Napoléon Bonaparte and the Emancipation Issue in Saint-Domingue, 1799–1803

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Abstract *It is generally assumed that the expedition that Napoléon Bonaparte sent to Saint-Domingue (Haiti) in December 1801 was largely prompted by lobbying on the part of exiled planters and that it aimed at restoring slavery in this colony. Yet a careful analysis of French, British, and American published and archival sources paints a much more nuanced picture. French officials, including Bonaparte and the expedition's first captain general, Victoire Leclerc, paid little attention to the wishes of the planters. Their policies were largely dictated by the difficult political and military environment prevalent in Saint-Domingue. Strategic requirements prompted them to adapt a moderate, pragmatic policy that preserved Toussaint-Louverture's semifree cultivator system, and they never called, either officially or in private, for an immediate restoration of slavery in Saint-Domingue.*

Year X in the Republican calendar, 1802, marked a fundamental shift in France's colonial policy. The country, which a decade before had granted full citizenship to its free people of color (April 1792) and freedom to its slaves (February 1794), now seemed intent on reneging on its revolutionary principles. First Consul Napoléon Bonaparte maintained slavery in the colonies that France regained with the Treaty of Amiens and where the 1794 law of emancipation had never taken effect, like Martinique; he sided with the white planters of Réunion and Mauritius who had refused to implement the law; he also sent expeditions to restore French sovereignty in colonies where slaves had been freed, like Guadeloupe, and eventually restored slavery in that island.

What, then, of Saint-Domingue (Haiti), which had been the most prosperous of France's colonies in the 1780s, before witnessing the most dramatic slave uprising in world history? Haitian historical accounts offer a straightforward narrative: Saint-Domingue flourished under the stern but enlightened rule of Toussaint-Louverture until Bonaparte sent a massive expedition to restore slavery at the demand of the planter lobby. Thankfully, Haitians rebelled and preserved their

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imperiled freedom from Bonaparte and the planters' ill designs.[1] This narrative, which has remained surprisingly stable despite two centuries of historiographical reappraisals, draws from two central premises best exemplified by a chapter title in C. L. R. James's classic *Black Jacobins*: "The Bourgeoisie Prepares to Restore Slavery."[2] The first is that Dominguan planters exiled in Paris had an outsize influence on the formulation of French colonial policy, an oft-repeated claim found in countless accounts of the expedition, old and new, written on both sides of the Atlantic.[3] The other, equally widespread claim is that Bonaparte articulated from the outset a clear plan to restore slavery in Saint-Domingue.[4]

The historical record, however, indicates that this two-pronged approach overlooks the considerable hesitation that marked France's labor policies in Saint-Domingue. Far from making a coordinated push for a restoration of slavery, the colonial "lobby" in 1801–2 was instead remarkable for its diversity and moderation. Many memoirists took the emancipation of Dominguan slaves as a fait accompli, while their more conservative colleagues were afraid to articulate a reactionary agenda for fear of offending a metropolitan opinion that was far from sympathetic to their cause. That they had any influence on the strong-willed Bonaparte, moreover, is far from certain.

Primary sources also indicate that Bonaparte, instead of devising a

1 Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, vol. 2 (Port-au-Prince, 1847), 135; H. Pauléus Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint Louverture*, vol. 3 (Port-au-Prince, 1933), 48; Gérard Mentor Laurent, *Six études sur J. J. Dessalines* (Port-au-Prince, 1950), 31; Wiener Kerns Fleurimond, *Haïti, 1804–2004: Le bicentenaire d'une révolution oubliée* (Paris, 2005), 34.

2 Cyril Lionel Robert James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1963; rpt. New York, 1989), 269.

3 James Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies* (1802; rpt. New York, 1969), 30; Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti* (London, 1805), 262–63; Baron de Vastey, *Political Remarks on Some French Works and Newspapers* (London, 1818), 196; Civique de Gastine, *Histoire de la république d'Haïti ou Saint-Domingue, l'esclavage et les colons* (Paris, 1819), 8, 140; A. J. B. Bouvet de Cressé, ed., *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1824), 44–45; Jean-Baptiste Lemonnier-Delafosse, *Seconde campagne de Saint-Domingue du 1 décembre 1803 au 15 juillet 1809 précédée de souvenirs historiques et succincts de la première campagne* (Le Havre, 1846), 3; Thomas Gragnon-Lacoste, *Toussaint Louverture* (Paris, 1877), 279; James, *Black Jacobins*, 270–71; Claude Auguste and Marcel Auguste, *Les déportés de Saint-Domingue* (Sherbrooke, QC, 1979), 18; Claude Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage, 1794–1802: Le cas des colonies orientales Ile de France (Maurice) et la Réunion* (Paris, 1998), 635; Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 289; Madison Bell, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography* (New York, 2007), 221.

4 François Desrivières Chanlatte, *Considérations diverses sur Haïti* (Port-au-Prince, 1822), 11; Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 135; Joseph Saint-Rémy, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris, 1850), 323, 378; Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint Louverture*, 48; Laurent, *Six études sur J. J. Dessalines*, 31; James, *Black Jacobins*, 275, 294; Thomas Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789–1804* (Knoxville, TN, 1973), 174; Auguste and Auguste, *Les déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 18; Claude Auguste and Marcel Auguste, *L'expédition Leclerc, 1801–1803* (Port-au-Prince, 1985), 17; Yves Bénot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon* (Paris, 1992), 49; Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 636–37; Fleurimond, *Haïti, 1804–2004*, 34, 64. For a rare view of Bonaparte as an abolitionist, see Jean Martin, "Esclavage," in *Dictionnaire Napoléon*, ed. Jean Tulard (Paris, 1987), 673.

clear, consistent plan to restore slavery in all French colonies, hesitated for years between enlisting Louverture as an ally (a policy that required France's continued embrace of emancipation) and removing him from power. Even after he decided to send an expedition to overthrow Louverture in 1801, Bonaparte refrained from advocating a return to slavery because he hoped to convince colonial officers to abandon Louverture. Bonaparte eventually delegated the decision on the type of labor system to be adopted in Saint-Domingue to the commander of the expedition, his brother-in-law Victoire Leclerc, who chose to embrace emancipation in an effort to secure the support of the colonial army. Not even his successor, the more conservative Donatien de Rochambeau, dared to modify this policy given the expedition's continued reliance on black allies.

To fully comprehend Bonaparte's carefully calibrated policy, one should refrain from conceptualizing the era's ideological debates as a clear-cut dichotomy between "slavery" and "freedom" and instead keep in mind that, after the Haitian Revolution had shown the limitations of both systems, most colonial thinkers and policy makers embraced an intermediate approach. Bonaparte, Louverture, and Leclerc never openly supported a restoration of slavery in Saint-Domingue, but they also lamented the decline in discipline and productivity that had followed emancipation and were adamant that plantation laborers should return to work, even if some force proved necessary. Ever since the days of the Spanish serfdom system known as *repartimiento* (for native Tainos) and indentured servitude (for European migrants), the Caribbean had been home to a variety of semifree labor systems, so it was not outlandish for landowners of all colors to force recent freedmen into a semifree status, not only in Saint-Domingue but also in Guadeloupe and (later) in postemancipation British and Spanish colonies.

To understand Bonaparte's seemingly abrupt policy shifts in 1799–1802, one should also stay clear of a philosophical, racial, or ethical approach to the emancipation debate. Bonaparte was a racist by today's standards, and a man all too willing to support slavery in other parts of the French empire.[5] But the Consulate, particularly when it came to colonial policy, was a pragmatic, postideological regime that strove to leave behind the conjectural disputes associated with the earlier phases of the French Revolution and to focus on what was politically and militarily feasible. French colonial policy thus evolved alongside practical

[5] On Bonaparte as a racist, see Antoine-Claire Thibaudeau, *Mémoires sur le Consulat, 1799–1804* (Paris, 1827), 120; Jan Pachonski and Reuel K. Wilson, *Poland's Caribbean Tragedy: A Study of Polish Legions in the Haitian War of Independence, 1802–1803* (Boulder, CO, 1986), 61; and Claude Ribbe, *Le crime de Napoléon* (Paris, 2005). On the restoration of slavery in other colonies, see Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*; and Miranda Spieler, "Empire and Underworld: Guiana in the French Legal Imagination, 1789–1870" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2005).

factors like the status of the British naval blockade and the number of armed black laborers in a given colony. A consummate pragmatist, Bonaparte simultaneously embraced different labor codes in different colonies and followed a policy that one could describe as "one empire, two systems," to paraphrase China's policy toward Hong Kong. As such, Saint-Domingue, with its exceptionally large colonial army, remained a unique case from the time Louverture emerged as the colony's de facto ruler in late 1798 to the time, three years later, when Leclerc and twenty-one thousand French troops left Atlantic ports to remove him from power.

Labor Regulations in Saint-Domingue prior to the French Landing, 1798–1801

Contrasting the black laborers' freedom prior to 1802 to their potential enslavement in the case of a French victory would be somewhat misleading, since labor rules prior to the Leclerc expedition fell far short of free labor. Léger-Félicité Sonthonax and Etienne Polverel had abolished slavery in Saint-Domingue in 1793, a radical move that the Convention had extended in February 1794 to all the colonies under France's control (parts of southern Saint-Domingue kept slavery until British occupation ended in 1798).[6] Within months of the emancipation law, however, the drastic drop in agricultural production incited French agents to curtail the former slaves' newfound freedom and to force them to return to their plantations as *cultivateurs*. Cultivators were supposed to be paid and well treated and could change plantations after their contract expired, but they could not move to a town or live off subsistence farming. Louverture publicly expressed his commitment to liberty and carefully avoided practices (like whipping) that cultivators associated with slavery, but during his tenure cultivators saw their working conditions worsen as he tied workers to their plantation for life, reduced their salary, and instructed his second in command, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, to severely punish recalcitrant workers.[7]

Louverture, who had played no role in the abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue (he was at the time fighting for slave-owning Spain),

6 André Rigaud, [Speech] (9 Fructidor, Year VI [Aug. 26, 1798]), folder "Théodore Hédouville Correspondence 1," box 1, Haiti Misc. Collection, Sc. MG 119, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library (hereafter SC-NYPL).

7 On Louverture's rhetorical commitment to emancipation, see Toussaint Louverture to Soldiers of the Army of Saint-Domingue (6 Floréal, Year IX [Apr. 26, 1801]), CO 137/106, British National Archives, Kew (hereafter BNA). On Louverture's strict labor rules, see Louverture, "Règlement sur la culture" (3 Brumaire, Year IX [Oct. 25, 1800]), CC9B/9, Archives Nationales, Paris (hereafter AN); Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 106; and Michel-Etienne Descourtilz, *Voyage d'un naturaliste en Haïti, 1799–1803* (1809; rpt. Paris, 1935), 166, 170.

also failed to support attempts to spread emancipation to nearby colonies, in large part because Saint-Domingue's competitive domestic political environment precluded foreign adventurism. When France's agent in Cap Français, Philippe Roume de Saint-Laurent, made plans to spark a slave revolt in Jamaica, Louverture covertly leaked the plans to the governor of Jamaica to obtain British support against his rival André Rigaud.[8] When Louverture invaded Spanish Santo Domingo in 1801, his abiding goal was to deny France a landing site should it decide to send an expedition. Louverture justified the invasion by referring to cases of Spanish kidnappings of black Dominguans, but such cases were rare, and he does not seem to have abolished slavery in Santo Domingo itself.[9] A few authors have claimed that by late 1801 Louverture was preparing an expedition to the coast of Africa to end the slave trade at its source, but there is no evidence that he ever devised such a preposterous plan.[10] There is, however, proof that Louverture asked Jamaican slave traders to sell their human cargo in Saint-Domingue (where they would have been granted the *cultivateur* status) to help replace laborers lost during the war.[11] Taken together, Louverture's actions as governor of Saint-Domingue, far from turning Saint-Domingue into a revolutionary hotbed of emancipation, instead crafted a system in which the rhetorical rejection of slavery was balanced by the needs of plantation agriculture and Louverture's political ambitions.

Louverture's willingness to curtail his people's freedom was not altogether surprising, since he had been not only a slave himself but also a planter and slave owner prior to the revolution.[12] During his rise to the colony's governorship, he (and fellow black generals like Dessalines) acquired large estates whose prosperity depended on a vast, docile labor force, further aligning his interests with members of the white planter class, many of whom served as close advisers during his

8 Alexander Lindsay, Earl of Balcarres, to William Cavendish, Duke of Portland (Oct. 28, 1799), CO 137/103, BNA; Gabriel Debien and Pierre Pluchon, "Un plan d'invasion de la Jamaïque en 1799 et la politique anglo-américaine de Toussaint Louverture," *Revue de la Société haïtienne d'histoire et de géographie* 36 (1978): 12–14.

9 On Louverture's justifications for taking over Santo Domingo, see Louverture, "Procès-verbal de la prise de possession de la partie espagnole" (Jan. 1801), CO 137/106, BNA. On the lack of proof that Louverture abolished slavery in Santo Domingo, see Louverture to Inhabitants of Bani (Jan. 11, 1801), in *Cesión de Santo Domingo a Francia*, ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (Ciudad Trujillo, 1958), 616; François Lequoy de Mongiraud to Denis Decrès (20 Brumaire, Year XI [Nov. 11, 1802]), CC9A/32, AN; Antonio del Monte y Tejada, *Historia de Santo Domingo*, vol. 3 (Ciudad Trujillo, 1952), 210–13; and David P. Geggus, "The Sounds and Echoes of Freedom: The Impact of the Haitian Revolution on Latin America," in *Beyond Slavery: The Multilayered Legacy of Africans in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. Darién Davis (New York, 2007), 24.

10 Gragnon-Lacoste, *Toussaint Louverture*, 202; James, *Black Jacobins*, 265.

11 1801 Constitution, Art. 17; George Nugent to Portland (Sept. 5, 1801), CO 137/106, BNA; Gerbier to Gabriel d'Hédouville (Sept. 28, 1801), in Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint Louverture*, 43.

12 Gabriel Debien, "Toussaint Louverture avant 1789: Légendes et réalités," in *Toussaint Louverture et l'indépendance d'Haïti*, ed. Jacques de Cauna (Paris, 2004), 61–67.

tenure as governor.[13] When black cultivators revolted against labor abuses in November 1801, Louverture moved quickly to protect white planters and violently put down the uprising, even insisting that his nephew Moyse be executed.[14] If there ever was a planter lobby intent on forcing former slaves back to their plantations, its influence seemed stronger in Cap Français than in Paris.

The Colonial Lobby's Diversity and Moderation, 1799–1801

When he seized power in 1799, Bonaparte took no definitive course of action in France's colonial empire, largely because the British naval blockade precluded any large-scale expedition. His new constitution simply specified that distinct, as yet undetermined, laws would govern the colonies. Some colonists viewed the clause as a prelude to the restoration of slavery, but the constitution merely marked the beginning of a two-year policy review during which planters, officers, administrators, and assorted well-wishers sent a flurry of memoirs in a (largely ineffectual) attempt to shape official policy.

The most famous *créole* exile was none other than Bonaparte's wife, Joséphine Tascher de la Pagerie, the daughter of planters from Martinique. That she incited Bonaparte to restore slavery is a historical canard that runs contrary to the archival record. She did have some sway over her husband early in the Consulate, but she wielded it on behalf of émigrés, not planters. According to her memoirs, she warned her husband *not* to attack Louverture, and her contemporary letters made no reference to a restoration of slavery. Louverture saw to it that her plantation in Léogane was cultivated in her absence, giving her no financial incentive to wish for his removal from office.[15]

Bonaparte did not mention Joséphine in his memoirs, but he recalled being assailed by the "whining" (*criailleries*) of the planters and "the various demands of the colonists, the merchants, and the specu-

[13] On Louverture's landholdings, see Etienne Dupuch, "Compte courant" (10 Prairial, Year IX [May 30, 1801]), folder 6, box 6, Borie Family Papers, (Phi)1602, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; "Procès verbaux dressés par Corneille sur les habitations du citoyen Louverture" (Prairial, Year X [June 1802]), 7Yd284, Service Historique de la Défense—Département de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes (hereafter SHD-DAT); and Gabriel Debien, "A propos du trésor de Toussaint Louverture," *Revue de la Société d'histoire et de géographie d'Haïti* 17 (1946): 30–39.

[14] Louverture, "Récit des événements qui se sont passés dans la partie du nord de Saint-Domingue, depuis le 29 vendémiaire jusqu'au 13 brumaire an dix" (Nov. 7, 1801), CO 137/106, BNA.

[15] On claims that Joséphine incited Bonaparte to restore slavery, see Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 392; Ott, *Haitian Revolution*, 141; and Bell, *Toussaint Louverture*, 221. For proof of the contrary, see Joséphine de Beauharnais to Jean-Antoine Chaptal (1800), in *Impératrice Joséphine: Correspondance, 1782–1814*, ed. Bernard Chevallier, Maurice Catinat, and Christophe Pincemaille (Paris, 1996), 106; and Léon Vallée, ed., *Memoirs of the Empress Joséphine*, 2 vols. (New York, 1903), 1:194–205, 246; 2:27. On Joséphine's plantation, see James, *Black Jacobins*, 262.

lators" that allegedly forced him into action.[16] His recollections must be analyzed with a critical eye, however, since Bonaparte had a personal interest in attributing his own decision making to outside influences given the disastrous outcome of the expedition. Bonaparte being pushed around by nagging planters, moreover, hardly corresponds to his reputation as an independent, hardheaded statesman. Bonaparte, his secretary wrote in reference to the Saint-Domingue expedition, "was not the kind of man to decide on a war based on deliberations in the Conseil d'Etat."[17]

The abundant colonial files at the Archives Nationales in Paris show that colonial lobbyists, however active, espoused a wide variety of views and that most (as was the case throughout the revolutionary era) tailored their views to the moderate political paradigm prevailing in the early Consulate.[18] Memoirists generally agreed that the state of affairs in Saint-Domingue was unsatisfactory, but there was no consensus on a remedy, and many authors advised *against* restoring slavery because they feared a genocidal conflict if the majority blacks ever became convinced that their former masters planned to deprive them of their freedom. They proposed solutions to the labor crisis that included locking black laborers into long-term contracts, developing the black laborers' taste for luxury goods to incite them to become wage earners, or reviving the old system of white indentured servitude.[19] Several memoirists did call for a restoration of slavery, but they by no means represented a clear majority.[20] How much influence these reports had on French policy remains to be seen, since most of them, still gathering dust in the Archives Nationales, show no indication of having ever been read. This alleged onslaught of colonial lobbying, moreover, must be balanced with the continued activism of the abolitionist abbé Henri

16 "Criailleries" from Emmanuel de Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1956), 769. "The various demands" from Barry Edward O'Meara, *Napoléon en exil: Relation contenant les opinions et les réflexions de Napoléon sur les événements les plus importants de sa vie, durant trois ans de sa captivité, recueillies*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1897), 277.

17 Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, *Mémoires de M. de Bourrienne, ministre d'état*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1829), 310.

18 On the colonial lobby's ability to adapt to the prevailing political environment, see Jennifer Pierce, "Discourses of the Dispossessed: Saint-Domingue Colonists on Race, Revolution, and Empire, 1789–1825" (PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2005).

19 Pétiniaud to Directoire Exécutif (8 Frimaire, Year VII [Nov. 28, 1798]), CC9A/18, AN; Louis [Duteux?], "Réflexions sur les colonies françaises et principalement sur Saint-Domingue" (14 Ventôse, Year VIII [Mar. 5, 1800]), CC9A/27, AN; Paul Alliot Vauneuf to Daniel Lescallier (3 Prairial, Year VIII [May 23, 1800]), CC9A/27, AN; Guillois, "Réflexions sur l'état politique et commercial de Saint-Domingue" (ca. 1800), CC9C/1, AN; Louis Maury to Bonaparte (7 Vendémiaire, Year X [Sept. 29, 1801]), CC9A/29, AN; "Vue ou plan sur la population, et repeuplement des blancs en l'île de Saint-Domingue" (ca. 1801), CC9A/30, AN.

20 [Genêt to Pierre-Alexandre Forfait?] (6 Prairial, Year VIII [May 26, 1800]), CC9B/27, AN; Gautier, "Aperçu sur les intérêts du commerce maritime" (Nov. 1801), CC9A/28, AN; Lenoir, "Mémoire sur la colonie de Saint-Domingue" (ca. 1803), 1M593, SHD-DAT.

Grégoire and of Republican salon hostesses like Madame de Staël and Julie Talma.[21]

Some authors have cited various books published in 1801–2 as evidence of a paradigm shift on the issue of emancipation, but colonial thinking had always been noted for its pragmatism, and many authors who had once supported slavery now espoused ideas consistent with the new political environment.[22] M. J. La Neuville's *Dernier cri de Saint-Domingue* (1800) gave an apocalyptic account of the Haitian Revolution that echoed the slave owners' laments, but its author also distanced himself from slavery, "an excellent system in its time, but counterproductive, dangerous, and inapplicable in another era unless it is modified," instead advocating an African version of indentured servitude.[23] In the first volume of his *Traité d'économie politique* (1801), which he wrote specifically for Bonaparte's colonial education, the former Saint-Domingue planter François Page wrote that abruptly freeing Caribbean slaves in 1793 had been a mistake. But he considered it equally unwise to put the genie of emancipation back in the bottle when Louverture commanded twenty thousand veteran black soldiers. Page's advice was to accept emancipation and use freed slaves for offensive military operations in the Western Hemisphere.[24] Charles Malenfant, another former Saint-Domingue planter who had opposed emancipation in 1793, contacted Leclerc in 1801 to warn him that restoring slavery was impossible unless one was willing to exterminate the entire black population (a policy that would undermine the economic rationale for the expedition), and he argued that France would be best served by keeping Louverture's cultivator system.[25]

As with handwritten memoirs, there is no sign that published monographs—some of which, like La Neuville's, were published in Philadelphia—had a marked impact. Bonaparte never made any reference to colonial authors when justifying his decisions, and Page bitterly complained in the second volume of his work that the government "had refused to even appoint me as a mere clerk."[26] More conservative authors held off on publishing their manuscripts because they feared that French public opinion was hostile to their cause (a sensible choice,

21 Marcel Dorigny and Bernard Gainot, eds., *La Société des amis des noirs, 1788–1799: Contribution à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris, 1998), 302, 395; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 77, 97, 183–98, 229.

22 On the alleged influence of published memoirs, see Dorigny and Gainot, *Société des amis des noirs*, 302; and Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 183, 189, 196–98, 204–6.

23 M. J. La Neuville, *Le dernier cri de Saint-Domingue et des colonies* (Philadelphia, 1800), 2.

24 P. François Page, *Traité d'économie politique et de commerce des colonies*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1801), 1:2, 223, 247.

25 Charles Malenfant, *Des colonies, et particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1814), i–ii, vi–vii, 74.

26 Page, *Traité d'économie politique*, 2:viii.

since police reports mention that the French rank and file opposed an expedition to Saint-Domingue).[27] Félix Carteau's and Louis Narcisse Baudry Deslozières's often-cited (and avowedly proslavery) *Soirées bermudiennes* and *Egarements du nigrophilisme* were only published in 1802,[28] when Bonaparte had already sent an expedition to Saint-Domingue, and must thus be treated as a consequence of the conservative turn in governmental policy rather than as its root cause.

Given the seeming inability of government outsiders to impose their views, or even to agree on a set of policy prescriptions, it might seem more apt to study activists who tried to frame their country's policy from the innards of the French bureaucracy. The more convincing advocates of the colonial-lobby theory have thus pointed to the large number of colonial veterans who manned the upper echelons of the Ministry of the Navy and the Conseil d'Etat, where they could theoretically have wielded a disproportionate influence.[29] Among these well-connected colonists they cite Charles Pierre Claret, Comte de Fleurieu, minister of the navy under Louis XVI (now in the Conseil d'Etat); Eustache Bruix, a Saint-Domingue–born planter and minister of the navy during the Directory (also in the Conseil d'Etat); Laurent Truguet (another minister of the navy turned *conseiller d'état*); Jean-Baptiste Guillemain de Vaivres, a former intendant of Saint-Domingue (now heading the colonial bureau of the Ministry of the Navy); Daniel Lescallier, a former governor of Réunion (now in the Conseil d'Etat, later the colonial prefect of Guadeloupe); Vincent Viénot de Vaublanc, a planter born in Fort Liberté (elected deputy in December 1800); Pierre-Victoire Malouet (a former governor of Guyana and a naval commissioner in Saint-Domingue, also in the Conseil d'Etat); François Barbé de Marbois (a former intendant of Saint-Domingue and the soon-to-be-appointed secretary of the treasury); and Médéric Moreau de Saint-Méry, a prominent Dominguan legist now heading the French residency in Parma.

One must be careful, however, not to draw too many conclusions

[27] For authors who delayed publication of their manuscripts, see Félix Carteau, *Soirées bermudiennes, ou entretiens sur les événemens qui ont opéré la ruine de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue* (Bordeaux, 1802), xl; Barré de Saint-Venant, *Des colonies modernes sous la zone torride, et particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1802), xv; and Fr. R. de Tussac, *Cri des colons contre un ouvrage de M. l'évêque et sénateur Grégoire, ayant pour titre de la littérature des nègres* (Paris, 1810), 17. On French public opinion, see Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 93.

[28] On Deslozières's work, see Claude Wanquet, "Un réquisitoire contre l'abolition de l'esclavage: *Les égarements du nigrophilisme* de Louis Narcisse Baudry Deslozières (mars 1802)," in *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises, 1802: Ruptures et continuités de la politique coloniale française (1800–1830)*, ed. Yves Bénot and Marcel Dorigny (Paris, 2003), 29–49.

[29] Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 351; Laurent Dubois, "'Troubled Water': Rebellion and Republicanism in the Revolutionary French Caribbean," in *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, ed. James Horn, Jan Ellen Lewis, and Peter Onuf (Charlottesville, VA, 2002), 292–99.

from these individuals' résumés. All had served a prerevolutionary empire built on the twin pillars of racism and slavery, but after ten years of revolutionary upheaval they now ran the gamut from reactionaries who thought that the clock could be turned back to 1789 (and who had been deported to Guyana under the Directory for their right-wing views) to political realists convinced that it could not (and who had joined Henri Grégoire's second Society of the Friends of the Blacks). Instead of making the blanket assumption that all former colonial bureaucrats were racist apologists of slavery, one must thus assess their opinions on a case-by-case basis.

Malouet, who first traveled to Saint-Domingue as a colonial bureaucrat before the Revolution, exemplified the more conservative side of the political spectrum. Like many newcomers, he was at first shocked by the treatment of the slaves, but he promptly married into the local plantocracy and argued in *Mémoire sur l'esclavage des nègres* (1788) that slavery was acceptable as long as laws limited planters' worst exactions. With the outbreak of the slave revolt, he moved to England, where he and *créole* exiles lobbied for a British invasion of Saint-Domingue. By 1801 he was mentioned as a supporter of the restoration of slavery in the Conseil d'Etat, a position consistent with his *Collection de mémoires sur les colonies* (1802), which lamented the black domination of the French empire.[30]

But officials known for their support of emancipation could also be found in the immediate entourage of Bonaparte, who was thus exposed to a wide variety of policy prescriptions. The minister of the police, Joseph Fouché, had been a radical in the 1790s and spoke against slavery in the Conseil d'Etat.[31] Lescallier had backed the Marquis de Lafayette's utopian plantation projects as the governor of Guyana and was a member of the second Society of the Friends of the Blacks. Truguet sent four reports in 1799–1800 to oppose both slavery and an expedition to Saint-Domingue.[32]

Saint-Domingue's frequent upheavals also brought a steady stream of political exiles who vociferously attacked Louverture, not because of a latent desire to see slavery restored, but because they disagreed with

[30] Pierre-Victoire Malouet, *Mémoire sur l'esclavage des nègres dans lequel on discute les motifs proposés pour leur affranchissement, ceux qui s'y opposent, et les moyens praticables pour améliorer leur sort* (Neufchâtel, 1788); Pierre-Victoire Malouet, *Mémoires de Malouet*, 2 vols. (1868; rpt. Paris, 1874); Léon Vallée, ed., *Memoirs of Fouché*, vol. 1 (New York, 1903), 181; Jean Tarrade, "Is Slavery Reformable? Proposals of Colonial Administrators at the End of the Ancien Régime," in *The Abolitions of Slavery: From Léger Félicité Sonthonax to Victor Schoelcher, 1793, 1794, 1848*, ed. Marcel Dorigny (1995; rpt. New York, 2003), 101–3.

[31] Vallée, *Memoirs of Fouché*, iii–viii, xxiii–li, 181; Louis Madelin, *Fouché, 1759–1820* (Paris, 1903), 382–83.

[32] Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 532–34, 573–78; Tarrade, "Is Slavery Reformable?" 101–3, 107–8; Dorigny and Gainot, *Société des amis des noirs*, 234, 304, 345; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 10, 47–49, 68.

his closeness to the British enemy. Days after 18 Brumaire, when the minister of the navy invited several colonial experts to offer their advice on the policy to adopt toward Saint-Domingue, former slave owners like Page and Paul Alliot-Vauneuf argued *against* sending an expedition to Saint-Domingue because they thought that forcing black soldiers back into slavery was a hopeless cause. Those who supported the use of force during the meeting were Louis Dufay and Jean-Baptiste Belley, two of the deputies sent to France in 1794 to obtain the abolition of slavery and who, as members of the second Society of the Friends of the Blacks, could hardly be suspected of reactionary leanings.[33] Like Belley, many of Louverture's harshest critics were officers of color who had run afoul of the governor during his rise to power. One may mention Etienne Mentor, a black deputy who proposed to sentence Louverture to death for signing a treaty with England; Jean-Pierre Léveillé, who was furious at Louverture for killing his brother and exiling the French agent Gabriel d'Hédouville; Jean-Louis Villatte, a mulatto rival whom Louverture had expelled in 1796; and most notably Rigaud, who reached France in the spring of 1801 after losing the War of the South to Louverture.[34]

Given the diversity of views represented in the Ministry of the Navy and the Conseil d'Etat, governmental insiders merely helped Bonaparte conceptualize potential policy options, while the final decision remained his to make. Even more than opinions, which the fractious nebula of colonial experts provided in abundance in Paris, he needed reliable facts, which he could only obtain from government officials stationed in the Caribbean. Far from calling for a restoration of slavery, these officials drew a vivid picture of Louverture's increasingly tenuous loyalty to the *métropole*.

A Flow of Information Emphasizing Strategic, not Economic, Concerns, 1799–1801

As he attempted to assess the veracity of the accusations levied against Saint-Domingue's governor, Bonaparte's most obvious source of information was Louverture himself, whom he still hoped to use as an ally as late as the spring of 1801. Aware that he had many enemies, Louverture sent an abundant and well-crafted correspondence, often

[33] Paul Alliot-Vauneuf to Daniel Lescallier (3 Prairial, Year VIII [May 23, 1800]), CC9A/27, AN; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 10, 50–54.

[34] Jean-Pierre Léveillé to Consuls of the Republic (3 Frimaire, Year VIII [Nov. 24 1799]), F/5B/38, AN; [Memoir on troops of color] (ca. 1801), box 22/2194, Rochambeau Papers, University of Florida (hereafter RP-UF); Jean-Louis Dubroca, *La vie de Toussaint Louverture, chef des noirs insurgés de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1802), 34, 69; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, 2004), 222.

addressed directly to the first consul, and dispatched envoys to Paris to defend his actions from his critics. He also went to great lengths to stymie any information that might reflect poorly on his rule, censoring outgoing mail and preventing known critics from leaving the colony.[35] In the end, Louverture was successful in exaggerating the extent of Saint-Domingue's economic recovery under his rule, but less so in concealing his abrupt treatment of French officials and his closeness to Anglo-American diplomats, so from Paris's perspective the decline of the plantation sector seemed less pressing an issue than Louverture's apparent slide toward independence.

The French agent Roume was another logical source of information. A white *créole* from Grenada, Roume was a longtime colonial administrator who had once supported slavery, but he was also the husband of a mixed-race woman who prided himself on his family's racial diversity.[36] A pragmatist, he held views that evolved with the revolution, and he eventually concluded that it would be in France's best interest to employ former slaves as soldiers to attack neighboring Jamaica and free British slaves.[37] Roume hoped to influence Louverture when he first took over as agent in Cap Français, but his hopes were soon quashed when Louverture sent a mob to intimidate him, put him under house arrest, threatened to kill him unless he approved of the takeover of Santo Domingo, and finally locked him up in a chicken coop.[38] Concluding that Louverture would never respect his authority, Roume advised the French government to be ready to send an army of twelve thousand troops after peace with England was secure—not to restore slavery, he emphasized, but to rein in Louverture, whom he suspected of making preparations for independence.[39] In August 1801 Roume left the colony for New York, where he sent a detailed account of his captivity and again called for a French expedition, in part because he feared that Louverture planned to force African-born Dominguans back into slavery.[40]

35 Pascal to Louverture (23 Germinal, Year VII [Apr. 12, 1799]), Sc. Micro R-2228 Reel 5 (Executive correspondence: Louverture), SC-NYPL; François-Marie Périchou de Kerversau to Eustache Bruix (22 Fructidor, Year VIII [Sept. 9, 1800]), CC9/B23, AN; Huin and Augustin d'Hébécourt to Forfait (10 Brumaire, Year IX [Nov. 1, 1800]), CC9A/21, AN.

36 Philippe Roume de Saint-Laurent, "Discours adressé à l'Assemblée Nationale" (May 1791), Roume Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (hereafter LC-MD); Roume, "Discours" (30 Messidor, Year VII [July 18, 1799]), CC9B/9, AN.

37 Roume to Emmanuel Sieyès (19 Fructidor, Year VII [Sept. 5, 1799]), 284AP/13, dossier 6, AN.

38 "Testimonio . . . sobre . . . la conducta y operaciones del general Louverture" (ca. May 30, 1800), in Demorizi, *Cesión de Santo Domingo a Francia*, 593–614; Kerversau, "Rapport sur la partie française de Saint-Domingue" (1 Germinal, Year IX [Mar. 22, 1801]), box 2/66, RP-UF.

39 Philippe Roume de Saint-Laurent, "Moyens proposé au gouvernement français . . . pour la réorganisation de cette colonie sans recourir aux voies de rigueur" (22 Prairial, Year VIII [June 11, 1800]), Roume Papers, LC-MD.

40 Roume to Forfait (3 Vendémiaire, Year X [Sept. 25, 1801]), BN08270, lot 132, RP-UF.

Of all the French officials in Hispaniola, the best informed and most influential was François-Marie Périchou de Kerversau, who served as France's agent in Santo Domingo in 1798–99. Kerversau was a noble from Brittany who had gone to Saint-Domingue to flee the Terror, but in colonial affairs he was a moderate adamant that slavery should not be restored.[41] Like Roume, he first hoped that Louverture could be contained by moral suasion, only to conclude that independence was Louverture's end goal and that France would have to send numerous forces to see its authority respected.[42] Kerversau's successor as a French agent in Santo Domingo, the mulatto general Antoine Chanlatte, was a supporter of Rigaud who made the now familiar accusations that Louverture was an Anglophile who dreamed of independence.[43] Chanlatte and Kerversau opposed Louverture's takeover of Santo Domingo for fear that it would add to the governor's already extensive powers, and both returned to France in September 1801, at a time when Bonaparte was finalizing his plans to send an expedition to Saint-Domingue. In personal meetings with the minister of the navy, Kerversau reiterated his attacks on Louverture's diplomatic dealings with England (which, interestingly, were partly caused by Louverture's own fears that France might launch an expedition against him) while criticizing his excessive severity against plantation laborers. Kerversau's reports were favorably received and he returned with the Leclerc expedition at Bonaparte's personal request, as did Chanlatte.[44]

Another influential administrator was Saint-Domingue's director of fortifications, Charles-Humbert-Marie de Vincent. His colonial service went back to 1786 and he was financially invested in the plantation economy, having married the daughter of a planter from Gonaïves, but like many others he viewed emancipation as a fait accompli, and during his many missions to France Vincent only raised the issue of Louverture's questionable treaties with England.[45] Contrary to Kerversau and

41 On Kerversau's background, see his officer file in 8Yd743/1 and 8Yd743/2, SHD-DAT. On Kerversau's opposition to slavery, see Kerversau to Bruix (24 Prairial, Year VIII [June 13, 1800]), CC9/B23, AN.

42 Kerversau to Bruix (21 Pluviôse, Year VII [Feb. 9, 1799]), CC9/B23, AN; Kerversau to Forfait (24 Frimaire, Year IX [Dec. 20, 1800]), FP/49APC/1, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence (hereafter CAOM).

43 Antoine Chanlatte to Forfait (4 Complémentaire, Year VIII [Sept. 21, 1800]), CO 137/105, BNA.

44 François-Marie Périchou de Kerversau, "Compte-rendu de sa conduite à Saint-Domingue" (28 Fructidor, Year IX [Sept. 15, 1801]), CC9/B23, AN; Decrès to [Louis-Alexandre Berthier] (6 Brumaire, Year X [Oct. 28, 1801]), 8Yd743/1, SHD-DAT; Pierre Pluchon, "Toussaint Louverture d'après le général de Kerversau," in Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture*, 157–61. On Louverture's diplomatic dealings with England, see Philippe Girard, "Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture's Diplomacy, 1798–1802," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 66 (2009): 87–124.

45 On Vincent's background, see his officer file in 8Yd1825, SHD-DAT; and Christian Schneider, "Le colonel Vincent, officier du génie à Saint-Domingue," *Annales historiques de la révolution française*, no. 329 (2002): 101–22.

Roume, Vincent never called for an expedition because he was convinced that it would result in the deaths of thousands of white planters, black laborers, and French soldiers. In the summer of 1801 he warned Louverture that the controversial constitution he had just passed was an affront to French sovereignty and would surely prompt Bonaparte to resort to force. Louverture entrusted Vincent with the task of bringing a copy of the constitution to Paris in a last-ditch effort to mellow Bonaparte, but the first consul had already made up his mind by the time Vincent reached France, and Vincent's warnings that tropical fevers would decimate the French expedition went unheeded.[46]

That fall Louverture also sent Gaston Nogérée, one of the many white planters in his entourage and a signatory of the 1801 constitution. Nogérée arrived in December 1801, too late to have any influence on the decision to send an expedition to Saint-Domingue, but it is worth noting that he was yet another white colonist who does not fit the profile of the racist foe of emancipation.[47] In the end, neither he nor Roume, Vincent, Kerversau, or Chanlatte—all the leading French administrators in Hispaniola—ever lobbied Bonaparte to restore slavery. All they did was to paint the picture of a gifted but dangerously independent leader and (aside from Vincent and Nogérée) argue that an expedition was needed to keep the colony within the French empire.

Bonaparte's Decision to Remove Louverture from Office, Spring 1801

Bonaparte's colonial policy seemed quite erratic from 1799 to 1801 as he abruptly shifted between attempts at conciliation with Louverture and desultory plans of expeditions. In December 1799 he considered shipping a fleet to show the French flag in Saint-Domingue, but within days he decided instead to send Vincent and two other envoys with minimal naval support. By January 1800 he was again thinking of outfitting a fleet, only to put such plans on hold when the ships were met by a storm during a sortie and he reassigned the troops to the Egyptian theater. A fleet allegedly bound for Saint-Domingue sailed in February 1801, but it was in fact a decoy meant to facilitate the departure of reinforcements to Egypt.[48]

46 On Vincent's warnings against an expedition, see Charles Humbert de Vincent, "Nouvelles observations sur Saint-Domingue et des moyens d'y rétablir le calme" (11 Frimaire, Year VIII [Dec. 2, 1799]), CC9A/28, AN; Vincent, "Précis des principaux événements de Saint-Domingue" (ca. Nov. 1801), MS 619, Fonds Montbret, Bibliothèque François Villon, Rouen; and Las Cases, *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, 770.

47 Gaston Nogérée to Louverture (25 Vendémiaire, Year X [Oct. 17, 1801]), box 1:5, John Kobler/Haitian Revolution Collection, MG 140, SC-NYPL; Louis-André Pichon to Pascal (5 Brumaire, Year X [Oct. 27, 1801]), BN08269, lot 107, RP-UF.

48 Jean-Baptiste Vaillant, ed., *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III*, 32 vols. (Paris, 1858), 6:28, 42, 64, 227, 458, 543, 590; 7:8, 81, 177.

These orders and counterorders make little sense unless one understands that Bonaparte was oscillating between two radically different options. The first was "to consolidate and legalize the regulations respecting labor established by Toussaint, which had already been crowned with the most brilliant success." The other was to restore white rule in Saint-Domingue with a large European force. "I inclined to the former scheme," Bonaparte later remembered, because it was "most conducive to the influence of [the French] flag in America. With an army of twenty-five to thirty thousand blacks, what might I not undertake against Jamaica, the Antilles, Canada, the United States itself, or the Spanish colonies?"[49] "I regret to have sent an army to Saint-Domingue," he told Barry Edward O'Meara in Saint Helena, because with Louverture's troops "I would have taken Jamaica and done your colonies irreparable damage."[50] Such later recollections were obviously tainted by Bonaparte's knowledge that the expedition had proved a disaster, but they should not be dismissed outright since they were consistent with a conversation he had with Barbé de Marbois in August 1800. In it he expressed his conviction that "this island would go for England if the blacks were not attached to us by their interest in liberty. They will produce less sugar, maybe, than they did as slaves; but they will produce it for us and will serve us, if we need them, as soldiers. We will have one less sugar mill; but we will have one more citadel filled with friendly soldiers."[51] For Bonaparte to employ freed slaves for offensive operations was not as revolutionary a concept as it may seem, since colonial units had a long and successful history in the French, British, and Spanish Caribbean. Victor Hugues's use of freed slaves in Guadeloupe had been particularly effective, so during the Consulate Bonaparte was deluged with a flurry of memoirs, almost as numerous as those written by planters, that urged him to continue the policies of the Directory and send black soldiers against colonies as varied as Jamaica, Louisiana, Mexico, Trinidad, and Paraguay.[52]

After hesitating for eighteen months, Bonaparte made his decision: he would ally himself with Louverture—and thus continue to support emancipation in Saint-Domingue. In February 1801 he ordered the minister of the navy to send new agents to Saint-Domingue and "flatter" Louverture.[53] Bonaparte viewed the alliance as his most real-

[49] Somerset de Chair, ed., *Napoleon on Napoleon: An Autobiography of the Emperor* (New York, 1992), 177–78.

[50] O'Meara, *Napoléon en exil*, 276–77.

[51] Pierre-Louis Roederer, *Mémoires sur la Révolution, le Consulat, et l'Empire* (1840; rpt. Paris, 1942), 131.

[52] On Hugues, see Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 152, 193, 222–30, 241–42. On plans of expeditions, see Philippe Girard, "Rêves d'Empire: French Plans of Expeditions in the Southern United States and the Caribbean, 1789–1809," *Louisiana History* 48 (2007): 389–412.

[53] Bonaparte to Forfait (Feb. 18, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:44–45.

istic policy option, one that offered the promise of applying great pressure on his British enemy at minimal cost, and in his instructions to the new colonial prefect François Lequoy-Mongiraud he told him "not to give Louverture any cause for complaint," so that Louverture's "black legions" could be employed in military operations.[54] A month later Bonaparte wrote a rare personal letter to Louverture to announce his promotion to captain general. "The government could not have given you a greater proof of its trust," he wrote. Soon "elements of the army of Saint-Domingue will contribute in your region to further the glory and possessions of the Republic."[55]

The flattering letter, accompanied by a promotion, would probably have done wonders with Louverture, who had long complained of not receiving any reply to the many letters he had addressed to Bonaparte.[56] Had Bonaparte also sent Louverture his two sons (who were held as quasi hostages in a Parisian school), Louverture might very well have accepted Bonaparte's offer for a transatlantic alliance sealed on the emancipationist status quo.[57] Bonaparte, however, never sent the letter. After changing his mind yet another time, he canceled the plan to send new agents and removed Louverture from the army's officer roll.[58] On May 4 he gave firm orders to assemble a force thirty-six hundred strong in Brest, which eventually grew into the main squadron of the Leclerc expedition.[59]

The proslavery colonial lobby did not reach a critical mass in the spring of 1801, nor did Bonaparte repudiate the law of emancipation around that time, so Bonaparte's sudden policy shift largely resulted from a changing strategic environment. In March the assassination of Czar Paul halted Russian plans to attack British India, thus lessening the value of a simultaneous assault on British Jamaica.[60] That same month England made its first peace overtures that, if conclusive, would allow French fleets to leave for the Caribbean.[61] Last and most important,

54 Bonaparte to François Lequoy-Mongiraud (Mar. 4, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:78.

55 Bonaparte to Louverture (13 Ventôse, Year IX [Mar. 4, 1801]), Kurt Fischer Collection, Moorland-Springarn Research Center, Howard University (hereafter KFC-HU).

56 Pamphile de Lacroix, *La révolution de Haïti* (1819; rpt. Paris, 1995), 277.

57 On Louverture's sons, see Chef du Bureau du Contentieux du Ministère de la Marine to Louverture (24 Prairial, Year VII [June 12, 1799]), MS7, 100, Service Historique de la Défense, Département de la Marine (hereafter SHD-DM); Louverture to Placide and Isaac Louverture (25 Pluviôse, Year IX [Feb. 14 1801]), in Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture*, 231–32.

58 Ministère de la Guerre, "Relevé de services" (ca. 1803), 7Yd284, SHD-DAT; Pierre Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture* (Paris, 1989), 456–57; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 25.

59 Bonaparte, "Arrêté" (May 4, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:179.

60 Bonaparte to Joseph Bonaparte (Apr. 12, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:145; James, *Black Jacobins*, 271; Frederick W. Kagan, *The End of the Old Order: Napoleon and Europe, 1801–1805* (Cambridge, 2006), 17–26.

61 Bonaparte to Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (May 28, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:202.

Bonaparte received letters that Louverture had sent in February and in which he daringly announced that he had jailed the agent Roume and taken over Santo Domingo, both of which made it unlikely that Louverture's ambitions could ever be harnessed in a manner conducive to France's interests. When it came time to lay out the rationale for the Leclerc expedition, these letters were reproduced in the *Moniteur universel* in October 1801, along with Louverture's equally provocative constitution.[62]

Events in later months further convinced the first consul of the necessity and practicality of the expedition. News from Egypt, which Bonaparte had once thought might take "the place of Saint-Domingue and the Antilles," grew increasingly bad, thus increasing the relative importance of Saint-Domingue. In September, Kerversau and Chanlatte returned to France and personally reiterated their accusations of Louverture's disloyalty to Bonaparte, who later railed against a man who had "negotiated with the English, both directly and secretly."[63] In October the London peace preliminaries opened the Atlantic Ocean to French warships and removed the main practical hurdle to the expedition. A few days later Vincent arrived with a copy of the 1801 constitution, which was widely interpreted as a declaration of independence.[64] Bonaparte immediately asked the British to authorize him to ship out a fleet to Saint-Domingue, and preparations for the Leclerc expedition proceeded apace, ballooning to a seven-port behemoth with twenty-one thousand troops by the end of November.[65] Based on this sequence of events, the fear that Louverture might declare independence, not dissatisfaction with the 1794 emancipation law, is the most convincing explanation for Bonaparte's decision to remove him from office.

Planning for the Leclerc Expedition and the Slavery Issue, Fall 1801

The expedition readied in Brest was the largest to sail from France while Bonaparte ruled, and he was confident of victory. This brought an important matter to the fore: though not initially motivated by a desire to restore slavery, the Leclerc expedition would give Bonaparte an opportunity to do so, and the first consul had to make a decision on the labor system to be adopted after the conquest. Many scholars have

62 Louverture to Bonaparte (23 Pluviôse, Year IX [Feb. 12, 1801]), in Lemonnier-Delafosse, *Seconde campagne de Saint-Domingue*, 284–86; *Moniteur universel*, no. 23 (23 Vendémiaire, Year X [Oct. 15, 1801]), 1–2.

63 "Saint-Domingue and the Antilles" and "negotiated with the English" from de Chair, *Napoleon on Napoleon*, 128, 175.

64 Pichon to Talleyrand (18 Thermidor, Year IX [Aug. 6, 1801]), CC9/B21, AN.

65 On British approval, see Bonaparte to Decrès (Oct. 7, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:351.

assumed that Bonaparte decided to restore slavery when he outfitted the Leclerc expedition (or even as early as 1799), but to do so they must reject two years' worth of pro-emancipation statements as lies.[66] From the time he took office in 1799 Bonaparte promised that "the sacred principles of liberty and equality will never suffer any change" in Saint-Domingue.[67] He publicly and privately marshaled his commitment to emancipation again in May 1800, January 1801, and March 1801 and instructed Louverture to inscribe every battalion flag with the inscription "France is the only people that recognizes your freedom and equality" (which Louverture refused to do to keep his soldiers unsure of the first consul's intentions).[68]

Bonaparte's decision to oust Louverture changed nothing about his public support for emancipation, since in the fall of 1801 he received reports that Louverture's stern rule had become unpopular and he became hopeful that he could enlist the support of Louverture's black subordinates.[69] With this in mind, in November 1801 he drafted a public proclamation to be distributed after the French landing and in which he reassured the people of Saint-Domingue that "regardless of your origin or skin color, you are all French, you are all free and equal."[70] The deliberations of the consuls similarly indicated that the expedition was motivated not by a desire to restore slavery but by anger at "irregular acts" and that in Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue "all are free; all will remain free."[71] Similar comments could be found in Bonaparte's private correspondence; in a letter to his minister of foreign affairs he dismissed economic motives like "commerce and finances" and instead explained that his goal was to "crush the government of the blacks."[72] No mere propaganda ploy, Bonaparte's continued support for emancipation was an integral part of the planning for the expedition, because it could help isolate Louverture and considerably facilitate Leclerc's

66 James, *Black Jacobins*, 275; Laurent, *Six études sur J. J. Dessalines*, 31; Auguste and Auguste, *Les déportés de Saint-Domingue*, 18; Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 636–37; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 49, 58; Thomas Pronier, "L'implicite et l'explicite dans la politique de Napoléon," in Bénot and Dorigny, *Rétablissement de l'esclavage*, 51–67; Fleurimond, *Haïti, 1804–2004*, 34.

67 Bonaparte to Citizens of Saint-Domingue (Dec. 25, 1799), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 6:42.

68 For other comments on emancipation, see Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 6:245, 572, 574; Bonaparte to Louverture (13 Ventôse, Year IX [Mar. 4, 1801]), KFC-HU. On the flag, see Bonaparte, "Arrêté" (Dec. 25, 1799), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 6:42; de Chair, *Napoleon on Napoleon*, 176; and Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 45–46.

69 Roume to Forfait (3 Vendémiaire, Year X [Sept. 25, 1801]), BN08270, lot 132, RP-UF; André Rigaud to Decrès (2 Brumaire, Year X [Oct. 24, 1801]), Sc. Micro R-2228 Reel 1, SC-NYPL; Bonaparte to Leclerc (Nov. 19, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:412.

70 Bonaparte, "Proclamation du Consul à tous les habitants de Saint-Domingue" (17 Brumaire, Year X [Nov. 8, 1801]), FM/F/3/202, CAOM.

71 Bonaparte, "Exposé de la situation de la République" (Nov. 22, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:416.

72 Bonaparte to Talleyrand (Nov. 13, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:406.

military task in Saint-Domingue. Bonaparte's secret instructions to Leclerc thus specified that the republic would never force people "back in irons" and that the end goal was to get "free cultivators" back to work, statements consistent with letters Bonaparte sent to Leclerc in the spring and fall of 1802 in which he made no call for an immediate restoration of slavery.[73] Fouché, whose memoirs claim that it was widely understood in the fall of 1801 that slavery would be reinstituted in Saint-Domingue, thus seems to overstate his case, as do the various authors who claim that Bonaparte explicitly ordered Leclerc to restore slavery.[74]

Bonaparte's 1799 constitution allowed him to govern each colony with distinct laws, so maintaining emancipation in Saint-Domingue in no way constrained his options elsewhere. In the aforementioned conversation with Barbé de Marbois, Bonaparte explained that "my policy is to govern men the way most of them want to be governed. I finished the war in Vendée by making myself a Catholic; I established myself in Egypt by converting to Islam; I won minds in Italy by becoming a reactionary. If I governed the Jews, I would rebuild the Temple of Solomon. So I will speak of freedom in Saint-Domingue; I will keep slavery in Réunion, as well as in Santo Domingo."[75] In nearly identical terms he explained in January 1801 that "the French government's guiding principle is to govern peoples according to their habits and customs" and that slavery would remain in Spanish Santo Domingo even as France "governed Saint-Domingue with and for the blacks," a distinction that also appears in Leclerc's instructions.[76] In March 1801, just as he was expressing his support for Dominguan emancipation in his letter to Louverture, Bonaparte maintained slavery in Indian Ocean colonies, where white planters had threatened to declare independence rather than free their slaves.[77] In October he decided that the colonies returned by England with the peace (and where emancipation had not taken effect) would continue to employ slaves, but he went on to explain that the goal in Saint-Domingue was to "enforce the rights of the metropolis" and said nothing of slavery there.[78]

73 Bonaparte, "Notes pour servir aux instructions à donner au capitaine général Leclerc" (Oct. 31, 1801), in *Lettres du général Leclerc, commandant en chef l'armée de Saint-Domingue*, ed. Paul Roussier (Paris, 1937), 269. For Bonaparte's correspondence, see below.

74 Vallée, *Memoirs of Fouché*, 181; Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies*, 41; Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 135; Saint-Rémy, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*, 378; Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint Louverture*, 48.

75 Roederer, *Mémoires*, 131.

76 Bonaparte, "Instructions . . . pour le Gen. Combis" (Jan. 14, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 6:572.

77 Bonaparte to Forfait (Mar. 9, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:97; Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 604–6.

78 Bonaparte to Decrès (Oct. 7, 1801), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:351.

Despite its apparent contradictions, Bonaparte's colonial policy was governed by a consistent principle: instead of being constrained by a one-size-fits-all ideological commitment to emancipation or slavery, he would pursue what could realistically be achieved in a given colony. Slavery seemed to have his preference, since he restored or maintained it wherever he could, but he knew that restoring slavery in Saint-Domingue would be both difficult (the black population being unusually large and well armed) and unnecessary (since Louverture's labor code offered another path to economic renewal), and he was probably sincere when he explained in the fall of 1801 that he had different plans for this colony.

Leclerc's Policies on Slavery after the Landing of the Expedition, Spring 1802

Given the difficulty of micromanaging distant colonies in the age of sail, Bonaparte in effect delegated day-to-day French colonial policy to the captain general of the expedition. For this crucial position he could easily have selected an officer tied to the planter milieu, like Donatien de Rochambeau (who only obtained the number two spot in the expeditionary force), or one known for his conservative views, like Louis-Thomas Villaret de Joyeuse (whose role was limited to convoying the troops to Saint-Domingue and who later ruled Martinique).[79] Instead, he gave the overall command to Leclerc, who had started his military career as one of the bourgeois volunteers of 1792 and was a typical product of the French Revolution.[80] A newcomer to colonial affairs, Leclerc embarked with an impressive library that included works on the history of Saint-Domingue, a 237-volume encyclopedia, and plays by Jean Racine and Molière.[81] In the eighteenth century some planters and slave traders had enslaved Africans while reading the philosophes (who themselves could be remarkably racist), but Leclerc's reading preferences still pointed more to a son of the Enlightenment than to a reactionary partisan of the Bourbons (some of the same books could be found in Louverture's own library).[82] His army, far from consisting

[79] On Rochambeau's ties to planters, see Armand de Vanssay to Anne-Paschale de Vanssay (May 17, 1802), in Gabriel Debien, "Autour de l'expédition de Saint-Domingue: Les espoirs d'une famille d'anciens planteurs, 1801–1804," *Notes d'histoire coloniale* 111 (1942): 34; Deneuville to Rochambeau (26 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 14, 1802]), box 9/805, RP-UF; Des Cassennes de Bond to Rochambeau (Aug. 29, 1802), box 10/904, RP-UF. On Villaret, see Kenneth Johnson, "Louis-Thomas Villaret de Joyeuse, Admiral and Colonial Administrator" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2006), 175–83.

[80] Henri Mézière, *Le général Leclerc (1772–1802) et l'expédition de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1990).

[81] "Procès verbal d'énumération et estimation des divers effets provenant de la succession du général en chef Leclerc" (19 Brumaire, Year XI [Nov. 10, 1802]), CC9/B23, AN.

[82] On the philosophes' views on slavery, see Pierre H. Boulle, *Race et esclavage dans la France de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2007), 22–23, 27–29. On the planters' reading choices, see Paul Butel, "Suc-

of aristocratic émigrés, included many followers of Jean Moreau known for their attachment to revolutionary principles, as well as (at Bonaparte's insistence) dozens of black and mulatto officers.[83]

The French expedition landed in Cap Français in February 1802. As had been the case since 1793, each side tried to appeal to the black majority by presenting itself as the true friend of emancipation. To mobilize their supporters, Louverture and Dessalines charged that the French had come to restore slavery, and to counter these accusations, Leclerc distributed Bonaparte's proclamation and others under his own name in which he promised that emancipation would remain the norm.[84] When Joseph, the slave of a U.S. merchant in Cap Français, jumped ship in early April, French authorities granted him his freedom despite the recriminations of his owner.[85] Meanwhile, Kerversau (who headed the force sent to Santo Domingo) forbade the use of chains and whips in the Spanish part of Hispaniola and called for the use of black plantation drivers to curb racial tensions.[86]

Given France's record as the only colonial power to have abolished slavery, Leclerc's proclamations struck a chord with much of the black population. Some laborers and soldiers fought on Louverture's side, but many, chastened by Louverture's past labor abuses, remained neutral or joined the French. In the south, where Louverture and Dessalines had made many enemies during the War of the South, black generals like Jean-Joseph Laplume quickly rallied to the French side.[87] Another notable convert was Henri Christophe, the black commander of Cap Français, who eventually joined French ranks under the express promise that slavery would not be restored, as did Louverture's own brother Paul.[88] Abandoned by most of his subordinates, Louverture sued for peace in May and was deported to France within weeks on charges that he was plotting a new insurrection.

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cès et déclin du commerce colonial français de la Révolution à la Restauration," *Revue économique* 40 (1989): 1088. On Louverture's library, see Rainsford, *Historical Account*, 244.

83 André Rigaud to Decrès (26 Brumaire, Year X [Nov. 17, 1801]), 8Yd638, SHD-DAT; Philippe d'Auvergne to Robert Hobart (Apr. 13, 1802), WO 1/924, BNA.

84 On accusations that the French had come to restore slavery, see Louverture to Domage (20 Pluviôse, Year X [Feb. 9, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN; and Figeat, "Mémoire" (14 Vendémiaire, Year XI [Oct. 6, 1802]), CC9A/32, AN. For a proclamation, see Leclerc, "Proclamation aux habitants de Saint-Domingue" (28 Pluviôse, Year X [Feb. 17, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN.

85 John W. Lionard to Tobias Lear (Apr. 8, 1802), 208 MI/2, AN; Tim Matthewson, *A Pro-Slavery Foreign Policy: Haitian-American Relations during the Early Republic* (Westport, CT, 2003), 88.

86 Kerversau, [Proclamation] (5 Ventôse, Year X [Feb. 24, 1802]), Log 1737.F, Library Company of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

87 Edward Corbet to Nugent (Feb. 27, 1802), CO 137/107, BNA.

88 On Christophe, see Henri Christophe to Louverture (28 Ventôse, Year X [Mar. 19, 1802]), folder C14, KFC-HU; Christophe, "Manifeste du roi" (Sept. 18, 1814), RG 59/MLR A1632, National Archives, College Park (hereafter NARA-CP); and Hardÿ de Périni, *Correspondance intime du général Jean Hardÿ de 1798 à 1802* (Paris, 1901), 282. On Paul Louverture, see Paul Louverture to Leclerc (2 Ventôse, Year X [Feb. 21, 1802]), box 1Ad./7, RP-UF.

Finding himself the new master of Saint-Domingue, Leclerc began to work on the crucial *règlement des cultures*. Far from seizing this opportunity to restore slavery, he explained that his goal was to guarantee "liberty" while avoiding "license," a balanced approach identical to Louverture's.[89] As evidenced by the numerous drafts now housed at the University of Florida, Leclerc labored repeatedly on his labor code. The first iteration began with "no colonies without cultivation" (sans la culture il n'existe point de colonies), a phrase that Leclerc crossed out, probably after being told that it closely resembled the old planter motto "no colonies without slavery" (sans l'esclavage, point de colonies). The first draft made no mention of a salary, but the second temporarily gave farm laborers a share of plantation revenue, a right they obtained in perpetuity in the final law.[90] As other scholars have already noted, Leclerc's labor rules were almost identical to those in effect under Louverture, which was no coincidence since Leclerc wrote to the minister of the navy, Denis Decrès, that his labor code would be "more or less that of Louverture, which is very good. . . . It is so strong, in fact, that I would never have dared proposing one like this" (Leclerc had been struck by how harshly farm laborers were treated under Louverture).[91]

Far from being a tool of the planter lobby, Leclerc had tense relations with white *créoles*. He summoned a colonial council to advise him on his labor code, but to the dismay of the white planters, he insisted that it should include people of color like Christophe.[92] The council issued a report that was remarkably moderate, describing slavery as "anathema" and proposing regulations similar to Leclerc's and Louverture's, but it was irrelevant since Leclerc insisted from the outset that the council had no legislative power and finalized his labor code before he even received the council's recommendations.[93] When the council complained that taxes were too high, Leclerc disbanded it altogether, along with local town councils, and imposed martial law for the rest

89 Leclerc, "Ordre du jour" (25 Floréal, Year X [May 15, 1802]), CC9A 31, AN.

90 Leclerc, "Règlement sur la culture" (ca. May 1802), box 22/2239, RP-UF.

91 On other scholars who emphasize continuity, see Robert K. Lacerte, "The Evolution of Land and Labor in the Haitian Revolution, 1791–1820," *Americas* 34 (1978): 456–58; and Michel Hector, ed., *La révolution française et Haïti: Filiations, ruptures, nouvelles dimensions*, 2 vols. (Port-au-Prince, 1995). For the finished law, see *Gazette officielle de Saint-Domingue*, no. 4 (14 Messidor, Year X [July 3, 1802]), CC9A/30, AN. "More or less" from Leclerc to Decrès (16 Floréal, Year X [May 6, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN. On working conditions under Louverture, see Leclerc to Decrès (20 Pluviôse, Year X [Feb. 9, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN.

92 Philibert Fressinet, "Mémoires sur la dernière expédition de Saint-Domingue" (1802 [probably May 1805]), 1M593, SHD-DAT; Christophe, "Manifeste du roi" (Sept. 18, 1814), 10, Publications on the Independence of Haiti, RG 59/MLR A1632, NARA-CP.

93 "Anathema" from Joseph Bizouard, [Report to Leclerc] (24 Prairial, Year X [June 13, 1802]), box 7/492, RP-UF. On the powers of the council, see Leclerc to Inhabitants of Saint-Domingue (5 Floréal, Year X [Apr. 25, 1802]), box 4/277, RP-UF.

of his tenure.[94] For local planters, many of whom had bought into the rumor that Leclerc was under secret orders to restore slavery, the expedition was a rude awakening. Instead of bowing to their demands, French officers acted as if they were in conquered territory, seduced their wives, collected bribes, wooed black officers, and refused to give sequestered plantations back to returning exiles.[95]

The philosophical and economic merits of slavery aside, Leclerc's decision not to restore slavery was largely due to his reliance on black troops, which grew particularly marked after a deadly yellow fever epidemic broke out in late April.[96] He knew that crucial officers like Christophe had switched to the French side under a formal pledge that abolition would remain the norm and would surely defect if he ever broke his word. Even Leclerc's white troops would likely object, since many of them were revolutionary veterans who felt closer to the oppressed black laborers than to their aristocratic white masters.[97]

Leclerc's political caution became all the more necessary when he launched a disarmament campaign in June.[98] Sonthonax and Louverture had told former slaves that their guns were the best guarantor of their freedom, so rumors immediately spread that the French had ulterior motives, especially since Leclerc simultaneously ordered cultivators back to work under Louverture's unpopular labor code.[99] Time and again Leclerc assured cultivators that their freedom was not in question, but planters undermined his public proclamations with imprudent gossip. In June a planter in Cap Français bumped into one of his former slaves (now an officer), tore off his epaulettes, and told him that it was time to go back to the fields. Leclerc sentenced the planter to be put in the stocks on the market square, bearing a sign that read "partisan of slavery."[100] When a French general placed an order for chains, Leclerc fired back that "one can never speak of chains in

94 Leclerc to Deraim (23 Prairial, Year X [June 12, 1802]), box 7/489, RP-UF; Joseph-Antoine Idlinger, "Rapport sur l'objet proposé par le citoyen général en chef" (25 Prairial, Year X [June 14, 1802]), box 7/496, RP-UF; Leclerc, "Le général en chef ordonne" (10 Messidor, Year X [June 29, 1802]), box 7/564, RP-UF; Leclerc, "Ordonnance" (12 Messidor, Year X [1 July 1802]), CC9/B26, AN.

95 On the belief that Leclerc would restore slavery, see Pierre Collette to Stanislas Foache (Apr. 2, 1802), FP/92APC/16/43, CAOM; Corbet to Nugent (June 25, 1802), CO 137/108, BNA. On the planters' dissatisfaction, see Collette to Foache (Apr. 7, 1802), FP/92APC/16/43, CAOM; Lacroix, *La révolution de Haïti*, 358; and Mary Hassal [Leonora Sansay], *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (Philadelphia, 1808), 34.

96 Leclerc to Decrès (4 Vendémiaire, Year XI [Sept. 26, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN.

97 Leclerc to Decrès (14 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 2, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT.

98 Leclerc to Bonaparte (17 Prairial, Year X [June 6, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT.

99 On opposition to disarmament, see Grandet, "Journal des événements militaires survenus depuis le 1 thermidor, an 8 [10?]" (8 Thermidor, Year X [July 27, 1802]), B7/5, SHD-DAT. On opposition to plantation labor, see Dugey to Rochambeau (23 Prairial, Year X [June 12, 1802]), BN08268, lot 39, RP-UF.

100 Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 259.

the colony. The very word scares the blacks. . . . My mission here is as political as it is military."[101] Whipping, another politically charged punishment, was also used by some planters despite Leclerc's admonitions and its devastating impact on black public opinion.[102]

After hearing of the Peace of Amiens, Leclerc began to fear that France might be tempted to maintain slavery in the colonies it had recovered from Britain, and he anxiously asked his superiors to say nothing that might contradict his proclamations promising emancipation.[103] This brought the debate on the contentious issue back full circle to Paris, Bonaparte, and the colonial lobby.

The Law of May 20, 1802, and the Expedition to Guadeloupe, Summer 1802

In France the March 1802 treaty of Amiens gave renewed vigor to the public debate on the fate of the empire. Some scholars have cited the conservative tone of that year's intellectual output as a leading reason for Bonaparte's support for slavery, but contemporary authors, in 1802 as in 1801, remained divided on the issue.[104] Leaving aside René Périn's *L'incendie du Cap*, a badly written novel intended for a popular audience, the most potent critic of emancipation that year was Carteau, whose *Soirées bermudiennes* overtly advocated the restoration of slavery.[105] Such extremist works, however, were not the norm. Barré de Saint-Venant's *Des colonies modernes* criticized the economic impact of emancipation, but the author refrained from publishing the third volume, which would have covered a possible restoration of slavery, for fear of a popular backlash.[106] Jean-Louis Dubroca's best-selling biography of Louverture praised "the invaluable gift of liberty" even as it attacked Louverture as a traitor.[107] Page published the second volume of his treatise, which like the first advocated "slavery, whenever it is possible, and freedom, whenever it is necessary," and counseled Bonaparte to use black cultivators and white indentured servants in Saint-Domingue because restoring slavery was a military impossibility.[108] As in 1801, Bonaparte gave no indication that he had read any of these books.

[101] Leclerc to Jean-Baptiste Salme (7 Floréal, Year X [Apr. 27, 1802]), B7/3, SHD-DAT.

[102] Louis d'Arbois to Charles Desbureaux (23 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 11, 1802]), 135AP/1, AN.

[103] Leclerc to Decrès (16 Floréal, Year X [May 6, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT.

[104] Jean-Marcel Champion, "30 Floréal, Year X: The Restoration of Slavery by Bonaparte," in Dorigny, *Abolitions of Slavery*, 232.

[105] René Périn, *L'incendie du Cap, ou le règne de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris, 1802); Carteau, *Soirées bermudiennes*, xxxiv–xxxvi, xl, 14, 303–6.

[106] Saint-Venant, *Des colonies modernes*, vii, xv, 161, 511.

[107] Dubroca, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*, 44.

[108] Page, *Traité d'économie politique*, 2:viii.

There was initially little change to Bonaparte's policy, formulated in 1801, to maintain slavery where it was in effect and emancipation elsewhere. In a private letter Bonaparte mentioned the possibility that slavery could be partially restored in Saint-Domingue, where *anciens libres* (people freed before 1793) and soldiers would remain free, while *nouveaux libres* cultivators would lose their freedom, but a speech he delivered soon after did not mention the idea, and it never resurfaced thereafter.[109] Bonaparte never publicly announced his intention to restore slavery in Saint-Domingue, so his earlier, abolitionist proclamations remained official policy throughout 1802.

Historians frequently refer to the law of May 20, 1802, as marking the time when Bonaparte "restored" slavery, but the term is inaccurate.[110] The law merely *maintained* slavery in colonies that had never effectively abolished it (like Martinique and Réunion), restored the *slave trade* to those colonies, and specified that the government *would decide* within ten years what labor regimen would be adopted in colonies where slavery had been abolished (like Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue). The law changed nothing about the well-established principle that different laws would govern different colonies, and the government's orator explained that future regulations would "vary according to circumstances."[111] The Tribunate and the Legislative Corps passed the law by the relatively narrow majorities of 54–27 and 211–63 despite a recent purge, clearly indicating that Bonaparte was under no overwhelming political pressure to restore slavery.[112]

In the spring and summer of 1802 Bonaparte and Decrès implemented a series of discriminatory decrees targeting people of color in metropolitan France.[113] Because of this clear conservative shift in Bonaparte's racial policies, it is often assumed that he wrote Leclerc to ask him to restore slavery, when in reality he continued to give him much latitude on this crucial issue.[114] Concluding that Leclerc was best positioned to decide whether France should maintain Louverture's cultivator system, Bonaparte told Decrès that, the May 20 law notwithstand-

109 Bonaparte to Jean-Jacques de Cambacérès (Apr. 27, 1802), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:566. On the subsequent speech, see Bonaparte, "To the Legislative Corps" (May 6, 1802), in *The Rise to Power*, vol. 1 of *Letters and Documents of Napoleon*, ed. John Howard (New York, 1961), 521.

110 Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 645; Champion, "Restoration of Slavery"; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 91; Bénot and Dorigny, *Rétablissement de l'esclavage*, 7.

111 Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 370.

112 Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 645; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 92.

113 Decrès to Berthier (23 Floréal, Year X [May 13, 1802]), CC9/B24, AN; Decrès to Maritime Prefect of Havre (3 Messidor, Year X [June 22, 1802]), R3674, Archives Départementales du Calvados, Caen; Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 647; Cauna, *Toussaint Louverture*, 223–25.

114 Nugent to John Sullivan (Aug. 12, 1802), CO 137/108, BNA; James, *Black Jacobins*, 341; Ott, *Haitian Revolution*, 174; Wanquet, *La France et la première abolition de l'esclavage*, 648; Champion, "Restoration of Slavery," 233; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 91.

ing, he would support "whatever measures [Leclerc] will take to reassert the rights of the metropolis."[115] The May 20 law "has nothing to do with Saint-Domingue," Decrès accordingly wrote to Leclerc. "You know what is good and what will suit the government. You alone, being on the spot, can calculate what can most advantageously be obtained."[116]

In July and August, Bonaparte authorized his commanders in Guadeloupe and Guyana to restore slavery at the earliest convenient time.[117] This was a major policy shift that directly contradicted earlier promises to maintain the status quo, but letters Bonaparte sent to Leclerc that summer remained surprisingly silent on the issue of slavery, merely specifying that leading black officers should be deported. "Rid us of these gilded Africans, and there will be nothing left for us to wish," he wrote.[118] Well aware of the difficult military situation prevailing in Saint-Domingue (which Leclerc made painfully clear in a long stream of plaintive letters), Bonaparte probably found it wise not to force his brother-in-law into an unpopular course of action.

Leclerc, to whom the decision to restore slavery was thus delegated, never saw it as a realistic proposition in the short term because the declining number of European troops under his command left him highly dependent on colonial units to carry out the disarmament campaign. "I know what the colony needs, but I also know when we can implement it," he wrote in reference to his labor code, before explaining that the yellow fever epidemic made it impossible to fulfill Bonaparte's order that he disband colonial units.[119] Unsure that France could ever control a colony that was 90 percent black, he even expressed his preference for using white farm laborers. "Do not think of restoring slavery here for quite some time," he wrote Decrès after he heard of the May 20 law. "I think I can do everything so that my successor can implement the decisions of the government, but after issuing numerous public proclamations to guarantee the freedom of the blacks, I do not want to contradict myself."[120] Personal honor also featured prominently in an August 6 letter to Bonaparte, in which he alluded to his personal reluctance to reimpose slavery and the variety of labor options available to Bonaparte in the longer term. "By the time I leave the colony, it will be ready for whatever regime you want to adopt there, but my successor will have to take the last step if you think it is appropriate" (La colonie

115 Bonaparte to Decrès (May 21, 1802), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:596.
116 Decrès to Leclerc (25 Prairial, Year X [June 14, 1802]), CC9/B24, AN.
117 Bonaparte to Decrès (July 13, 1802, and Aug. 7, 1802), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:661, 711.
118 Bonaparte to Leclerc (July 1, 1802), in Vaillant, *Correspondance*, 7:640.
119 Leclerc to Decrès (17 Messidor, Year X [July 6, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT
120 Leclerc to Decrès (5 Thermidor, Year X [July 24, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT.

sera disposée à recevoir le régime que vous voudrez lui donner, mais ce sera à mon successeur à faire le dernier pas si vous le jugez à propos), he wrote. "As for myself, I will do nothing that is contrary to what I printed here" (Je ne ferai rien de contraire à ce que j'ai imprimé ici).[121] Throughout the summer he continued to advocate patience.[122]

Concerned that Bonaparte's decision to maintain slavery in Martinique would undermine his attempts to convince Dominguans of France's good intentions, Leclerc tried to keep black laborers unaware of the May 20 law and refused to publish it. But compartmentalizing French colonial policy in a small, well-traveled sea like the Caribbean proved impractical. Dominguans learned of the restoration of the slave trade when slave traders came to Saint-Domingue, and news that slavery had been maintained in Martinique and Tobago soon reached the colony as well.[123] If anything, Leclerc's ineffectual secrecy measures convinced the population that he had something to hide and that the law contained a secret clause restoring slavery in Saint-Domingue.[124]

Guadeloupe was the colony whose recent political history most resembled Saint-Domingue's, so events on that sister island resonated with particular intensity. After hearing that officers of color had revolted in Guadeloupe in October 1801, Bonaparte sent Antoine Richepance to restore French authority in an expedition that paralleled Leclerc's.[125] By July major combat operations had come to an end in Guadeloupe, and Richepance began to deport all people of color who had borne arms.[126] Fifteen hundred rebels were loaded onboard frigates to be sold as slaves on the Spanish main, and, after a circuitous journey, several of the frigates stopped in Cap Français, where they brought news of Richepance's brutal policies.[127]

Richepance refrained from officially restoring slavery in Guadeloupe, but he authorized the use of the whip and everyone—Leclerc and many present historians included—mistakenly assumed that he

121 Leclerc to Bonaparte (21 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 9, 1802]), 416AP/1, AN.

122 Leclerc to Decrès (18 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 6, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT; Leclerc to Decrès (7 Fructidor, Year X [Aug. 25, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN; Leclerc to Decrès (8 Fructidor, Year X [Aug. 26, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN.

123 Leclerc to Bonaparte (18 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 6, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT; Leclerc to Decrès (5 Vendémiaire, Year XI [Sept. 27, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN.

124 [British naval officer], "Observations Made and Information Gained at Cap Français" (July 1802), ADM 1/252, BNA.

125 Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 359–411; Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 39–40, 69–74.

126 Antoine Richepance to Decrès (18 Messidor, Year X [July 7, 1802]), in *Moniteur universel*, no. 324 (24 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 12, 1802]), 4.

127 John T. Duckworth to Evan Nepean (Aug. 7, 1802), ADM 1/252, BNA; Marques de Someruelos to Heads of Ports of Matanzas, Remedios, Trinidad, Puerto Principe, Bayamo, Cuba, Baracoa, Batabanó (Sept. 13, 1802), in *Documentos para la historia de Haití en el Archivo Nacional*, ed. José Luciano Franco (Havana, 1954), 148–49; Pichon to Leclerc (9 Vendémiaire, Year XI [Oct. 1, 1802]), BN08269, lot 107, RP-UF.

had restored it.[128] In Saint-Domingue panic-stricken *nouveaux libres* begged their former masters to let them buy their freedom, while *anciens libres* lined up in the courts to get their old emancipation papers notarized.[129] "My moral ascendancy is now destroyed," a despondent Leclerc wrote Bonaparte, "now that your plans for the colonies are well known."[130] "Because of Richepance's proclamation and the planters' inconsiderate comments," he wrote Decrès, the rebels now died "with incredible fanaticism."[131]

Even as he assumed that slavery had officially been restored in Guadeloupe (a measure that would only come in May 1803), Leclerc continued to reaffirm his attachment to emancipation in Saint-Domingue. His primary objective remained to disarm plantation laborers to ensure lasting French control of the colony. To achieve this important strategic task, he could not count on European troops, only fifteen hundred of whom were still fit for duty by the fall.[132] To fight the mountain maroons who opposed the disarmament campaign, Leclerc concluded that his only option was to supplement his meager army with colonial troops—and thus to continue supporting emancipation.[133]

Political and military setbacks clearly took a toll on Leclerc's morale. On a more personal level, he was terrified of yellow fever and devastated to learn that his wife Pauline had had an affair with one of his generals. "Ever since I arrived here," he wrote a month before his death, "all I saw were fires, insurrections, murders, the dead and the dying. My soul is wilted; no happy thought can make me forget these hideous scenes."[134] Leclerc's despondency probably explains the extremist policies he embraced in the last weeks of his life. Convinced that Saint-Domingue's cultivators would never be subservient again, he concluded that it would be necessary to wage a "war of extermination."[135] "Here is my opinion on this country," he wrote Bonaparte; "we must destroy all the Negroes in the mountains, men and women, keep-

[128] On the informal restoration of slavery, see Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 321, 403, 407. For the mistaken view that slavery was legally restored, see Leclerc to Decrès (30 Fructidor, Year XI [Sept. 17, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN; Champion, "Restoration of Slavery," 233; and Bénot, *Démence coloniale*, 74, 92.

[129] Alfred P. M. Laujon, *Précis historique de la dernière expédition de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, ca. 1805), 131.

[130] Leclerc to Bonaparte (18 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 6, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT.

[131] Leclerc to Decrès (21 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 9, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN.

[132] Hector Daure, "Compte-rendu de l'administration générale de Saint-Domingue" (late 1803), 184, CC9B/27, AN.

[133] On the maroon rebels, see Jean Fouchard, *The Haitian Maroons: Liberty or Death* (New York, 1981), 355; and Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, TN, 1990), 216. On Leclerc's need for colonial troops, see Leclerc to Decrès (7 Fructidor, Year X [Aug. 25, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN; and Leclerc to Decrès (4 Vendémiaire, Year XI [Sept. 26, 1802]), CC9B/19, AN.

[134] Leclerc to Bonaparte (Oct. 7, 1802), in Roussier, *Lettres du général Leclerc*, 260.

[135] Leclerc to Decrès (30 Fructidor, Year XI [Sept. 17, 1803]), CC9B/19, AN.

ing only infants less than twelve years old; we must also destroy half those of the plain, and leave in the colony not a single man of color who has worn an epaulette. Without this the colony will never be quiet."[136] Large-scale executions of colonial troops eventually prompted most colonial officers, including Dessalines and Christophe, to defect in October.[137] Leclerc retaliated by ordering all remaining colonial troops to be drowned, but yellow fever took his own life before he brought this project to completion. Unable to withstand the pressure of the difficult mission entrusted to him, he had gone from emancipation to attempted genocide in a matter of six months; but France had yet to restore slavery in Saint-Domingue.

Rochambeau's Rule and the Haitian Victory, November 1802—November 1803

Rochambeau, whom Bonaparte had designated to take over in the event of Leclerc's death, had acquired widespread experience in the New World from the battlefields of the American Revolution (where he had served under his famous father) to Saint-Domingue itself. He had supported the arming of people of color in Cap Français in 1792, at a time when white colonists were adamantly opposed to such measures, but he still came across as a reactionary figure to Leclerc, who privately asked Decrès for his recall.[138] After Leclerc's death the more republican-minded elements of his army (including Bertrand Clauzel, who was next in line to inherit the captain generalcy) even made plans to overthrow Rochambeau, reiterate France's commitment to emancipation, and attack Jamaica with black freedmen.[139]

Conversely, Rochambeau's reputation as a creature of the ancien régime initially endeared him to the planters. The colonists in Port-Républicain (Port-au-Prince) applauded the promotion of "the man who was deported by Sonthonax because he favored the system that is indispensible for Saint-Domingue," that is to say, slavery, while criticizing Leclerc's embrace of the *fausse philosophie*, a code word for emancipation.[140] The colony had been brought to the brink of ruin by the "folly and négrophilisme of [Leclerc] and the Jacobin generals who sur-

136 Leclerc to Bonaparte (Oct. 7, 1802), in Roussier, *Lettres du général Leclerc*, 260.

137 Jean-Jacques Dessalines to Pierre Quantin (2 Brumaire, Year XI [Oct. 24, 1802]), box 13/1238, RP-UF.

138 On Rochambeau's 1792 role, see Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 146. On demands for Rochambeau's recall, see Leclerc to Decrès (18 Thermidor, Year X [Aug. 6, 1802]), B7/26, SHD-DAT.

139 Bertrand Clauzel to Fontaine (ca. fall 1803), box 1Ad./33, RP-UF; Magnytot to Bonaparte (26 Fructidor, Year XI [Sept. 13, 1803]), BB4 181, SHD-DM; Jacques de Norvins, *Souvenirs d'un historien de Napoléon: Mémorial de J. de Norvins*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1896), 50.

140 Merchants and planters of Port-au-Prince to Main Trading Centers of France (30 Frimaire, Year XI [Dec. 21, 1802]), box 15/1449, RP-UF

rounded him"; another planter concurred.[141] Convinced that Rochambeau might soon legalize slavery, some planters neglected to pay their share to cultivators, or sold them outright. Rochambeau's envoy to Cuba, Louis de Noailles, arranged to smuggle slaves into the Spanish colony, a plan Rochambeau only denounced after complaints by Spanish authorities that it violated Spain's mercantilist laws.[142]

Rochambeau repeatedly and explicitly expressed his support for a restoration of slavery in his correspondence, but he received no response to his queries. One of his letters, written on January 1, 1803, bore many marginal notations regarding several of his demands, but no comment accompanied the most controversial of his requests: that slavery be restored in Saint-Domingue.[143] Decrès only wrote to complain that Rochambeau and Leclerc had used excessive severity against the black population of Saint-Domingue and were destroying the very labor force on which the colony's prosperity was based.[144] The expedition had clearly become a forlorn cause by early 1803, so Bonaparte and Decrès probably concluded that there was no point in debating a possible restoration of slavery when it would never be put into effect. When war with England resumed and sealed the expedition's fate, they stopped writing altogether.[145] Rochambeau was left to oversee the end of the war on his own and, remarkably, never restored slavery, probably because he continued to rely on black allies—particularly maroon groups opposed to Dessalines—until the very end of the conflict.[146]

Pressured on land and sea by Dessalines and the British navy, the French army retreated to the few ports it still controlled, only to lose them one by one as the blockade took its toll. After the evacuation of Cap Français in November 1803, Dessalines proclaimed the independence of Saint-Domingue (soon renamed Haiti), saying that he would show no "clemency toward all those who would dare to speak to us of slavery."[147] White planters who forswore slavery were invited to remain in the new Haiti, and a surprising number opted to stay because two

141 Gorman to W. L. Whitfield (Jan. 5, 1803), CO 137/110, BNA.

142 Louis de Noailles to Donatien de Rochambeau (9 Nivôse, Year XI [Dec. 30, 1802]), 416AP/1, AN; Rochambeau to Decrès (25 Pluviôse, Year XI [Feb. 14, 1803]), CC9A/34, AN; Someruelos, "Instrucción que se da al Sr. D. Francisco de Arango para la commission con que pasa al Guarico" (Mar. 5, 1803), in Franco, *Documentos para la historia de Haití*, 234–37; Francisco de Arango, "Comisión de Arango en Santo Domingo" (July 17, 1803), in ibid., 237–59.

143 Rochambeau to Decrès (11 Nivôse, Year XI [Jan. 1, 1803]), in Bureau des Colonies du Ministère de la Marine, "Extrait de différentes lettres écrites . . ." (3 Floréal, Year XI [Apr. 23, 1803]), CC9A/34, AN.

144 Rochambeau to Decrès (25 Floréal, Year XI [May 15, 1803]), CC9B/19, AN.

145 Rochambeau to Decrès (19 Brumaire, Year XII [Nov. 11, 1803]), CC9B/19, AN.

146 Pierre Thouvenot to Decrès (8 Fructidor, Year XI [Aug. 26, 1803]), B7/20, SHD-DAT.

147 Henri Christophe, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Augustin Clerveaux, "Proclamation" (Nov. 29, 1803), *National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser*, Jan. 13, 1804. The formal ceremony of independence took place on Jan. 1, 1804, in Gonaïves.

years of bitter disputes with metropolitan officers had convinced many *créole* planters that they were better off under the rule of black officers like Dessalines who could be counted on to send cultivators back to work.[148] Dessalines did maintain the cultivator system, but solely for the benefit of fellow officers of color; he ordered most French planters killed in January–April 1804, a decision he presented as just vengeance for the atrocities committed during the Leclerc-Rochambeau era and as a way to forestall any French plans to send a new expedition.[149]

Conclusion

Looking back on the Leclerc expedition late in 1803, Dessalines gave a surprisingly nuanced appraisal of French intentions. Leclerc, he recollected, had first told Christophe that "the regime introduced by former governor Louverture needed to be softened." Only later had the "envoy of Bonaparte become inebriated with the cruel suggestions of the planters, who urged him to restore slavery, which *maybe* was the purpose of his mission."[150] His adversary Rochambeau was even more unsure that slavery had ever been Bonaparte's goal and wrote in his own account that "the government's goal was to restore order and cultivation among the blacks, but also to preserve the liberty that had been granted to them, while making it useful for the owners of the blacks and the commerce of the metropolis."[151] In the memoirs he wrote during his captivity, Louverture attributed the outbreak of fighting in February 1802 to Leclerc's grating personality, and he never accused Bonaparte of harboring ulterior motives (though he possibly refrained from overt criticism given his precarious situation at the time).[152] Leclerc died of yellow fever too suddenly to write his own account, so none of the four leading actors of the Haitian war of independence considered it self-evident that Bonaparte had devised a clear plan to restore slavery in 1801, a belief consistent with the rest of the historical record but one that runs counter to two centuries of subsequent historiography.

148 Rochambeau, "Précis des opérations de l'expédition de Saint-Domingue de 1802 à 1803" (Oct. [Dec.?] 6, 1803), CC9A/36, AN; Antoine Frinquier, "Relation des événements du Cap Français depuis l'évacuation de l'armée commandée par le général de division Rochambeau jusqu'au 20 mai 1804, 32 jours après le massacre général des blancs dans cette colonie" (ca. May 1804), 1M597, SHD-DAT; Rainsford, *Historical Account*, 345; [French officer], *Notice historique sur les désastres de Saint-Domingue pendant l'an XI et l'an XII, par un officier français détenu par Dessalines* (Paris, ca. 1804), 30.

149 Dessalines, "Proclamation" (Jan. 1, 1804) and "Proclamation" (Apr. 28, 1804), in AB/XIX/3302/15, AN.

150 Dessalines to British Minister (Sept. 2, 1803), CO 137/110, BNA; emphasis added.

151 Rochambeau, "Précis des opérations de l'expédition de Saint-Domingue de 1802 à 1803" (Oct. [Dec.?] 6, 1803), CC9A/36, AN.

152 Saint-Rémy, ed., *Mémoires du Général Toussaint l'Ouverture écrits par lui-même* (1853; rpt. Port-au-Prince, 1982), 48.

Historical "what ifs" are slippery constructs, not least because they cannot be directly based on archival evidence, but one can reasonably theorize that, given Bonaparte's pragmatic approach to the slavery issue, the Haitian war of independence could have unfolded in a variety of ways depending on the outcome of military operations. A victory by the maroon groups from the mountains, who were adamantly opposed to forced labor, would most certainly have resulted in the immediate abandonment of any form of plantation agriculture. On the other extreme, a clear-cut French victory would probably have incited Decrès and Bonaparte to restore slavery (as was the case in Guadeloupe).[153] It is easy, however, to imagine two scenarios under which Louverture's cultivator system could have survived: if a politically moderate French general like Leclerc or Clauzel had continued to rely on Republican and colonial troops to maintain a tenuous peace, or if a plantation-owning black officer like Louverture or Dessalines had achieved supreme leadership. In the end it was Dessalines who prevailed, and he maintained the cultivator system. After Dessalines's death, Christophe also resorted to forced labor in northern Haiti, and the cultivator system remained on the books until the 1820s, when it fell into disuse due to peasant opposition and fully free labor finally became the norm in Haiti, twenty years after that country's independence from France.[154]

Long ignored in French historical accounts of the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, France's Caribbean empire has become the subject of much public scrutiny in recent years, particularly when the French National Assembly declared the slave trade a crime against humanity at the behest of Guyana's deputy Christiane Taubira (2001), the May 20 law reached its two hundredth anniversary (2002), and the French president Jacques Chirac declined to celebrate the bicentennial of the battle of Austerlitz to avoid honoring a historical figure tainted by his association with the restoration of slavery in Guadeloupe (2005).[155] While the main object of this article is not to rehabilitate Bonaparte's memory, it is worth noting that his approach to slavery, in Saint-Domingue at least, was much subtler than contemporary controversies would suggest.

153 Decrès to Leclerc (June 14, 1802), in Roussier, *Lettres du général Leclerc*, 284.

154 On labor abuse in Haiti, see "Code rural d'Haïti" (July 1826), CC9A/54, AN; Lacerte, "Evolution of Land and Labor"; and Gérard Barthélémy, *Créoles, bossales: Conflit en Haïti* (Petit Bourg, Guadeloupe, 2000), 261.

155 On the 2001 law, see Christiane Taubira-Delannon, "Rapport no. 1378 fait au nom de la commission des lois constitutionnelles, de la législation et de l'administration générale de la République sur les propositions de loi . . . ," Feb. 10, 1999, www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/rapports/r1378.asp.