not deigned to inform me and of which I learn only through the English) in order to direct against me a formidable expedition, in the ranks of which I see my

personal enemies and people injurious to the colony, whom I sent away.

"Come to me within twenty-four hours. I want,—oh, how I want you and my letters to arrive in time to make the First Consul change his determination, to make him see that in ruining me he ruins the blacks—ruins not only San Domingo but all the western colonies. If Bonaparte is the first man in France, Toussaint is the first man in the Archipelago of the Antilles."

He had no false modesty as to what he meant to San Domingo.

He reflected for a moment, then said in a firm tone that he had been making arrangements with the English to get 20,000 blacks from Africa, but not for treachery, to make them soldiers of France. "I know the perfidy of the English. I am under no obligation to them for the information they gave me as to the expedition coming to San Domingo. No! Never will I arm for them!"

But reality forced itself on him again.

"I took up arms for the freedom of my colour, which France alone proclaimed, but which she has no right to nullify. Our liberty is no longer in her hands: it is in our own. We will defend it or perish."

This strange duality, so confusing to his people who had to do the fighting, continued to the very end. And yet, in this moment of his greatest uncertainty, so different from his usual clarity of mind and vigour of action, Toussaint showed himself one of those few men for whom power is a means to an end, the development of civilization, the betterment of his fellow-creatures. His very hesitations were a sign of the superior cast of his mind. Dessalines and Moïse would not have hesitated. He issued another proclamation, and devoted most of it to reassuring the white proprietors who "will always find in us ardent protectors, true friends, zealous defenders. . . ."

What did all this mean to the former slaves? When he touched the expedition, the confusion of his mind was evident in every line. "Men of good faith . . . will not be able any longer to believe that France, who abandoned

San Domingo to herself at a time when her enemies disputed possession . . . will now send there an army to destroy the men who have not ceased to serve her will. . . ."

After thus sowing doubt in the minds of the people as to the intentions of the French, he continued: "But if it so happens that this crime of which the French Government is suspected is real, it suffices for me to say that a child who knows the rights that nature has given over it to the author of its days, shows itself obedient and submissive toward its father and mother; and if, in spite of its submission and obedience, the father and mother are unnatural enough to wish to destroy it, there remains no other course than to place its vengeance in the hands of God."

So God was to defend the blacks from slavery. What of the army and the people and himself, their leader?

"Brave soldiers, generals, officers, and rank and file, do not listen to the wicked . . . I shall show you the road you ought to follow . . . I am a soldier, I am afraid of no man and I fear only God. If I must die, it shall be as a soldier of honour with no fear of reproach."

Toussaint could not believe that the French ruling class would be so depraved, so lost to all sense of decency, as to try to restore slavery. His grasp of politics led him to make all preparations, but he could not admit to himself and to his people that it was easier to find decency, gratitude, justice, and humanity in a cage of starving tigers than in the councils of imperialism, whether in the cabinets of Pitt or Bonaparte, of Baldwin, Laval or Blum.

Criticism is not enough. What should Toussaint have done? A hundred and fifty years of history and the scientific study of revolution begun by Marx and Engels, and amplified by Lenin and Trotsky, justify us in pointing to an alternative course.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution faced much the same problem as Toussaint. Russian bourgeois culture was a relatively poor thing, but Lenin admitted frankly that it was superior to that of the proletariat and would have to be used until the proletariat had developed itself. He rigidly excluded the bourgeoisie from political power, but he proposed that they should be given important posts and good salaries, higher than those of Communist Party members. Even some Communists who had suffered and fought under Tsarism were after a time dismissed and replaced by competent bourgeois. We can measure Toussaint's gigantic intellect by the fact that, untrained as he was, he attempted to do the same, his black army and generals filling the political rôle of the Bolshevik Party. If he kept whites in his army, it was for the same reason that the Bolsheviks also kept Tsarist officers. Neither revolution had enough trained and educated officers of its own, and the black Jacobins, relatively speaking, were far worse off culturally than the Russian Bolsheviks.

The whole theory of the Bolshevik policy was that the victories of the new régime would gradually win over those who had been constrained to accept it by force. Toussaint hoped for the same. If he failed, it is for the same reason that the Russian socialist revolution failed, even after all its achievements—the defeat of the revolution in Europe. Had the Jacobins been able to consolidate the democratic republic in 1794, Haiti would have remained a French colony, but an attempt to restore slavery would have been most unlikely.

It was in method, and not in principle, that Toussaint failed. The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperalism in terms of race is disastrous. But to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental as an error only less grave than to make it fundamental. There were Jacobin workmen in Paris who would have fought for the blacks against Bonaparte's troops. But the international movement was not then what is it to-day, and there were none in San Domingo. The black labourers saw only the old slave-owning whites. These would accept the new régime, but never to the extent of fighting for it against a French army, and the masses knew this. Tous-

saint of course knew this also. He never trusted Agé, his Chief of Staff who was a Frenchman, and asked Agé's junior, Lamartinière, to keep an eye on him. But whereas Lenin kept the party and the masses thoroughly aware of every step, and explained carefully the exact position of the bourgeois servants of the Workers' State, Toussaint explained nothing, and allowed the masses to think that their old enemies were being favoured at their expense. In allowing himself to be looked upon as taking the side of the whites against the blacks, Toussaint committed the unpardonable crime in the eyes of a community where the whites stood for so much evil. That they should get back their property was bad enough. That they should be privileged was intolerable. And to shoot Moïse, the black, for the sake of the whites was more than an error, it was a crime. It was almost as if Lenin had had Trotsky shot for taking the side of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.

Toussaint's position was extraordinarily difficult. San Domingo was, after all, a French colony. Granted that, before the expedition was a certainty, plain speech was impossible; once he understood that it was coming, there should have been no hesitation. He should have declared that a powerful expedition could have no other aim than the restoration of slavery, summoned the population to resist, declared independence, confiscated the property of all who refused to accept and distributed it among his supporters. Agé and the other white officers should have been given a plain choice: accept or leave. If they had accepted, intending to be traitors, the black officers would have been on guard against them, the men would have known where they stood and would have shot them at the slightest vacillation before the enemy. The whites should have been offered the same choice: accept the black régime which has guaranteed and will guarantee your property, or leave; traitors in war-time would be dealt with as all traitors in war. Many of the planters favoured independence. They would have stayed and contributed their knowledge, such as it was, to the new State. Not only former slaves had followed Toussaint. Lamartinière was a Mulatto so white that

only those who knew his origins could tell that he had Negro ancestry, but he was absolutely and completely devoted to the cause of Toussaint. So was Maurepas, an old free black. With Dessalines, Belair, Moïse and the hundreds of other officers, ex-slave and formerly free, it would have been easy for Toussaint to get the mass of the population behind him. Having the army, some of the better educated blacks and Mulattoes and the labourers who had supported him so staunchly in everything, he would have been invincible. With the issue unobscure and his power clear, many who might otherwise have hesitated would have come down on the side that was taking decisive action. With a decisive victory won it was not impossible to re-open negotiations with a chastened French government to establish the hoped-for relations.

It was the ex-slave labourers and the ex-slave army which would decide the issue, and Toussaint's policy crippled both.

He left the army with a divided allegiance. There were Frenchmen in it whose duty would be to fight for France. They, the Mulattoes and the old free blacks had no fears about their liberty.

Instead of bringing the black labourers nearer he drove them away from him. Even after the revolt it was not too late. Lenin crushed the Kronstadt revolt with a relentless hand, but, in a manner so abrupt as to call forth protests from sticklers for party discipline, he proposed the New Economic Policy immediately afterwards. It was this quick recognition of danger that saved the Russian Revolution. Toussaint crushed the revolt as he was bound to do. But instead of recognising the origin of the revolt as springing from the fear of the same enemy that he was arming against, he was sterner with the revolutionaries than he had ever been before. It happened that the day on which Moïse was executed, November 21st, was the very day fixed by Bonaparte for the departure of the expedition.

Instead of reprisals Toussaint should have covered the country, and in the homely way that he understood so well, mobilised the masses, talked to the people, explained

the situation to them and told them what he wanted them to do. As it was, the policy he persisted in reduced the masses to a state of stupor.[9] It has been said that he was thinking of the effect in France. His severity and his proclamation reassuring the whites aimed at showing Bonaparte that all classes were safe in San Domingo, and that he could be trusted to govern the colony with justice. It is probably true, and is his greatest condemnation.

Bonaparte was not going to be convinced by Toussaint's justice and fairness and capacity to govern. Where imperialists do not find disorder they create it deliberately, as Hédouville did. They want an excuse for going in. But they can find that easily and will go in even without any. It is force that counts, and chiefly the organised force of the masses. Always, but particularly at the moment of struggle, a leader must think of his own masses. It is what they think that matters, not what the imperialists think. And if to make matters clear to them Toussaint had to condone a massacre of the whites, so much the worse for the whites. He had done everything possible for them, and if the race question occupied the place that it did in San Domingo, it was not the fault of the blacks. But Toussaint, like Robespierre, destroyed his own Left-wing, and with it sealed his own doom. The tragedy was that there was no need for it. Robespierre struck at the masses because he was bourgeois and they were communist. That clash was inevitable, and regrets over it are vain. But between Toussaint and his people there was no fundamental difference of outlook or of aim. Knowing the race question for the political and social question that it was, he tried to deal with it in a purely political and social way. It was a grave error. Lenin in his thesis to the Second Congress of the Communist International warned the white revolutionaries —a warning they badly need—that such has been the effect of the policy of imperialism on the relationship between advanced and backward peoples that European Communists will have to make wide concessions to natives of colonial countries in order to overcome the justified prejudice which these feel toward all classes in the oppressing countries. Toussaint, as his power grew, forgot that. He ignored the black labourers, bewildered them at the very moment that he needed them most, and to bewilder the masses is to strike the deadliest of all blows at the revolution.

[9] Idlinger, Treasurer to the Colony. Report to the French Government, *Les Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères. Fonds divers, Section Amérique,* No. 14.

His personal weakness, the obverse side of his strength, played its part also. He left even his generals in the dark. A naturally silent and reserved man, he had been formed by military discipline. He gave orders and expected them to be obeyed. Nobody ever knew what he was doing. He said suddenly that Sonthonax must go and invited his generals to sign the letter or not, as they pleased. When Vincent spoke to Christophe and Moïse about the Constitution, they knew nothing about it. Moïse's bitter complaint about Toussaint and the whites came obviously from a man to whom Toussaint had never explained the motives of his policy. They would not have needed much persuasion to follow a bold lead. Moïse was feeling his way towards it, and we can point out Toussaint's weakness all the more clearly because Dessalines had actually found the correct method. His speech to the army was famous, and another version—he probably made it more than once—ran this way: "If France wishes to try any nonsense here, everybody must rise together, men and women." Loud acclamations greeted this bold pronouncement, worth a thousand of Toussaint's equivocal proclamations reassuring the whites. Dessalines had not the slightest desire to reassure whites.

The whites were whites of the old régime. Dessalines did not care what they said or thought. The black labourers had to do the fighting—and it was they who needed reassurance. It was not that Toussaint had any illusions about the whites. He had none whatever. When the war had actually begun, he sent a curt message to his com-

manders: "Leave nothing white behind you."[10] But the mischief had been done.

Yet Toussaint's error sprang from the very qualities that made him what he was. It is easy to see to-day, as his generals saw after he was dead, where he had erred. It does not mean that they or any of us would have done better in his place. If Dessalines could see so clearly and simply, it was because the ties that bound this uneducated soldier to French civilisation were of the slenderest. He saw what was under his nose so well because he saw no further. Toussaint's failure was the failure of enlightenment, not of darkness.

In the last days of December, the fleet of Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse, bearing on board the first detachment of 12,000 men, sailed into the harbour of Samana Bay. Toussaint, standing alone on a neighbouring peak, watched the vessels. Unaccustomed to naval armaments, he was overwhelmed by their number; as he returned to his staff he uttered the words, "We shall perish. All France is come to overwhelm us." It was not fear. He was never afraid. But certain traits of character run deep in great men. Despite all that he had done he was at bottom the same Toussaint who had hesitated to join the revolution in 1791 and for one whole month had protected his master's plantation from destruction. Only this time it was not a plantation and a few score slaves but a colony and hundreds of thousands of people.

[10] Mauviel, Bishop of San Domingo, memorandum to Napoleon, *Les Archives Nationales*, AF. IV. 1187.

XIII

The War of Independence

THE DEFEAT of Toussaint in the War of Independence and his imprisonment and death in Europe are universally looked upon as a tragedy. They contain authentic elements of the tragic in that even at the height of the war Toussaint strove to maintain the French connection as necessary to Haiti in its long and difficult climb to civilisation. Convinced that slavery could never be restored in San Domingo, he was equally convinced that a population of slaves recently landed from Africa could not attain to civilisation by "going it alone." His tergiversations, his inability to take the

days at St Helena and that apotheosis of accumulation and degradation, the suicide in the Wilhelmstrasse. The Greek tragedians could always go to their gods for a dramatic embodiment of fate, the *dike* which rules over a world neither they nor we ever made. But not Shakespeare himself could have found such a dramatic embodiment of fate as Toussaint struggled against, Bonaparte himself; nor could the furthest imagination have envisaged the entry of the chorus, of the ex-slaves themselves, as the arbiters of their own fate. Toussaint's certainty of this as the ultimate and irresistible resolution of the problem to which he refused to limit himself, that explains his mistakes and atones for them.

Like Toussaint, Bonaparte did everything himself and he wrote out the plan of campaign with his own hand.

He divided it into three periods. In the first Leclerc was to promise Toussaint everything he asked for, in order that Leclerc might establish himself in the principal points of the country.

"As soon as this is done, you will then be firmer. Command him to reply without equivocation to me, the proclamation and my letter." Toussaint was to come to Le Cap and swear fidelity to the Republic. "On that very day" he and all his supporters, white and black, were to be shipped to France without being disgraced but with honour and consideration. (This was merely to avoid irritating the population unnecessarily: no epaulette was to be left on the shoulders of a single nigger.) Raimond (with no mass following) was to be arrested and sent to France as a criminal. During this first period Leclerc was to treat Moïse, Dessalines, and Toussaint well, and every attempt was to be made to win over men like Christophe, Clairveaux, and Maurepas who were "favourable to the whites," in other words men who had carried out Toussaint's policy and treated them with fairness and consideration. This was the first period, to last about 15 or 20 days.

But Bonaparte had his doubts about Toussaint, Moïse, and Dessalines. If they did not come to swear fealty (and be politely but firmly deported), they were to be declared traitors, hunted down by "a war to the death," and if captured shot within 24 hours. This would end the second period. "On the same day" at all points "all doubtful persons, whatever their colour, were to be arrested, and all the black generals whatever their status deported." The last stage was the disarming of the population. The National Guard and *gendarmerie* were to be "reorganised," in other words, made all white, and San Domingo would then be ready for the "special laws."

The first thing was to break the military power of the blacks: no black above the rank of captain was to be left in the island.

The second thing was prestige. Bonaparte knew the imperialist importance of a proper respect for white women among natives. The ancients never thought a conquest completed until the victor had slept with the wife or daughter of the conquered monarch. It is difficult to inculcate the proper sentiment of inferiority in a man who sleeps with your sister. Bonaparte ordered that all white women who had "prostituted themselves" to Negroes, were to be sent to Europe, whatever their rank. Leclerc was not to tolerate from anyone any talk about the "rights of those blacks who had shed so much white blood." [1] Whatever his rank or services he was to be shipped to France.

The "special laws" were not specified, but the Mulattoes, too, were to be suitably dealt with. Rigaud, Pétion, Villate and other officers, having no fears for their own rights and thinking to supplant Toussaint and his generals, had obtained permission to come with the expedition. Bonaparte had them all put on one ship, the *Vertu*. If Toussaint welcomed the expedition they were not even to be allowed to land, but were to be deported at once to Madagascar. If there was fighting to be done, however,

[1] The instructions are printed in full in *Die Kolonialpolitik Napoleons I*, by Roloff (Munich, 1899), as an appendix.

then they would be allowed to shed their share of blood.[2]

Bonaparte in these instructions repudiated the idea of restoring slavery. He was lying. But he was still posing as the heir of the revolution, and he dared not commit this reactionary policy to black and white lest it fall into the hands of Leclerc's successor (if Leclerc needed one) and for fear of the effect on the army. Even when he did give Leclerc authority to restore slavery, Leclerc kept it from his second-in-command, Rochambeau. Many officers, and all the soldiers, believed that they were fighting for the revolution against Toussaint, a traitor sold to priests, émigrés, and the British.

It is on colonial peoples without means of counter-publicity that imperialism practises its basest arts, and what is staggering in this document is not its duplicity. It is the calm assumption of stupidity and trustfulness on the part of the black generals. Bonaparte seemed to have had fears of only three, Toussaint, Moïse, and Dessalines.

But the most bewildering fact in all this history, and the testimony to Bonaparte's knowledge of men, is that Pétion and Rigaud knew that they would be deported to Madagascar if there was no resistance. Yet so strong is the pull of authority that they were prepared to accept even this grudging recognition.[3] The apparently impudent assumptions of Bonaparte were really sound policy. That calm confidence in its capacity to deceive is a mark of the mature ruling class. This accounts for its wild fury when it runs up against the type which never pays any attention to its most solemn protestations. Bonaparte was wise in singling out Toussaint, Dessalines, and Moïse. But for the first two the whole plan would have succeeded.

[2] Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. III, p. 48. This is not in the instructions.
[3] Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. III, p. 48.

On February 2nd Leclerc appeared off the harbour of Le Cap with 5,000 of his 12,000 men, and instructed Christophe, commanding the troops in the town, to prepare quarters for his men. Christophe, poor fool, had had everything ready to receive them, and but for a quarrel between Leclerc and Villaret-Joyeuse and an adverse wind Leclerc would have had Le Cap intact. But Toussaint, riding hard from Samana, arrived just in time to stop Christophe. He did not show himself, but allowed Christophe to carry on negotiations, hiding in a room nearby and making Christophe speak loudly so that he could hear his refusal.[4]

On his way to Christophe, Leclerc's envoy as if by accident let slip some proclamations by Bonaparte calling on the population to rally round Leclerc, protector of their liberties, restorer of peace, etc. It was all that the petty-bourgeois needed. The Municipality and the civil functionaries, Mulattoes and free blacks, always jealous of Toussaint's illiterate black generals and their low origin, and resenting Toussaint's despotism, gave demonstrations of joy and satisfaction. Stupid as only the petty-bourgeois functionary can be, they implored Christophe to welcome the French expedition.[5] César Télémaque, Mayor of Le Cap, old free black and a notably able administrator, led this folly, gave an official reading of the proclamation, and pestered Christophe to submit. To add force to the protestations of himself and his friends, he brought a deputation of old men, women and children to Christophe. Whites, and all the formerly free were radiant, but the officers of the army, black and Mulatto, were grimly hostile, and would not speak to the French. Under the watchful eye of his chief, Christophe remained firm and replied to Leclerc's threats with counter-threats. Next day, the 4th, Christophe summoned the garrison, who took the oath to be faithful to death. They learned that Fort Liberté had been taken

[4] Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir . . .*, Vol. II, pp. 69-88.
[5] Lacroix. *Mémoires pour Servir . . .* Lacroix took part in the negotiations.

by the French. It was war, and Christophe called on the inhabitants to evacuate the town. Men, women and children started the painful journey up into the hills that began almost where the city ended. A few inhabitants remained near César Télémaque at the Municipality, hoping in spite of themselves for some intervention against this last and final misery. All had their eyes fixed on the sea. At last as evening fell a boat detached itself from the squadron, and taking advantage of the growing darkness, moved toward the harbour. Immediately Christophe's scouts on guard gave the dreaded signal by the discharge of cannon, and and at the sound the soldiers, torches in hand, ran through the city. Soon everything was burning. Suddenly with a terrific shock the powder-magazine exploded. Rocks loosened by the explosion came rolling down, crushing women and children hiding in the hills. By Toussaint's orders all in the city, whites and Télémaque and his friends, were compelled to follow the troops. They came unwillingly, bitterly regretting that Leclerc had not been welcomed.

Christophe and his soldiers, guarding the population, retired to the mountains. All night the fire raged, destroying property to the value of 100 million francs. Leclerc's envoys had told him how flourishing the city was, but when he landed the next day he was welcomed by cinders and ashes: of 2,000 houses only 59 remained. It was an indication to the bitterly disappointed Frenchman of the days that were to come, the beginning of a devastation which threw San Domingo back half a century.

But even then Toussaint still hesitated. On his way from Le Cap to Gonaïves he met a French detachment. Stopping to parley he was greeted with bullets and nearly lost his life. His horse was wounded, the hat of one of his officers was carried away by a bullet, and Christophe had to throw himself from his horse and swim across a river to escape capture or death.

War is a continuation of politics by other means, and Toussaint was now reaping the reward of his policy during the previous year. The labourers, hostile to the

French, did not respond to his call. They could not understand why Toussaint should call on them to fight these whites, when all his policy had been towards conciliation of them.[6] It was easy for Toussaint's enemies to represent him as a tyrant, consorting with émigrés and priests—everyone could see him doing this—seeking to hand the colony over to the British for the triumph of his own ambition. Mulattoes and former free blacks were openly for the French. San Domingo was a French colony. Why should they burn down their property for Toussaint's ambition?

The army did not know where it stood. Christophe had nearly let Leclerc in, and now wavering among the commanding officers came to the help of Leclerc and further confused both rank-and-file and masses. Port-Républicain, the capital, was under the command of Agé. Boudet with 3,500 men called on Agé to surrender the town. At a conference of the officers, the white officer in charge of the powder magazine refused to hand over the keys. Lamartinière drew his pistol and shot him dead at the conference table. Another bullet for Agé would have saved an infinite amount of trouble. But before such a demonstration of loyalty and the temper of others of his subordinates Agé temporised. To Boudet's summons he replied that he could do nothing except by the orders of Dessalines, his superior officer, who was at St Marc. What sort of resistance was this? Thus encouraged, Boudet landed his troops and

6 ". . . he (Toussaint) was favourable to white colonists, especially to those who occupied new possessions; and the care and partiality which he felt for them went so far that he was severely censured as being more attached to them than to his own people. This negro wail was not without reason; for some months previous to the arrival of the French he put to death his own nephew, General Moïse, for having disregarded his orders relative to the protection of the colonists. This act of the Governor, and the great confidence which he had in the French Government, were the chief causes of the weak resistance which the French met with in Hayti." This is an extract from a manifesto published by Christophe in 1814 when Haiti was again threatened. (Reprinted in Beard, *Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, London, 1853, p. 326.) Toussaint did not trust the French Government as Christophe says. He would not have armed to the extent and in the manner he did if he had. But he allowed the people to think that he trusted the French.

marched boldly towards the town. Another officer, follower of Rigaud, delivered an important fort to the advance-guard. There was some brave fighting at the last moment, but with such confusion and disloyalty in the command the garrison could not hold the town. Trying in vain to set it on fire as they left, Lamartinière and his men retreated. Not only was the capital gone, with little loss, and all its supplies intact, but the French captured the treasury with two and a half million francs.[7]

The next night came an offer of submission from Laplume, the Negro general commanding in the South. Officers and men, as they had been accustomed to do in the political tangles of the revolution, followed their commanders, who in most cases had built their corps themselves. Even at Santo Domingo, where Paul L'Ouverture was in command, the French had another easy success. Kerverseau, hitherto in Toussaint's service, had joined Leclerc, and had been put in command of a French detachment. He marched on Santo Domingo and demanded submission. L'Ouverture refused. A group of French and Spanish inhabitants attempted to let the French into the city, but Paul L'Ouverture dispersed them. Yet even Toussaint's own brother, while refusing to admit Kerverseau, wrote to the Governor asking for orders. Where Toussaint's own brother was so uncertain, what could the masses do? Only then did Toussaint write commanding him to defend to the last and "even to the extent of capturing Kerverseau and his troops"—a miserable and tell-tale indication of vacillation. Afraid that his messengers might be captured, Toussaint gave his couriers another letter counselling Paul to conciliation. This letter the officers (two blacks and a white) in case of arrest were to present to their captors, hiding the genuine instructions. The officers were killed, and both letters were found on them. Kerverseau sent the false letter to Paul, who opened the gates and let Kerverseau in. Mauviel, the Bishop of San Domingo, had long been working on Clairveaux, second in rank of Toussaint's

[7] The commander of Boudet's advance-guard was Pamphile de Lacroix.

officers. Clairveaux in a few days would yield to Mauviel and surrender to the French. It was treason, but it was an easy treason after he had heard that Toussaint's own brother, his subordinate, had let Kerverseau in, apparently on Toussaint's instructions. The French welcomed Toussaint's officers and men and treated them as comrades. The masses looked on, confused, bewildered, not knowing what to do. Fortunately for these misguided chiefs, Toussaint, Dessalines, and Maurepas paid no attention to Leclerc's proclamations. It was this that saved the traitors, for Bonaparte's instructions were explicit, and but for the resistance of the so-called enemies of France the epaulettes would have been torn from the shoulders of these stupidly trustful blacks.

On February 10th Maurepas, holding Port-de-Paix, the strongest position on the North coast, was attacked by 1,500 troops under Debelle and menaced by the guns of the fleet. Refusing to capitulate he retired from the town and took up his position in the mountains. But Rochambeau took Fort Dauphin, and thus except for St Marc under Dessalines nearly the whole littoral was in the hands of Leclerc.

Toussaint on February 8th did not yet know the full extent of his reverses, but as the blows fell upon him he braced himself not for surrender but for resistance. The dream of orderly government and progress to civilisation was over. He had held on to the last shred of hope for peace, but as he saw the enemy closing in, then and then only did he prepare to fight. Grievous had been his error, but as soon as he decided to look the destruction of San Domingo fairly in the face, he rose to the peril, and this, his last campaign, was his greatest. He outlined his plan to Dessalines. "Do not forget, while waiting for the rainy season which will rid us of our foes, that we have no other resource than destruction and fire. Bear in mind that the soil bathed with our sweat must not furnish our enemies with the smallest sustenance. Tear up the roads with shot; throw corpses and horses into all the fountains, burn and annihilate everything in order that those who have come

to reduce us to slavery may have before their eyes the image of that hell which they deserve." It was too late. Events were to show that if he had but mobilised the masses before and purged his army, the French attack would have been crippled at the start. His desire to avoid destruction was the very thing that caused it. It is the recurring error of moderates when face to face with a revolutionary struggle.

Dessalines never got the letter. But the superb soldier and revolutionary leader was a man far different from Christophe and the rest. He needed neither instructions nor exhortation to take appropriate action. When he heard that Port-Républicain was taken, he paled through his black skin, turned fiercely to curse those around him and bellowed with wrath. Such a thing should never have happened, and it was all Toussaint's fault.

The French had the initiative, and Dessalines did not wait to be attacked. Marching south to meet them, he made contact with Lamartinière at La Croix-des-Bouquets. Feinting as if to retreat into the Cahos Mountains, he sent the French on a false scent and speeded to Léogane, a town rich in resources and the port of a fertile and flourishing plain. Boudet sent a division after him, but Dessalines got to Léogane first, burnt it to the ground and devastated the plain. He was now in a critical position. He could go no further into the South. Laplume threatened him there. Boudet's pursuing division and Boudet himself at Port-Républicain barred his retreat. And 900 men landed at Arcahaye put that seaport town in the hands of the French. Only the uncharted mountains offered an escape. High over frightful precipices and unknown paths Dessalines led his men. The waiting French never saw him, and after a series of forced marches he got back to St Marc, re-organised his forces and then marched south again to meet the French and check them in their advance on his headquarters. Boudet was attacking by sea and land. Making use of every difficulty of the difficult road, Dessalines made

Boudet fight every inch of the way, and the French advance had continually to be cleared by artillery. In the final engagement Dessalines was defeated; but after such a harassing march and murderous combat, that Boudet's men lay exhausted and could not follow the retreating army. Taking his time, Dessalines retired to St Marc. On the parade ground he had kept a huge fire burning for two days, and he had filled the town and his own recently completed palace with inflammable material. Lighting a torch, with his own hand he applied it to his house, while his soldiers followed his example throughout the town. Boudet, like Leclerc, marched into ruins. But weary and dispirited as were the French, they were to have no peace. For Dessalines, judging that the garrison at Port-Républicain would be depleted, now set off south again at top speed, intending to surprise the town, take it by assault, and burn it to the ground. As he ranged from one part of the island to another, wearing out these inhuman persecutors of his people, this old slave, with the marks of the whip below his general's uniform, was fast coming to the conclusion at which Toussaint still boggled. He would declare the island independent and finish with France. The old slave-owners were everywhere grinning with joy at the French expedition; he would finish with everything white for ever.

Men, women and children, indeed all the whites who came into his hands, he massacred. And forbidding burial, he left stacks of corpses rotting in the sun to strike terror into the French detachments as they toiled behind his flying columns.

Leclerc now tried to get hold of Toussaint by using his own sons to decoy him. It had been a plot carefully laid by Bonaparte in Paris as far back as the previous October. Bonaparte would not send the boys back, and Toussaint's enemies did not scruple to try turning their minds against him.[8] But when the time came for the expedition,

[8] Toussaint's letter to them, 22 Prairial, An VII, *Les Archives Nationales*. F. III. 210.

Bonaparte sent for them and their tutor, the Abbé Coisnon. He spoke kindly to them, gave them presents, told them what a great man their father was, how well he had served France, assured them that the expedition was merely to strengthen San Domingo against its enemies, told them that he would send them on in advance to tell their father all this, and asked their tutor to undertake the journey with them: his priestly vocation would help. He had high officials entertain them to dinner. By some chance the boys were not sent on in advance, but they and their tutor sailed with Leclerc. Bonaparte had given Leclerc a long rigmarole of a letter (signed with his own hand at last) guaranteeing liberty to the blacks, and asking Toussaint to assist Leclerc in the government of the country (presumably for the week or so before he was shipped off to France), all with an undercurrent of threats against him if he resisted. This Leclerc now despatched to Toussaint by the boys and the priest, hoping that the defeats and defections would have cowed Toussaint and that fatherly affection would do the rest. All along the road the crowds, glad to see the General's children back from Paris, came out to welcome them, shouted greetings, embraced them while they told of their messages of goodwill. Unknown to themselves, they were breaking down the spirit of resistance of the people. Toussaint was away, but late on the evening of the next day he came hurrying in. The boys threw themselves into his arms while tears streamed down the cheeks of the stern old soldier. Coisnon had hitherto kept himself carefully in the background, but (it is his own account) judging the moment ripe, he stepped forward with a solemn reminder of duty to France and produced the letter.

The whole elaborate deception was a miserable failure. Toussaint—how well he knew these men—did not even bother to read the whole of the letter. He looked at half of it and was about to speak when Coisnon began a long eulogy of Bonaparte, his kindly reception of the boys, the peaceful nature of the expedition, etc. Dessalines would in all probability have shot Coisnon out of hand and taken his sons. But Toussaint was a different type. To Coisnon

he made a dignified response. Bonaparte's words announced peace, Leclerc's actions declared war: "In the midst of so many disasters and acts of violence I must not forget that I wear a sword." If Leclerc desired peace, let him stop the march of his army.

They talked far into the night, and Toussaint could not contain his indignation as he understood that his sons were being offered to him as the price of his surrender. Yet that night, with the tears again flowing, he told the priest that while he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the freedom of the blacks, he would send the boys back lest Leclerc should think he was keeping them by coercion or undue influence. Two days later the letter for Leclerc was ready, and he sent it back with the boys, proposing a suspension of hostilities. Leclerc sent Isaac and Placide back again, promising that if Toussaint only came to discuss with him all would be well. He would appoint Toussaint his first lieutenant. If not, after four days he would declare Toussaint an outlaw. What he really wanted was to get Toussaint into his hands.

Isaac and Placide entreated Toussaint to see Leclerc. He refused. What were Rigaud, Pétion, Villate, Chanlatte, his personal enemies, doing in the French Army? If, now that the blacks had some power, the French treated them in that way, how would they treat them when they were powerless?

But moved by the entreaties of the boys and their obvious love for France, he told them he would not attempt to influence them. France or San Domingo. "My children, make your choice; whatever it is I shall always love you." His own son Isaac declared for France, but Placide threw himself on his father, sobbing that he feared the future, feared slavery, and would fight with him. At once Toussaint gave him command of a battalion of his guards, which he led into battle a few days later. Madame L'Ouverture, with a woman's instinctive sense of immediate reality, would not give up Isaac and made him stay.[9]

Luckily for this narrative, we have the complete series

[9] Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir* . . . Vol. II, pp. 119-126.

of letters written by Leclerc from San Domingo to Bonaparte, the First Consul, and the Minister of Marine. For the student of any period of history, but particularly of imperialism, they are documents of priceless value:

"I have great need of the reinforcements. You must see how difficult it is . . . I have already 600 sick, the majority of my troops having embarked five months ago. Cultivation is in good condition.

"Above all count on my devotion. Many of those who envied my command in Paris would be wiped out here. I shall prove to France that you have made a good choice." [10]

"Three months before our arrival . . . Moïse had sought to supplant Toussaint and to do this, he had begun the massacre of 600 to 700 whites. Toussaint had him shot and has rid us of him. . . ." [11]

"Toussaint has sent to make me proposals for the suspension of hostilities. I believe not a word of it. He is the most false and deceitful man in the world. . . .[12]

"I have already more than 1,200 men in hospital. Calculate on a considerable waste of life in this country. . . .

"I am here without food or money. The burning of Le Cap and the districts through which the rebels have retired deprives me of all resources of this kind. It is necessary that the Government send me provisions, money, troops. That is the only means of ensuring the preservation of San Domingo. I have here no resources in commerce; the traders at Le Cap are only the agents of the Americans and the Americans are of all Jews the most Jewish . . ." [13]

[10] Leclerc to the First Consul. February 9th, 1802. The letters are transcribed from the Archives of the Minister for War, by General Nemours. See *Histoire Militaire de la Guerre d'Indépendence . . .*, Vol. II, pp. 53-120.
[11] February 15th, 1802, to the Minister of Marine.
[12] "O Wad some power . . ."

Leclerc had been merely playing with Toussaint. When his reinforcements arrived he issued a proclamation putting Toussaint and Christophe outside the law, and prepared to overwhelm them in the plain of Gonaïves. Desfourneaux would leave the River Salée and passing by way of Limbé and Plaisance arrive at Gonaïves. Hardy would leave Le Cap and by way of Marmelade and Ennery descend on Gonaïves. Rochambeau would leave Fort Dauphin and by way of St Raphael arrive at Gonaïves. Humbert and Debelle would defeat Maurepas and drive him back on Gonaïves, while Boudet coming up from Port-Républicain would cut off the retreat and stab Toussaint's forces in the back.

Toussaint, with half his 18,000 troops in the ranks of the enemy, could only delay and harass the advance, devastate the country and deprive Leclerc of supplies, while retiring slowly to the mountains. He was too good a soldier to attempt to defend every possible point where Leclerc might land, and had secreted his munitions and stores in strategic places, whence they could feed as many lines of retreat as possible. He would raid Leclerc's outposts, make surprise attacks, lay ambushes, give the French no peace, while avoiding major engagements. With the coming of the rains, the French, worn out, would fall victims in thousands to the fever, and the blacks would descend and drive them into the sea. But first he had to extricate himself from the steel ring that Leclerc was drawing round him.

It is necessary to describe this campaign in some detail. The political manœuvres were based on the progress of the war, and the war was the supreme test of the people of San Domingo. Bonaparte's army did not fall from the sky, nor were his soldiers entirely the product of his own unparalleled genius for military command. They were in the last analysis the result, one of the finest results, of the revolutionary change in French society. Their irresistible

[13] February 15th, 1802. To the Minister of Marine.

élan, their intelligence, their endurance and morale, sprang from the new social freedom that followed the destruction of feudalism; their consciousness that they, the people, had done it, their faith in themselves as the bearers of liberty and equality all over Europe. None of the French rank-and-file in San Domingo guessed that they were fighting to restore slavery. The war was for them a revolutionary war.

But Toussaint's soldiers and generals, illiterates and ex-slaves, had been moulded by the same revolution. An army is a miniature of the society which produces it. If the black army had wobbled before the French, it was because San Domingo society as a whole did not know what to think of Leclerc's expedition, could not believe its vile purpose. But the few thousand who remained faithful to Toussaint were the advance-guard of the revolutionary army fighting a revolutionary war. They were for the moment outnumbered. If Toussaint had the help of some of the labourers, thousands of Mulattoes and the former free were joining Leclerc. But the liberty and equality which these blacks acclaimed as they went into battle meant far more to them than the same words in the mouths of the French. And in a revolutionary struggle these things are worth many regiments.

Hardy, coming from Le Cap, met Christophe at Bois-Pin on February 19th. Hardy drove Christophe from his position, but here the French received the first shock. Christophe, defeated, retired in good order and took up position at Ennery. On February 21st, Hardy attacked with the Napoleonic vigour that had swept and would sweep everything in Europe before it, until the army was mortally stricken in the Moscow campaign. Once again Christophe was dislodged. But still holding his men together, he took up position again at Bayonnais. The next day Hardy drove him back, but as signally failed to disrupt his forces. Still covering the town of Gonaïves, Christophe now took up

position at La Coupe-à-Pintades, ready to meet the French the next day, the 23rd.

Toussaint was at Gonaïves. He did not approve of all this fighting. He preferred guerrilla warfare and the raising of the population, but those who remained faithful to him were eager to cross swords with Bonaparte's soldiers,[14] and Toussaint had to follow. Plaisance was treacherously surrendered to Rochambeau, and Toussaint, with 600 men and a few hundred auxiliaries, hastened to bar Rochambeau's way at Ravine-à-Couleuvres. It was a moment of great personal anxiety. His wife and family hiding in a retreat in the mountains had had to leave it, and Toussaint did not know where they were. But he prepared for battle with his usual disregard of his personal fate. Accompanied only by an aide and two labourers he reconnoitred with such daring that one of his guides who pushed on too far was captured by an outpost and immediately killed. Toussaint, going back, addressed his army: "You are going to fight against men who have neither faith, law nor religion. They promise you liberty, they intend your servitude. Why have so many ships traversed the ocean, if not to throw you again into chains? They disdain to recognise in you submissive children, and if you are not their slaves you are rebels. The mother-country, misled by the Consul, is no longer anything for you but a stepmother. . . . Uncover your breasts, you will see them branded by the iron of slavery. During ten years, what have you not undertaken for liberty? Your masters slain or put to flight; the English humiliated by defeat; discord extinguished, a land of slavery purified by fire and evolving more beautiful than ever under liberty; these are your labours and these the fruits of your labours. And the foe wishes to snatch both out of your hands. . . ."

He who had fought so hard to build spoke with fierce pride of the destruction which met the French on every side. The French would meet their fate. "Their bones will be scattered among these mountains and rocks and tossed

[14] Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir . . .* Vol. II, p. 228.

with the bayonet. The blacks appeared to fly before them. But it was only to jump into the ditches again, when the fire from the fortress decimated the French ranks. Dugua fell wounded in two places, Leclerc was slightly wounded, and the French that day lost nearly 800 men. Some days after came Rochambeau. Having lost Toussaint, he arrived with his forces fresh and ready for battle. He was warned of the two previous disasters, but having silenced the fire of Lamartinière's redoubt by an intensive bombardment, he attacked it, leading his division in person. He was beaten back, was himself wounded, and his division lost 300 men.

The French had thus lost 1,500 men outside Crête-à-Pierrot. Twelve thousand of them under Leclerc now encircled the 1,200 men in the fortress. Dessalines had left to raise the labourers on the countryside, but the garrison gave him their word not to surrender. Fired by the determination and courage of their leader the besieged ran up the red flag at the four corners of the fortress, intimating that they were neither giving nor taking quarter.

The black garrison, beating off assaults and hurling defiance at ten times its number, Toussaint, travelling swiftly northward to cut Leclerc's communications: Bonaparte's periods were in a tangle, and Leclerc was getting very, very anxious. It was now half-way through March, and the rainy season was almost there. Feverishly Leclerc set his men to fortify their positions. Pétion was in the besieging army with a corps of Mulattoes and former free, and it was Pétion who devised ways and means of investing the fortress by the use of local material. But their hard fighting and labours in this strange and unaccustomed climate wore down the French soldiers. This was not the way they had conquered in Italy, in Egypt, in the Pyrenees, and on the Rhine. Dessalines, raiding their lines from the neighbouring hills, kept them constantly on the alert. By subjecting them to this unceasing strain, they would fall easy victims to the fever in the rainy season.

And these blacks were bewildering enemies. They had the organisation and discipline of a trained army, and at the same time all the tricks and dodges of guerrillas. A black appeared among Boudet's soldiers, claiming to be a deserter. As Doudet in the midst of his guard questioned him, he seemed overwhelmed with fear. But he was a scout, and having learned all he wanted to know he made a dash for safety. Boudet, who saw his movement first, tried to stop him, but the black nearly bit off his thumb. Then, dashing beneath the legs of a horse, he overthrew the soldiers who tried to stop him, plunged into the river, and escaped amid a shower of bullets. He was struck, for on the opposite bank he collapsed, but a party of his own people carried him off.

Dessalines' relentless murders of all whites were having their effect. The French soldiers were retaliating, and Leclerc and his generals were shooting their prisoners, hundreds of blacks at a time—600 at one shooting. The black labourers, though not leaping to the attack, were hostile to the invading whites. They watched their movements from a distance, and fired at their flanks. If the French despatched a body of men to disperse them, they fled. As soon as these rejoined the main body, the labourers reappeared again.

"It was evident that we no longer inspired moral terror, and it is the greatest misfortune that can befall an army." [22] Lacroix could see the effect on the population of this indomitable challenge to the famous army of the First Consul.

The dishonest political position of the French Army was now taking its toll. The soldiers still thought of themselves as a revolutionary army. Yet at nights they heard the blacks in the fortress singing the *Marseillaise*, the *Ça Ira*, and the other revolutionary songs. Lacroix records how these misguided wretches as they heard the songs started and looked at the officers as if to say, "Have our barbarous enemies justice on their side? Are we no longer the soldiers

[22] Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir . . .*, Vol. II, pp. 161-162.

of Republican France? And have we become the crude instruments of policy?" [23]

A regiment of Poles, remembering their own struggle for nationalism, refused to join in the massacre of 600 blacks, ordered by Leclerc, and later, when Dessalines was reorganising the local army, he would call one of his regiments the Polish regiment.

Toussaint had no mercy on the local whites, but he treated the French prisoners with courtesy and care, spoke frequently to them, explained his stand. Later, as the army went to pieces, some soldiers deserted to the blacks. All that was needed was a highly political detachment of white Jacobins fighting in the black ranks, and calling on Leclerc's soldiers to come over.

But the garrison had neither doubts nor scruples. Being without water, they kept in their mouths balls of lead in order to quench an insupportable thirst. Nobody complained. The officers asked the chief of ambulance for doses of poison to prevent them falling alive into the hands of the French, and the wounded asked their companions in case of evacuation to kill them before they left.

The French, well supplied with artillery, began a three days' bombardment, intending to beat the fortress and the redoubt to dust, and their black and Mulatto allies were a mighty support. Pétion's skill in artillery threw cannon-ball after cannon-ball into the fortress. When his men complained of always being put in the front, he rebuked them. "Wretches," he said in a low voice as if ashamed that the French should hear, "are you not honoured to be placed first? Be quiet and follow me." Lacroix asked Bodin, "that valorous Negro," to hold a pontoon. "Do not worry, General," was the reply. "They will take it when I am dead." Nervous for another in a difficult position, Lacroix told him to be of good cheer. "Do not be worried, General," replied Henin. "Ten years now I have cheerfully made war for the Republic. Why should I not do it for a quarter of an hour for friendship?"

It would have been difficult enough in any circumstances to tear the epaulettes from the shoulders of these niggers, both majors, but it would be trebly so after the services they were rendering with such gallant, even debonair loyalty. Every day of war was piling up mountains in the way of Bonaparte's clear and precise instructions.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

Toussaint had started with little over a thousand men, but as he went along he raised the labourers, and at the sight of him and the sound of his great voice they came. He appeared before Ennery and the garrison fled. Leclerc sent Hardy to follow him. Toussaint threw out his curtain of troops which led Hardy in the wrong direction, made him describe a circle, and at the end remain like Rochambeau with no troops to fight against. He commanded Christophe, who was in the mountainous districts of Petite-Rivière, to go to Grande-Rivière in the North and keep the road to Le Cap and the Spanish part of the island open. In Marmelade, Grande-Rivière, Dondon, Sans-Souci, Port-Français, his own Northern districts whose spirit he had so ruthlessly broken, the labourers were massing now. One of his adherents held the mountains of Limbé, another the mountains around Plaisance. Desfourneaux held Plaisance itself, guarding Leclerc's communications with Le Cap. If Toussaint took Plaisance he would join hands with Christophe and Maurepas, raise the whole of the North plain, capture Le Cap and then with his authority restored in the North, take Leclerc in the rear. He launched the first attack on the fort Bedourete, as usual leading the charge with sword drawn. While the battle raged, Desfourneaux from Plaisance sent reinforcements, and Toussaint himself went to meet these. To his amazement he saw advancing against him soldiers wearing the uniform of the Ninth Brigade, the crack corps under the command of Maurepas. He recognised at once what had happened. Riding out alone to within five or six paces of the regiment, he spoke to them. "Soldiers of the Ninth, will you dare to fire on your general, your fathers and your brothers?" The black soldiers fell on their knees before him and he would have won them back.

But the Europeans with them fired on Toussaint. His own soldiers rushed up to protect him. As that moment a young officer handed to Toussaint a letter from Dessalines and was immediately shot, dying in Toussaint's arms. The captain of Toussaint's dragoons was grievously wounded at his side, and holding the wounded man on his horse Toussaint galloped away.

Dessalines' letter told him that Crête-à-Pierrot and the redoubt were completely invested with such large forces that he could not relieve them. He abandoned the project of marching on Le Cap, and sent to tell Dessalines that he was returning to relieve the fortress.

But Dessalines could not wait. On March 24th, the third day of the bombardment, the French captured a black man and a black woman. The man said he was blind, only the whites of his eyes could be seen and he could scarcely walk, while the old black woman with him said that she was deaf. Suspecting them to be spies the French beat them mercilessly, but they only sobbed and wailed, said nothing and lay as if unable to move. Lacroix, on his rounds, took pity on them, and asked that they should be allowed to go about their business; but not until the French threatened to shoot them did they get up and walk. As soon as they were out of reach, they began to dance, and ran to the fortress to give Dessalines' order to evacuate.

At nightfall Lamartinière left the redoubt and joined the main force. There were only 800 of them now, but they were going to make the attempt to cut their way through. Magny was Lamartinière's superior officer, but in moments of crisis it is merit that counts, and by common consent Lamartinière took command. Between eight and nine in the evening the men of the garrison threw themselves on Lacroix' division. Strong fortifications and a fierce gunfire stopped them. Suddenly reversing their tactics, they retreated and attacked the division of Rochambeau. They broke through, Rochambeau fled into a neighbouring wood to save his life, and Lamartinière and Magny, with 700 men, rejoined Dessalines, having accomplished one of the most remarkable feats of arms of the period.

Toussaint reached the fortress just too late, and did not know that the evacuation had taken place. Reconnoitring, he detected a weakness in the disposition of Leclerc's forces, and he planned to raid that general's headquarters and arrest him with the whole of his staff. He was as daring and as tireless as ever, but his politics still lagged behind events. If he had captured Leclerc and his staff, he was going to send them back to France with an account of Leclerc's conduct, and ask the First Consul to send someone worthy of confidence to whom he might hand over the government. He seemed still to be hoping that if he defeated Leclerc, Bonaparte would see reason and the valuable connection with France be maintained. But the days for that were over. Dessalines had pronounced the word independence. Magny and Lamartinière and the garrison of Crête-à-Pierrot had defied not Leclerc but France. Toussaint was still thinking in terms of the decree of February 4th, 1794. The black revolution had passed him by.

The capture of Crête-à-Pierrot was a great victory for Leclerc, but a victory that had cost too much. The garrison had escaped with the loss of less than half its men, Leclerc had lost 2,000 dead, several of his officers were severely wounded (Dugua was to die), and he entered the fortress to find only the wounded, the cannon spiked, the war material and stores destroyed. Leclerc begged his officers to moderate the casualties in their reports, but even as it was Bonaparte was profoundly moved by the disastrous losses before Crête-à-Pierrot, and sent to say so.

Leclerc sent Rochambeau and Hardy northwards to maintain and strengthen his communications with Le Cap. He asked Lacroix to enter Port-Républicain in such a way as to efface the bad impression which had been created in the population by the repeated checks all over the country and the losses in front of Crête-à-Pierrot. Lacroix placed his men in two ranks instead of three, the sections marched at great distances from each other, and all the officers were mounted. He had artillery harnessed to animals sent to

in another—one region would be "pacified," but as soon as the soldiers moved to another, the first broke out again. The French, disheartened, began to blame Leclerc for not getting rid of all the black and Mulatto generals along with Toussaint. "But no one observed that in the new insurrection of San Domingo, as in all insurrections which attack constituted authority, it was not the avowed chiefs who gave the signal for revolt but obscure creatures for the greater part personal enemies of the coloured generals." [38] It is a recurrent tale, this.[39] It is the curse of the masses always, now as then, that those who have shouted most always quail when the time for action arrives, or worse still find some good reason for collaborating with the enemy. Christophe, Maurepas, and the rest hunted down these "brigands." The French feared Lamartinière, and ambushed him even while he was in their service—a pitiable

[38] Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir . . .*, Vol. II, p. 225.

[39] Michelet had shown that such was also his view of the French Revolution. But it is in Georges Lefebvre, the great contemporary historian of the French Revolution, who on occasion after occasion exhaustively examines all the available evidence and repeats that we do not know and will never know who were the real leaders of the French Revolution, nameless, obscure men, far removed from the legislators and the public orators.

G. Lefebvre, *La Fuite du Roi*, p. 187 (mimeographed lectures): "It is wrong to attach too much importance to any opinion that the Girondins or Robespierre might have on what needed to be done. That is not the way to approach the question. We must pay more attention to the obscure leaders and the people who listened to them in stores and the little workshops and dark streets of old Paris. It was on them that the business depended and for the moment, evidently, they followed the Girondins. . . . It is therefore in the popular mentality, in the profound and incurable distrust which was born in the soul of the people, in regard to the aristocracy, beginning in 1789, and in regard to the king, from the time of the flight to Varennes, it is there that we must seek the explanation of what took place. The people and their unknown leaders knew what they wanted. They followed the Girondins and afterwards Robespierre, only to the degree that their advice appeared acceptable.

"Who then are these leaders to whom the people listened? We know some. Nevertheless, as in all the decisive days of the revolution, what we most would like to know is forever out of our reach; we would like to have the diary of the most obscure of these popular leaders; we would then be able to grasp, in the act so to speak, how one of these great revolutionary days began; we do not have it."

death for that splendid officer. Dessalines hunted down "brigands" with the rest, biding his time.

But the insurrection grew always, and while it grew the fever took its toll. The French could bury their dead in formal fashion no longer, but threw them into huge holes at night, lest the blacks should see how the army was wasting away. As if that could hide it. Leclerc, his health broken, went to Tortuga to recuperate. Feeling better, he left the island to come back to Le Cap. As soon as he left an insurrection burst behind him. It was crushed there, only to break out among the blacks around Môle St Nicholas. In early July the rumours began to spread through the island that the French Government was restoring slavery.

Once more the masses had shown greater political understanding than their leaders. Bonaparte had indeed taken the step. Richepanse in Guadeloupe had carried out instructions similar to those of Leclerc. There the Mulattoes ruled. He had defeated them, had deported their leaders and others, some 3,000 people in all, and had the black population under his feet. And Leclerc's boastful letters, telling lies about the way he had beaten Toussaint, had done the rest.

The French officers had been ashamed to let Bonaparte know the true results of their battles with the black generals. After the defeat of Debelle by Maurepas, Desfourneaux wrote to Dugua: "He (Debelle) has attacked Maurepas . . . , he has been repulsed and grievously wounded. It is feared that he will die. Maurepas holds his position unshaken with 3,000 men and six pieces of artillery. . . . This information is very exact. . . ." [40] But when Dugua reported this to the Minister of War it was translated into: General Debelle, after divers engagements with Maurepas, general of brigade (a Negro), has received the submission of this chief who has judged it more prudent to become a servant of the Republic than to get him-

[40] Nemours, *Histoire Militaire . . .*, Vol. II, p. 261.

self piked by our gallant soldiers whose ardour it is impossible to resist." [41]

With these smoothly false reports Bonaparte must have thought that the job, if not quite finished, would not present much difficulty, and there was no more necessity to prevaricate.

He did not begin with San Domingo or Guadeloupe. He started with the French colonies that had been restored by Britain to France at the Treaty of Amiens. At a session of the Legislature in May, Bruix explained the new policy. "Free peoples are jealous of their noble prerogatives. They have their egoism; but the sentiment must not be carried too far"—not as far as the French West Indies at any rate. The blacks were referred to as "the guilty," and many proposed that they should be terrorised by decimation. The Abbé Grégoire, still a legislator of France, sat listening to them. Perhaps in his mind's eye the gallant old priest saw, not these heartless rapacious representatives of the new bourgeois France, but the Convention on that day of February 4th, eight years before, when slavery had been abolished without a debate. But the Paris masses were in the streets then. The Abbé Grégoire said nothing, and Bonaparte, noticing it, asked him for his opinion. "I think," replied Grégoire, "that listening to such speeches is sufficient to show that they are spoken by whites. If these gentlemen were this moment to change colour they would talk differently." Bonaparte swore at him, and the restoration of slavery for Martinique, Ile-de-Bourbon, and other islands was passed by 211 votes to 60.

But the maritime bourgeois were clamouring for more. In a few days the slave-trade was officially restored for all the colonies, and the incoming Africans were to be slaves as of old; followed step by step the prohibition of coloured people coming to France, the restoration of the prohibition of mixed marriages, and discrimination against Mulattoes. Bonaparte stopped short at actually declaring slavery restored in San Domingo and Guadeloupe. But even before the first decree in May he had written to Richepanse and

[41] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 266.

Leclerc telling them to restore slavery when they saw fit. Rumours of all this were coming through to San Domingo, while Leclerc, with Bonaparte's instructions still his secret, continued to assure the blacks that he had no intention of restoring slavery.

As soon as Richepanse received Bonaparte's final instructions, he restored slavery. Every ship was bringing back émigré colonists to San Domingo, thirsting for revenge, eager for the old days. "No slavery, no colony." They said it openly, while Leclerc denied it, and the black and Mulatto population listened in alarm. Agents of the maritime bourgeois were busy trying to place orders.

Then one day late in July a frigate, the *Cockarde*, entered the harbour of Le Cap having on board blacks deported from Guadeloupe. That night some of them jumped overboard and swam ashore to give their brothers in San Domingo the news that slavery had been restored in Guadeloupe. The insurrection became general.

This unexpected exposure of Bonaparte's secret intentions threw Leclerc into mortal terror.

> *"Do not think of establishing slavery here for some time. I think I can do everything in order that my successor should have only the Government's decision to put into effect. But after the innumerable proclamations I have issued here to assure the blacks of their liberty, I do not wish to contradict myself; but assure the First Consul that my successor will find everything ready."* [42]
>
> *"The districts of Plaisance, Gros Morne, Port-de-Paix, St Louise, Le Borgne, are in revolt . . . but . . . I hope that this will be the last crisis.*
>
> *"The malady is making such frightful progress that I cannot calculate where it will end. The hospitals alone at Le Cap have lost this month 100 men a day.*
>
> *"To the maladies and insurrections must be added the shortage of cash in which you leave us. If that continues ever so little, with the reinforcements I expect*

[42] August 2nd, 1802. To the Minister of Marine.

and the hospitals so costly, I shall see my troops in revolt, because I shall not be able to administer to their needs." [43]

"My position is no better; the insurrection spreads, the malady continues. . . .

"All the blacks are persuaded, by letters which have come from France, by the law which re-established the slave-trade, by the decree of General Richepanse which re-established slavery in Guadeloupe, that the intention is to make them slaves again, and I can ensure their disarmament only by long and stubborn conflicts. These men do not wish to surrender. It must be admitted that on the eve of settling everything here, the political circumstances of which I have spoken to you above have almost destroyed my work. The unfortunate measures you have adopted have destroyed everything and inflamed minds. We will no longer be able to reduce the blacks except by force of arms. For this we need an army and funds, without which the prosperity of San Domingo is in grave danger.

"I have asked you, Citizen Minister, for a successor. That letter, like many others I have addressed to you, has received no reply. The Government must think of sending me a man who can replace me at need. It is not that I am thinking of quitting my post at a difficult moment, but my health is continually becoming worse, and there is no one who might replace me to the advantage of the Republic.

"I shall do all I possibly can to prevent the insurrection from spreading between now and the first Vendémiaire. By that time the 9,000 men you have promised me will no doubt have arrived. I shall go through the rebel districts with the same vigour I adopted in my first campaign. Terror will precede me

[43] *Ibid.*

and woe to those who will not obey me blindly; but for that I need money and troops." [44]

"Death has wrought such frightful havoc among my troops that when I tried to disarm the North a general insurrection broke out.

". . . I fear nothing from Christophe, but I am not so sure of Dessalines. The first attacks have driven the rebels from the positions they occupied; but they fell back to other cantons and in the insurrection there is a veritable fanaticism. These men get themselves killed, but they refuse to surrender. . . .

"I entreated you, Citizen Consul, to do nothing which might make them anxious about their liberty until I was ready, and that moment was rapidly approaching. Suddenly the law arrived here which authorises the slave-trade in the colonies, with business letters from Nantes and Havre asking if blacks can be sold here. More than all that, General Richepanse has just taken a decision to re-establish slavery in Guadeloupe. In this state of affairs, Citizen Consul, the moral force I had obtained here is destroyed. I can do nothing by persuasion. I can depend only on force and I have no troops.

". . . Now, Citizen Consul, that your plans for the colonies are perfectly known, if you wish to preserve San Domingo, send a new army, send above all money, and I assure you that if you abandon us to ourselves, as you have hitherto done, this colony is lost, and once lost, you will never regain it.

"My letter will surprise you, Citizen Consul, after those I have written to you. But what general could calculate on a mortality of four-fifths of his army and the uselessness of the remainder, who has been left without funds as I have, in a country where purchases are made only for their weight in gold and where with

[44] August 6th, 1802. To the Minister of Marine.

money I might have got rid of much discontent? Could I have expected, in these circumstances, the law relating to the slave-trade and above all the decrees of General Richepanse re-establishing slavery and forbidding the men of colour from signing themselves as citizens?

"I have shown you my real position with the frankness of a soldier. I am grieved to see all that I have done here on the point of being destroyed. If you had been a witness of the difficulties of all sorts which I have overcome, and the results I had obtained, you would grieve with me on seeing my position; but however disagreeable it may be, I still have hopes of succeeding. I make terrible examples, and since terror is the sole resource left me, I employ it. At Tortuga, of 450 rebels I had 60 hanged. To-day everything is in perfect order.

"All the proprietors or merchants who come from France speak of slaves. It seems that there is a general conspiracy to prevent the restoration of San Domingo to the Republic.

". . . Send me immediately reinforcements, send me money, for I am in a really wretched position.

"I have painted a pessimistic picture of my situation. Do not think that I am in any way cast down by what is happening. I shall be always equal to circumstances whatever they may be, and I shall serve you with the same zeal as long as my health permits me. It is now worse, and I am no longer able to ride. Bear in mind that you must send me a successor. I have no one here who can replace me in the critical situation in which the colony will be for some time. . . . Jérémie is in revolt. I have no other news from that quarter.

"Christophe and Dessalines have begged me not to leave them here after my departure. That allows you to judge of the confidence they have in me. I hope in the first days of Brumaire to be able to send to France or elsewhere all disruptive persons. . . . When I

leave, the colony will be ready to receive the régime which you wish to give it, but it will be for my successor to take the final step. If you agree, I shall do nothing contrary to what I have proclaimed here.

"General Richepanse conducts himself in a manner which is very impolitic and very clumsy in so far as San Domingo is concerned; if I had not cut off many heads here, I should have been chased from the island long ago, and would not have been able to fulfil your plans." [45]

"The black generals lead the columns; they are well surrounded.[46] *I have ordered them to make terrible examples* and I use them always when I have something terrible to do. . . .[47]

"The decrees of General Richepanse have repercussions here and are the source of great evil. The one which restored slavery, from having been issued three months too early, will cost the army and the colony of San Domingo many men.

"P.S.—I have just heard of a bloody fight that General Boyer has experienced at Gros-Morne. The rebels have been exterminated; 50 prisoners have been hung; these men die with an incredible fanaticism; they laugh at death; it is the same with the women. . . . This frenzy is the result of the proclamations of Richepanse and the fire-eating proposals of the colonists." [48]

"It appears to me from the orders that you send me that you have not got a clear idea of my position here. You order me to send the black generals to Europe. It would be very simple to arrest them all the same day; but I use these generals to quell the revolts which never stop. . . .

[45] August 6th, 1802. To the First Consul.
[46-47] Leclerc's emphasis.
[48] August 9th, 1802. This letter is not among those collected by General Nemours. It is quoted from Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, 1899, p. 258. This is the official French history.

"I have just discovered a great plot which aimed at raising the whole colony in revolt by the end of Thermidor. It was only partially executed for lack of a leader. It is not enough to have taken away Toussaint, there are 2,000 leaders to be taken away." [49]

The masses were fighting and dying as only revolutionary masses can, the French Army was wasting away, despair was slowly choking Leclerc. But still these black and Mulatto generals continued to fight for Leclerc against the "brigands," and the Mulattoes and former free continued to stick to the French, hoping that the fate of Guadeloupe and Martinique would not befall them. In August Charles Belair, heart-broken since Toussaint had been arrested—Toussaint used to call him his Labienus—and stirred to resentment at the cruelty of the French, joined the insurrection, and as if they were only waiting for someone in authority to lead them the whole population of the Artibonite revolted with him. This did not suit Dessalines. Belair was his rival, Toussaint's favourite, and Belair had in the early days of the expedition saved the lives of many whites. Dessalines invited him to an interview, hinting at a combination against the French. Belair and Sanite came, for the women were now fighting side by side with the men. Dessalines arrested them both and sent them to Leclerc. It was a treacherous crime, but it was not treachery to the revolution, for in the very month of August Dessalines and Pétion, while they hunted down "brigands," came to an understanding at last.[50] But Clairveaux the Mulatto, Christophe, Laplume, Paul L'Ouverture, Maurepas, stood waiting, God knows for what, and without them neither Dessalines nor Pétion could move.

With a skill and tenacity which astonished their seasoned opponents, the little local leaders not only beat off attacks but maintained a ceaseless harrying of the French

[49] August 25th, 1802. To the Minister of Marine.
[50] Sannon: *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. III, p. 120.

posts, giving them no peace, so that the soldiers were worn out and nerve-wracked, and fell in thousands to the yellow fever. When the French sent large expeditions against them they disappeared in the mountains, leaving a trail of flames behind them, returning when the weary French retreated, to destroy still more plantations and carry their attacks into the French lines. Running short of ammunition, the labourers in the mountains around Port-de-Paix attacked this important town, drove out the garrison, killed the whites, burned the houses that had been rebuilt, and took possession of the fort with 25,000 pounds of powder. Who comes to recapture it? Maurepas, who had commanded in the district and had so valiantly driven off the attacks of Humbert, Debelle and Hardy. He and the French, with a vigorous counter-attack, recaptured the fort, but "the insurgents with incredible activity . . . men, women and children, all had got back to the mountains more or less heavily laden." The masses of the North plain ran to put themselves under the guidance of these new leaders.[51]

All that the old gang would do was to threaten Leclerc. Some of the blacks who had been slaves attempted to purchase their freedom from their former masters. These refused, and singled out as their private property high officials and officers, men who had shed their blood on the battlefield and served with distinction in the administration. Christophe told General Ramel that if he thought slavery was to be restored, he would burn the whole of San Domingo to the ground. A black general dining with Lacroix pointed to his two daughters and asked him, "Are these to go back to slavery?" It was as if they could not believe it. So your liberal or social-democrat hesitates and dithers until the sledge-hammer of Fascism falls on his head, or a Franco launches his carefully prepared counter-revolution.

[51] Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir . . .*, Vol. II, p. 223.

On the night of October 11th at a reception given by Pauline Leclerc, Clairveaux, the Mulatto, said openly for everyone to hear, "I have always been free; only new circumstances have enabled me to elevate my reviled colour. But if I fancied that the restoration of slavery would ever be thought of, that instant I would become a brigand."

The Mulattoes were for the most part hostile to the return of slavery. But despite his threats, Clairveaux still hesitated. It was Pétion who acted and forced his hand. Pétion was holding positions near Le Cap, with Mulatto troops. All these men were only waiting on their leaders. At Pétion's command they spiked the guns, disarmed the Europeans, and with a singular humanity which they would soon regret allowed these to go back to Le Cap. Pétion then went to Clairveaux, told him that the colonial troops were in revolt, and that if he did not wish to pay with his head for these defections, the only thing was to join. Then only did Clairveaux join. Together Pétion and Clairveaux had 3,000 coloured soldiers devoted to them. Leclerc had but 300 white soldiers in Le Cap and had no suspicions of Mulatto defection. But for the vacillation of Clairveaux, a sudden movement would have put Le Cap and Leclerc himself into their hands entirely.[62] As it was the French had time to take the alarm, summon reinforcements, and put themselves in a state of defence. Thus when Pétion and Clairveaux did make the attack they were checked. But all white Le Cap was badly frightened. Leclerc sent over a thousand blacks on board ships in the harbour to get them out of the way; and when the battle began and he felt himself in danger, he ordered that they should be drowned. The sailors massacred them and threw them overboard.

Dessalines in the West was waiting. He had been preparing for weeks now, not giving in the arms that he was taking as he had done at first. As soon as he learned that Pétion and Clairveaux had started, he left Gonaïves and set out for Petite-Rivière, giving the word to his supporters

[62] Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution . . .*, p. 271.

to be ready to raise the labourers at a given signal. The priest of Petite-Rivière invited him to breakfast and he went, not knowing that word had already come for his arrest and that he was to be taken at the presbytery. Madame Pageot, the curé's servant, a Mulatto, laid the table and then brought Dessalines a bowl of water in which to wash his hands. Looking hard into his eyes, she pressed her elbows to her sides and then moved them backwards, a sign that he was going to be bound. Already the soldiers were surrounding the house. Dessalines bolted for the door. The curé called to him. He replied that he had to perform some military duty. He sprang on his horse, and followed by his guard he rode off towards Artibonite, firing three pistol-shots in the air and crying out "To arms! To arms!" It had been a near thing.

Christophe still hesitated for a day or two, but on October 14th he joined Pétion and Clairveaux at last. The Mulattoes in the South still stuck to the French, but in the North and West the masses now had trained soldiers and leaders.

Leclerc, through illness or bitterness, never wrote this news to his brother-in-law or to the Minister. He sent to beg Christophe to come back, promising him honours and riches. Christophe replied that he was rich and honoured enough in possessing liberty himself and in securing the liberty of his colour. On the night of November 2nd Leclerc died. But before he died he knew that he had failed, and that San Domingo was lost to France. Of 34,000 French soldiers who had landed, 24,000 were dead, 8,000 were in hospital, and 2,000 exhausted men remained. Thousands of brave black soldiers were dead for no other crime than that of refusing to be slaves once more. The colony was devastated, and blacks and whites were murdering each other with a growing ferocity, in what was called a race war, but whose origin was not in their different colours but in the greed of the French bourgeoisie. Leclerc knew that, whatever reinforcements were sent, all was over. Before he died he confessed his grief over an enterprise undertaken on men and by men worthy of a bet-

ter fate, on account of the services they had rendered and still would have been able to render to France. We owe him no thanks for the admission. It did not in any way mitigate the blood that would yet be shed and the suffering still to be borne before the people of San Domingo freed themselves from this abomination of murder, greed, cruelty, sadism, inhumanity, let loose upon them by Napoleon and his government, in the name of a superior civilisation.

"Unfortunately the condition of the colonies is not known in France. We have there a false idea of the Negro. . . .

"We have in Europe a false idea of the country in which we fight and the men whom we fight against."

There the ex-slaves of the San Domingo Revolution established their affinity with the population of revolutionary France. Between 1789 and Waterloo in 1815 the people of France staggered Europe and the world with the colossal scope of their achievements in war and in peace. No one had previously conceived that so much power was hidden in a people. Hilaire Belloc has perhaps expressed it best when he said that after August 1792 the reactionary classes of Europe armed against this new monster and set themselves two tasks, to reach Paris and to destroy democracy. The first task, he continues, took them twenty-two years; on the second they are still engaged.

We see the same in San Domingo. The population had been transformed. No one could have guessed the power that was born in them when Boukman gave the signal for revolt on that stormy August night in 1791. Rebellion, war, peace, economic organisation, international diplomacy, administration, they had shown their capacity. Now the new nation was to undergo its final test.

What happened in San Domingo after Leclerc's death is one of those pages in history which every schoolboy should learn, and most certainly will learn, some day. The national struggle against Bonaparte in Spain, the burning

of Moscow by the Russians that fills the histories of the period, were anticipated and excelled by the blacks and Mulattoes of the island of San Domingo. The records are there. For self-sacrifice and heroism, the men, women and children who drove out the French stand second to no fighters for independence in any place or time. And the reason was simple. They had seen at last that without independence they could not maintain their liberty, and liberty was far more concrete for former slaves than the elusive forms of political democracy in France.

Rochambeau succeeded Leclerc, and he was confident of success. Although in the North and West the French held only Le Cap and a few towns, Spanish San Domingo was absolutely quiet; the great body of Mulattoes in the South, especially the rich proprietors, were still loyal. Rochambeau, setting out for Le Cap to take command, left the black Laplume holding command in the South, and Laplume remained faithful to the end. The French were in a critical position, but Rochambeau asked for 15,000 troops at one stroke to destroy the "brigands," then another 10,000, and finally another 10,000. "These three despatches are indispensable. . . . A point not less essential for the success of our army is the total destruction or deportation of the black and Mulatto generals, officers and soldiers." How that black army worried them! Rochambeau asked to send that rascal Toussaint to the galleys: "If he comes here I shall hang him without trial." [63]

Before long he received 10,000 men from Bonaparte. Also the fever was abating, and convalescents began to return to their regiments. Rochambeau captured Fort Dauphin and Port-de-Paix, and grew even more confident. What seemed to have confused him was the policy of Dessalines and Pétion. Christophe and Clairveaux were attacking, but blacks and Mulattoes had long recognised Dessalines as Commander-in-Chief, with Pétion as his

[63] Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution . . .*, p. 326. Lacroix does not deal with this section. Writing as late as 1819 he dared not set down the truth. But he wrote a memorandum for Napoleon in which he sets down the full details of the course of events. *Les Archives Nationales*, AF. IV. 1212.

unofficial second-in-command. Dessalines travelled over the island reorganising the local troops. Many of the petty chiefs and rank-and-file viewed him, as was natural, with distrust. He and Pétion won them over or hunted them down and destroyed them. Dessalines drilled the raw levies daily, preparing for a campaign on a grand scale. In the middle of January Rochambeau asked for authorisation to restore slavery at once.[64] Leclerc had not even dared to confide Bonaparte's authorisation to him, so utterly opposed were the sentiments of even post-revolutionary France to the reactionary savagery of the maritime bourgeois.

While waiting for this authorisation Rochambeau began on his own account to exterminate the Mulattoes. They outnumbered the whites, and looking forward to the restoration of white supremacy he thought it as well to get rid of as many as possible: Rochambeau hated the Mulattoes more than the blacks. One night at Port-Républicain he gave a great ball to which he invited several of the Mulatto women. It was a magnificent fête. At midnight Rochambeau stops the dancing and begs them to enter into a neighbouring apartment. This room, lit by a single lamp, is hung with black draperies in which white material figures as skulls; in the four corners are coffins. In the middle of their horrified silence the Mulatto women hear funeral chants sung by invisible singers. Dumb with terror they stood rooted to the spot, while Rochambeau told them: "You have just assisted at the funeral ceremonies of your husbands and your brothers." [65]

The French shot and drowned them, hundreds at a time, and not only shot the rich but confiscated their property.[66] By early March the Mulatto South was in full insurrection. But the Spaniards in the West and Laplume still

[64] To the Colonial Minister. 25 Nivôse. An XI. (January 14th 1803.) *Les Archives du Ministère des Colonies.*
[65] Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. III, p. 150. This incident is found in two early historians, Ardouin and Delattre, who are referred to by Sannon.
[66] Lacroix. Memorandum to Napoleon. *Les Archives Nationales;* AF. IV. 1212. Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution . . .*, pp. 371-372.

stuck to the French. Rochambeau received in all 20,000 men after Leclerc's death.[67] But by now Dessalines was ready.

We cannot describe that war in detail. It was a war not so much of armies as of the people. It was now a war with the racial divisions emphasizing the class struggle—blacks and Mulattoes against whites. Leclerc had proposed a war of extermination, and Rochambeau waged it. As late as November 4th Kerverseau, who had served a long time under Toussaint, was confident that the French could still count on the "free Negroes and proprietors as much as on the whites." [68] But he counted without Rochambeau's precipitancy. One week later his tone had changed. "This is no longer a war. It is a fight of tigers. One has to be in a transport of frenzy to keep it up, and I have to keep on telling the troops: 'It is no longer bravery I want from you. It is rage.' But one cannot always be in a rage, and humanity makes us weep sometimes." [69] He wept but he fought.

Rochambeau drowned so many people in the Bay of Le Cap that for many a long day the people of the district would not eat fish. Following the example of the Spaniards in Cuba and the English in Jamaica, he brought 1500 dogs to hunt down the blacks. The day they arrived there was a fête.[70] In the grounds of a former Jesuit convent an amphitheatre was constructed, and on a certain day a young black was led in and bound to a post, while the whites of Le Cap, the women in brilliant costumes, sat waiting—(and Toussaint had shot Moïse and the blacks of Limbé, Dondon and Plaisance for their hostility to these very people). To the sound of martial music arrived Rochambeau, surrounded by his staff. But when the dogs were let loose they did not attack the victim. Boyer, chief of

[67] Lacroix, *Mémoires pour Servir . . .*, Vol. 2. B.253.
[68] Kerverseau to Lacroix. November 4th, 1802. *Les Archives du Ministère de la Guerre*, B7. 8.
[69] *Ibid.*, November 11th, 1802.
[70] Beard, the English author, says that the white ladies of Le Cap went down to meet the dogs the day they were landed and greeted them with kisses.

staff in place of the dead Dugua, jumped into the arena and with a stroke of his sword cut open the belly of the black. At the sight and scent of the blood the dogs threw themselves on the black and devoured him in a twinkling, while the applause ran round the arena and the band played. To encourage them in a liking for blood blacks were daily delivered to them, until the dogs, though useless in battle, would throw themselves on blacks at sight.[71] The French burned alive, hanged, drowned, tortured, and started again their old habit of burying blacks up to the neck near nests of insects. It was not only hatred and fear, but policy. "If France wishes to regain San Domingo she must send hither 25,000 men in a body, declare the negroes slaves, and destroy at least 30,000 negroes and negresses—the latter being more cruel than the men. These measures are frightful, but necessary. We must take them or renounce the colony. Whoever says otherwise lies in his throat and deceives France."[72] This was the general opinion of the whites. Kill them all off and get new ones who know nothing about liberty and equality. They chained 16 of Toussaint's generals to a rock where they wasted away 17 days. They drowned old Pierre Baptiste. The wife and children of Maurepas were drowned before his eyes, while the sailors nailed a pair of epaulettes into his naked shoulders. Some of the French, it is fair to say, turned in horror from this barbarism. A few captains of boats refused to drown the blacks handed over to them, but sold them into slavery instead. Some others landed them on deserted beaches in San Domingo or on other islands. Allix, Commander of Port-Républicain, would not accept 10,000 shot sent him to tie to the feet of those to be drowned. Rochambeau banished him. Mazard, another sea-captain, worked as hard to save blacks as most of his colleagues to drown them. But these were drops in the ocean. It was the

[71] Lacroix Memorandum. *Les Archives Nationales.* Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. III, pp. 152-153.
[72] Letter from Le Cap, October 6th (14 Vendémiaire An XI). *Les Archives Nationales.* Quoted in Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, p. 347. Needless to say, Stoddard has no objection whatever to this policy.

policy of the Tories that the British followed in Ireland, in 1921, not the remonstrances of the *Manchester Guardian* or the Society of Friends. So it is, so it always has been.

Dessalines was a one-sided genius, but he was the man for this crisis, not Toussaint. He gave blow for blow. When Rochambeau put to death 500 at Le Cap and buried them in a large hole dug while they waited for execution, Dessalines raised gibbets of branches and hanged 500 for Rochambeau and the whites in Le Cap to see. But neither Dessalines' army nor his ferocity won the victory. It was the people. They burned San Domingo flat so that at the end of the war it was a charred desert. Why do you burn everything? asked a French officer of a prisoner. We have a right to burn what we cultivate because a man has a right to dispose of his own labour, was the reply of this unknown anarchist.[73] And far from being intimidated, the civil population met the terror with such courage and firmness as frightened the terrorists. Three blacks were condemned to be burnt alive. A huge crowd stood round while two of them were consumed, uttering horrible cries. But the third, a boy of 19, bound so that he could not see the other two, called to them in creole, "You do not know how to die. See how to die." By a great effort he twisted his body in his bonds, sat down and, placing his feet in the flames, let them burn without uttering a groan. "I was there," said Lemmonier-Delafosse, "spectator of the heroic death of this wretch, greater than Mucius Scaevola. . . . These were the men we had to fight against."[74] Another thrown to the dogs showed no anger, but stroked them and encouraged them while he presented his limbs to be destroyed.[75] With the women it was the same. When Chevalier, a black chief, hesitated at the sight of the scaffold, his wife shamed him. "You do not know how sweet it is to die for liberty!" And refusing to allow herself to be hanged by the executioner, she took the rope and hanged herself.

[73] Lacroix Memorandum. *Les Archives Nationales.*
[74] Lemmonier-Delafosse, *Seconde campagne de Saint-Domingue précédée de souvenirs historiques et succints de la première campagne*, Paris, 1846.
[75] Lacroix Memorandum.

To her daughters going to execution with her, another woman gave courage. "Be glad you will not be the mothers of slaves."

The French, powerless before this fortitude, saw in it not the strength of the revolution but some peculiarity special to blacks. The muscles of a Negro, they said, contracted with so much force as to make him insensible to pain. They enslaved the Negro, they said, because he was not a man, and when he behaved like a man they called him a monster.

In the spring of 1803 Bonaparte was preparing vast armaments to send to San Domingo during the coming autumn. With sublime impudence he blamed the blacks for what was happening in San Domingo. At a meeting of the Institute at which Grégoire was present he said that the friends of the blacks should hide their heads at the news from San Domingo. That the blacks would not docilely submit to be slaves again was an unpardonable crime and they wreaked their vengeance on the man whom they considered mainly responsible for their disappointment. It was Toussaint's resistance which had upset all calculations.

The balked greed of Bonaparte and the French bourgeoisie, their hatred of the "revolted slave" who had ruined their plans, can be judged from the brutality with which they persecuted him. He landed at Brest on July 9th, saw his family for the first time since they had left Le Cap, and never saw them again. Not only Leclerc but Bonaparte feared him, and Bonaparte feared too the French Revolution which he and his kind had stifled. In a closed carriage and under instructions devised and carried out with the greatest rigour and secrecy, they hurried him across France. Bonaparte, it seems, was afraid that attempts might be made to rescue him. There were no blacks in France to do this, and such an attempt could have been anticipated from scattered Jacobins stirred to anger at this final degradation of the revolution—the restoration of slavery. But such fears were far-fetched. At one town some French officers who had served under him heard that he was passing through and asked to be allowed to salute their old commander.[76] That was all.

On August 24th, with his faithful servant, Mars Plaisir,[77] Toussaint was imprisoned in the Fort-de-Joux, situated in the Jura mountains, at an altitude of over 3,000 feet. Leclerc was writing his frantic letters charged with fear of the black leader. He could send no evidence on which to accuse him. But Governments do not need evidence, and Bonaparte did not murder Toussaint judicially because he feared the repercussions in San Domingo of a trial and execution. But he was to be got rid of and Bonaparte decided to kill him by ill-treatment, cold and starvation. On Bonaparte's strict instructions his gaolers humiliated him, called him Toussaint, gave him convict's clothes to wear, cut down his food, and when the winter came reduced his allowance for wood; they took away his servant.[78] Bonaparte sent his aide-de-campe, Caffarelli, to interview him, to find out where he had hidden his treasure, and what secret arrangements he had made with the British. Caffarelli had seven interviews with him and could find out nothing: there was nothing to find out. Toussaint had no treasure. He had not sold himself to the British.

The régime tightened always. His gaolers, still on Bonaparte's advice, watched him eat his food, watched him perform his natural functions. They feared that he might escape, and wanted him to die as quickly as possible, thinking that once the great leader was gone their chances in San Domingo would be better. He had medical attendance at first, but his gaoler soon dispensed with it. "The construction of Negroes being totally different to that of Europeans, I have dispensed with his doctor and his surgeon who would be useless to him." [79]

[76] Isaac L'Ouverture. Mémoires.
[77] He was a Mulatto—typical of Toussaint.
[78] Nemours, *Histoire de la Captivité et de la Mort de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*. Paris, 1929. The definitive account of Toussaint's captivity with many of the most important documents printed in full.
[79] Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution . . .*, p. 224. Poyen quotes the gaoler's official report.

He was 57 and quite early he broke down. He wrote long reports of his conduct, addressed letters to Bonaparte asking for trial, appealed to his greatness and magnanimity.

> *"I have had the misfortune to incur your anger; but as to fidelity and probity, I am strong in my conscience, and I dare to say with truth that among all the servants of the State none is more honest than I. I was one of your soldiers and the first servant of the Republic in San Domingo. I am to-day wretched, ruined, dishonoured, a victim of my own services. Let your sensibility be touched at my position, you are too great in feeling and too just not to pronounce on my destiny. . . ."*

In the warning to the Directory, as in his proclamations to his soldiers and to his people, so now in his personal grief the limitations of his political conceptions stood revealed. The sombre cadences in which he begged for trial are evidence of his fatal sincerity. Despite the treachery of France he still saw himself as a part of the French Republic "one and indivisible." He could not think otherwise. The decree of the 16th Pluviôse had marked in his mind the beginning of a new era for all French blacks. His experiences of French Commissioners, his fears for his people, his hard sense of reality, had driven him along the road of independence. But there was a limit beyond which he could not go. He had a profound conviction that the French could never restore slavery in San Domingo and he falsely believed that, once the means of defending liberty for all were safeguarded, no sacrifice was too great to make the French see reason. That was why his chief concern in prison was the fate of his wife and children. About the future of San Domingo he maintained an unshakable silence. His words to the captain when stepping on the boat were the last he ever said on that subject. The maintenance of liberty for all had been his life's work and the words and the silence afterwards were certainly intentional.

Shivering with cold, he was spending his first winter in a cell inadequately warmed, where the walls ran with moisture. His iron frame, which had withstood the privations and fatigues of ten incredible years, now huddled before the logs measured out by the orders of Bonaparte. The hitherto unsleeping intellect collapsed periodically into long hours of coma. Before the spring he was dying. One April morning he was found dead in his chair.

There is no drama like the drama of history. Toussaint died on April 7th, 1803 and Bonaparte must have thought that half the battle against San Domingo was now won. But in Toussaint's last hours his comrades in arms, ignorant of his fate, were drafting the declaration of independence.

For some months after November 1802, the national army still carried the French flag, and in December a rumour had spread among the French that the blacks and Mulattoes were not fighting for independence because they still carried the French colours. To end this Dessalines summoned a conference at Arcahaye. From the red, white and blue of the tricolour, the white was removed, and instead of the initials R. F. (République Française), "Liberty or Death" was inscribed. The new flag was unfurled on May 18th. On that very day some officers from the South, hastening back to their commands, were in danger of being captured by a French cruiser. Rather than surrender, Laporte, the senior officer, ordered the boat to be sunk and drew a pistol on himself, while the crew disappeared below the waves shouting, "Long live independence!" A few weeks after the Arcahaye Conference San Domingo learned that the war between Britain and France had begun again: Rochambeau was cut off by the British fleet.

This was welcome news, but the San Domingo blacks now knew all that there was to be known about imperialism. The British policy was opportunist. They attempted no hostilities against the coast towns and they allowed American vessels to provision Rochambeau at Le Cap.[80]

[80] Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. III, p. 185.

They were probably waiting to see if Rochambeau could win a temporary victory, at least in a part of San Domingo, when they could step in and capture it from the French. But in time they threw their full weight on the side of Dessalines, supplying arms and ammunition. Dessalines, however, sought no co-operation of any kind, and paid both English and Americans spot cash for all they sold him.[81]

The war in Europe was the turning point. Spanish San Domingo still remained quiet, but North, West, and South the revolution for national independence drove the French out of the fortified positions they occupied and penned them in the coastal towns.

It was a people's war. They played the most audacious tricks on the French. One night Lacroix wished to make a reconnaissance. He heard at a musket's distance a low voice saying, "Platoon, halt! To the right, dress!" This was repeated twenty times along an extended line. Soon he heard commands in creole from several chiefs not to whisper nor to smoke. The French made their dispositions and waited all night for a sudden attack. When day came, they found that they had been the dupe of about a hundred labourers. "These ruses, if one paid too much attention to them, destroyed one's morale; if they were neglected, they could lead to surprises." [82]

Not only on land but on sea the blacks and Mulattoes took an irresistible offensive. Building light boats they skimmed over the rivers and around the coasts, attacking ships, massacring the prisoners, and carrying off plunder. The French were helpless against them. The blacks ran their boats on shore, hid them, and carried on guerilla warfare against the French soldiers, then disappeared to sail quickly down the rivers and appear unexpectedly at sea. They captured two vessels, one from Nantes and one from Havre, which had escaped the blockade, and slaughtered

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[82] Lacroix, Memorandum to Napoleon. *Les Archives Nationales*, AF. IV. 1212.

all on board. The French, facing annihilation, defended themselves with desperate valour. But under the pressure of the attack and the blockade, a division broke out between the army and the local whites. Rochambeau, without money, levied heavy subventions on them and the local whites rebelled. They had been willing to live under Toussaint. Though some of them wished Leclerc had not come, being white, they had joined Leclerc's army and grasped eagerly at the chance to reassert white domination. But now that they saw their plantations destroyed, San Domingo in ruins, their lives in danger, and their possessions confiscated, they turned on Rochambeau and reproached him, some being anxious now only for peace with the blacks. The struggle became hopeless for the French, hopeless in their own internal divisions, hopeless in the numbers against them and the spirit which moved in the black army. The accounts must be read in the histories of Haiti and the memoirs of the French officers who survived. On November 16th the blacks and Mulattoes concentrated for a last attack on Le Cap, and the strongly fortified posts surrounding it.

Clairveaux, the Mulatto, was in command, and with him was Capois Death, a Negro officer, so called on account of his bravery. From early morning the national army attacked. In the afternoon under a crossfire of musketry and artillery Capois led the assault on the blockhouses of Bréda and Champlin, shouting "Forward, forward!" The French were strongly entrenched and drove off the blacks again and again only to see them return to the attack with undiminished ardour. A bullet knocked over Capois' horse. Boiling with rage he scrambled up and, making a gesture of contempt with his sword, he continued to advance. "Forward, forward!"

The French, who had fought on so many fields, had never seen fighting like this. From all sides came a storm of shouts. "Bravo! Bravo!" There was a roll of drums. The French ceased fire. A French horseman rode out and advanced to the bridge. He brought a message from Rochambeau. "The Captain-General sends his admiring compli-

ments to the officer who has just covered himself with so much glory." [83] Without a shot fired from the blacks, the horseman turned and rode back to the blockhouse and the battle began again. The struggle had been such a nightmare that by now all in San Domingo were a little mad, both white and black.

Half a century later Lemmonier-Delafosse (who believed in slavery) wrote his memoirs: "But what men these blacks are! How they fight and how they die! One has to make war against them to know their reckless courage in braving danger when they can no longer have recourse to stratagem. I have seen a solid column, torn by grape-shot from four pieces of cannon, advance without making a retrograde step. The more they fell, the greater seemed to be the courage of the rest. They advanced singing, for the Negro sings everywhere, makes songs on everything. Their song was a song of brave men and went as follows:

'To the attack, grenadier,
Who gets killed, that's his affair.
Forget your ma,
Forget your pa,
To the attack, grenadier,
Who gets killed, that's his affair.'

"This song was worth all our republican songs. Three times these brave men, arms in hand, advanced without firing a shot, and each time repulsed, only retired after leaving the ground strewed with three-quarters of their troop. One must have seen this bravery to have any conception of it. Those songs shouted into the sky in unison by 2,000 voices, to which the cannon formed the bass, produced a thrilling effect. French courage alone could resist it. Indeed large ditches, an excellent artillery, perfect soldiers gave us a great advantage. But for many a day that massed square which marched singing to its death, lighted by a magnificent sun, remained in my thoughts, and even to-day after more than 40 years, this majestic and glorious

[83] Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint-L'Ouverture*, Vol. III, p. 195.

spectacle still lives as vividly in my imagination as in the moments when I saw it."

It had stirred even such a hater of colour as Rochambeau to a chivalrous gesture. Dessalines, the local leader, was stationed on a neighbouring hill. Himself known as the bravest of the brave, even he was overcome at the spirit of Capois and his men, and dumb with admiration he sat watching the attack, twiddling his legendary snuff-box in his hand. A sudden torrential rain stopped the fighting. But it was the end. That night Rochambeau held a council of war and decided to evacuate the island. Toussaint had been dead only seven months, but his work was done. Of men who had cowered trembling before the frown of any white ruffian, he had made in ten years an army which could hold its own with the finest soldiers Europe has yet seen.

"There is no longer any doubt, my dear General," wrote the triumphant Dessalines to one of his officers in the South, "the country is ours and the famous *who will have it* is decided."

On November 28th, the day before that fixed for his departure, Rochambeau tried to come to terms for his men and ships with the British waiting for him outside the harbour. The British made the harshest terms, and Rochambeau threatened to land at Caracol and retreat to Spanish San Domingo, which still remained in the hands of the French. Dessalines warned him that if he did not clear out at once his ships would be bombarded with red-hot shot. Since early morning the furnaces of Fort Picolet had been burning, and Rochambeau had no alternative but to surrender to the British. Of 60,000 soldiers and sailors who had sailed from France nearly all had perished, and the few who remained were to rot and waste for years in English prisons.

On November 29th Dessalines, Christophe, and Clairveaux (Pétion was ill) issued a preliminary proclamation

of independence, moderate in tone, deploring the bloodshed of the previous years. On December 31st at a meeting of all the officers held at Gonaïves the final Declaration of Independence was read. To emphasise the break with the French the new State was renamed Haiti. Dessalines made an attempt to take Spanish San Domingo, but the French Revolution had never had any support there, and he failed. On October 1804 he had himself crowned Emperor. Private merchants of Philadelphia presented him with the crown, brought on the American boat the *Connecticut*, his coronation robes reached Haiti from Jamaica on an English frigate from London. He made his solemn entry into Le Cap in a six-horse carriage brought for him by the English agent, Ogden, on board the *Samson*.[84] Thus the Negro monarch entered into his inheritance, tailored and valeted by English and American capitalists, supported on the one side by the King of England and on the other by the President of the United States.

Early in the new year, 1805, the whites in Haiti were massacred by the orders of Dessalines. All histories are full of this. A representative of the British Government[85] once threw it in the face of the Haitian delegate at a meeting of the League of Nations. He would have been more cautious if he had known the part his own highly civilised country played in this supposedly typical example of black savagery.

The patience and forbearance of the poor are among the strongest bulwarks of the rich. The black labourers of San Domingo had had provocation enough from the whites to justify the massacre of three times their number. But up to October 1802, although they knew that slavery would be restored if they lost the war, they, poor wretches, still retained some traces of humanity, and even then some of the whites might have escaped massacre. All that the labourers wanted was to be left in peace with the assurance

[84] See note 87 on p. 371.
[85] Lord Cecil.

that the whites would not seek to make them slaves again. But Leclerc's letters tell us that he had resolved on a war of extermination. That in plain words was the massacre of as many blacks as possible. The drowning of over a thousand in Le Cap harbour at one stroke was no act of panic —it was deliberately done. This started the race war, and Rochambeau completed it by attempting to exterminate blacks and Mulattoes as well.

But the San Domingo whites, as they saw Rochambeau's policy and arms failing, turned once more to the blacks. Dessalines' moderate proclamation of November 29th reassured them. Dessalines even invited the white émigrés to return and enjoy their property. The blacks did not want their goods—"Far from our minds is such an unjust thought." The retiring French offered the whites places in their ships. They refused almost unanimously.[86] Abominable hypocrites as they were, now that their last bid for supremacy had failed, they were willing to accommodate themselves to an independent black State.

Why they were not allowed to do so was due not so much to the justified hate of the blacks but the calculated savagery of imperialism. Let us grant freely that Dessalines wanted to destroy all the whites. He had arranged with Rochambeau to protect the French wounded. As soon as Rochambeau left, he massacred them. But Christophe had certainly no such intention, and all Clairveaux' history shows him to have been a man who would not harbour any such ideas. But when the Congress met at Gonaïves in December, there were three Englishmen present, one of them Cathcart, an English agent. They swore that the English would trade with San Domingo and accord their protection for its independence only when the last of the whites had fallen under the axe.[87] These civilised cannibals in their greed for trade wanted to drive a wedge between

[86] Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution . . .*, p. 436.
[87] Guy, *La Perte de Saint-Domingue. Du Traité d' Amiens au Couronnement de Dessalines. D'après les mémoires . . . conservés aux Archives des Colonies. Fonds Moreau*, f. 283. M. Camille Guy, *Bulletin de géographie historique et descriptive*, No. 3, 1898, pp. 17-18.

Haiti and France to break all possibilities of unity, and instead of using their influence in the right direction chose to make these propositions to a people exasperated by centuries of provocation and strained to breaking-point by Leclerc's invasion and Rochambeau's cruelties. This is one of the most infamous and unjustifiable crimes in all this wretched history. Though there is no evidence, the Americans were probably in it too. All through Leclerc's compaign they took the part of the blacks, accused Leclerc of "crime, treason, assassination and sacrilege," [88] wrote in their journals of his perfidious machinations toward the "unfortunate Toussaint," and generally were consumed with that virtuous indignation characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon capitalist whenever property or profits is in danger. That the great majority of the British people would have revolted in horror from such barbarism there is no doubt, as the vast majority of Frenchmen after 1794 disapproved of slavery. But to-day as then, the great propertied interests and their agents commit the most ferocious crimes in the name of the whole people, and bluff and browbeat them by lying propaganda.

The first draft of the proclamation handed to Dessalines at the Congress was rejected by him as being too moderate. The second, which met with his approval, struck the new note, "Peace to our neighbours. But anathema to the French name. Hatred eternal to France. This is our cry." Dessalines was crowned in October 1804. The white proprietors still remained untouched. The black population, despite incendiary proclamations by Dessalines, inciting them against the whites, did not molest them at all. In January the command was issued to massacre them all, but even then no holocaust took place.

In February and March Dessalines undertook a campaign against the French in San Domingo. He besieged Santo Domingo, and on the twenty-second day of the siege the town was about to fall into his hands when a French

[88] Extracts from American papers among Leclerc's Archives. *Les Archives du Ministère de la Guerre.* B⁷6.

squadron appeared in the harbour, commanded by Admiral Missiessy. At the same time the rumour ran that another French squadron was in the harbour of Gonaïves. Dessalines, feeling that Haiti was menaced, raised the siege and hurried back home. It was then that the complete massacre took place. The population, stirred to fear at the nearness of the counter-revolution, killed all with every possible brutality. After the first slaughter Dessalines issued a proclamation promising pardon to all who were in hiding. They came out, and were immediately killed. Yet Dessalines took great care to protect the British and the American whites, and spared also the priests, the skilled workmen, and the officers of health. Toussaint had written to Bonaparte asking for just such persons as these to help. And even the fierce and uncultured Dessalines, though with the marks of the whip on his skin, would have been willing to let bygones be bygones if there had been any semblance of good feeling or generosity on the other side. This is not idealism. We have Bonaparte's letter when he was about to direct his energies to the East. He was willing to let Toussaint govern then. And at St Helena he confessed that the expedition had been a mistake, and he should have ruled the island through Toussaint L'Ouverture. He had been convinced at last by the only argument that imperialists understand.

The massacre of the whites was a tragedy; not for the whites. For these old slave-owners, those who burnt a little powder in the arse of a Negro, who buried him alive for insects to eat, who were well treated by Toussaint, and who, as soon as they got the chance, began their old cruelties again; for these there is no need to waste one tear or one drop of ink. The tragedy was for the blacks and the Mulattoes. It was not policy but revenge, and revenge has no place in politics. The whites were no longer to be feared, and such purposeless massacres degrade and brutalise a population, especially one which was just beginning as a nation and had had so bitter a past. The people did not want it—all they wanted was freedom, and independence

seemed to promise that. Christophe and other generals strongly disapproved.[89] Had the British and the Americans thrown their weight on the side of humanity, Dessalines might have been curbed. As it was Haiti suffered terribly from the resulting isolation. Whites were banished from Haiti for generations, and the unfortunate country, ruined economically, its population lacking in social culture, had its inevitable difficulties doubled by this massacre. That the new nation survived at all is forever to its credit for if the Haitians thought that imperialism was finished with them, they were mistaken.

Pitt, Dundas and the rest were very satisfied. The wonderful colony of San Domingo was no longer a rival. Having failed to get it for themselves, they turned their minds definitely away from the West Indies. But France wanted the colony back. Only the war with England and the destruction at Trafalgar of the French fleet (weakened by the loss of all the sailors in San Domingo) prevented another expedition. The French bourgeoisie bided its time. Always they planned to restore slavery. Mauviel, the Bishop who had been spared by Dessalines, acted as a spy, and informed Bonaparte of the various fortifications and plans for defence. The reverend gentleman, deprecating that "his sphere was not the military art," modestly submitted to Napoleon an actual plan of campaign. Most of the blacks, he was sure, wanted to be slaves. But above all in the colonies, "with the difference of colour, and with their warm climate, religion was necessary to restrain the effervescence of the passions. Without it the blacks would again abandon themselves to their brutal instincts and would indulge in new excesses. It is only by speaking to them in the name of God that one would henceforth be able to persuade them that the state of dependence in which they are placed is in the order of the Divine Providence." [90] Nevertheless,

[89] Poyen, *Histoire Militaire de la Révolution . . .*, p. 470.
[90] Mauviel. Memorandum to Napoleon. *Les Archives Nationales* A.F. IV. 1212.

after restoration there should be an armed police and gendarmerie, "mobile columns patrolling all points," light boats constantly cruising in the harbours. Religion, it seemed, was not enough.

How to make these future slaves accept slavery? Another gentleman proposed that they should be taught to read but not to write. Thus they could read their prayers and improving books, in which they would learn of the cruelties practised by the Spaniards and the English on the Red Indians. Particularly he wanted put in how the English invited the Red Indians to celebrate a treaty of alliance and poisoned them in rum.[91] Yet another proposal suggested that an expedition should "not only draw forth into activity the dormant and stagnant capital of individuals in France itself, but also attract monied men of other countries. . . ." This proposal came from England or America, for it was written in English. The rulers of Haiti were to be pensioned and pardoned.

Those who knew San Domingo, however, knew that there would never be any more slavery for the blacks there, and Lacroix' proposal was to exterminate those who remained and bring fresh ones from Africa.[92] This was the prevailing opinion. Lacroix was a brave soldier and a highly educated man. He knew the black leaders personally. Even after the defeat he wrote in high praise of them and their people, but there is nothing so fierce as an imperialist in the colonies.

Finally[93] those black Haitian labourers and the Mulattoes have given us an example to study. Despite the temporary reaction of Fascism, the prevailing standards of human liberty and equality are infinitely more advanced and more profound than those current in 1789. Judged relatively by these standards, the millions of blacks in Africa and the few of them who are educated are as much pariahs in that vast prison as the blacks and Mulattoes of San Do-

[91] Various Memoranda on America. *Les Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères.*
[92] Lacroix. Memorandum to Napoleon.
[93] See Preface to the Vintage Edition, p. vii.

mingo in the eighteenth century. The imperialists envisage an eternity of African exploitation: the African is backward, ignorant. . . . They dream dreams. If in 1788 anyone had told the Comte de Lauzerne, the Minister; the Comte de Peynier, the Governor; General Rochambeau, the soldier; Moreau de Saint-Mery, the historian; Barbé de Marbois, the bureaucrat, that the thousands of dumb brutes who were whipped to labour at dawn and whipped back at midnight, who submitted to their mutilations, burnings, and other savageries, some of whom would not even move unless they were whipped, if these fine gentlemen had been told that in three years the blacks would shake off their chains and face extermination rather than put them on again, they would have thought the speaker mad. While if to-day one were to suggest to any white colonial potentate that among those blacks whom they rule are men so infinitely their superior in ability, energy, range of vision, and tenacity of purpose that in a hundred years' time these whites would be remembered only because of their contact with the blacks, one would get some idea of what the Counts, Marquises, and other colonial magnates of the day thought of Jean-François, Toussaint, and Rigaud when the revolt first began.

The blacks of Africa are more advanced, nearer ready than were the slaves of San Domingo. This is the appeal written by some obscure Rhodesian black in whom burns the fire that burnt in Toussaint L'Ouverture:[94]

"LISTEN *to this all of you who live in the country, think well how they treat us and to ask for a land. Do we live in good treatment, no; therefore let us ask one another and remember this treatment. Because we wish on the day of 29th April, every person not to go to work, he who will go to work, and if we see him it will be a serious case. Know how they cause us to suffer, they cheat us for money, they arrest us for loafing, they persecute us and put us in gaol for tax. What reason have we done? Secondly do you not wish to hear*

[94] Command 5009.

these words, well listen, this year of 1935, if they will not increase us more money stop paying tax, do you think they can kill you, no. Let us encourage surely you will see that God be with us. See how we suffer with the work and how we are continually reviled and beaten underground. Many brothers of us die for 22s. 6d. is this money that we should lose our lives for? He who cannot read should tell his companion that on the 29th. April not to go to work. Those words do not come from here, they come from the wisers who are far away and enable to encourage us.

"That all. Hear well if it is right let us do so.

"We are all of the Nkana.

"Africans—Men and Women.

"I am glad,

"G. LOVEWAY."

Such men as Loveway are symbols of the future. Others will arise, and others. From the people heaving in action will come the leaders; not the isolated blacks at Guys' Hospital or the Sorbonne, the dabblers in *surréalisme* or the lawyers, but the quiet recruits in a black police force, the sergeant in the French native army or British police, familiarising himself with military tactics and strategy, reading a stray pamphlet of Lenin or Trotsky as Toussaint read the Abbé Raynal.

Nor will success result in the isolation of Africa. The blacks will demand skilled workmen and teachers. International socialism will need the products of a free Africa far more than the French bourgeoisie needed slavery and the slave-trade. Imperialism vaunts its exploitation of the wealth of Africa for the benefit of civilisation. In reality, from the very nature of its system of production for profit it strangles the real wealth of the continent—the creative capacity of the African people. The African faces a long and difficult road and he will need guidance. But he will tread it fast because he will walk upright.