

Fall of *Ancient Régime* at Saint Domingue

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“The European voyager who, on a morning of early 1789, raised the eastern cape of the island of San Domingo and sailed along its northern shore, had before his eyes substantially the panorama of to-day: a wall of high green hills, clothed with forests and backed by glimpses of mountain-peaks far in the hazy distance. No sign of man broke upon the lonely coast, for this was the decayed and neglected colony of Spanish Santo Domingo. But when he had crossed the wide-bay-mouth of Mancenille and again neared the land, the scene was changed as by an enchanter’s wand. There lay before him a noble plain, teeming and throbbing with human life to its very background of lofty mountains; a vast checkerboard of bright green sugar-cane, upon which rose white columns of tall chimneys and tree-empowered plantation mansions. Where a mountain spur neared the sea, its slopes were belted with coffee-plantations almost to its wooded crest. When the sudden tropic night fell, the long coast sparkled with lights, while ever and anon a sudden flame from some boiling-house stack lit up the countryside with its glare. For this was the French portion of the island, - La Partie Française de Saint-Domingue.”¹ The purpose of this short poetic description of the coast of island called by Columbus Hispaniola was not merely to contrast the economic stagnation of its Spanish part and dynamism of its French portion but to emphasize the exceptional development of Saint Domingue which became the richest world colony in the last decades of the *ancien régime*. There was a prize to be paid for such prosperity. It was enormous brutality and sufferings of millions of black slaves deported from African coast.

1) Lothrop Theodor STODDARD, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, Boston, 1914, p. 1-2.

The epic of the only successful revolution of black slaves in the history of mankind led by the heroic figure of “black jacobin” Toussaint Louverture that changed the traditional oppression of French colony of Saint Domingue into a new type of military despotism of the black state of Haiti has been narrated many times from different points of view.² However, the detailed description and critical analysis of the first stage of the dramatic events at the twilight of the French power at Saint Domingue from 1789 to 1792 – before the moment when the local radical mulattoes and blacks became the principal actors of the political and revolutionary struggle and the political role of white colonists was marginalized – has been relatively neglected. The rise and personal tragedy of Toussaint Louverture is much more attractive issue to be studied and related than the agony of the society of planters doomed inevitably to historical failure. Nevertheless, I am convinced that because of the tremendous importance of the Caribbean colony for the economic life of the French society of the eighteenth century the complete collapse of “tropical version” of *ancien régime* at Saint Domingue presents an integral part of the history of French revolution and an interesting case-study for any scholar focused on the comparative analysis of revolutions at the threshold of modernity. Jean Jaurès wrote that there is a “*sad irony of human history*” that “*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*.”³

When Christopher Columbus on his first voyage had left the Leucayan Islands, on the fifth of December 1492 he saw the coast of Haiti, which he regarded as the continent. He anchored at the western part of the island. Columbus captured by beautiful nature reminding him Spain named the

place Saint Nicholas and the island *Espagnola (Hispaniola)* or *Little Spain*.⁴ Later Columbus erected a small fortress called Navidad from the day of the nativity (December 25th).⁵ In one decade, the number of former inhabitants of the island had been reduced from a million to less than sixty thousand. In 1511, there were only fourteen thousand native Indian left.⁶ However, the conquest of mainland and fall of Indian states in Mexico and Peru drained away the local European population and the island was marginalized in the system of Spanish world-empire.⁷ Santo Domingo, the capital of Hispaniola, was seriously damaged by Francis Drake in 1586. The buccaneers, maritime adventurers from British Isles, Holland, and France, took possession of the island of Tortuga located northwest of Haiti in 1630. Some of them, mostly of French origin, established a settlement on the southwestern shore of Haiti as a nucleus of French territory at the island.⁸ In 1656, Bertrand Dageron was sent from France to Hispaniola as a first Governor of new French colony of Saint Domingue.⁹ In the peace of Ryswick in 1697 Spain officially recognized the French presence and ceded the western portion of Hispaniola to France.¹⁰ England acknowledged the French possession of Saint Domingue in 1714.¹¹

The main reason of the French expansion in the Caribbean region used to be to challenge the Spanish hegemony in the New World. French governor of Saint Domingue Du Casse remarked in his letter to Paris in 1699: “*Je ne regarde pas cette colonie de Saint-Domingue par la culture du sucre, indigo et tabacs, ny autres denrées qui se font dans l’Amérique, mais comme une place d’armes pour unir à la monarchie française les importants*

2) James STEPHEN, *The History of Toussaint Louverture*, London, 1814; Louis DUBROCA, *La Vie de Toussaint-Louverture, chef des noirs insurgé de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, 1802; Thomas Prosper GRAGNON-LACOSTE, *Toussaint Louverture*, Paris, 1877; Charles Wyllys ELLIOTT, *St. Domingo, its revolution and its hero, Toussaint Louverture*, New York, 1855; Antoine Marie Thérèse MÉTRAL, and Isaac TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE, *L’Expédition des Français à Saint-Domingue, sous le consulat de Napoléon Bonaparte*. Paris, 1825; Ida A. TAYLOR, *Revolutionary Types*, London, 1904; Alphonse de LAMARTINE, *Toussaint Louverture: Poème dramatique*, Paris, 1850; Madison Smartt BELL, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography*, New York, 2007.

3) C. L. R. JAMES, *The Black Jacobins*, London, 2001, p. 39.

4) John Rely BEARD, *Toussaint L’Ouverture: Biography and Autobiography*, Boston, 1863, p. 22.

5) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

6) *Ibid.*, p. 25.

7) Lothrop Theodor STODDARD, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, Boston, 1914, pp. 2-3.

8) RAYNAL, IV, p. 36.

9) RAYNAL, *Histoire philosophique et politique, Des Établissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, Amsterdam, 1770, V, pp. 88-90; BEARD, p. 26-27.

10) Marcus RAINSFORD, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti: Comprehending a View of the Principal Transactions in the Revolution of Saint Domingo; with its Antient and Modern State*, London, 1805, pp. 57-58.

11) STODDARD, p. 4.

*clefs du Mexique, du Pérou et du royaume de Santa Fé.*¹² For instance, the strong fortress of the Môle-Saint-Nicolas was called the “*Gibraltar of the Antilles*”.¹³ Nevertheless, the fast and successful development of plantation economy based on sugar-cane, coffee, cocoa, cotton and indigo and dynamic commerce changed completely the position and role of Saint Domingue in the system of French overseas territories.¹⁴ *Compagnie de Saint Louis* to support the French economical activities was established in 1698.¹⁵ However, because of its slow progress and disappointing results it was replaced by *Compagnie des Indes* in 1724.¹⁶ The wealth of island originated from its rich soil and forced labor of African slaves. In 1789, Saint Domingue contained 793 sugar plantations, 3,117 coffee plantations, 789 cotton plantations and 182 establishments for making rum.¹⁷ In 1767, the value of the products of the French colony was 77 million francs; in 1774, 82 million francs; in 1776, 95.1 million francs and in 1799, it achieved its peak of 176 million francs.¹⁸ In the year 1791, goods exported from Saint Domingue to France had the value of 133.5 million francs.¹⁹ John Rely Beard estimated that the entire value of the wealth accumulated by the plantation economy (including slaves) amounted to 992 million francs at the dawn of the French Revolution.²⁰ The value of about 480,000 black slaves was 758.3 million francs;²¹ therefore, three-fourth of the property of the planters was composed of black slaves.²² By 1789 Saint Domingue became the most important market of the New World. It received in its ports 1,587 ships, more than Marseilles. In 1789 the export trade of Great Britain was twenty seven million pounds, that of France seventeen million pounds, of which the trade of Saint

Domingue accounted for about eleven million pounds. For comparison, the whole British colonial trade was five million pounds.²³ Therefore, it is not surprising that French Saint Domingue was called “*the gem of the West Indies, and the spectacle of its marvelous prosperity was perhaps enhanced by contrast with its Spanish neighbor*”.²⁴

The economic life of Saint Domingue was subordinated to the strict mercantilist system known as the “*Pacte Coloniale*”. It could be encapsulated by five basic rules: 1) the colony must send its products only to the mother country; 2) the colony must buy only from the mother country; 3) the colony must establish no manufactures; 4) the mother country agreed to buy its tropical products only from the colony; 5) the carrying-trade with the colony must be the monopoly of the mother country’s merchant marine.²⁵ The mercantilist system caused some problems with the supplying of colonies especially when war conflicts cut the trade routes. For instance, during the Seven Years’ War many slaves at Saint Domingue died of hunger.²⁶ In 1767, Étienne-François de Choiseul opened a port of Môle-Saint-Nicolas for foreign trade.²⁷ In 1784, further openings were made in Le Cap Français, Port-au-Prince, and Les Cayes.²⁸ The Anglo-French commercial treaty of 1786 and the Franco-American convention of 1787 sealed the fate of the “*Pacte Coloniale*” and opened the island for foreign trade.²⁹

12) Pierre de VAISSIÈRE, *Saint-Domingue, 1629-1789*, Paris, 1909, p. 16.

13) STODDARD, p. 7.

14) Franklin W. KNIGHT, *The Haitian Revolution*, in: *The American Historical Review* 105 (1), 2000, p. 103-115.

15) VAISSIÈRE, p. 40; RAYNAL, V, p. 95.

16) VAISSIÈRE, p. 43-44.

17) RAINSFORD, p. 85.

18) Because of political unrest the value of the products of Saint Domingue fell abruptly to 65.4 francs in 1801 - see BEARD, p. 19.

19) 27 million dollars - see *Ibid.*, p. 19.

20) *Ibid.*, p. 19.

21) The animals were worth 5.2 millions francs - see *Ibid.*, p. 20.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 20.

23) JAMES, pp. 40-41.

24) STODDARD, p. 6.

25) *Ibid.*, p. 16. Royal edict from October 1727 included three following articles: 1) “*Defendons à tous nos sujets dans notre royaume et dans les colonies soumises à notre obéissance de faire venir des pays étrangers et colonies étrangères aucuns nègres, effets, denrées et marchandise pour être introduits dans nosdites colonies, à l’exception, néanmoins, des chairs salées d’Irlande*”; 2) “*Défondons ... à nosdits sujets de faire sortir de nosdits isles et colonies aucuns nègres, effets, denrées et marchandises, pour être envoyés dans les pays étrangers ou colonies étrangères. Permettons néanmoins aux négocians français de porter en droiture de nos isles d’Amérique dans les ports d’Espagne les sucres de toute espèce, à l’exception des sucres bruts, ensemble toutes les marchandises du cru des colonies*”; 3) “*Les étrangers ne pourront aborder avec leurs vaisseaux ou autres bâtimens dans les ports, anses et rades de nos isles*” - see VAISSIÈRE, p. 30.

26) STODDARD, p. 18.

27) *Ibid.*, p. 18.

28) *Ibid.*, p. 18.

29) *Ibid.*, p. 18.

The French colony of Saint Domingue was divided into three provinces – the North, the West, and the South.³⁰ The North Province with the capital city Cap Français with twenty thousand inhabitants was the oldest, richest and the most densely populated area of the island. However, it was isolated from the rest of the country by a mountain-chain running from east to west. The West Province presenting the central portion of the Saint Domingue was not so prosperous. Its main city Port-au-Prince was a busy port with about eight thousand inhabitants and the seat of *conseil supérieur*, commandant-général and Intendant (after 1750).³¹ The occurrence of earthquakes made it a town of low wooden houses (the lesson apparently forgotten till January 2010), which was sometimes compared to a “Tartar camp”.³² The South Province with the capital Les Cayes was the least important from economic and demographic point of view.³³

The climate was very injurious for health of Europeans. Placed within the tropics, the island has hot but humid climate liable to great and sudden changes.³⁴ “*In this climate the European must be always on his guard. The sun is a danger, the evening-cool a menace, the rain not less fatal,*” remarked one visitor in 1785.³⁵ The hot months from April to September were the time of malaria and yellow fever; the cooler rainy season brought intestinal diseases.³⁶ Abbé Raynal remarked that “*la plupart des Français qui arrivent dans la colonie, n’ont ni ressources, ni talens. Avant qu’ils ayent acquis assez d’industrie pour subsister, ils sont presque tous enlevés par des maladies mortelles*”.³⁷

The territory of Saint Domingue like all other West Indian settlements was inhabited by three different “racial groups” or “orders of people” including the “pure” whites, the “free colored” (both mulattoes and blacks,

known by the name *sang mêlée*, or *gens de couleur*)³⁸ and the black slaves.³⁹ The official data from 1788 gave about 28,000 whites, 22,000 “free colored” and 405,000 slaves living in the island.⁴⁰ The colony was divided into fifty-two parishes, each of which supplied at least one company of whites, mulattoes, or blacks to serve in the militia. The King’s troops included from two thousands to three thousands soldiers.⁴¹

The white population of Saint Domingue represented a social “micro-cosmos” of contemporary France with almost all its animosities and jealousies. It was predominantly foreign-born; possibly over one half or three fourths were of European birth.⁴² Big owners of plantations of European descent (*grands blancs*) “*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 civilization. ... 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 India interest in England*”.⁴³ Alexandre de Wimpfen who visited the colony at the beginning of French revolution wrote that “*the first thing that strikes every traveler is that in spite of the conformity of origin, color, and interests, the whites from Europe and the white Creoles form two classes, which, by their mutual pretensions, are so widely sundered that necessity alone can bring them together. The former, with more breeding, more politeness, and more knowledge of the world, affect over the latter a superiority which is far from contributing to unite them*”.⁴⁴ Similarly, abbé Raynal emphasized that the European class of Saint Domingue suffered from disunion and a lack of “national conscious-

30) At the beginning of the French Revolution of 1789, these provinces were transformed into three corresponding Departments, which were subdivided into twelve Districts, each bearing the name of its chief city – see BEARD, p. 16.

31) RAYNAL, V, p. 106.

32) STODDARD, p. 8.

33) Ibid., pp. 6-7.

34) BEARD, p. 15.

35) STODDARD, p. 9.

36) Ibid., p. 10.

37) RAYNAL, V, p. 115.

38) “*Les affranchis de Saint-Domingue, comme ceux d’Athènes et de Rome, n’avaient pour droits politiques que le droit de propriété et de domicile ; ils touchaient à la classe des citoyens par la liberté, et à celle des esclaves par le peu de considération dont ils jouissaient*” – see LACROIX, p. 14.

39) Bryan EDWARDS, *The History Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies. To which is added, An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, London, 1798, p. 323.

40) STODDARD, p. 8.

41) EDWARDS, p. 325.

42) STODDARD, p. 21.

43) JAMES, pp. 23-24.

44) STODDARD, pp. 19-20.

ness": "Even the Creole is not always an American; he is a Gascon or Provençal, if he has chanced to learn his father's dialect or imbided his principles."⁴⁵

For many decades the only efficient power of Saint Domingue was independent and autonomous groups of military.⁴⁶ In 1685 the *Conseil supérieur du Petit-Goave* was established at Saint-Domingue as a first civil legal establishment; until that date the French portion of island was directly controlled by military.⁴⁷ The colony possessed some of the oldest blood of France⁴⁸ and the preponderance of warriors recruiting from the rank of French aristocracy over royal bureaucracy continued at least till the sixth decade of eighteenth century. There are some social and political reasons for this phenomenon. Pierre de Vaissière emphasized that the migration of the members of French aristocracy into Saint Domingue could be explained by their effort to preserve the traditional way of life of their ancestors and to escape the consequences of economic and social marginalization of their class in the time of centralization and bureaucratization of French state administration

45) Ibid., p. 20.

46) Governor Philippe-François Bart wrote in September 1761: "Une branche de l'autorité est entre les mains du militaire ; c'est une suite de l'origine et de l'établissement de la colonie ; c'est une nécessité même, eu égard à son état actuel. 8.000 blancs en tout, capables de porter les armes, sont disposés le long d'une côté qui a plus de 300 lieues de circuit. Près de 200.000 noirs, leurs esclaves et leurs ennemis, ou qui peuvent le devenir, sont autour d'eux le jour et la nuit. Il est donc nécessaire que ces 8.000 blancs soient armés et leurs armes sont encore bien faibles contre la trahison de leurs esclaves, qui peut rendre les femmes et les enfants même autant à craindre que les plus forts d'entre eux. Ces 8.000 blancs ainsi répandus ne sont point des hommes nés dans le pays, retenus par le lien de la patrie et du sang. Ce sont des hommes que l'intérêt a appelés de diverses parts. Ces hommes ainsi armés ne sont point dans les villes et des bourgs et bourgades, où des juges attentifs exercent un police exacte. Ils habitent au contraire çà et là, et y vivoient dans une espèce d'indépendance funeste à la société et à l'État même, si des rameaux de cette autorité militaire ne se subdivisoient pour s'étendre partout et y porter le principe de la subordination qui maintient tout dans l'ordre. Chaque petit quartier reconnoît donc un chef dans le plus ancien capitaine de milices" – see VAISSIÈRE, pp. 115–117.

47) "Les juges jusqu'en 1685 étaient les gouverneurs et les capitaines de milices, commandants de quartier. C'est en 1685 que MM. Bégon et Saint-Laurent établirent des juges royaux et un Conseil souverain" – see Ibid., p. 112. In 1702, the conseil was based in Cap Français – see RAYNAL, V, p. 93.

48) STODDARD, p. 22.

initiated by Richelieu.⁴⁹ Pierre de Vaissière argued that this predominance of military ("la supériorité exécrée du militaire") that developed in special conditions of colonial anachronism and system of slavery of Saint Domingue presented a resurrection of the traditional social role of armed and landed aristocracy protecting the monarchy.⁵⁰ The noblemen – seeking their independence – secured their position of armed protectors at Saint Domingue again and changed the island in something close to a sanctuary of *Fronde*.⁵¹ The members of aristocracy presented prominent personalities especially in the first decades of French rule at Saint-Domingue. For instance, Jean-Joseph de Paty defended in 1695 Port-de-Paix against Spaniards and later he was responsible for administration of Petit-Goave and military protection of west and south of the country. Another member of high aristocracy a military Pierre de Charritte was a governor of Cap Français from 1701 till 1716.⁵² The relations of the nobility of Saint Domingue with the French aristocracy were very close and deepened through frequent intermarriage. A deputation from the colony told to Louis XVI: "Sire, your court has become Creole by alliances."⁵³ In a certain sense, the migration of French high aristocracy to overseas anticipated its flight after 1789 and gave the social milieu of Saint Domingue a special conservative and military character.

Some foreign visitors and commentators noticed the degenerated state of local clergy. Alexandre de Wimpffen wrote in 1790 that many priests living comfortably with an income sufficiently large neglected their religious duties towards community.⁵⁴ It was not exceptional that some children

49) VAISSIÈRE, p. 104. Moreau de Saint-Méry remarked in *Mémoire historique et politique sur la colonie de Saint-Domingue* (1763): "Il y a 200 gentilshommes dans la dépendance du Cap et à proportion dans le reste de l'île. ... Ils vivent dans leurs terres qu'ils font cultiver. ... Les villes et les bourgs sont habités par de gros négociants, les officiers des sièges royaux, les avocats, procureurs et marchands" – see Ibid., p. 105.

50) Ibid., pp. 117–118.

51) "C'est avant tout son indépendance, son indépendance perdue, qu'instinctivement la noblesse française tenta de retrouver aux colonies, et du mouvement d'expansion de cette noblesse au XVIII^e siècle, ces causes profondes méritaient peut-être rappelées" – see Ibid., p. 118; JAMES, p. 44.

52) VAISSIÈRE, p. 120–121.

53) STODDARD, p. 22.

54) Ibid., p. 23.

from white families were not baptized. Father Labat found the main church of La Cap Français dilapidated.⁵⁵

The middle class at Saint Domingue was formed by town merchants and shopkeepers. Creoles (white and colored) born in the colony lived exclusively in the country.⁵⁶ So called “*petits blancs*” (small whites) represented the lower ranks of the white population of Saint Domingue.⁵⁷ The system of slavery did not enable to create “*white working class*”: “*No small white was a servant, no white man did any work that he could get a Negro to do for him.*”⁵⁸ Some authors describe them as “*vicious rabble of adventurers, drawn to Saint Domingue by the luxury and dissipation of urban life*”, or “*the scum of France, and of Europe as well*”; “*here his white skin made him a person of quality and rejected or failures in their own country flocked to Saint Domingue*”.⁵⁹ This “*mass of crooks and criminals*” from “*the underworld of two continents*”⁶⁰ were attracted by radicalism and Jacobinism and felt deep racial hatred towards blacks and mulattoes.⁶¹

The free mulattoes and free blacks presented a distinct social class of colony. In the seventeenth century the racial prejudice was not yet strong. The *Negro Code* in 1685 permitted marriage between the white and the black slave who had children with him; the black female and her children were subsequently emancipated. The *Negro Code* even gave the free mulattoes and free blacks equal rights with the whites.⁶² When the black and colored populations of Saint Domingue grew larger, the official colonial policy changed dramatically and the free colored people had to face strict restrictive laws and regulations. In 1786 wrote Desalles that “*the white who marries a colored woman descends from his rank of white, and becomes the equal of the freedman*”.⁶³ Despite this discrimination compared by C. L. R. James to Nazi

racial legislation,⁶⁴ the free mulattoes accumulated a vast amount of fortune including one third of the cultivated land.⁶⁵

Slavery presented a basic fundament of all social and economic structure of Saint Domingue before 1789 and main source of its prosperity. But it was its curse as well; Leroy-Beaulieu said that “*slavery like Saturn devours its own children*”.⁶⁶ The census of 1681 gives the slave population two thousand and that of 1687 about three thousand four hundred. The number of slaves by the year 1701 is estimated at twenty thousand and by the year 1754 two hundred thirty thousand.⁶⁷ Because of high mortality,⁶⁸ the importation per year from West African coast had to be quite large. An official memoir from 1785 gave the number of blacks exported to Saint Domingue from the West Coast of Africa as thirty four thousand, not including three or four thousand from Mozambique.⁶⁹ Therefore, at the dawn of French Revolution and the collapse of the local social and political structure a majority of the black slave population was African-born.⁷⁰

64) JAMES, p. 33.

65) Pamphile de LACROIX, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, 1819, p. 15; STODDARD, p. 46.

66) STODDARD, p. 52.

67) *Ibid.*, p. 50-51.

68) Due to improper food, undue labor, omnipresent violence and brutality and high infant mortality. *Ordonnance* from 15th of October 1786 tried to ameliorate the living conditions of the black slaves: “*Sa Majesté fait très expresses inhibitions et défenses à tous les propriétaires, procureurs et économes gérants, de traiter inhumainement leurs esclaves, en leur faisant donner plus de 50 coups de fouet, en les frappant à coups de bâton, en les mutilant, ou enfin en les faisant périr de différents genres de mort. Les maîtres ayant donné plus de 50 coups de fouet ou de bâton seront condamnés à 2.000 livres d'amende, et, en cas de récidive, déclarés incapables de posséder des esclaves. Ils seront notés d'infamie, s'ils ont fait mutiler leurs esclaves, et punis de mort toutes les fois qu'ils les auront fait périr de leur autorité, pour quelque cause que ce soit. Enfin, il est enjoint aux esclaves de porter respect et obéissance entière dans tous les cas à leurs maîtres ou à leurs représentantes; mais il est aussi défendu aux maîtres de châtier ceux qui réclameraient contre de mauvais traitements ou une mauvaise nourriture, à moins de plainte non justifiée*” - see VAISSIÈRE, p. 185-186.

69) STODDARD, p. 52.

70) *Ibid.*, p. 53.

55) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

56) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

57) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

58) JAMES, p. 27.

59) *Ibid.*, p. 27.

60) *Ibid.*, p. 27.

61) STODDARD, p. 26.

62) JAMES, p. 30.

63) STODDARD, p. 42.

In 1785, Abbé Raynal expressed his admiration for maroons,⁷¹ slave refugees having escaped to the woods and mountains. They formed independent communities and danger to the colony (Macandal revolt in 1758).⁷² In 1720, one thousand slaves fled to the interior of the island, and in 1751, there were at least three thousand of them.⁷³

The Minister of Marine in Paris, distant a six weeks voyage, appointed the Governor General and the Intendant with authority for three years. These high officials represented twofold local power of Saint Domingue.⁷⁴ The Governor General was the titular representative of the Crown, the military chief, and an official responsible for external relations. He was a head of militia and *gendarmerie* system. Sometimes he usurped both civil and judicial authority and governed under virtual martial law: *“The powers of the Governors were not fixed definitely by law, but were described in the commission given to each appointee and varied from time to time. To a Governor possessing a greater degree of the King’s confidence, especial power would be given.”*⁷⁵ Bryan Edwards wrote that *“his supreme command over the naval and military force; his power of imprisoning without a cause, and of allowing no arrest but with his own approbation; made the administrators of justice his slaves, and his will superior to the law”*.⁷⁶ For instance, Prince de Rohan, when acting as Governor General of Saint Domingue, arrested several members of superior court and sent them in France where they spent a long time in the Bastille, without a trial.⁷⁷

71) *“Il sera toujours beau de voir des peuples révoltés contre l’esclavage des negres. Ceux-ci s’enfoncerent dans les montagnes inaccessibles, où ils se sont multipliés au point d’offrir un asyle assuré à tous les esclaves qui peuvent les y aller joindre. C’est-là, que graces à la cruauté des nations civilisées, ils deviennent libres & féroces comme des tigres, dans l’attente peut-être d’un chef & d’un conquérant qui rétablisse les droits de l’humanité violée, en s’emparant d’une isle que la nature semble avoir destinée aux esclaves qui la cultivent, & non aux tyrans qui l’arrosent du sang de ces victimes”* – see RAYNAL, V, p. 125.

72) STODDARD, pp. 65–66.

73) JAMES, p. 16.

74) STODDARD, p. 10; EDWARDS, p. 324.

75) STODDARD, p. 11.

76) EDWARDS, p. 324.

77) EDWARDS, p. 325.

The Intendant whose office had been established at the beginning of the eighteenth century⁷⁸ was a head of civil administration and the judiciary. He had the control and inspection of all duties and taxes imposed by the Colonial Assembly, composed of Governor, Intendant, some commandants of militia and presidents of provincial councils.⁷⁹ Intendants were often accused of obstructionism and clientelism. The members of superior courts of Cap Français and Port-au-Prince were the General Governor and his deputies, the Intendant, King’s lieutenants, twelve counselors and four judge advocates (*assesseurs*).⁸⁰

The Governor as a representative of the *noblesse d’épée* used to be a former soldier or sailor; the Intendant as an incarnation of the *“noblesse de robe”* was a royal bureaucrat. The mutual relationship between both officials could be characterized by chronic rivalries, competition and jealousy.⁸¹ The natural outcome was an arbitrariness and inefficiency of the political system. Almost all foreign observers were very critical to the state of French colonial administration of Saint Domingue. *“This hybrid civil and military administration called a government has degenerated into a frightful mixture of tyranny and anarchy,”* remarked Hilliard d’Aubertcuil in 1776.⁸²

Despite the fact that in the second half of the eighteenth the social evolution and economic prosperity gradually changed the face of the colonial society of Saint Domingue and the civil and royal authorities and the rich planters started to play more important role in the political life and administration of the colony at the expense of the military,⁸³ Pierre de Vaisière was convinced that the position of the French aristocracy in the formation of the colonial society at the Saint Domingue should not have been un-

78) *“Jusqu’à cette date de 1703, il n’y eut pas d’intendant spécial à Saint-Domingue, mais seulement un intendant des îles françaises de l’Amérique. En 1703, le Roi nomma le sieur Deslandes commissaire-ordonnateur faisant fonction d’intendant à Saint-Domingue”* – see VAISSIÈRE, p. 110.

79) EDWARDS, p. 324.

80) Ibid., p. 325.

81) STODDARD, p. 11.

82) Ibid., p. 11.

83) VAISSIÈRE, p. 126.

derestimated.⁸⁴ However, the royal representatives following the policy of bureaucratization and centralization of the seventeenth century were highly suspicious toward the aristocratic party (*la noblesse d'épée*) at the colony.⁸⁵ The government tried to emasculate economic power of aristocracy and diminish its social prestige as well.⁸⁶ Intendant Jean-Baptiste Dubois Duclos complained that *la noblesse d'épée* regarded “*la colonie comme une place de guerre et les habitants comme des soldats qui n'ont d'ordre à recevoir que d'eux seuls*”.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the result of royal policy to marginalize military aristocracy seemed to be at least ambiguous till the second half of the eighteenth century.⁸⁸ Intendant Jean-Étienne Bernard de Clugny played a crucial role in a decrease of the role of *la noblesse d'épée* at the Saint Domingue. In Mars 24 1763, Clugny abrogated the militia presenting an important in-

strument of local power of aristocracy.⁸⁹ The local military leaders were replaced by trustees (*syndics*) responsible for civil administration of a territory.⁹⁰ Clugny decided to convoke an assembly of the representatives of Saint Domingue to seal the triumph of civil administration over military one.⁹¹ Governor Charles Henri Théodat d'Estaing accused him in 1766 to “*d'avoir contribué plus que personne au renversement des anciens principes des colonies*”.⁹² However, Clugny's attempt to suppress the militia for its aristocratic tilt resulted in a failure and chaos affecting all colonial life. Robert d'Argout, who became the governor in 1777, complained in 1763 that white colonists and planters deprived of the protection of militia became target of the violent attacks of fugitive black slaves and maroons.⁹³ The newly appointed officers seemed to have neglected public works and collection of taxation.⁹⁴ D'Estaing argued that “*la supériorité de M. de Clugny sur M. Bart (gouverneur) a produit la révolution. ... L'ordonnance provisoire du 24 mars 1763*

84) “*Est-il vraiment possible, je le demande, d'indiquer plus précisément et plus finement le rôle de la noblesse dans la formation de la société française à Saint-Domingue, de cette noblesse autour de laquelle se groupèrent peu à peu, sans doute, pour faire corps avec elle, tous ceux que les sentiments, sinon la naissance, en rapprochaient, mais qui fut toujours le modèle auquel tint à honneur de se conformer la meilleure partie et la plus saine de la population, et qui, à Saint-Domingue aussi bien qu'ailleurs, doit être considérée comme l'agent le plus actif de la civilisation française; de cette noblesse dont l'influence morale fut si indéniable que la qualité de gentilhomme en arriva à devenir, aux îles, le synonyme du titre d'honnête homme; de cette noblesse, enfin, dont le rôle eût pu être bien plus fécond si, dans un stupide aveuglement, la monarchie n'avait adopté à son égard la plus déplorable politique, et engagé contre elle la lutte la plus néfaste*” - see Ibid., p. 127-128.

85) Ibid., p. 129.

86) For instance, in 1719 “*ordonnance*” forbade to all members of general staff to own land in the colony - see Ibid., p. 129-130.

87) Ibid., p. 131.

88) François de Montholon mentioned in 1723 “*de luxe de messieurs les officiers*” - see Ibid., p. 130. “*Ces messieurs veulent toujours rester maîtres de toutes les affaires*”, remarked M. de la Chapelle in 1736 - see Ibid., p. 132. “*Toutes les affaires doivent se traiter militairement dans la colonie*”, wrote M. De Conflans in 1750 - see Ibid., p. 135).

89) The provision was justified by the following way: “*Aux temps anciens la colonie de Saint-Domingue, composée d'un tas d'aventuriers que l'envie de s'enrichir et une humeur belliqueuse y avoient rassemblés, n'étoit point telle qu'elle se montre aujourd'hui. Des hommes errans, accoutumés aux coups de main, indisciplinés, en petit nombre et réunis en peu de lieux, avoient besoin pour être contenus de loix simples dont l'exécution fût soudaine, de loix du moment. Dans ce temps, un gouvernement militaire convenoit à des hommes militaires, et comme l'éducation et les sentiments qu'elle inspire ne cimentent point les liens de la société, la contrainte devoit la resserrer, afin que cette société imparfaite pût subsister. ... Mais si les milices ont été nécessaires lorsque la colonie n'étoit encore peuplée que des gens qui en avoient fait la conquête, et qui ont été longtemps obligés de veiller continuellement à sa défense, aujourd'hui c'est le gouvernement civil qui doit présider seul à la conservation de la société, lorsqu'elle n'est pas attaquée*” - see Ibid., p. 139.

90) Ibid., p. 140.

91) Ibid., p. 140-141.

92) Ibid., p. 143.

93) “*Il y a des exemples dans la partie de l'Ouest et sans doute ailleurs aussi que des habitants ont été insultés dans leurs propres maisons par des troupes de nègres fugitifs ou marrons, et qu'après avoir été pillés et incendiés, ils ont encore éprouvé mille cruautés de la part de ces misérables*” - see Ibid., p. 143.

94) Robert d'Argout wrote that “*ces officiers municipaux regardent leur fonction comme une corvée personnelle et dispendieuse; ils sont élus pour trois ans et ils craignent, s'ils se montrent sévères envers leurs administrés, d'être à leur tour, étant sortis de charge, traités avec sévérité*” - see Ibid., p. 144.

a supprimé les milices. ... Mais il s'est trouvé qu'en supprimant cette troupe, on a supprimé dans ce vaste pays toutes les branches intermédiaires de l'administration et qu'on l'a plongé sans le vouloir dans une anarchie complète. ... Les assemblées des paroisses furent chargées de choisir les syndics. ... Par esprit de malignité. ... le public s'est plu à choisir les plus mauvais sujets et il a fallu souffrir à la tête des quartiers les sujets les plus ineptes et les derniers de ceux qui les habitoient, des gens enfin choisis par plaisanterie.⁹⁵ When the militia was restored in April 1768, the insurrection led by some *petits blancs* swept the island.⁹⁶

The abortive reform initiative proposed by intendant Jean-Étienne Bernard de Clugny resulted paradoxically into a strengthening of the military aristocracy at Saint Domingue. De Kerdisien-Trémaïs, quartermaster of Cap Français, remarked that *“de la faiblesse et de la soumission aveugle de M. l'intendant Bongars à M. de Nolivos, il est résulté, que le militaire, déjà maître par état des troupes et par l'ordonnance des milices de tous les habitants tant des villes que des campagnes, c'est encore facilement emparé de toutes les parties de l'administration*.”⁹⁷ Pierre de Vaissière argued that this relentless struggle between civil and military administration weakened the colonial society and presented one of the crucial factors of the complete collapse of *ancien régime* at Saint Domingue after 1789.⁹⁸

The spirit of independence inherited from a turbulent past seemed to become an integral part of local collective mentality. A Governor of Martinique complained that many people left his island for Saint Domingue, *“where they may give themselves up to hunting and disorder, and where licentious liberty is complete*.”⁹⁹ A General Governor of Saint Domingue remarked

95) Ibid., p. 144-145.

96) Ibid., p. 146.

97) Ibid., p. 149.

98) *“De la perte de Saint Domingue on a rendu responsables les noirs, les mulâtres. Ils n'ont point été les vrais coupables. Les vrais coupables furent ceux qui, systématiquement, enlevèrent toute force et toute autorité au seul pouvoir capable de contenir une société encore en formation comme l'était la société de Saint-Domingue, au pouvoir militaire, qui s'appuyèrent contre lui sur la plus vile partie de la population! Ces meneurs de désordre, ces fauteurs d'anarchie, ces intrigants, ces factieux, dont un intendant avait fait un jour ses auxiliaires, ont les retrouvera aux plus sombres heures de la révolution de Saint-Domingue”* – see Ibid., p. 150.

99) STODDARD, p. 4.

in 1723: *“These people have risen not only against the Company but against the King's authority. They demand tax exemption, free trade with all nations, and a republican liberty*.”¹⁰⁰

The war of American independence made Saint Domingue into a great commercial centre and contributed significantly to its economic development.¹⁰¹ In 1789, Saint Domingue *“had attained a height of prosperity not surpassed in the history of European colonies. The greatest part of its soil was covered by plantations on a gigantic scale which supplied half Europe with sugar, coffee, and cotton*.”¹⁰² Bryan Edwards emphasized that in 1788, *“upon the whole, the situation of all ranks of people in St. Domingo was less miserable than might have been expected to result from a government so depraved as we have seen it. In spite of political evils, signs of prosperity were visible; their towns were opulent; their markets plentiful; their commerce extensive, and their cultivation on the increase*.”¹⁰³ However, the affluent colonial society was split by inner social, regional and racial rivalries and hatred, for instance between Cap Français and Port-au-Prince. When in 1787, the Superior Council of Cap Français was abolished and its power transferred into Port-au-Prince, a special envoy was sent to France to protest against the provision.¹⁰⁴

The slavery presenting the very foundation of the economic system of Saint Domingue was attacked by new generation of religiously inspired and enlightened philanthropists and abolitionists; in 1787, the English reformer Thomas Clarkson had founded in London a society advocating the abolition of slavery. He was supported by British politician William Wilberforce.¹⁰⁵ In February 1788, Jacques Pierre Brissot established in Paris *Les Amis des Noirs*. The members of this influential society became Jérôme Pé-

100) Ibid., p. 5.

101) BEARD, p. 42.

102) STODDARD, pp. 14-15.

103) EDWARDS, p. 328.

104) BEARD, p. 42.

105) Despite the policy of abolitionism verbally supported by William Pitt Jr., the British share in trade slaves surpassed those of all rivals; in 1789, English transported from Africa into New World about 38,000 slaves; French 20,000; Dutch 4,000; Danes 2,000; Portuguese 10,000 – see LACROIX, p. 17.

tion, Honoré- Gabriel Riqueti de Mirabeau, Etienne Clavière and Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet.¹⁰⁶

The news on the political development in France after 19th of November 1787 when Louis XVI promised a calling of the States General produced the greatest agitation in the colony. Phases, signs and expressions of revolutionary struggle were imitated and reproduced in a specific Caribbean context.¹⁰⁷ The rich colonial proprietors formed so-called *Club Massaic* (from the name of the hotel where the members assembled) to promote their political influence and prepare the establishment of a Colonial Assembly.¹⁰⁸ The spontaneous panic – similar to “the Great Fear” (*La Grand Peur*) in continental France which lasted in July and August 1789¹⁰⁹ – emerged in Saint Domingue in a guise of “black menace”.¹¹⁰

In 15th July 1788 a group of wealthy planters and colonists from Saint Domingue living in France formed a colonial committee closely linked to Duc d’Orléans party.¹¹¹ Despite the extensive propaganda including the petition with four thousand signatures and pamphlets (written mostly by Gouy d’Arsy, leader of the colonists), *Conseil d’Etat* turned down the idea of colonial representation in 4th of September 1788.¹¹² However, it did not stop the aspiration of the colonists to be fully politically integrated into the States General. At the end of 1788 the colonists mostly from the North Province

106) BEARD, p. 43; LACROIX, p. 16; JAMES, pp. 41–44.

107) “Comme on exagère ce qu’on imite, les phases de la révolution eurent leur réflexion à Saint-Domingue avec l’intensité d’un miroir ardent. Les couleurs nationales, qui avait été prises en France avec ivresse, furent arborées avec fureur sous le ciel des Antilles” – see Pamphile de LACROIX, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, Paris, 1819, p. 13.

108) BEARD, p. 43.

109) Simon SCHAMA, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, London, 1989, pp. 428–431.

110) “On répandit le bruit qu’un complot exécrationnel, tramé par les autorités, devait anéantir la colonie. On publia au Cap que trois mille noirs, révoltés, se disposaient à saccager la ville et étaient rassemblés dans le morne qui la domine. Un fort détachement de garde nationale s’y porta à l’instant, et ce détachement, après une course pénible, rentra en ville avec un volontaire blessé à mort, non par les révoltés (il n’en existait point encore), mais par ses propres camarades” – see LACROIX, p. 13.

111) STODDARD, p. 69.

112) Ibid., p. 70.

summoned electoral assemblies and elected a delegation of eighteen representatives (six for each province) as the new constituents of Saint Domingue in the States General.¹¹³ *Petits blancs* and mulattoes were excluded (and slaves – of course – not mentioned). New General Governor Marquis Marie-Charles du Chilleau arrived at Saint Domingue in December 1788. His hesitant approach reflecting the weakness of the metropolitan government contrasted to the stance of Intendant Barbé de Marbois who knew that the partisans of colonial representation were only a rich minority.¹¹⁴ The gravely bad harvest in summer 1788 with fatal political consequences hit Saint Domingue as well. The prohibition of export of grain from France threatened Saint Domingue with famine.¹¹⁵ Marie-Charles du Chilleau opened the ports for foreign ships which caused a clash with Barbé de Marbois who agreed to the first breaches but refused to sanction their extension.¹¹⁶ The matter went to the King’s Council who recalled Chilleau and replaced him with new Governor Louis-Antoine Thomassin de Peynier.¹¹⁷ The quarrel weakened the authority of government.

In France, the powerful opponents were stubbornly refusing the political representation of Saint Domingue.¹¹⁸ Fortunately for colonists, Gouy d’Arcy joined the deputies of Third Estate in the tennis-court to swear that being the representatives of the nation they would never adjourn.¹¹⁹ By this clever political gesture he gained the sympathy of the deputies which admitted the principle of colonial representation.¹²⁰ In the following debate on the size of the Saint Domingue delegation, Brissot and Condorcet opposed the colonial request of eighteen seats; Mirabeau pointed out to the neglected political rights of mulattoes and blacks: “*Have not the best minds denied the very utility of colonies? And, even admitting their utility, is that any reason for a right to representation? These people wish a representation in proportion to the number of inhabitants. But have the blacks or the free people of color taken part in the elections? The free colored are landowners and taxpayers; – never-*

113) EDWARDS, p. 329.

114) STODDARD, p. 72.

115) Ibid., p. 76.

116) Ibid., p. 76.

117) JAMES, p. 49.

118) STODDARD, pp. 77–78.

119) JAMES, p. 48–49; STODDARD, p. 78.

120) JAMES, p. 49; STODDARD, p. 79.

theless, they have had no vote. And as to the slaves – either they are, or they are not, men. If they be men, let the colonists free them, make them voters and eligible as deputies; if they be not men, – have we counted into the population of France the number of our horses and mules?”¹²¹ In 7th of July 1789 the Assembly voted for six deputies for Saint Domingue.¹²²

What seemed to be a success for colonial representations could be regarded as fateful decision to link the future political destiny of Saint Domingue with radical influences of French Revolution. The policy of isolationism carried out by the colonists of Île-de-France and Bourbon seemed to spare both islands from the social and political destabilization. Beaulieu wrote in 1802 that “this thoughtless step of the inhabitants of Saint Domingue is generally held to have been the source of those ills which wrought their ruin. If the inhabitants of Saint Domingue had never sent deputies to the States-General, there would have been no point of contact between them and that National Assembly which was the heart of the Revolution, or, at most, communication would have been both slow and difficult”.¹²³ In their paradoxical move the rich planters paved the way for their own eclipse and the emancipation of all inhabitants of Saint Domingue. C. L. R. James argued that “the Saint Domingue representatives realized at last what they had done; they had tied the fortunes of Saint Domingue to the assembly of a people in revolution and thenceforth the history of liberty in France and of slave emancipation in Saint Domingue is one and indivisible”.¹²⁴

The fall of the Bastille on the 14th of July 1789, the night of the 4th of August 1789 and the “Declaration of the Rights of Man” on the 20th of August 1789 presented crucial steps in the early stages of revolution. At Saint Domingue the local militia was transformed into a National Guard; Intendant Barbé de Marbois had to leave the colony. On the 22nd October 1789 the representatives of Saint Domingue were received in National Assembly to present their grievances (*les cahiers de doléances*) and made a contribution of six millions livres to the national revenue.¹²⁵ The president of National Assembly declared solemnly that “aucune partie de la nation ne réclamerait vainement ses droits auprès de l’assemblée des représentants du peuple

français”.¹²⁶ The revolutionary radicalism and philanthropism was apparently contagious. On the 4th December 1789 Charles de Lameth, influenced by ideas of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, said in the National Assembly: “Je suis un des plus grands propriétaires de Saint Domingue ; mais je vous déclare que, dussé-je perdre tout ce que j’y possède, je le préférerais plutôt que de méconnaître des principes que la justice et l’humanité ont consacré ; je me déclare et pour l’admission des sang-mêlés aux assemblées administratives et pour la liberté des noirs.”¹²⁷

Nevertheless, the colonial society of Saint Domingue itself was not yet ready for such political vision: “The religious fanaticism of the Vendée was no fiercer than the racial fanaticism of Saint Domingue.”¹²⁸ The colonists “sleep on the verge of the volcano, and the first convulsions do not waken them,” said Mirabeau.¹²⁹ Violent scenes took place in Saint Domingue and *petits blancs* who joined the revolution refused to grant political rights to a “bastard and degenerate race”.¹³⁰ The denial of the revolutionaries to integrate the mulattoes into a new “patriotic and progressive” society pushed the *gens de couleur* towards to contra-revolution. Governor Peynier turned to rich mulattoes to gain them for the cause of government: “It has become more necessary than ever not to give them any cause for offence, to encourage them and to treat them as friends and whites.”¹³¹ A key person of the contra-revolution at Saint-Domingue and a strong opponent of General Assembly became Chevalier Thomas Antoine Mauduit du Plessis, colonel of the Royal Infantry Regiment of Port-au-Prince, who arrived at Saint Domingue.¹³² Before his coming to the island he met at Turin Count d’Artois who was staying in exile as the leader of the *émigrés*.¹³³ Mauduit’s soldiers hostile to the revolution were called “*pompons blanc*” (after royalist white cockade).¹³⁴

On the 2nd March 1790, the National Assembly appointed a Committee on Colonies (“*Comité colonial de l’Assemblée nationale*”). Six days later,

126) Ibid., p. 15.

127) Ibid., p. 18; JAMES, p. 56.

128) STODDARD, p. 40.

129) ELLIOTT, p. 12.

130) JAMES, p. 58.

131) Ibid., p. 51.

132) LACROIX, p. 39.

133) STODDARD, p. 106.

134) Ibid., p. 106.

121) JAMES, p. 49; STODDARD, p. 79.

122) JAMES, p. 49; STODDARD, p. 79.

123) STODDARD, p. 80.

124) JAMES, p. 49.

125) LACROIX, p. 15.

on the 8th of March 1790, Antoine Barnave who was a chairman (“*rappor-teur*”) of the committee introduced a draft decree stating that “*considérant les colonies comme une partie de l’empire français, et désirant les faire jouir des fruits de l’heureuse régénération qui s’y est opérée, elle n’a cependant jamais entendu les comprendre dans la constitution qu’elle a décrété pour le royaume, et les assujettir à des lois qui pourraient être incompatibles avec leurs convenances locales et particulières*”.¹³⁵ Therefore, the National Assembly agreed that “*chaque colonie est autorisée à faire connaître son vœu sur la constitution, la législation et l’administration qui conviennent à sa prospérité et au bonheur de ses habitants, à la charge de se conformer aux principes généraux qui lient les colonies à la métropole, et qui assurent la conservation de leurs intérêts respectifs*”.¹³⁶ It was an open expression of the liberal policy of constitutional decentralization of French overseas empire.¹³⁷

National Assembly declared in the article 4 of the decree that “*toutes les personnes âgées de vingt-cinq ans accomplis, propriétaires d’immeubles, ou, à défaut d’une telle propriété, domiciliés dans la paroisse depuis deux ans, et payant une contribution, se réuniraient pour former l’assemblée provinciale*.”¹³⁸ However, the mulattoes and black slaves were

not mentioned.¹³⁹ Abbé Henri Grégoire demanded that the decree should have included the mulattoes and that article 4 should be extended by the sentence that “*les hommes de couleur qui rempliraient les conditions qu’il exigeait jouiraient des droits politiques concurremment avec les blancs*”, but Antoine Barnave supported by the deputies of Saint Domingue (including Charles de Lameth) refused the debate on the motion.¹⁴⁰

On the 16th of April 1790, the General Assembly of Saint Domingue (*Assemblée Générale*)¹⁴¹ met at the town of St. Marc and consisted of 213 members.¹⁴² The request of inclusion of the representatives of the mulattoes (*une race bâtarde et dégénérée*) was refused. On 28th of May 1790 the General Assembly passed the decree entitled “Constitutional Bases of the General Assembly” declaring that legislative authority, in everything which relates to the internal concerns of the colony, is vested in the assembly of its representatives. The deputies decided that no act of legislative body, in what relates to the internal concerns of the colony, shall be considered as a law definitive, unless it be made by the representatives of Saint Domingue, freely and legally chosen, and confirmed directly by the king and not by National Assembly.¹⁴³ Colonists argued that Saint Domingue had “*given itself to the king*”, but upon certain conditions only. They imagined the French part of island not as a subject colony, but as a “Franco-American Province,” linked to France through the personal union (like France and Navarre).¹⁴⁴ Therefore, the planters accepted the sovereignty of the French king, but they refused the supremacy of the French people.¹⁴⁵ There was no unanimity in the

135) LACROIX, p. 26.

136) Ibid., p. 26.

137) Baillio, “*petit blanc et citoyen du Cap François*”, expressed the local patriotism supporting the idea of autonomy or independence of Saint Domingue by following way: “*De l’égalité de droit des hommes a résulté nécessairement l’égalité de droit des peuples. Chaque colonie française a donc acquis par la révolution le plein pouvoir de se constituer, d’énoncer sa volonté générale, et de n’obéir à aucune autre loi. A plus forte raison Saint Domingue qui n’est point une colonie française, puisque la France n’a jamais fondé, acquis ni conquis Saint-Domingue, puisque les immortels Flibustiers en ont été les seuls fondateurs, doit-il jouir de ce droit fondamental commun à tous les peuples, et sans l’exercice duquel aucune société humaine ne peut désormais exister. Saint Domingue est donc indépendant, il l’est de la manière la plus absolue ; et la nation française est peut-être celle du monde entier avec laquelle il convient le moins au peuple de Saint Domingue de conserver aucun lien de dépendance législative, vu la terrible opposition des principes et de l’opinion publique des deux peuples. Saint Domingue est donc libre de chercher dans la nature entière des amis, des vengeurs ; et nulle puissance n’a droit de traverser ce peuple malheureux dans ses démarches les plus désespérées. Il n’est encore, hélas ! que trop loin de se permettre celles qui lui seroient le plus nécessaires*” – see BAILLIO, *Anti-Brissot*, Paris, 1793, p. 3.

138) LACROIX, p. 29.

139) JAMES, p. 57.

140) LACROIX, p. 30.

141) The term *Assemblée Coloniale* was rejected – see Ibid., p. 32.

142) EDWARDS, p. 334.

143) Ibid., p. 335–336; “*Article 1^{er}. Le pouvoir législatif, en tout ce qui concerne le régime intérieur de la colonie, réside dans l’assemblée de ses représentants, qui sera appelée l’assemblée générale de la partie française de Saint Domingue. Article 2nd. Aucun acte du corps législatif, en ce qui concerne le régime intérieur de la colonie, ne sera regardé comme loi, à moins qu’il ne soit agréé par les représentants de la partie française de Saint Domingue, librement et légalement élus, et confirmés par le roi*” – see LACROIX, p. 33–34.

144) STODDARD, p. 5.

145) Ibid., p. 102.

assembly – the western parishes recalled their delegates, while the representatives of Cap Français renounced their obedience.¹⁴⁶

Jean-Philippe Garron de Coulon argued that there were only two possible courses to the General Assembly of Saint Domingue: either accept the fact that Saint Domingue was a subject colony or to prepare the full independence of the island.¹⁴⁷ However, there was no political consensus among ruling classes concerning the political future of the colony and it opened the way for disastrous civic, social and racial war in near future. Alexandre de Wimpfen who was a witness of the events at Saint Domingue in 1790 remarked: “*I see but one way of saving the colony: it is to bring about the Revolution by the hands of those who are ineffectually employed to retard its progress. They can no longer check; they may still direct it. The bulk of the colonists, the merchants, the different departments of the administration, have all an equal interest to maintain order: let them speedily join themselves to the Government, to baffle and counteract the dark intrigues carried on by the disaffected to excite an insurrection of the people of color and the blacks.*”¹⁴⁸ However, nobody heard his advice.

Governor Peynier who was not willing to become a mere puppet of the General Assembly was trying unsuccessfully to achieve its dissolution and election of a new body.¹⁴⁹ The deputies encouraged by this achievement seized the royal arsenals within their jurisdiction. On 27th of July 1790 they ordered the replacement of the regular troops by the national guards. The Governor attempted to use the *Leopard*, a ship of the line, to blockade Saint-Marc by sea, but the sailors mutinied and took side with the General Assembly.¹⁵⁰ Peynier retaliated by a decision to arrest some members of the western provincial assembly at Port-au-Prince. On 30th of July 1790 Mauduit led a troop of one hundred grenadiers to accomplish the order but was repelled by four hundred national guards.¹⁵¹ Baron Joseph-Paul de Cambefort, colonel of the Royal Regiment Cap Français, sent regular troops led by an officer Vincent to land north of Port-au-Prince to help Mauduit to attack the city.¹⁵²

146) EDWARDS, p. 338; LACROIX, p. 39-41.

147) STODDARD, p. 102.

148) *Ibid.*, p. 110-111.

149) *Ibid.*, p. 104-105.

150) *Ibid.*, p. 106.

151) EDWARDS, p. 339.

152) STODDARD, p. 108.

The General Assembly called upon the “people” to defend their representatives but it had no force on which it could depend.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, the number of members of the General Assembly was reduced to one hundred, and of these eighty five embarked on the board of the *Leopard* in the harbor of Port-au-Prince and left for France to defend their “cause”.¹⁵⁴

The government triumphed but it was not able to exploit its success. Some two thousand armed supporters of former General Assembly marched from South.¹⁵⁵ On 23th of August 1790 so-called Treaty of Léogane was concluded. Both parties agreed to stop the hostilities until the arrival of the National Assembly’s decision concerning the political development on the island.¹⁵⁶ The West of the colony was dominated by the Mauduit’s *pompons blancs* and the adherents of *ancien régime*. The South was controlled by revolutionary radicals (*Patriots*) and the North with its huge economic potential and richness played with an idea of independence.¹⁵⁷

The mulattoes felt betrayed by all parties profited from the relative decline of influence of white colonists and prepared the insurrection in Saint Domingue.¹⁵⁸ On 21st October 1790, Vincent Ogé landed in Cap Français and six weeks later he published a manifesto demanding the complete political emancipation of mulattoes. Vincent Ogé who was a young colored man under thirty years of age; he nourished close connection to the *Amis des Noirs* during his long stay in Paris. His mother possessed a coffee plantation in Saint Domingue. In July 1790, Vincent Ogé went secretly to London where he met Thomas Clarkson, than he embarked for the United States with money and letters of credit to procure arms and ammunition.¹⁵⁹ Ogé established his camp at Grande Rivière and appointed his brother and Jean-Baptiste Chavannes his lieutenants. However, the repercussion of the incident was relatively weak and Ogé was joined by two hundred armed “colored” rebels only. Subsequently, Ogé’s men massacred white settlers and were dispersed by local regulars and militia. Ogé and his brother and some followers es-

153) EDWARDS, p. 339; JAMES, p. 58; STODDARD, p. 108.

154) Sixty four of these eighty five were fathers of families – see EDWARDS, p. 340.

155) STODDARD, p. 108-109.

156) *Ibid.*, p. 109.

157) “... il faut au peuple de Saint Domingue l’indépendance la plus entière, la plus absolue. Elle est nécessaire à sa sûreté, à son existence ; il la défendra jusqu’à la mort” – see BAILLIO, p. 5.

158) JAMES, p. 59.

159) *Ibid.*, p. 59.

caped to Cuba, but were sent back to the hands of French authorities.¹⁶⁰ Twenty of his men were hanged. Ogé and Chavannes were publicly humiliated and sentenced to be broken alive on the wheel.

The *petit blancs* facing a challenge of “colored” population got radicalized; a relatively large force of mulattoes assembled at the town of Verette and a prominent mulattoe leader André Rigaud and his rebellious “colored” men met at Les Cayes. Mauduit avoided the clash between whites and mulattoes by promising that the “colored” people would receive all political rights.¹⁶¹ However, Rigaud and some other leaders of mulattoes were not convinced. André Rigaud even declared that “*it was a transient and deceitful calm, and, that no peace would be permanent until one class of people had exterminated the other*”.¹⁶²

On the 12th of October 1790 the National Assembly had issued a decree completely vindicating the government, revoked all legislative motions of the General Assembly of Saint Marc and ordered its dissolution. On the other hand, in November 1790 Peynier was replaced because of his bad health by Vicomte Philibert François Rouxel de Blanchelande who became a new General Governor, but who lacked the resolution of his predecessor.¹⁶³

Meanwhile in France the inner political state of Saint Domingue caused concern. The barbarity of the execution of Ogé and Chavannes influenced the public opinion and political representation in France. The orders were given for a new assembly to be established at the colony and king requested the strengthening of the military and naval force in the region.¹⁶⁴ On the 2nd of March 1791 a squadron with two regiments of the line on board appeared in the harbor of Port-au-Prince.¹⁶⁵ Mauduit was brutally assassinated by his own soldiers caught up in the revolutionary ardor.¹⁶⁶

On the 7th of April 1791 the issue of Saint Domingue was debated again on the ground of the National Assembly. Abbé Grégoire and other sup-

porters of mulattoes predominated over Moreau de Saint-Méry¹⁶⁷ and advocates of so-called “color line”.¹⁶⁸ Maximilien Robespierre joined the discussion and proclaimed: “*If I should suspect that among those who have opposed rights for the men of color 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. 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 if the price is to be your happiness, your glory, your liberty. I repeat it - perish the colonies 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.*”¹⁶⁹

Finally, in the evening of the 15th of May 1791 National Assembly passed a decree, declaring, among a number of other articles, that every person of the age of twenty five years and upwards, possessing property, or having resided two years in the colony, and paid taxes, should be permitted to vote in the formation of the colonial assembly.¹⁷⁰ The mulattoes born of free

167) Moreau de Saint-Méry wrote in his *Considérations* published in March 1791: “*If the National Assembly has the misfortune to legislate on the mulatto status, all is over. The colonists will believe themselves betrayed; the mulattoes, instigated by their friends, will go to the last extremity. And then the slaves, who possess the same friends and the same means of action, will seek to attain the same results. The colonies will soon be only a vast shambles: and France? Yes! The mulattoes themselves are but pawns in a larger game. For, if our slaves once suspect that there is a power other than their masters which holds the final disposition of their fate; if they once see that the mulattoes have successfully invoked this power and by its aid have become our equals; - then France renounce all hope of preserving her colonies*” - see STODDARD, p. 119.

168) JAMES, p. 61.

169) Ibid., pp. 61-62.

170) EDWARDS, p. 347.

160) EDWARDS, p. 341-344.

161) Ibid., p. 343.

162) RAINSFORD, p. 123.

163) STODDARD, p. 113.

164) EDWARDS, p. 345.

165) STODDARD, p. 113.

166) EDWARDS, p. 346; JAMES, p. 67.

parents were allowed to vote and declared eligible to be elected in the colonial assemblies.

On the 30th of June 1791 the news on the decree were received in Cap Français. The white colonists of Saint Domingue were deeply offended; they resolved to reject the civic oath and to confiscate the French property in the harbor.¹⁷¹ Some colonists were resolved on secession and declaration of independence and forging an alliance with Great Britain, the United States and other colonies in the New World aimed against France and Spain.¹⁷² The identity of emerging nation (*nation haïtienne*) formed mostly by *petits blancs* was deeply racist and anti-Spanish.¹⁷³

However, on the morning of 23^d of August 1791 the inhabitants of Cap Français were alarmed by the reports on the enormous revolt of black slaves.¹⁷⁴ In the space of two months it was estimated that about two thousand whites were killed and ten thousand blacks were deprived of life, executed or died by famine.¹⁷⁵ The dramatic events on the North Plain and threat of black insurrection contributed to the peace and reconciliation which were concluded between mulattoes and rich whites represented by the leader of Western royalists Humus de Jumecourt, commandant of the

171) Ibid., p. 348.

172) “... *non-seulement de reconnoître l’indépendance de Saint-Domingue, mais de déclarer celle des colonies qui lui appartiennent de plus près ; d’épouser cette généreuse nation angloise, la seule amie des peuples libres ; de former avec elle, avec les Etats-Unis, avec toutes les colonies du du Nouveau Monde l’union défensive et offensive la plus intime, la plus hardie, la plus vaste dans son plan qui commence déjà à transpirer, à étonner les stupides valets qui vous mènent par la lisière. Périssent les colonies ! a dit un de vos législateurs. Et moi je dis : Périssent la nation qui remplira des engagements défensifs avec l’Espagne ! Périssent la nation qui osera défendre l’Espagne contre l’Angleterre et les deux Amériques*” – see BAILLIO, p. 7.

173) “*Pensez vous qu’après avoir triomphé de ces monstres Africains, après les avoir exterminés ou remis à la chaîne, le premier soin des dignes successeurs des Flibustiers, de ces âmes brûlantes d’énergie, altérées de vengeance, ne sera pas de purger leur île de la vermine Espagnole, d’apaiser enfin, par le sacrifice de cette horde barbare, les mânes sanglans de la malheureuse nation haïtienne, et de resseoir enfin sur des fondamens invincibles cet empire que cent cinquante ans de travaux et d’épreuves leur ont si bien acquis*” – see Ibid., p. 7.

174) EDWARDS, p. 349.

175) Ibid., p. 350-351.

district of La Croix-des-Bouquets and Cul-de-sas.¹⁷⁶ Formal alliance known as the “Confederation of La-Croix-des-Bouquets” was signed.¹⁷⁷ The assembly of Cap Français sanctioned many resolutions in favor of mulattoes who were integrated into the colonial society.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, it was too late to consolidate the colonial society of Saint Domingue fatally linked to the percussions of French Revolution.

On the 29th of November 1791, the three commissioners, Frédérick Ignace de Mirbeck, Philippe Rose Roume and Edmond de Saint-Léger, landed in Saint Domingue. They announced the arrival of large bodies of troops from France which was welcomed by colonists with relief. However, their mission to achieve reconciliation and to stop violence and insurrection failed and they returned to France in spring 1792. On the 24th of March 1792 the decree conferring full political equality to mulattoes was accepted in Constituent Assembly (signed by king on the 4th of April 1792).

New commissioners, Léger Félicité Sonthonax (friend of Girondin ministry Jacques-Pierre de Brissot), Étienne Polverel and Jean-Antoine Ailhaud, accompanied by four thousand national guards and two thousand regular troops in fifteen ships sailed from Rochefort in the middle of July to finish the inner political conflicts and to suppress the black uprising.¹⁷⁹ On the 18th of September 1792 they arrived to Cap Français.¹⁸⁰ The fall of the Tuileries on the 10th of August 1792, the establishment of the National Convention and declaration of republic dramatically changed the course of the revolution. The rich planters of Saint Domingue were labeled as “the aristocrats of the skin” (*aristocrates de la peau*) and their policy of preservation slavery and racial barriers became discredited and untenable.¹⁸¹ A new General Governor Jean-Jacques d’Espardes, an old man of seventy-three, was nominated as commander in chief.¹⁸² Blanchelande was arrested, sent to France and guillotined on the 15th of April 1793. Early in 1793 an able general Laveaux was preparing a final assault to complete the defeat of black

176) JAMES, p. 79.

177) STODDARD, p. 144.

178) EDWARDS, p. 352.

179) JAMES, p. 97.

180) STODDARD, p. 180.

181) JAMES, p. 98.

182) Andrien-Nicolas, marquis de la Salle, comte d’Offémont, was a General Governor after Blanchelande till June 1792.

rebels, but he was recalled by the commissioners to defend the coasts against foreign enemy.¹⁸³

Although it was suspected that the main intention of the commissioners was to declare an emancipation and freedom for all the blacks in the island, they proclaim that their only aim was to set up the rights of the mulattoes, as decreed by law.¹⁸⁴ Instead of convocation a new colonial assembly, the commissioners institutionalized a political body called *Une Commission Intermediare*, by nominating twelve persons, of which six came from the former assembly, and the other six were chosen among mulattoes.¹⁸⁵ General Governor d'Espardes complained vainly that he was stripped of all his public authority.¹⁸⁶ Subsequently, he was arrested and replaced by François Galbaud du Four, a rich mulatto who was supported by local white colonists and planters. Galbaud arrived to Cap Français on 7th of May 1793 and was shocked by the state of country.¹⁸⁷ Meanwhile, Sonthonax and Polverel put four members of *Une Commission Intermediare* into custody; Sonthonax set up a revolutionary tribunal and arrested many "suspects" to be taken by ships to France.¹⁸⁸

183) JAMES, p. 101.

184) EDWARDS, p. 355. Sonthonax told in his speech to colonists: "We declare in the presence of the Supreme Being, in the name of the mother country, before the people and amid its present representatives, that from this time forth we recognize but two classes of men at Saint Domingue - the free, without distinction of color, and the slaves. We declare that to the Colonial Assemblies alone belong the right to pronounce upon the fate of the slaves. We declare that slavery is necessary to the cultivation and prosperity of the colonies; that it is neither in the principles nor the will of the National Assembly of France to touch these prerogatives of the colonists; and that if the Assembly should ever be so far misled as to provoke their abolition, we swear to oppose such action with all our power. Such are our principles. Such are those given to us by the National Assembly and the King. We will die, if need be, that they may triumph" STODDARD, pp. 188-189.

185) EDWARDS, p. 355

186) Ibid., p. 355.

187) Ibid., p. 355-356; STODDARD, p. 216.

188) Sonthonax wrote in a letter from 11th of January 1793: "At the time of our arrival in Saint Domingue there existed two factions - the Royalists and the Aristocrates de la Peau. The former were crushed in October, but the latter are more audacious than before. Everywhere, especially at Port-au-Prince, they prate of independence" - see STODDARD, p. 201, pp. 202-203.

Not surprisingly, the clash between the side of commissioners and followers of Galbaud started. Sonthonax and Polverel tried to deport him and punish his adherents, but they underestimated their rival. Galbaud was joined by three thousand sailors and local whites and on 20th of June 1793 he occupied Cap Français by force. The commissioners and their troops had to leave the city. Facing defeat and end of revolutionary rule, Sonthonax turned for the aid to the rebel black slaves. He offered them amnesty, freedom and the plunder of Cap Français.¹⁸⁹ The crowd of about ten thousand rebels attacked the city and set it ablaze. After the massacre of Cap Français the number of refugees migrated to North American ports, especially Baltimore. The rule of *ancient régime* of Saint Domingue based on the idea of racial supremacy of rich European colonists ended.¹⁹⁰ On 29th August 1793 Sonthonax declared the abolition of slavery.¹⁹¹

After seven years of almost unceasing struggle the English invasion was beaten, the mulatto power brutally broken, the Spanish part of the island occupied and former black slave Toussaint Louverture became an absolute master of the island. However, the peace of Amiens in 1801 enabled the First Consul Bonaparte to send a considerable military contingent under the leadership of General Charles Leclerc to restore French supremacy at the island. Despite the devastation of French troops by yellow fever and negative psychological impact of Napoleon's decision to restore slavery the conquest of Saint Domingue seemed to be averted mainly by the renewal of war between France and England in 1803. Within a year the former colony of Saint Domingue was lost for France and a completely fresh chapter in the history of island as independent black state started.

After Bourbon return in 1814 some exiled colonists and persons who lost property at Saint Domingue expected that the new government would have followed Napoleon's example after the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens and would have attempted to restore the French authority in Saint Domingue by using military force.¹⁹² However, François-René de Chateaubri-

189) EDWARDS, p. 356-357; STODDARD, p. 219.

190) JAMES, p. 103.

191) Ibid., p. 104.

192) For instance Pierre Victor de Malouet, minister of marine and member of government of Louis XVIII, see Chris BONGIE, "Monotonies of History": *Baron de Vastey and the Mulatto Legend of Derek Walcott's „Haitian Trilogy"*, in: *Yale French Review* 107, 2005, p. 70-107.

and preferred to demonstrate the new efficiency of French royal army in Spain. The French interest in Saint Domingue died away.¹⁹³

The population of the independent island in 1824 divided into three political entities (the Kingdom of Henry Christophe I., the Southern Republic under Alexandre Pétion, and the Old Spanish District) was estimated to be around 935,000 individuals.¹⁹⁴ This mass was composed of blacks (819,000), mulattoes (105,000), Indians (1,500) and whites (500).¹⁹⁵ The strikingly small number of whites was a result of the enforcement of the law of the new independent Haiti which declared that “*no white man, whatever be his nationality, shall be permitted to land on the Haitian territory, with the title of master or proprietor; nor shall he be able, in future, to acquire there, either real estate or the rights of a Haitian*”.¹⁹⁶

The end of French hegemony at Saint Domingue and the emergence of independent black state were enabled by deficiencies of administration of the colony afflicted by traditionally rivalry between the *noblesse d'épée* and the *noblesse de robe*. In 1789, the representatives of Saint Domingue were trying to be integrated into National Assembly, without realizing that the declaration of human rights and civic emancipation would be aimed at the very foundation of the island economic and social system. The resilience against the revolutionary impulses emanating from the continental France and an attempt to cope with the inner political conflicts and mulatto and slave uprising led to a tentative to create a new independent national and political entity – *nation haïtienne*. However, this collective identity lacked a sufficient social background. If *petits blacks* succeeded in this project, the result could have been a political system of racial apartheid not dissimilar to the experiment in South Africa. Paradoxically, the dream of *petits blancs* on the independent *nation haïtienne* was realized later by the different people detested and hated by whites – liberated black slaves led by Toussaint Louverture and Jacques Dessalines.

193) Christopher L. MILLER, *Forget Haiti: Baron Roger and the New Africa*. In: *Yale French Studies*, 107, 2005, p. 39–69.

194) John Relly Beard thought that this census was highly exaggerated or falsified. He was convinced that “*at no time since its independence has Hayti proper – the French part – had more than from 500,000 to 600,000 inhabitants*” – see BEARD, p. 20.

195) *Ibid.*, p. 20.

196) *Ibid.*, p. 20–21.

Sultan Mahmud II's Reforms in the Light of Central European Documents

MIROSLAV ŠEDIVÝ

In their research on Ottoman history in the first half of the 19th century, historians and orientalists exploited the archives in London and Paris or, particularly the Russians and Soviets, those in Russia not only relating to the diplomatic relations between the Sublime Porte and European countries but also for the mostly internal affairs of the sultan's empire. Surprisingly, only very few of them visited the Central European archives for the same purpose despite the fact that a considerable number of reports of Austrian and Prussian diplomats residing within the Ottoman territory are particularly housed in *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* in Vienna and *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz* in Berlin-Dahlem.¹

This approach seems to be logical at first sight: Great Britain, France and Russia pursued an active policy in the Near East and their interests were much more excessive than those of Prussia. With a closer look, however, one realises that this dismissive approach is entirely unfounded in the case of Austria, which was connected with the Ottoman Empire by the longest frontier of all European countries as well as extensive political and economic interests; after the Napoleonic wars, the Habsburg Empire had the greatest share in its southeastern neighbour's foreign trade until the 1840s. As to the second German Power, Prussian interests in the area were insignificant, but owing to its important role on the chessboard of European diplomacy it could not ignore the events in the Levant and was also represented in Constantinople and some other places in the Near East.

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