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rforce, pp. 213–28, 270–74; Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*
. 329–42.
rforce, p. 324.
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ncan Rice, 'Literary Sources and the Evolution of British Attitudes
nd Drescher, *Anti-Slavery Religion and Reform*, pp. 319–34,
See also Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, pp. 175–224. Some critics
perialist and racist notions were implicit in Defoe's fictions because
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n, pores, muscles, and nerves of a day labourer are different from those
r; so are his sentiments, actions and manners. The different stations of
whole fabric, external and internal; and these different stations arise
se uniformly, from the necessary and uniform principles of human
ime, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Oxford 1983, p. 402.
vards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the*
ls, London 1801.
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merica, Princeton 1965, p. 198). For a discussion of the pattern of
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V

The French Revolution and the Antilles: 1789–93

Our very good friend the Marquis de la Fayette has entrusted to my care the key of the Bastille . . . as a present to your Excellency . . . I feel myself happy in being the person thro' whom the Marquis has conveyed this early trophy of the spoils of despotism, and the first ripe fruits of American principles transplanted in Europe, to the great master and patron . . . That the principles of America opened the Bastille is not to be doubted, and therefore the key comes to the right place.

(Tom Paine to George Washington, May 1st 1790)

Soon, to announce morn
the sun will arise on her golden path,
soon shall superstition disappear,
soon the wise man will conquer.

The Magic Flute (1791), Mozart/Schickaneder

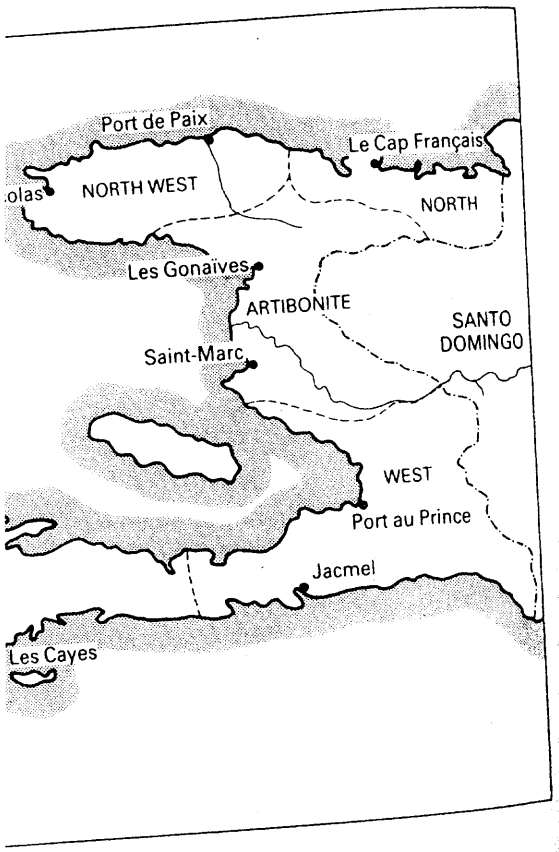
The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews shrunk and dry'd
Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing, awakening,
Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds and bars are burst.
Let the slave grinding at the mill run out into the field,
Let him look up into the heavens and laugh in the bright air;

America (1793), William Blake

The colony of St Domingue

The colonial system of France's *ancien régi* splendid achievements. Government, colonists the most diversified, technically advanced plantations in the New World. They had pion cultivation, improved the variety of cane use extended St Domingue's capacity through elab slave trade bounty and remission of duty on promoted an extraordinary development of tions, helping to make them Europe's chief produce. Between 1770 and 1790 the slave p Antilles rose from 379,000 to 650,000, whi 217.5 million *livres* (£9 million) in the yea British West Indian exports of about £5 millio slaves; in land area the French islands were tw The workings of the *exclusif* meant that as mu of colonial produce accrued as mercantile interests; while British planters received premi the French were subjected to monopolistic The brilliant prosperity of Bordeaux and Nan commerce. With some 465,000 slaves St Domi most productive slave colony in the Caribbean a privateer base throughout the century witl invasion. The colony's 30,000 whites and 28,0 colour were organised and armed to defend Martinique were amongst the most produ colonies of the Lesser Antilles. On Guadeloup island dependencies, there were 90,000 slaves, 3,000 coloured *affranchis*; on Martinique tl 10,600 whites and 5,000 *affranchis*. Nearly sixteen and sixty were armed. The colonial m to the regular garrisons – roughly 3,000 troop same number in the Windwards – and naval s remained something of a backwater with only were to be found on Ste Lucie and Trinidad France by the treaty of 1783. Louisiana, de been ceded to Spain; nevertheless the vigo nourished the dream that they could be stepp on the mainland.[1]

In purely military and diplomatic terms t American War of Independence had achieve isolating and defeating the traditional ene main customer for North American toba underpinning to the diplomatic and militar



The colony of St Domingue

The colonial system of France's *ancien régime* was one of its most splendid achievements. Government, colonists and merchants had built the most diversified, technically advanced and well-fortified slave plantations in the New World. They had pioneered New World coffee cultivation, improved the variety of cane used for sugar-making, and extended St Domingue's capacity through elaborate irrigation works. A slave trade bounty and remission of duty on colonial re-exports had promoted an extraordinary development of the French slave plantations, helping to make them Europe's chief suppliers of plantation produce. Between 1770 and 1790 the slave population of the French Antilles rose from 379,000 to 650,000, while their exports reached 217.5 million *livres* (£9 million) in the year 1789, compared with British West Indian exports of about £5 million, produced by 480,000 slaves; in land area the French islands were twice as large as the British. The workings of the *exclusif* meant that as much as a half of the value of colonial produce accrued as mercantile profits to metropolitan interests; while British planters received premium prices for their sugar the French were subjected to monopolistic commercial exploitation. The brilliant prosperity of Bordeaux and Nantes derived from colonial commerce. With some 465,000 slaves St Domingue was the largest and most productive slave colony in the Caribbean in 1789; it had served as a privateer base throughout the century without ever itself suffering invasion. The colony's 30,000 whites and 28,000 or more free people of colour were organised and armed to defend slavery. Guadeloupe and Martinique were amongst the most productive and stable of the colonies of the Lesser Antilles. On Guadeloupe, together with its small island dependencies, there were 90,000 slaves, nearly 14,000 whites and 3,000 coloured *affranchis*; on Martinique there were 83,000 slaves, 10,600 whites and 5,000 *affranchis*. Nearly all free males between sixteen and sixty were armed. The colonial militias acted as auxiliaries to the regular garrisons – roughly 3,000 troops in St Domingue and the same number in the Windwards – and naval squadrons. French Guyana remained something of a backwater with only 10,000 slaves; even fewer were to be found on Ste Lucie and Trinidad, colonies turned over to France by the treaty of 1783. Louisiana, despite its French links, had been ceded to Spain; nevertheless the vigour of the island colonies nourished the dream that they could be stepping stones to a new empire on the mainland.[1]

In purely military and diplomatic terms French participation in the American War of Independence had achieved all that was hoped of it, isolating and defeating the traditional enemy. Since France was the main customer for North American tobacco there was commercial underpinning to the diplomatic and military alignment. Whatever the

impasse of the French monarchy in the Old World, in the New World its alliance with the American Revolution had been an astonishingly bold stroke of policy and one apparently crowned with great success. The partisans of an enlightened reform of the political and financial structures of the monarchy were encouraged by American and colonial successes. Nor did they withhold respect, even admiration, from Britain's rulers who had acknowledged defeat with decorum, regained commercial access to North American markets and financed with ease the heavy costs of the war. By contrast French achievements overseas proved to be almost as disruptive in their effects and implications as the stubborn structures of privilege and caste power in France itself. Colonial and American entanglements made their own spectacular contribution to the crash of the *ancien régime* and the travail of the revolutionary order. Few contemporary observers missed the obsession with the New World which was characteristic of French statesmen, philosophers and economists in the eighteenth century, nor the impact of colonial controversies on alignments in the metropolis. The decision to back the revolt of the thirteen English North American colonies disastrously compounded the problems of the old order, with the huge costs of waging war across the Atlantic directly precipitating the final agony of royal finances and the example of representative government stimulating expectations in the French colonies as well as metropolis.[2]

The rapid growth of France's slave colonies in the years before 1789 made its own contribution to the instability of the *ancien régime*. Colonial wealth was a nesting ground of fractious and antagonistic interests prior to the revolution; afterwards it proved a precarious and unreliable support of the new system. Colonial wealth encouraged the pretensions of some awkward components of the absolutist order while the problems of colonial trade fostered the opposition of the commercial and manufacturing bourgeoisie. The Duc d'Orléans, whose self-seeking demagogy caused much mischief to the royalist cause, drew large revenues from the Antilles and stimulated the intrigues of a planter faction there. The Parlement at Bordeaux, which did so much to obstruct royal plans for reform and rationalisation, numbered several important colonial interests in its ranks. Almost to the last some royal financiers believed that large revenues, or fabulous loans, could be raised on the basis of the colonial boom. The dimensions of the colonial trade had been increased by a decree of 1784 which relaxed the *exclusif*, permitting the colonists to buy a wider range of supplies from North America and ending the special status of Bordeaux and Nantes. Most French merchants also saw their interests threatened by the Anglo–French Trade Treaty of 1786–7, since this permitted the British to encroach on the colonial trade with their new

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manufactures and their growing demand for raw cotton. The measures modifying the *exclusif* were 'generally and violently criticised' by maritime centres in the *cahiers* they drew up for the Estates General.[3] If the problems of the monarchy were compounded by colonial prosperity, then the fault lay with the former not the latter. The *ancien régime* was a fortress of privilege and not a forum for articulating and reconciling opposed interests, such as those generated by the development of the colonies. Some of those enriched by the colonies enjoyed access to the privileges bestowed by the *ancien régime*, others resented the increasing difficulty of gaining entry to the charmed circle. Either way colonial interests added to 'the disparity, the disaccord, the incoherence of the different parts of the monarchy' about which Calonne wrote in his ministerial memorandum to the King of 1786.[4] As was only natural, those involved in American properties or trade tended to be deeply influenced by the institutions and example of the United States. The aristocrats with colonial estates lacked genuinely feudal roots or well-founded bourgeois stability, but they felt themselves to be part of a new world in the making. Those creoles who pursued a military career often enlisted in the artillery regiments. In politics many colonial proprietors wavered between British and North American models, admiring the oligarchic solidity of 'illegitimate monarchy' but tempted by the expansive republicanism of the Virginians. British occupation of Guadeloupe and Martinique during the Seven Years War had greatly benefited many planters and merchants, while the more recent alliance with the North American rebels had nourished further commercial contacts. Colonial proprietors subscribed to the political clubs set up in the metropolis in 1787–8. A youthful minority tended to an excited but inconstant radicalism: bearing ancient names they wished to be distinguished by enlightenment and political influence rather than inherited privileges. Among the noble young colonial proprietors whose volatile commitment was to mark the Revolution were Charles Lameth, Alexandre Beauharnais and Louis Philippe Ségur.[5]

Colonial proprietors resident in the Antilles were understandably more content with the relaxation of the *exclusif* than were the merchants of the metropolis. But the decrees of 1784 which had liberalised trade were accompanied by regulations requiring planters and their managers to give a stricter accounting of their financial transactions and of the treatment of their slaves; these regulations were very unpopular with the colonial proprietors. The colonists habitually complained of the tyranny exercised by royal officials though in practice the effectiveness of metropolitan rule was greatly reduced by corruption and by a rapid turnover in the higher posts. In the 1780s St Domingue had eleven different Governors and five different Intendants. The last

pre-revolutionary Intendant, Barbé de Marbois, displayed an efficiency and reforming zeal which alarmed the planters and estate managers. Barbé de Marbois proposed a reform of the laws which guaranteed the planters' property against seizure for debt. He also suspended the *conseil* at Cap Francais after it had repeatedly refused to register metropolitan edicts. The planters were encouraged to channel their representations through newly created Chambers of Agriculture and Commerce, but these were granted weaker powers than the *Conseils Supérieurs*. The colonists of St Domingue further resented what they saw as official favouritism towards Martinique and Guadeloupe. On these two islands the colonists were granted newly established representative Assemblies. Though these Assemblies had little power the process of electing representatives to them proved a startling innovation; the vote was given to all properly registered male *habitans* of sixteen years or over, a surprisingly low age limit.[6]

Antoine Barnave, who was to be the most influential exponent of colonial policy in the early years of the Revolution, wrote that the tremendous growth of maritime commerce and of the manufacturing centres had upset the equilibrium of a feudal society, with its ruling order based on landholding: 'a new distribution of wealth involves a new distribution of power', he declared.[7] For the most part the maritime bourgeoisie did indeed support the growing challenge to royal authority. Arthur Young noted after his visit in 1788: 'Nantes is as *enflamée* in the cause of liberty as any town in France can be.' A recent historian of the port points out that a demonstration of its citizens raising the classic demands of the Third Estate was led by one Cottin, who owned valuable property in the colonies.[8] A recent historian of the Revolution in Bordeaux writes, 'the Third in Bordeaux showed a thrusting and persistent desire for representation'.[9] The subsequent spread of revolutionary clubs owed much to the commercial nexus spreading out from the major maritime ports; this was as true of the Jacobins, with their roots in a Breton society, as of the Girondins, with their links to Bordeaux. As the Revolution developed the maritime bourgeois of the metropolis would find themselves increasingly at logger heads with their clients in the colonies. The latter's unpaid debts and zest for smuggling aroused mercantile hostility. For the maritime bourgeoisie projects of colonial autonomy spelt a mortal threat to the *exclusif*. Yet in the early stages of the Revolution there were bonds of common interest uniting merchants and colonial proprietors. Both wished for political representation and both had a stake in the colonial system. Furthermore many merchants owned a share in a plantation, while many colonial proprietors, as absentees living in the metropolis, opposed the autonomism of the resident colonists.

According to one contemporary source there hundred and fifty owners of colonial property a members of the Constituent Assembly of those with interests linked to colonial comm would have been even larger. The observatic above have seemed to some historians a striking concept of 'bourgeois revolution'. Yet in fact the different, since they highlight the economic vul bourgeoisie. The Constituent Assembly was i bourgeois body, in the most literal sense of the proportion of its urban-based, property-owning overseas trade.[10] But the French bourgeoisie lac security of its more developed British rival. Th and colonies reflected the comparative weaknes and domestic circuits of accumulation.

The planters and merchants of the Antilles w camps on the eve of the Revolution: those wl with the metropolis and those, often creoles, w or even separation. The pro-metropolitan cor proprietors and their representatives, the prin French merchant houses, and the members of colonial administration. Governors and senio loyal to the Crown, often had ties to the la uncommon for those holding senior colonial tions and other property: the membershi proprietors club formed in 1789 – the Club M call of those responsible for French colonial a names as Choiseul, Bongars, Gallifet, Du Chi main Caribbean strongholds of the metropol Français, in St Domingue, and St Pierre, in with a population of 15,000 and the St Domingue as its hinterland, was the mos French Caribbean ports: its theatre could seat the administrative capital of St Domingue w West, a region where there were more mediu larger free coloured population. St Domingue' were found in the South, where plantation de early phase.[11]

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According to one contemporary source there were no less than one hundred and fifty owners of colonial property amongst the thousand or so members of the Constituent Assembly of 1789. The numbers of those with interests linked to colonial commerce or administration would have been even larger. The observations of Barnave quoted above have seemed to some historians a striking anticipation of Marx's concept of 'bourgeois revolution'. Yet in fact the implications are rather different, since they highlight the economic vulnerability of the French bourgeoisie. The Constituent Assembly was indeed a predominantly bourgeois body, in the most literal sense of the term, with a significant proportion of its urban-based, property-owning members dependent on overseas trade.[10] But the French bourgeoisie lacked the broad base and security of its more developed British rival. The salience of commerce and colonies reflected the comparative weakness of the internal market and domestic circuits of accumulation.

The planters and merchants of the Antilles were split into two broad camps on the eve of the Revolution: those whose primary links were with the metropolis and those, often creoles, who aspired to autonomy or even separation. The pro-metropolitan complex included absentee proprietors and their representatives, the principals and agents of the French merchant houses, and the members of the civilian apparatus of colonial administration. Governors and senior military officers, while loyal to the Crown, often had ties to the large planters. It was not uncommon for those holding senior colonial posts to acquire plantations and other property: the membership list of the colonial proprietors club formed in 1789 – the Club Massiac – reads like a roll call of those responsible for French colonial administration, with such names as Choiseul, Bongars, Gallifet, Du Chilleau, and Malouet. The main Caribbean strongholds of the metropolitan complex were Cap Français, in St Domingue, and St Pierre, in Martinique. The former, with a population of 15,000 and the rich northern plain of St Domingue as its hinterland, was the most well-appointed of the French Caribbean ports: its theatre could seat 1,200 people. However, the administrative capital of St Domingue was Port au Prince in the West, a region where there were more medium-sized properties and a larger free coloured population. St Domingue's main smuggling centres were found in the South, where plantation development was still in an early phase.[11]

The French Governors commanded a formidable armed force; the regular garrisons included locally recruited troops, such as the coloured contingents of the *Légion de St Domingue* which had acquitted themselves well in North America. The whole apparatus of colonial government was a sub-branch of the Navy Ministry. The colonial

establishments had swollen during the years of war with Britain (1777–83) and seemed more than adequate to maintain slave subordination and to deter invasion. Colonial administrators tended to distrust the white creoles and the white colonists were prone to envy the success of the free people of colour. While the great majority of St Domingue's 780 sugar estates were owned by whites about 2,000 coffee estates in the West and South were owned by people of colour; sugar estates were far more valuable though also more likely to be encumbered with debt. A tacit understanding often existed between colonial officialdom and the free coloured population since both distrusted the proclivities of the white colonists.

The white creole grouping in the French Antilles included most *cultivateurs*, or resident planters, together with merchants engaged in the legal or illegal trade with the United States or Britain. A high proportion of white creoles had some property or a profession while by extention this 'creole' grouping also included proprietors who, though born in France, had decided to settle permanently in the colonies. The *petits blancs* were, to begin with, not clearly aligned with either the metropolitan or the creole groupings; they included many recent immigrants who hoped to make money and return to France. While many *petits blancs* cherished links with France, they usually had little love for metropolitan officials, whom they associated with ministerial 'despotism' and favouritism towards mulattos. For the creoles memories of the clashes of the 1760s had been reactivated by confrontations of the 1780s. Commercial contacts with the British and North Americans stimulated the desire for free trade and political autonomy. Finally there were planters heavily indebted to French merchants, who dreamed of separation from the metropolis.

In St Domingue free people of colour were almost as numerous as white colonists, indeed possibly more numerous. The size of the free coloured population is not fully shown by official figures, which placed it at 25,000 because acquiring a proper certificate of manumission was a cumbersome and expensive business; in addition to those who held such certificates there were thousands of persons of colour who were free *de facto* rather than *de jure*; some of the former were known as the *libres de savane*, who were free to move within a given region but still beholden to a master who had not formally manumitted them. The *maréchaussée*, a force devoted to catching runaway slaves and supplementing plantation security, was recruited largely from the free people of colour. The free coloured population also included a layer of proprietors who in St Domingue between them owned about 100,000 slaves; nowhere else in the Americas did those of partly African descent figure so importantly in the ranks of the propertied classes. The *petits*

blancs and white *cultivateurs* were prone to resent coloured proprietor or lawyer, and their rancour w the latter, as often happened, bore the distinguishe father. In the Lesser Antilles the free populati proportionately not so large as in St Domingue amongst the free correspondingly less pronounce rivalry was already a well-established theme o especially in St Domingue, the free people of co integral component of the slave-owning class and slave subjection.[12]

Thus clamped on top of the slave economy, ther interests, formed by the intersecting fields of force mercantile system, an aristocratic political ord hierarchy, and a highly unequal distribution of priv both the white and free coloured population. In th 1788 the social antagonisms rooted in slave exploita were overlaid by conflicts stemming from this structure of control. The revolution weakened metropolis and stimulated fierce factional strife protracted and complex process. The colonial re repeated battering in the wars and commotions of th and it was so vastly profitable that it would not every resource and expedient had been exhausted.

There were no major slave uprisings in the Fr 1770s and 1780s. In St Domingue a stream advantage of the colony's extensive and mounta common border with Spanish Santo Domingo. Mar in the Artibonite in the North-east, in the area kn the South, and along the border. Smaller, but also than their Jamaican equivalents, the maroon bands appeared to pose no threat to the slave order in 17 Martinique are the largest of the islands of the former had a rugged interior zone where maroons Martinique there was a plantation uprising in 1789 formidable resources of the colonial social for sufficient to contain such challenges.[13]

In 1788, just as the pre-Revolution unfolded, an ab *Amis des Noirs*, was set up in Paris and began to literature. Unlike the colonial factions the *Amis d* represented a general rather than particular interes declare themselves philanthropists, but if there wa animating their activities it was that of the integri

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blancs and white *cultivateurs* were prone to resent the success of the coloured proprietor or lawyer, and their rancour was not diminished if the latter, as often happened, bore the distinguished name of a French father. In the Lesser Antilles the free population of colour was proportionately not so large as in St Domingue and racial tensions amongst the free correspondingly less pronounced. But while racial rivalry was already a well-established theme of colonial society, especially in St Domingue, the free people of colour were still an integral component of the slave-owning class and of the apparatus of slave subjection.[12]

Thus clamped on top of the slave economy, there was a complex of interests, formed by the intersecting fields of force of a colonial and mercantile system, an aristocratic political order, a racial caste hierarchy, and a highly unequal distribution of private property within both the white and free coloured population. In the French Antilles of 1788 the social antagonisms rooted in slave exploitation and oppression were overlaid by conflicts stemming from this interlocking superstructure of control. The revolution weakened the grip of the metropolis and stimulated fierce factional strife, but this was a protracted and complex process. The colonial regime had survived repeated battering in the wars and commotions of the previous century; and it was so vastly profitable that it would not be abandoned until every resource and expedient had been exhausted.

There were no major slave uprisings in the French Antilles in the 1770s and 1780s. In St Domingue a stream of runaways took advantage of the colony's extensive and mountainous interior and common border with Spanish Santo Domingo. Maroon bands operated in the Artibonite in the North-east, in the area known as Plymouth in the South, and along the border. Smaller, but also more oppositional, than their Jamaican equivalents, the maroon bands of St Domingue still appeared to pose no threat to the slave order in 1789. Guadeloupe and Martinique are the largest of the islands of the Lesser Antilles; the former had a rugged interior zone where maroons held out while on Martinique there was a plantation uprising in 1789. But once again the formidable resources of the colonial social formation were quite sufficient to contain such challenges.[13]

In 1788, just as the pre-Revolution unfolded, an abolitionist society, the *Amis des Noirs*, was set up in Paris and began to circulate anti-slavery literature. Unlike the colonial factions the *Amis des Noirs* supposedly represented a general rather than particular interest. Not only did they declare themselves philanthropists, but if there was a 'hidden interest' animating their activities it was that of the integrity of the nation and

Empire as a whole, with these entities being understood in an inclusive rather than exclusive sense. Abolitionism was a cause that drew support from radical aristocrats impatient with caste distinctions, financial bureaucrats hostile to corporate obstruction, colonial officials worried by the security of the plantations and the loyalty of the planters, clerics concerned with the construction of a more humane social order, and members of the liberal professions committed to progress. The initial supporters of organised abolitionism inclined to be somewhat eccentric members of the ruling order, with several being of Protestant extraction, others linked to the world of high finance and many enjoying personal links with England or the United States. But while the *Amis des Noirs* were sometimes accused of being English agents, they saw themselves as the most enlightened representatives of a truly national interest, extending civic belonging to all inhabitants of the Empire. In a social formation of rigidly separated orders and estates, each with their own privileges and exemptions, those sympathetic to abolitionism were also the champions of an overriding national authority, before which every citizen would have equal rights. Naturally the *Amis* laid claim to the French anti-slavery tradition.[14]

The tenor of French writing on slavery had often been more radical, if also more rhetorical, than that to be found in Britain or the United States, and less inclined to take the form of the systematic moral tract. Attacks on slavery had been launched in the best-known works of Montesquieu, Rousseau and Raynal. The Abbé Raynal saw himself as an exponent of France's true colonial interests. He claimed that slaves were treated better in the French than in the British colonies but he was nevertheless concerned that huge aggregations of plantation slaves endangered the colonial order. While he urged a relaxation of trade restrictions, he was not sympathetic to colonial independence. In a new edition of his *History* published in 1781 he added some proposals for achieving the gradual emancipation of slaves by freeing those born to slave mothers after a twenty-five-year apprenticeship period; Pechmeja's extreme anti-slavery passages were retained as a warning of what might happen if a moderate reform was not adopted. The measures proposed by Raynal would give the colonial state new power and authority in its dealing with the planters. Raynal was on good terms with senior officials of the Colonial Bureau and for a time in receipt of a subsidy from this quarter. The regulations of 1784 fell well short of Raynal's proposals, but planter opposition to them was provoked by the suspicion that they were simply the first instalment of a perilous official experiment in philanthropy.[15]

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first published in 1781 and subsequently reprinted by the *Amis des Noirs*, of which he was a founder member, in 1788. Condorcet united in his person the various strands which comprised French abolitionism in the early revolutionary period. He was an aristocrat of Protestant extraction and, prior to the Revolution, Secretary of the Academy, an associate of Turgot, briefly Director of the Mint, and an outstanding advocate of social and educational reform. One of the last of the *philosophes*, Condorcet lived to play an important part in the politics of the revolution, as a writer, as President of the Legislative Assembly, and as a constitutional and educational authority. Like other enlightened aristocrats he detested caste privileges, seeing in them trammels of the *ancien régime*. Condorcet's essay on slavery, though grounded in a humanist universalism, was far more concerned with the realities of social life in the colonies than the philosophical disquisitions of Millar and Beattie. He argued that slavery was an intolerable injury to human nature but that, for this very reason, emancipation should be approached with great circumspection. Slaves would need a lengthy tutelage before they were ready to exercise the responsibilities of freedom. Planters should be obliged to improve conditions for their slaves, freeing those born to slave mothers at twenty-five years of age, and laying the basis for a new agro-industrial pattern in which tenant or smallholding cultivators supplied sugar cane or unhusked coffee to planter-manufacturers. Condorcet insisted that it was social environment, not ethnicity, which shaped human potential. He concluded his pamphlet with a plea for the removal of the disabilities placed on Jews and Protestants as well as blacks.[16]

About a quarter of the original sponsors of the *Amis* were senior financial officials, including five Tax Farmers-General, two Under-Secretaries of the Finance Ministry, and five senior officials of the *Régie General*. Presumably these men, themselves under attack as social parasites, hoped to demonstrate their benevolence and public-spiritedness. More specifically they may have seen slavery and the slave trade as the unacceptable face of the old order, the perfect symbol of its infestation by special interests. As nobles most slave traders were only lightly taxed; indeed, under the *acquits de Guinée* bounty arrangement they were in receipt of a substantial subsidy, rising from 1.5 million *livres* in 1786 to over 2.8 million in 1788. The *Amis* called for the immediate ending of this subsidy pending abolition of the slave trade itself by negotiation with Britain. Doubtless a more authoritative metropolis would also derive more revenue from the booming commerce of the colonies.[17]

If Condorcet was the most eminent intellectual sponsor of the *Amis*, its first organiser was the journalist Brissot de Warville, whose visits to

England and the United States had acquainted him with anti-slavery currents in those countries. He was also a close associate of Clavière, a financier of Protestant extraction. Brissot's links with the world of high finance did not inhibit him from composing an essay on property rights which stressed their arbitrary social character – indeed he got close to anticipating Proudhon's formula that 'property is theft'. Under the *ancien régime*, of course, legal property rights included seigneuries and public offices as well as human chattels.[18] Brissot aspired to be a visionary social philosopher and, beyond the convenience of the retainer he received from Clavière, may have felt that in this capacity he was a kindred spirit to the high financier, as the speculations of both vaulted over the awkward clumps of property built into the *ancien régime*.

With the calling of the Estates General the *Amis des Noirs* sent an anti-slavery circular to every *baillage* responsible for electing deputies. Partly as a result forty-nine out of about six hundred *cahiers de doléances* contained some proposal directed at the slave trade or favouring gradual emancipation. Perhaps significantly, twenty-eight of these attacks figured in *cahiers* submitted by the nobility or clergy and were rarer in the *cahiers* submitted by otherwise radical sections of the Third Estate. The maritime bourgeoisie had little inclination at this time towards abolitionism.[19]

These first representations were to be the high-water mark of the strictly anti-slavery work of the *Amis des Noirs*. While continuing to deplore the excesses of slave-traders and slave-owners, the members of the Society henceforth concentrated their main attacks on the cost of the slave trade subsidy, and on attempts to exclude free people of colour from political and social rights. In fact the *Amis* never became a campaigning body like its English counterpart. Its members were drawn from the salons of polite society and their chief activity was to lend their name to the Society's propaganda. In fact the Massiac Club, representing the colonial proprietors, was to be far more active as a campaigning force, sending out a stream of pamphlets and agents to the important political centres. Brissot, the Abbé Grégoire and other prominent members of the *Amis* advanced its aims in the course of their activity as leading protagonists of the revolution. Indeed part of the reason for the Society's low level of activity was certainly the wider pre-occupations of those who had founded it. If in the early months they saw in abolitionism a symbol of the struggle to purify the French monarchy, they were soon caught up in events in which the nature of the regime had to be addressed quite directly. Henceforth colonial controversies were important because they tested the scope of civic and suffrage rights rather than because slavery was at issue. In the years 1789–93 the British Parliament repeatedly debated the slave trade

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without taking any consequent action. During these same years the French assemblies discussed almost every aspect of the colonial regime other than slavery. Paradoxically by the time the Convention decreed the abolition of colonial slavery in 1794 the *Amis des Noirs* no longer functioned and most of its former members no longer played a role. It is almost as if enlightened abolitionism was as much part of the old order as the *exclusif* and the *acquits de Guinée*. Only once this whole superstructure was in ruins could slave emancipation be adopted in the metropolis. To explain why we must turn to the complex, multi-cornered contest of the intervening years.

The Governor of Guadeloupe was shocked at the insolence and assertiveness of the members of the colony's new Assembly in 1788. But the first colonists to seek a role in metropolitan politics were those from the north of St Domingue who, angered at the suspension of the *conseil supérieur* of Cap Français and the absence of any colony-wide assembly, petitioned in 1788 for colonial representation in the Estates General. The Marquis Gouy d'Arsy, an absentee proprietor linked to the Duc d'Orléans, formed a committee in Paris which associated itself with this demand; the Oriental Lodge of the Freemasons, of which Orléans was president, was heavily involved in this faction. The colonial ministry, headed by La Luzerne, formerly Governor of St Domingue (1786–7), successfully opposed this petition, anticipating that colonial representatives would simply undermine ministerial authority and put their own special interests above the need for rational reform – the former *conseil* at Le Cap had enjoyed a veto over fiscal innovations. Notwithstanding this opposition several thousand white colonists proceeded to elect deputies for St Domingue.[20]

When the Estates General met in May 1789 Gouy d'Arsy and other supporters of the proposal for colonial representation made a direct appeal, first to the Second Estate (many of the colonists were nobles), and then to the Third. The latter eventually accepted the principle of colonial representation largely because Gouy d'Arsy and his friends were prepared to support the Third in its battle with the King for majority representation; after declaring themselves ready to swear the tennis court oath the colonial deputies were admitted as *suppléants* and a report on colonial representation was commissioned from the Credentials Committee. Gouy d'Arsy requested that St Domingue be allowed twenty deputies to take into account the colony's commercial importance and total population. Mirabeau, who had endorsed the first statement put out by the *Amis*, made a response that echoed the debate in the US Constitutional Convention:

> You claim representation proportionate to the number of inhabitants. The free blacks are proprietors and tax payers, and yet they have not been allowed to vote. And as for the slaves, either they are men or they are not; if the colonists consider them men, let them free them and make them electors and eligible for seats; if the contrary is the case, have we, in apportioning deputies according to the population of France, taken into consideration the number of our horses and mules?[21]

The Duc de la Rochefoucauld, another of those aristocrats who had been prepared both to support the *Amis des Noirs* and to join the Third Estate, attacked slavery without irony or qualification, but the generality of the deputies were alarmed at such talk. Eventually the Assembly voted to admit six colonial deputies as full members and the remainder as *suppléants*. In subsequent sessions deputies were also granted to Martinique, Guadeloupe and the other French slave colonies, until there were a total of seventeen colonial deputies. The deputies of St Domingue had triumphed not only over the objections of the Colonial Ministry and the *Amis des Noirs* but also over opposition from the more conservative Club Massiac.

The Massiac Club, formed at the Hôtel Massiac in July 1789 in the aftermath of the first debate on colonial representation, comprised a group of the largest colonial proprietors who distrusted Gouy d'Arsy's opportunism and penchant for anti-ministerial rhetoric. It opposed the call for colonial deputies on the ground that this would expose delicate colonial issues to the hazards of debate in the Assembly. Several members of the Club Massiac were themselves members of the Assembly or otherwise politically influential and felt quite competent to represent colonial issues in the metropolis themselves. These included Pierre-Victor Malouet and Moreau de Saint-Méry. Malouet was to emerge as a leader of the *monarchiens*, who accepted the destruction of feudal privilege and absolutism but thereafter rallied to the King as the essential guarantee of property and order. Moreau de Saint-Méry, an enlightened colonial magistrate and friend of the Abbé Raynal, was President of the Electors of Paris. In this latter capacity Saint-Méry formally received the keys of the Bastille after its seizure (these keys were shortly to be presented to another slaveholder, George Washington, through the good offices of Lafayette and Thomas Paine). Despite such liberal and revolutionary credentials Saint-Méry was to remain a determined defender of the slave system. Putting aside its reservations about the colonial deputies the Club Massiac decided that it must defend them when they came under attack from members of the *Amis des Noirs*. Some three or four hundred absentee proprietors adhered to the club and enabled it to finance a press campaign against the *Amis*.

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Unlike the colonial deputies the Club Massiac rigorously abstained from criticism of the *exclusif* and strove to maintain a common position with deputies from the Atlantic ports.[22]

The events of 1789 aroused great enthusiasm among the colonists of the French Caribbean. The storming of the Bastille had an electric effect on the opponents of 'ministerial despotism' in the colonies. According to one account:

> Crowds of *petits blancs* gathered in the streets of [Cap Français] and discussed the Revolution and what it meant for the colony. The tri-coloured cockade was adopted amid wild transports of joy, and government officials who refused to wear it or to take the 'civic oath' were submitted to ill-treatment and violence. But, on the other hand, the mulattos were forbidden by the *petits blancs* to wear the sacred emblem.[23]

A group of patriot planters formed a National Guard under the captaincy of Bacon de Chevalrie. This 'turbulent nobleman' soon evinced autonomist inclinations. The National Guard arrested the Intendant, Barbé de Marbois, and put him on board a boat for France. By November 2nd a Colonial Assembly had been elected by the white *habitans* and vested itself with full powers of internal self-government. The Western and Southern provinces of St Domingue soon followed suit. These assemblies hesitated formally to abrogate the *exclusif*, but henceforth the colonial system became increasingly prone to leaks. The colonial assemblies invoked decrees which enabled them to import flour from North America in time of need; since the metropolitan Assembly had banned the export of wheat it was in a weak position to object. The real problem in the colonies was that of enforcement. The officials who remained were not prepared to offend colonists who still declared formal allegiance to monarch and metropolis. In Martinique the threat to the *exclusif* came to the surface in a bitter factional dispute between mercantile representatives from St Pierre and planter representatives from the rest of the island – in a bid to secure an overall majority the planters suggested that the parishes should be allotted representatives in proportion to their populations, with slaves counting, as in the United States, as three-fifths of a person. In this island an interim Governor who urged the mulattos to adopt the tricolour was also driven out after objections from the *petits blancs* of St Pierre. Reports of the work of the *Amis des Noirs* caused much consternation in the islands.[24]

The colonists tended to exaggerate greatly the impact of the propaganda produced by the *Amis*. The latter had lost the battle over colonial representation in the National Assembly and failed even to obtain a debate on slavery or the slave trade. Colonial issues were

referred to specialist committees, on the grounds of their delicacy. Abolitionist advocates like the Abbé Grégoire had to content themselves with anti-slavery interjections in debates on other subjects, and were then shouted down for their pains by other deputies. The *Amis* were little more successful outside the Assembly, but their failure to make headway did not mean that they ceased to be a source of acute anxiety to the white colonists. The society did circulate a new edition of Condorcet's essay as well as translations of pamphlets by Cugoano and Clarkson.[25] Condorcet and Brissot were prominent contributors to the revolutionary press, where they were to publicise arguments that had been referred by the Assembly to consideration by its colonial committee. The white colonists were alarmed at the thought that copies of the abolitionist pamphlets, or of issues of the *Patriote Français*, might find their way to the Antilles.

The issue taken up most vigorously by the *Amis* was that of the civic rights of free people of colour. The colonial assemblies, representing the white colonists, were concerned because free mulattos were far more likely to read, and be influenced by, the statements of the *Amis* than slaves incarcerated on the plantations. The literary activity of the *Amis* was directed at metropolitan legislators and opinion rather than at inciting rebellion in the colonies; but the colonists were concerned at results not intentions.

The ineffectiveness of the *Amis* in the National Assembly chiefly reflected the strength of commercial and manufacturing interests with a stake in the prosperity of the slave colonies. Such interests had a veto power not only in the Assembly but also in the Revolutionary Clubs. A historian of the latter writes:

> In spite of their oft-expressed devotion for liberty and equality, the clubs long remained indifferent to the horrors of slavery and the slave trade . . . I have unearthed no evidence that any provincial Jacobin Circle corresponded with the *Amis des Noirs* prior to 1791. Indeed to have done so in a port city where the foundation and sustenance of the economy was colonial commerce would have alienated merchants and workers.[26]

The attitude of commercial deputies towards the colonies was one of watchful suspicion. The merchant houses were naturally well-informed about developments in the islands and were perfectly aware of the danger represented by autonomism and separatism. But there was some reason to believe that only a minority of planters and merchants based in the colonies were tempted to slip loose from the metropolis and that this minority could be restrained by the patriotic inclinations of the majority of colonists and officials. Abolitionist provocations were to be

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avoided since they would encourage the autonomist reflex. However, this willingness to defer to the white colonists was itself conditional on loyal observance of metropolitan regulations by the latter, failing which sanctions would be looked to.

The initial rapport between many white colonists and members of the metropolitan clubs reflected the appeal to both of revolutionary ideology as well as the link of colonial interest. Many *petits blancs* inclined to the more radical wing of the Revolution because they wished personal rather than property rights to be decisive for the exercise of political rights. In the colonies a property qualification would have the effect of enfranchising the stratum of well-to-do free men of colour while disenfranchising many white colonists. So far as many colonial Jacobins were concerned, the people of colour were a species of foreigner with no entitlement to political rights. Metropolitan Jacobins accepted this in a more or less unthinking way, at least to begin with. There were few blacks or mulattos in France; perhaps a few thousand, certainly less than England's *circa* 15,000. On the other hand, the fierce anti-ministerial radicalism of the colonial Jacobins made them welcome allies. The new sense of national identity that the Revolution helped to foster had a messianic quality, which oscillated between the inclusive and the exclusive depending on the conjuncture. When the Revolution was on the offensive citizenship was open to all mankind, at its limit even to women and blacks as well; but as the revolutionary tide receded 'ready-made' social identifications asserted themselves at the expense of the more generous new civic definitions.

The basic lines of colonial policy in the period from the autumn of 1789 to near the end of 1791 were set by the so-called 'triumvirate' which dominated the National Assembly. Adrien Duport, Alexandre Lameth and Antoine Barnave emerged as leaders by dint of a responsible patriotism and constitutional monarchism well attuned to the aspirations of the Third Estate and of the latter's supporters in the other two orders. These men were also sympathetic to the aims of enlightened American planters, so long as they did not challenge the *exclusif*. The Lameth family itself, of course, held large estates in St Domingue. Barnave attached himself to the Lameths, living at their Paris Hôtel. The leader of the patriots in St Domingue, Bacon de Chevalerie, was a cousin to Barnave, which may have given the triumvirate an inside perspective on colonial problems. Duport was a leading member of the Club of Thirty, whose propagation of American models and ideals had made its own contribution to the ideological crisis of the old regime.

The basic aim of the triumvirate's colonial policy was to foster the alliance between commercial and planting interests, as a bulwark against both King and populace. The Declaration of the Rights of Man gave ideal expression to the project of the triumvirate; it could not be openly repudiated without jeopardising the prospects for a stable post-absolutist order. While colonial policy was important, it was subordinate to the triumvirate's overriding preoccupation of conserving the gains of 1789 and the fragile new ruling bloc.

Barnave was prepared to adapt revolutionary principles to protect the 'internal regime' of the colonies but not to jeopardise the 'external regime' furnished by the *exclusif*, and the principle of metropolitan sovereignty over them. In October 1789 La Luzerne, the Colonial Minister, submitted a memorandum to the Assembly arguing for separate colonial constitutions, designed to safeguard their special property regimes. The triumvirate was prepared to entertain such a proposal so long as colonial powers were strictly limited to internal affairs. Alexandre Lameth supported a deputy from Guadeloupe, Louis de Curt, who proposed the setting up of a commission which would devise constitutions for the colonies which would guarantee the 'agricultural and commercial property' of the Antilles – a pleasing euphemism for slavery and colonialism. Some members of the Massiac Club would have preferred to see colonial policy left entirely in the hands of the Ministry but, with reports coming in of unrest in the colonies, they were unable to prevent the Assembly taking responsibility into its hands, at least to the extent of accepting Curt's proposal. The Colonial Commission established by the Assembly had twelve members, each elected by a simple majority vote of the whole Assembly. Those elected included Lameth and Barnave, together with two colonial deputies, two absentee colonial proprietors, four deputies from maritime centres, a naval officer and a deputy from Rennes. Barnave was selected as reporter for this committee; twenty-eight years of age he was already one of the Assembly's leading orators. The method of election had ensured that no supporter of the *Amis* had been elected to the new body. Colonial interests had scored a notable victory, though factional tension meant that not all appreciated this fact.[27]

The Committee on Colonies was established on March 4th 1790 and produced its constitutional recommendations within four days. News from the islands had prompted a sense of urgency. Petitions from the colonies and from the maritime centres demanded repudiation of the threat to slavery and the slave trade implied by the abolitionist sentiments of some deputies; the Assembly was warned that servile revolt and colonial secession would result if such repudiation was not forthcoming. Articles appeared in the Paris press warning that the

overthrow of colonial slavery would lead to the distribution of property in France. It w not be satisfied until five or six *enfants du* France.[28] Bordeaux dispatched a squadron capital to demand assurances that the soci safe from any tampering by the Assen introduced by Barnave contained a guarante studious avoidance of embarrassing referen does not intend to make any innovations commerce between France and the colonies. it puts colonists and their property under t nation and declares guilty of treason whoe against them.'[29] The report granted inter colonies, but insisted that they could mak commercial regulations without the sanctio and that the political process should be con duly appointed colonial officials.

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overthrow of colonial slavery would lead to the break-up of estates and the distribution of property in France. It was said that Brissot would not be satisfied until five or six *enfants du Congo* sat as legislators of France.[28] Bordeaux dispatched a squadron of its Patriotic Army to the capital to demand assurances that the social order of the colonies be safe from any tampering by the Assembly. The colonial report introduced by Barnave contained a guarantee no less categorical for its studious avoidance of embarrassing references: 'the National Assembly does not intend to make any innovations in any of the branches of commerce between France and the colonies, whether direct or indirect; it puts colonists and their property under the special safeguard of the nation and declares guilty of treason whoever seeks to foment risings against them.'[29] The report granted internal self-government to the colonies, but insisted that they could make no permanent changes in commercial regulations without the sanction of the National Assembly and that the political process should be conducted under the tutelage of duly appointed colonial officials.

When presented to the Assembly the pledge given to the colonies' 'indirect trade' and to the colonists' 'property' was greeted with noisy enthusiasm by the deputies linked to colonial and commercial interests. Two supporters of the *Amis* tried to speak on the report but were shouted down with calls for an immediate vote. The report was forthwith adopted by acclamation. The Committee on Colonies now proceeded to draw up instructions concerning implementation of the decree. The most delicate question concerned the procedures to be adopted in the election of the colonial assemblies. The National Assembly had received a number of representations on behalf of the free people of colour, urging that they be given the right to 'active citizenship' on the same terms as white colonists. There was a small but well-established mulatto grouping in France which, with the help of the *Amis des Noirs*, ensured that the question of mulatto rights came before the Assembly. Among the leaders of this group were two lawyers: Julien Raimond and Vincent Ogé. These men were well educated and respectable – Raimond was the legitimate son of a marriage between a planter and a coloured woman – but nevertheless the services of a white advocate were engaged to place the petition before the Assembly and its Colonial Committee. It was couched in sufficiently moderate and persuasive terms to make an impact on both bodies. The free people of colour were evidently a crucial component of the colonial social order. The *maréchausée* and the *Légion* depended upon them, while in some parts of the south and west of St Domingue the majority of estates were in the hands of coloured proprietors. To exclude men of colour who met the financial criteria for 'active' citizenship (that is, voting and

office-holding) would be a gratuitious provocation to a section of the colonial population with a reputation for loyalty to the metropolis. But as soon as this issue was raised the deputies from St Domingue and the Club Massiac argued that it should be referred to the colonial assemblies themselves and that the National Legislature should not try to adjudicate such sensitive questions. They warned that the good effect of the declaration on colonists' property would be entirely undone if mulatto rights were foisted on the colonies. The triumvirate wished to defer to colonial anxieties without sacrificing their authority. Barnave eventually produced a vague formula relating to the colonial franchise which, since it avoided direct reference to racial distinctions, did not positively endorse caste discrimination nor concede a free hand to the white colonists. The colonial assemblies were to be voted on by parishes: 'All persons aged twenty-five years and upwards, possessing real estate or, in default of such property, domiciled for two years in the parish and paying taxes, shall meet and form the parish assembly.'[30] The colonial officials and local notables could be left to exclude those who did not fit. Nevertheless some colonial deputies remained dissatisfied and warned that failure to be quite specific in excluding the *gens de couleur* from 'active citizenship' would have disastrous consequences. Neither Barnave nor the Assembly heeded these prophetic warnings. The full fury of the racial animosities of the colonial whites may not have been appreciated. The social formation of the metropolis did not generate this species of communal antagonism. As for the colonial proprietors, those who resided in France often sounded, as did Lameth, like members of the *Amis des Noirs*. Moreover the colonial deputies were not unanimous. Arthur Dillon from Martinique declared that mulatto rights would cause no problem in his colony.[31]

Barnave, in making his fateful decision on this matter, also had to consider the political cost of appearing to flout ideals, and practical arrangements, recently agreed for the metropolis. Giving direction and coherence to the deliberations of such a large and inexperienced body as the National Assembly was no easy task. The Declaration of the Rights of Man had been adopted as the Assembly's Charter. It conferred legitimacy on the new order and was central to the so-called 'national catechism' in which citizens were to be instructed.[32] With some difficulty the Assembly majority reconciled the Declaration of Rights to a franchise restricted to tax-payers and a rule whereby only property-owners, or those paying more than 52 *livres* yearly in taxes, could qualify as a deputy. The democratic objections of the Abbé Grégoire and of Robespierre were answered by the argument that 'active citizenship' could only be responsibly conceded to shareholders in the national enterprise and control of public funds could only be conceded

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to those who principally provided them. The triumvirate would have confused its followers and compromised its credibility if it had urged the Assembly openly to flout the 'national catechism' or if it had recommended constitutional principles for the colonies which explicitly replaced the property qualification by that of skin colour. By the same token many of the leaders of the democratic opposition – Grégoire, Robespierre, Reubel and others – were in a position to avenge their defeats on the definition of 'active citizenship' by their vigilant defence of mulatto rights. The sincerity of their commitment to 'the Rights of Man' only added to the zeal with which they assailed any equivocation or inconsistency in the formulas of the colonial committee. Barnave's compromise was eventually accepted by the Assembly after a considerable debate. Though its studied ambiguity was attacked by democrats and abolitionists it did not supply the white colonists with the clear-cut guide-lines they were seeking and was bound to stimulate conflict between rival colonial factions.

The planter faction in Martinique was skilfully led by the thirty-year-old Louis–Francois Du Buc. This man was a descendant of the leader of the Gaoulé – a famous colonial rebellion of 1717 – and the son of Jean–Baptiste Du Buc, a friend of Raynal and *premier commis* of the colonial department in Choiseul's Ministry in the 1760s. Louis–Francois Du Buc and other large planters on Martinique eventually succeeded in dominating the island's Assembly, in winning the support of the Governor and in decreeing, with the latter's support, temporary suspension of many of the provisions of the *exclusif*. This latter action provoked intense hostility from the merchants of St Pierre, who alleged that planters like Du Buc were seeking to evade their debts to French merchants, and opposition from the Intendant, Foullon d'Ecottier – the latter was son of the Comptroller General of Finances in the metropolis. When a detachment of the mulatto militia was massacred by the *petits blancs* in St Pierre, Du Buc was able to persuade the Governor to send in garrison troops to arrest those responsible. Sixty of the *petits blancs* were deported to France on the grounds that they were recent arrivals without a domicil in the colony. Though his departure was more dignified the Intendant was also persuaded to return to the metropolis. Du Buc's success was soon menaced, however, by a patriotic sedition amongst the garrison troops who were persuaded that the *petits blancs* had been dealt with in an unjust and arbitrary fashion by a Governor and Colonial Assembly that had little loyalty to France or its revolution. Following this mutiny the Patriots regained possession of St Pierre; the Colonial Assembly and the Governor were obliged to withdraw to the island's interior. On neighbouring Guadeloupe there were also tensions between *grands blancs* and Patriots but there was no powerful

mercantile faction; St Pierre was, in effect, the commercial centre of the French Iles du Vent, serving Guadeloupe as well as Martinique (to the French at this time these were both Windward Islands, compared with the 'Leeward' St Domingue). The colonial establishment in Guadeloupe was also weaker: in any case the Governor, De Clugny, and the militia commander, De Gommier, were both themselves creoles. The arrival of the decree and instructions of March 1790 brought more comfort to Du Buc and the Colonial Assembly than to the mercantile faction since they had already won over the Governor, who would be responsible for applying the metropolitan measures. In the Iles du Vent the creole planter faction had no objection to conceding civic rights to a few wealthy mulattos and was quite prepared to use the free people of colour as a counter-weight to the patriotic *petits blancs*.[33]

In the French Windwards the March decree and instructions proved compatible with planter hegemony, some concessions to the free mulattos and a moderate autonomism because this suited the inclination of the main metropolitan officials there. But in St Domingue concessions, whether to the mulattos or to planter autonomism, had more explosive implications given the larger absolute and relative size of its free mulatto community and the vast commercial significance of its trade. In the French Windwards whites outnumbered free people of colour by two to one. The position of the mulattos of St Domingue, who were richer as well as more numerous, was strengthened by the return to the colony of several wealthy coloured proprietors – men such as Pierre Pinchinat, J.B. Lapointe and J.B. Villatte – who had been accustomed to respectful treatment in France. Vincent Ogé, the lawyer who had sought to vindicate mulatto rights before the National Assembly, also returned to the colony via London, where he raised money from Clarkson and the Abolition Society. Ogé also visited the United States where he purchased arms. These travels seem to have been facilitated by Masonic connections. Ogé arrived back in St Domingue in October 1790 demanding new elections based on the March decree, with full rights for qualified free people of colour. When this met with a predictable refusal from the Governor and Assembly of the North Ogé raised the standard of revolt, with support from a group of revolutionary Freemasons, both mulatto and white. Ogé's revolt was swiftly overwhelmed; he and his followers were subjected to summary trial, torture and execution in a display of 'exemplary' justice. This grim fate encouraged the leading mulattos of the South to make more effective preparations; the mulatto proprietors fortified their estates, arming and training their slaves, and conspiring with the mulatto veterans and under-officers of the Legion and *maréchaussée*. Villatte, one of the larger proprietors, had himself fought in North America. The

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s, had himself fought in North America. The

potential strength of the mulatto community was based in the South and West; not in the North where Ogé had raised the standard of revolt.[34]

In St Domingue all factions amongst the white colonists distrusted the metropolis. They suspected it of radicalism with regard to the *régime intérieur* (slavery and the caste system) and of a rigid conservatism *vis-à-vis* the *régime extérieur* (the *exclusif* and its accompanying apparatus of administration and invigilation). A moderate planter faction came to dominate the provincial assembly of the North, meeting in Le Cap, while a radical faction dominated the first colony-wide General Assembly, which met in Saint Marc, on the West coast, in February 1790. In all provinces the resident planters, or *cultivateurs*, evinced hostility to absentees, to commercial restrictions and to colonial officialdom. Those with the strongest animus against ministerial despotism, or those with the heaviest debts to French merchants, were likely to be among the more politically active. The planter class of St Domingue, by comparision with that of Martinique or Guadeloupe, was weakened by divisions – there were different regional interests and a higher proportion of both absentee and mulatto proprietors. No single leader of the stature of Du Buc emerged in St Domingue and planter hegemony of the countryside was less secure. The relative weakness of the planters of St Domingue led them to make demagogic appeals and concessions to the *petits blancs*: given the volatility of the political passions of the latter this was a dangerous game. It also carried with it the danger of driving into open opposition the relatively large group of propertied mulattos. The political leaders in St Domingue were largely drawn from the planter class, but the support of the *petits blancs* was encouraged by granting voting rights to all male whites with one year's residence in the colony, regardless of whether they owned property or paid direct taxes. The General Assembly at St Marc organised new elections following receipt of the March decree and instruction but, while rigorously excluding mulattos, they retained the wide franchise for whites. Thus the peculiar *régime intérieur* of St Domingue led it to a swifter 'democratisation' of the political process among whites than was seen in the metropolis. The patriotic sentiments of the *petits blancs* were outraged that the National Assembly had passed a decree which clearly deprived many of them of voting rights while being ambiguous enough to enfranchise the propertied mulatto.

The radically autonomist and anti-ministerial planters who dominated the St Marc Assembly mobilised the prejudices of the *petits blancs* without necessarily feeling them so intensely. At earlier and later stages of the revolution the *cultivateurs* of the West and South showed themselves ready to make agreements with mulatto proprietors. The

legislation and the *bases constitutionels* agreed by the St Marc Assembly were chiefly concerned with asserting far-reaching rights within the framework of the monarchy and not with racial questions. The Assembly acted as if it was a sovereign body entitled to negotiate directly with the monarch. The functions of the colonial magistrature and judiciary were entirely suspended and the Assembly arrogated to itself the right to propose commercial legislation and to reorganise the colonial garrison. By expressing a willingness to discuss the future scope of the *exclusif* the St Marc Assembly will have hoped to keep alive the possibility of achieving a *modus vivendi* with the metropolis. Some members of the Assembly may already have wished for complete separation, but this was not the outlook of the majority. However, their decrees went quite far enough to antagonise the Governor and the more cautious faction that dominated the Assembly of the North at Le Cap. In August 1790 the Governor denounced the acts of the St Marc Assembly as a virtual declaration of independence and dispatched troops against it. The forces assembled by the Governor mounted an effective blockade of St Marc, while the Assembly found that its patriotic rhetoric and programme for dispensing with the entirety of the former civil and religious administration had alienated an important stratum of *grands blancs* in the North and in Port au Prince. A number of the deputies slipped away to their plantations. The remainder, eighty-five out of more than two hundred, took advantage of a mutiny aboard the warship *Léopard*, then in St Marc's harbour, to make their escape. They persuaded the revolutionary sailors to take them to France where they could appeal directly to the National Assembly and to public opinion as victims of ministerial despotism and as the legitimate representatives of colonial Patriotism. When the *léopardins*, as they came to be called, landed at Brest, they were accepted as heroes of the Revolution. The arrival of their ship sparked off further mutinies on two ships of the line of the Brest squadron. But both the National Assembly and the triumvirate received these partisans of colonial liberty coolly and suspiciously. Despite the fact that his kinsman, Bacon de Chevalerie, was one of the *léopardins*, Barnave denounced the *bases constitutionels* adopted by the St Marc Assembly while praising the loyalty of the Assembly of the North. Eventually the St Marc deputies were permitted to appear before the Committee on Colonies; forty-five of them were persuaded to disavow the more extravagant claims of the St Marc Assembly.[35]

The events in both the Windward Islands and in St Domingue put the triumvirate in a very difficult position. The commercial and manufacturing interests involved in colonial trade knew that the colonists were exploiting the disturbed condition of colonies and metropolis to

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practise a large-scale contraband. North American, British and Dutch merchants were now making massive and brazen encroachments on the French colonial trade. Though Barnave and the triumvirate had repudiated the more extreme manifestations of planter patriotism they had not successfully defended the *exclusif*. This failure was the critical concern for the commercial interests of the metropolis. Towards the close of 1790 fresh forces and new Governors were dispatched to the Caribbean in an attempt to restore metropolitan authority. La Luzerne was replaced as Colonial Minister; his officials had been notably indulgent to *grands blancs* who had reciprocated by support for the *monarchiens*. The Committee on the Colonies now assumed more direct responsibility for colonial policy. The new Governor in Martinique swiftly came to terms with Du Buc, who had the island well under control. With the dispersal of the St Marc Assembly autonomism in St Domingue had acquired new sponsorship – this time from the Assembly of the North, with fulsome backing from Gouy d'Arsy in the National Assembly. Metropolitan authority in the colonies was represented by Governors and military commanders who lacked both the means and the desire to enforce the commercial regulations rigorously. The distinction insisted on by the Committee on the Colonies between an 'exterior regime' and an 'interior regime' proved quite artificial. The forced departure of the two crucial Intendants – Barbé de Marbois and Foullon d'Ecottier – had been accompanied by the disintegration of the system of metropolitan regulation of colonial commerce. Without 'interior' support the 'exterior' regime simply could not be enforced. The Governors and military commanders had always been drawn from the military aristocratic caste. They tended to sympathise with patrician *grands blancs* and not with the more uncouth Patriots of the towns; yet the latter included many of the clerks, notaries and petty officials upon whom an effective commercial system had to depend. The triumvirate in Paris was not suited to resolving this problem, since their own background and inclinations aligned them with the more respectable and enlightened planters rather than with Patriot enthusiasts prone to fomenting mutiny and insubordination.

By the early months of 1791 the triumvirate's conduct of colonial affairs came under attack in the Revolutionary Clubs and in the Constituent Assembly. Barnave and the Committee on the Colonies could be criticised for permitting Patriots to be persecuted in the colonies, for failing to enforce the *exclusif*, for giving a free hand to aristocratic royal officials and for failing to uphold mulatto rights. These criticisms might not be consistent with one another but were none the less damning for that. The collapse of the commercial system had a particularly damaging impact, uniting different constituencies

against those who were seen as responsible for it. The political clubs reflected the anger of the port cities at lost trade and of the urban populace at rising prices for plantation produce, as sugar, coffee and cacao were diverted from the French entrepôts by the higher prices in New York, Amsterdam and London. Before the end of the year there had been several sugar riots in Paris. The commercial interests knew well that contraband was the explanation for most of the shortages. The Revolutionary Clubs, especially those in the maritime centres, began to denounce a criminal conspiracy of royal officials, aristocratic planters, and traitors to the national interest: they urged the dispatch of troops to the Antilles.[36]

Barnave and the Committee on Colonies were themselves anxious to assert metropolitan authority and the provisions of the *exclusif*, since their aim from the outset had been to reconcile the interests of planting and commerce, colonies and metropolis. In a report to the National Assembly of November 29th 1790, Barnave had admitted that: 'The administration of the colonies is going to pieces. The old laws are without force and the new are infinitely slow in being established.'[37] He pointed to the expulsion of the Intendants as a critical blow to the colonial system and attacked the attempt by colonial assemblies to usurp administrative functions. He recommended the drawing up of new Instructions to be enforced by specially selected Commissioners. Barnave knew that the parade of patriotism made by the colonists brought into question the legitimacy of metropolitan authority. The commissioners would be plenipotentiaries, entrusted with the power and prestige of the National Assembly itself in an effort to meet this problem. Moreover he intended that the Commissioners should themselves be prominent and respected individuals: thus Mercier de la Rivière, the eminent Physiocrat and former Intendant at Martinique, was nominated, though ill health prevented him from sailing. Barnave's desperate attempt to recoup the colonial situation had the initial disadvantage that the nature of the new Instructions would have to be agreed by the National Assembly as a whole. Up to this point the Committee on the Colonies had been able to avoid a general discussion within the Assembly on colonial affairs by presenting reports and moving that they be accepted without discussion. This tactic had worked because the Assembly contained a vociferous minority prepared to support the Committee and a majority which did not wish to be embarrassed by a detailed discussion of the colonies, with their peculiar 'internal' regime. Between January and May 1791 the Committee on the Colonies found it increasingly difficult to gain acceptance for its proposals without a discussion. Once again controversy centred on mulatto rights rather than on the commercial regime, or on slavery

itself, or even on the precise powers to be assemblies. Indeed in the end controversy w restricted aspect even of the issue of n sympathetic to the *Amis des Noirs*, supported proposed that the new Instructions should those free people of colour who were otherw *both of whose parents had themselves been fr* there were very few free mulattos or blacks w it transpired about four hundred in St Domin

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Evidently this battle over the rights of a handful of free people of colour reflected and symbolised other issues. It highlighted the principle of metropolitan responsibility and gave the revolutionary democrats an issue on which they could embarrass Barnave. The question of slavery was taboo for the great majority of deputies to the Constituent Assembly, while metropolitan sovereignty was a taboo question for most colonial representatives. The Constituent deputies wished to see the return of a profitable colonial system and did not believe that attacking slavery was the way to achieve this. The leading planters, on the other hand, desired self-government, but most of them still felt themselves to be French and to be subjects of the French King. They looked to the metropolis to maintain order in the colonies and they felt bound to it by personal ties. They generally avoided open attacks on the principle of metropolitan regulation of commerce and contented themselves with rendering it ineffective. Some planters may have felt that the *exclusif* was a price worth paying for the benefits of association with the wider French empire; others that it would be tactically unwise to provoke into opposition the entire commercial lobby of the metropolis. The mulatto issue had the advantage for both colonists and Constituent deputies of posing the question of the ultimate control of colonial policy without broaching the even more delicate questions raised by slavery or the commercial system. So far as the *petits blancs* were concerned the enfranchisement of even a small number of mulattos would be the thin end of the wedge. The *grands blancs* and *cultivateurs* did not see in mulatto rights a mortal threat to their position but they definitely did not want to see such rights imposed from the outside; given the opportunity the planter representatives always spoke of their great benevolence towards the mulattos, even when denying rights to them. So far as the Constituent was concerned the enforcement of mulatto rights, even the rights of a very small number of mulattos, would require the rehabilitation of an administrative structure responsible to the metropolis. Moreover it would undercut the moral and political credentials of the colonial Patriots without threatening slavery. French 'patriotism' was defined by civic

virtue and love of country, just as it had been for British or North American Patriots; but what were the boundaries of the nation and who enjoyed civic rights? Narrowly bourgeois or racist conceptions could be denounced as the confection of a new aristocracy.

Thus the decision of the Jacobins and Constituent Left was not simply prompted by political calculation or economic interest. The issue of mulatto rights put to the test the principles enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. Of course the issue of slavery did as well but the abolitionist-minded deputy could persuade himself that conceding rights to mulattos, however modest these might be, was the first step towards improving the condition of the coloured people of the Antilles. Jacobins perceived in this question an opportunity to affirm the principles of 1789, expose the inconsistency of the triumvirate, assert the integrity of the nation and pursue a policy that had economic advantages as well as risks. The gruesome news of Ogé's martyrdom arrived in Paris at a time when popular distrust of the King was mounting; it was widely attacked as a barbarous example of caste revenge masquerading as royal justice. In the Revolutionary Clubs and newspapers denunciations of the 'aristocracy of the skin' in the colonies suggested parallels with the struggle against privilege in the metropolis.[39]

The Constituent Assembly debated the colonial Instructions for five days in May 1791. The colonial deputies, the Massiac Club and the *léopardins* united in warning of the dangers that would arise from even the smallest concession to the mulattos. Moreau de Saint Méry, now a deputy for Martinique, secured acceptance for a motion to the effect that no change could be made in the status of slaves (amended to 'persons not free') in the French West Indies that had not been formally and spontaneously demanded by the colonial assemblies themselves. But opinion among the mass of deputies was now seriously divided. A mulatto petition against white lynch law in the colonies was read to the Assembly on May 15th after Reubel, a Jacobin, proposed the motion that voting rights be given to qualified mulattos born of free parents. Despite Barnave's opposition this motion was passed by acclamation. Within days the directory of the department of the Gironde, and the Jacobins of Bordeaux, had congratulated the Assembly on its decision. But the radical Jacobins had no majority in the Constituent Assembly and no prospect of displacing the triumvirate. In an attempt to consolidate their temporary advantage the supporters of mulatto rights presented a 'declaration of motives' which was to accompany the decree to the colonies. Drafted by Dupont de Nemours and approved on May 29th this document theorised the compromising formula that had been adopted, declaring that the Constituent was not competent to

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accord civic rights to unfree persons, or freedmen, since these were members of a 'foreign nation'. Such concessions made little impact on the colonial representatives, who did all in their power to oppose and sabotage implementation of the May 15th decision. The Colonial Ministry and the Committee on Colonies were equally obstructive. The Governor of St Domingue sent a letter to the Constituent Assembly warning that introduction of the decree would provoke civil war, secession or even an invitation to the British fleet.

The extent of colonial resistance to the decree of May 15th began to undermine support for it in the maritime centres and in the Constituent Assembly. But the course of colonial policy was by no means determined solely by colonial events. The flight of the King in June, and the popular demonstration which escorted him back to Paris after his apprehension at Varennes, created a new political situation. The intrigues of the King created problems for the triumvirate, who were identified with the project of a constitutional monarchy. The latter was still the objective of the majority of the possessing classes since the monarch could serve as a rallying point for the disparate forces of property and commerce, for colonial planters and metropolitan merchants, for landowners and peasants, for regular officers and members of the burgeoning National Guard. But a constitutional monarchy required a constitutional monarch and this was a role which Louis XVI and the more ardent royalists were unprepared to play. The King's flight and the growing strength of the counter-revolution encouraged some leaders of democratic opinion, such as Condorcet, to canvass the republican alternative. But most members of the Constituent Assembly were more frightened of the populace and of the hazards of democratic experiment than they were of counter-revolution. Barnave and the 'Lamethists' formed a bloc with Malouet and many of the *monarchiens* in an effort to shore up the crumbling project of a constitutional monarchy. This new grouping, the *Feuillants*, had powerful backing from colonial interests, including those associated with the Massiac Club. The triumvirate had skilfully interpreted the mood of the Constituent Assembly, and of much of bourgeois opinion, even if not the true intentions of their sovereign. The *Feuillants* proceeded to repress democratic or republican agitation and to regain control of colonial policy. The failure to follow up the decree of May 15th with consequent Instructions had stalled its application, but it remained an embarrassment. On September 7th Barnave introduced a motion which referred the decree on mulatto rights for reconsideration by the Committee on the Colonies. Barnave presented this as a tactical withdrawal and had scathing words both for the social regime of the colonies and for ill-considered attempts to change it: 'This regime is

absurd, but one cannot handle it roughly without unloosing the greatest disorder. This regime is oppressive, but it gives a livelihood to several million Frenchmen. This regime is barbarous but a still greater barbarity will result if you interfere with it without the necessary knowledge.'[40] But such rhetoric could scarcely disguise the craven capitulation to colonial interests that he was recommending. On September 24th the Constituent formally rescinded the decree on mulatto rights . C.L.R. James has underlined the moral and political significance of the failure to implement the decree of May 15th:

> It was the colonial question which demoralised the Constituent. Jaurès, so weak on colonial events, but so strong on Parliamentary assemblies, has traced this demoralisation with the profound insight of a great parliamentarian. Hitherto, says Jaurès, the revolutionary bourgeoisie had been reasonably honest (Jaurès, *Histoire Socialiste de la Revolution Francaise*, Vol. II, pp. 225–6). If they had limited the franchise at least they had done so openly. But to avoid giving the Mulattoes the Rights of Man they had to descend to low dodges and crooked negotiations which destroyed their revolutionary integrity. It was the guilty conscience of the Constituent on the colonial question that placed it at the mercy of the reactionaries when Louis fled. 'Undoubtedly but for the compromises of Barnave and all his party on the colonial question, the general attitude of the Assembly after the flight to Varennes would have been different.'[41]

While it is difficult to be certain which was cause and which effect there can be little doubt that colonial compromise cemented the ill-fated *Feuillant* bloc.

The rescinding of the decree of May 15th was almost the last act of the Constituent. In the newly elected Legislative Assembly, which met on October 1st, the *Feuillants* remained the largest grouping and retained nominal control of colonial policy through a new Committee on Colonies constructed along similar lines to its predecessor. But though a *Feuillant* ministry was to remain in office until March of 1792 it was already beginning to be overtaken by events. Barnave and his colleagues did not possess either the financial or the military resources to command the situation in the colonies. Their effort to appease the colonial establishment failed to bring calm. The vacillations on mulatto rights and the conspiracies of the royalist counter-revolution had intensified the struggle in St Domingue. In Le Cap and Port au Prince patriot bands, the *pompons rouges*, clashed with royalist gangs, the *pompons blancs*. In the summer of 1791 the patriot committees, supported by most resident planters, dominated new elections to a general colonial Assembly: despite the decree of May 15th mulatto proprietors were completely excluded from these elections. The officers

the garrison and of the royal squadro monarchism as did a number of the a terests. The decree of May 15th encourag already begun to mobilise, to assert their Governor lacked either clear instructions troops.

These ragged conflicts, following nearly tw revolutionary rhetoric, and accompanied by planters and managers avid for increased ou for the most remarkable explosion of slav French Caribbean. Factional conflict had some plantations and the arming of some s in August, towards the close of the harve would, in many cases, have left the plant towns. Economic as well as political c contradictory relaxation/intensification of circulated more freely, markets in slave *maréchaussée* and police were distracted. the mass of slaves were no better, with ov slave crews to the limit. On the one hanc slave subjection was weakened and divide had unprecedented opportunities for mee ences and for arming themselves.

The slave uprising began on the night of Le Cap, the epicentre of struggles betwe elected Assembly dominated by white Patr the northern capital. According to legend a meeting of elite slaves held in the Bois-C August 14th. Boukman Dutty, a coac gathering and it was agreed that there w on a series of major plantations: Noé, C others in the region of Limbé and Acul conspirators pledged themselves to one ar whites and their evil God, crying out in F coeur à nous', (Listen to the voice of Libe of all).[42]

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of the garrison and of the royal squadron inclined to intransigent monarchism as did a number of the agents of metropolitan interests. The decree of May 15th encouraged the mulattos, who had already begun to mobilise, to assert their rights arms in hand. The Governor lacked either clear instructions or reinforcements of loyal troops.

These ragged conflicts, following nearly two years of uncertainty and revolutionary rhetoric, and accompanied by market pressures that made planters and managers avid for increased output, created the conditions for the most remarkable explosion of slave rebellion ever seen in the French Caribbean. Factional conflict had involved the fortification of some plantations and the arming of some slaves. The revolt took place in August, towards the close of the harvest season. White employees would, in many cases, have left the plantations, for recreation in the towns. Economic as well as political conditions had promoted a contradictory relaxation/intensification of the slave regime. Elite slaves circulated more freely, markets in slave produce flourished and the *maréchaussée* and police were distracted. Yet working conditions for the mass of slaves were no better, with overseers anxious to push their slave crews to the limit. On the one hand, the elaborate apparatus of slave subjection was weakened and divided. On the other, some slaves had unprecedented opportunities for meeting, for comparing experiences and for arming themselves.

The slave uprising began on the night of August 21st in the vicinity of Le Cap, the epicentre of struggles between colonial factions. A newly elected Assembly dominated by white Patriots was just about to meet in the northern capital. According to legend the outbreak was planned at a meeting of elite slaves held in the Bois-Caiman on the stormy night of August 14th. Boukman Dutty, a coach-driver, presided over the gathering and it was agreed that there would be a simultaneous revolt on a series of major plantations: Noé, Clement, Flaville, Gallifet, and others in the region of Limbé and Acul. At a voodoo ceremony the conspirators pledged themselves to one another and to victory over the whites and their evil God, crying out in *Kréyole*: 'Couté la Liberté dan coeur à nous', (Listen to the voice of Liberty which speaks in the hearts of all).[42]

The revolt spread rapidly across the northern plain, involving tens of thousands of slaves. The Colonial Assembly, now besieged in Le Cap, was to claim that 180 sugar estates and 900 coffee and indigo estates were engulfed by the revolt, with 100,000 slaves affected; though they probably exaggerated certainly nothing like this had been seen in

St Domingue before. Patriots insisted that royalist officials or rebellious mulattos were behind the revolt and had distributed arms to the slaves as part of a counter-revolutionary manoeuvre. The rebel leaders adopted the style and uniform of generals and some did claim that the King wanted to help the blacks. The rebels slaughtered hated overseers or whites who stood in their way. A few priests and doctors were said to have been spared; some even joined the black generals. The insurgents set fire to plantation buildings, and withdrew to refuge in the surrounding hills and forest; others remained, loath to abandon a place they thought of as home. Some rebels made common cause with the maroon bands, which mushroomed in number and in size. The garrison held Cap Français but was initially reluctant to venture far into the devastated Northern plain. One of the black leaders wrote to the Governor on September 4th saying that the only way in which peace could be secured was if the whites evacuated the entire region including Le Cap: 'They may take with them their gold and jewels. The only precious object we covet is liberty.' The Governor's forces gradually drove back the black columns from the main plantation zone. In November Boukman was killed by a regular column; the officer reporting this noted the presence of five cannon and a white man with Boukman's force of several hundred.[43] But there were now at least half a dozen large rebel and maroon forces active in the North and the borderlands. In parts of the South and West there were also disturbances; in these regions a free coloured militia assumed control. The Colonial Assembly appealed to the Governor of Jamaica for help. The seriousness of the slave revolt led white and mulatto proprietors to reach a 'concordat' in self-defence in a number of areas – but the mulattos were to remember their resentments when they heard that the May 15th decree had been rescinded. The Constituent Assembly had delivered this rebuff to the free mulattos in September 1791 before anyone in France was aware of the slave revolt in St Domingue. When the triumvirs withdrew rights from free people of colour they were appeasing white colonists and simply assuming the continued subordination of the slaves.

With hindsight we know that the rising of August 1791 was the beginning of the end of slavery in St Domingue. But this was not at all clear to contemporaries. The revolt had been far more widespread than any previously seen in the colony, but once the insurgents had retired to the hills and frontier zone a semblance of order returned to many plantations. While some rebels had achieved liberty, others remained to negotiate with the planters or overseers. In pitched battles the militia or regulars would usually prevail. The death of Boukman was believed to have dealt a crushing blow to the black insurgence. As yet it was not

clear that a new power had been born; the general programme or plan. When proper reached France at the beginning of Novemb of the matter in the eyes of metropolitan appeal to the Governor of Jamaica – an alar fact that the London newspapers seemed r developments in St Domingue than the metropolitan suspicions were, in fact, emine member of the Colonial Assembly, Cadu Governor of Jamaica but also sent a lette government to occupy St Domingue. A F supplies at Cap Français on September enthusiastic welcome by the white inhabita events as this reached France more or less the insurrection itself. Those most interest that colonists always exaggerated the exter such outbreaks, even when serious, could or later – separatist movements, as the N were a graver threat to metropolitan inte

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clear that a new power had been born; the rebels themselves issued no general programme or plan. When proper reports of the insurrection reached France at the beginning of November the most alarming aspect of the matter in the eyes of metropolitan observers was the planters' appeal to the Governor of Jamaica – an alarm that was increased by the fact that the London newspapers seemed much better informed about developments in St Domingue than the ministry in Paris. These metropolitan suspicions were, in fact, eminently justified, since a leading member of the Colonial Assembly, Cadusch, not only contacted the Governor of Jamaica but also sent a letter to Pitt inviting the British government to occupy St Domingue. A British warship arrived with supplies at Cap Français on September 22nd and was given an enthusiastic welcome by the white inhabitants. Reports of such ominous events as this reached France more or less at the same time as news of the insurrection itself. Those most interested in colonial affairs believed that colonists always exaggerated the extent of slave rebellions and that such outbreaks, even when serious, could always be contained sooner or later – separatist movements, as the North Americans had proved, were a graver threat to metropolitan interests.[44]

Following the insurrection in St Domingue about 20,000 former slaves left their estates and formed encampments in the foothills surrounding the Northern plain and at Ounaminthe near the border. The Northern capital at Le Cap remained in the hands of the Governor and the white Patriots of the Assembly. In some parts of the South and West there were smaller outbreaks of slave rebellion. Such outbreaks were not as extensive or as destructive of plantation property as the insurrection in the North.

Throughout the colony slaves who had family ties and garden plots were often reluctant to leave the plantation for the uncertain and rudimentary existence of the maroon. The planters or their managers acknowledged changed conditions by making concessions to their slaves – an extra free day per week, or more extensive cultivation rights – and in this way retained a work-force. In some parts of the country such concessions could be made because of high prices for sugar; in much of the North they might be made because the sugar mills were in no state to resume output in any case. The existence of rebel columns in the surrounding woods and hills was itself an inducement to plantation managers to be attentive to their crews. Most of the leaders of the slave risings, large or small, were prepared to negotiate with planters and political authorities to secure liberty for themselves, and their immediate followers, and better conditions for the mass of rebellious slaves. The leaders of the insurrectionary columns in the North – Biassou, Jean François, Toussaint Bréda – described themselves as

soldiers of the King: it was sometimes claimed that the whites had concealed a royal decree granting the slaves an extra free day per week.

A Civil Commission dispatched by the National Assembly arrived in St Domingue at the end of November 1791 and soon opened negotiations with the leaders of the Northern revolt. The latter demanded not only freedom for themselves but also full political rights, pointing out that the metropolitan decrees had left this to the discretion of local authorities. The black leaders declared that so long as their own freedom, and those of some 400 followers, was formally guaranteed, and the mass of slaves allowed more time to work their plots, they would be prepared to enforce a return to the plantations. C.L.R. James describes this as an 'abominable betrayal', yet it would count as standard conduct for past maroon leaders, with, perhaps, a dimension of servile trade unionism. The leaders of the revolt were predominantly former elite slaves, or even *affranchis*. The elite slaves already enjoyed privileges and aspired to full freedom; the mass of slaves might be more willing to settle for improved conditions. The main black leaders spoke French. Jean François claimed that, by contrast, many of their followers were Africans who spoke only two words of French; by implication these followers were not bothered about French legal formulas, and could be satisfied by promises of more time to work their plots. While the black leaders did display an egoism and condescension which merits James's scorn it is probable that it was the uneven and incomplete development of slave resistance and revolt which made this possible.[45]

The Civil Commissioners were prepared to accept the terms offered by the black leaders, but prospects for a deal were sabotaged by the provincial assembly of the North, which refused to countenance it. The Civil Commissioners did not have the strength to impose their will on the mass of white colonists: the depleted forces of the garrison were outnumbered by the militia. In other parts of the colony slave outbreaks helped to bring about an uneasy truce or 'concordat' between whites and free people of colour. In the West a 'combined' force of whites and free mulattos defeated an attempt by patriot *pompons rouges* to seize control of Port au Prince; they were assisted in this by a young black named Hyacinth who had established a following among the rebel slaves. An official wrote of the West: 'there are really no insurgent slaves but those which have been armed by the two parties.' The South was divided into a patchwork of white-controlled and mulatto-controlled areas. But in the hills of Les Platons a stubborn slave revolt was only contained with difficulty and an official reported the following rebel reaction to peace feelers put out by the attackers:' "nous après tandé zaute", which is to say, we had expected you, and we will cut off your heads to the last man; and that this land is not for you it is for

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us.'[46] So long as the colonial power resisted civic concessions to mulatto proprietors and commanders, it was not well placed to regain its influence over the different regions of the colony.

Meanwhile, developments within the metropolis strengthened the position of those associated with the *Amis des Noirs* and further antagonised the white planters of the Antilles. Brissot and Condorcet were both members of the Legislative while all former members of the Constituent had been debarred from presenting themselves as candidates. In the clubs the influence of the *Amis des Noirs* was growing, as Barnave was discredited by his capitulations to arrogant and racist colonists.[47] Brissot now became the most effective opposition leader in the Legislative and the champion of a new forward policy which would take France to war in Europe and would reassert metropolitan authority in the Antilles. Both objectives required a rehabilitation and expansion of the nation's armed forces and administrative machine. Popular support for such aims could be aroused by proclaiming the need to end foreign encouragement of the counter-revolution and foil the plots of aristocratic emigrés and colonists. The King, foolishly devoted to a *politique du pire*, permitted the formation of a new ministry committed to the 'Brissotin' programme, led by Roland and Clavière, the latter, of course, a sponsor of the *Amis*. The 'Jacobin' ministry was formed on March 15th 1792. One of its first acts was to introduce a decree on April 4th conceding full civic and political rights to all free adult males in the colonies, regardless of colour.

Brissot did not trust the white colonial factions and looked to the *gens de couleur* to recoup the situation. In St Domingue support from the free people of colour would be essential to the restoration of authority and the rehabilitation of the colonial system. In much of the West the 'concordat' between white and coloured proprietors had already been based on recognition of the necessity to unite the free population, whatever their colour, in the face of slave insurgency. The slave revolts had created a new situation in which both metropolitan and creole interests recognised the advantage of enlisting the support of the free people of colour. The 'concordat' had been devised with the help of the Civil Commissioners but implemented by municipal authorities who increasingly acted for themselves without reference to a weakened and distant metropolis. So far as many proprietors were concerned, it was a step towards self-reliance and self-government; and these consorted happily with their practice of free trade. Several important mulatto proprietors and merchants decided that their

interests would be best served by aligning themselves with creole autonomism and royalism. Thus in the West the royalist *pompons blancs* and the leaders of the 'combined force' acted together, led by the white planter Hanus de Jumécourt and the mulatto planter J.B. Lapointe. Some planters who favoured autonomism were prepared to work with the counter-revolutionary Princes, because the latter were in no position to impose ministerial despotism on the Antilles. Indeed it was now royalism rather than patriotism which could be used as a screen to defend the creole faction's aversion to metropolitan regulations. Such planter royalists saw British material support as the critical factor and were grateful for the help received from the Governor of Jamaica in the aftermath of the slave uprising. Spain might supply flanking support in St Domingue but it lacked Britain's commercial and maritime strength. Austria or Prussia might help to restore royal authority in France but had no purchase on the situation in the Caribbean.

The Brissotins did not control the state apparatus: within the Navy and its dependencies unreconstructed monarchism remained a powerful force and was strengthened by the adhesion of colonial *grands blancs* and *cultivateurs* who had earlier supported Barnave and Lameth. A more generous conception of citizenship would give Brissot the allies he needed to fashion a new colonial order. The Brissotin programme would, it was hoped, restore the flows of colonial commerce as well as promote plantation security; free mulattos and loyal whites would re-establish a functioning colonial administration and police. The now booming trade between the French colonies and the North American or British ports would be redirected back to Bordeaux and Nantes.

The planters' growing appetite for running their own affairs stopped just short of a desire for full independence. Under the impact of revolution and slave revolt the colony had fragmented into a score or so of separate municipalities and local assemblies, meeting in port towns such as St Marc, Jacmel, Jérémie and Léogane, as well as the provincial capitals of Le Cap, Port au Prince and Les Cayes. The planters and merchants who dominated the assemblies recognised that some sort of central authority was needed to check the activities of rebels and runaways. A constitutional monarchy or British protectorate might supply the back-up they required. To renounce France was not easy, but they did not wish to open up their ledgers and warehouses to the prying eyes of colonial tax inspectors and customs officials, whatever their colour. Many planters were disenchanted with the confusions of patriot democracy and thought these likely to be compounded by the admission of all free people of colour to citizenship. White proprietors were prepared to work with mulatto proprietors, but this did not mean that

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they accepted other men of colour as their equals; similarly the *grands blancs* had been prepared to exploit the racial resentments of the *petits blancs* but did not wish to see them occupying positions of influence. Up to this point the larger planters had dominated the colonial assemblies – though admittedly more securely in Martinique than St Domingue. *Petits blancs* had been allowed to vote but they had not stood as candidates; indeed not only *petits blancs* but also lawyers, priests and clerks had been largely absent from representation in the colonial assemblies. The Brissotin programme allowed these excluded layers of the white population to gain official posts at the risk of further alienating the richer planters and merchants, together with their hangers-on. It was hoped that the creole planters and merchants could be brought to accept the newly refurbished colonial state, since this would offer them a guarantee of slave subordination. Much as planters appreciated the profits of contraband it was hoped that security would be their overriding consideration.

The Legislative Assembly, aware that the colonial system could not be rebuilt without a much stronger metropolitan presence in St Domingue, dispatched a new Civil Commission and an expeditionary force of 6,000 men – 2,000 troops of the line and 4,000 National Guards – in July 1792; a smaller force was sent to the Windwards in the following month. The Civil Commissioners for St Domingue, of whom there were three, were entrusted with very wide powers by the Legislative Assembly enabling them to summon or dismiss the colonial assemblies and to investigate and restructure every branch of administration. The Commission comprised three members: Sonthonax, Polverel and Ailhaud.

Sonthonax, a twenty-nine-year-old lawyer and journalist, was a member of the Jacobin Club, a friend of Brissot and a supporter of the *Amis des Noirs*. He could generally count on the support of another, more cautious, Brissotin Commissioner, Polverel. Ailhaud was to return to France before revealing a distinctive political orientation. The expedition was accompanied by a new military commander and Governor, Desparbès, who was to be subordinate to the Commissioners. The expedition left France at an extraordinary moment. A Prussian general was poised at the head of a counter-revolutionary army to invade France. The intrigues of the King and court, underlined by the wholesale defection of royalist officers, had created an atmosphere of the greatest alarm and suspicion. Brissot had declared that '*La patrie est en danger*' and Robespierre had joined with him to call for a united patriotic mobilisation on June 28th. The *fédérés* who converged on Paris to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille denounced the treason of the King and Queen. The Patriots of

Marseilles began their march on the capital and demands were raised for the arming of all citizens, abolition of the distinction between active and passive citizens, overthrow of the monarchy and election of a National Convention on the basis of universal manhood suffrage. The King's refusal to sanction a number of emergency measures further inflamed the Patriots. Indeed the royal licence issued to the Civil Commissioners for St Domingue was amongst the last official acts of Louis XVI. The fact that an expedition of 6,000 troops was allowed to leave France at this juncture was itself a tribute to the importance attached to the colonies.

Notwithstanding their royal sanction the Commissioners had been chosen for their loyalty to the Assembly and took with them to the Antilles the spirit of patriotic vigilance and the fervour of a Jacobin Club that had yet to split. But they also had to contend with an incoherence at the heart of the Brissotin programme. Brissot wished to rehabilitate the state administration yet, clinging to the dead formula of constitutional monarchy, he failed to base his plans from the outset on an authoritative new sovereign power. Having denounced the King in June he was still prepared to negotiate with him in July. And even after the arrest of the royal family and the triumph of the Republican insurrection of August 10th Brissot and the Girondins seemed to be leading the government of a Republic in which they only half-believed. The Civil Commissioners acted with resolution, but they were dogged by the problem of the ultimate legitimacy of their acts. The Commissioners themselves had no difficulty in accepting the Republic declared in September or accepting the authority of the Convention, elected in the same month, which renewed their Commission. But the overthow of the monarchy was the signal for a royalist *fronde* throughout the French Antilles as creole planters and merchants seized on a ready-made justification for their autonomist aspirations.

The Civil Commission arrived in St Domingue on September 17th and was welcomed by the colonists of Cap Français because of the strong forces they brought with them. The Commission was soon plunged in a succession of difficult situations. The commander of the regular troops, D'Esparbès, resented the powers conferred on the Civil Commissioners and displayed little zeal for leading his troops in a campaign against the insurgents holding out in the interior. From the outset he revealed royalist sympathies, winning some planter support; when news arrived in October that a Republic had been declared he became bolder in his defiance of the Commissioners. Sonthonax announced that the Commissioners fully respected the colonists property and that they were determined to stamp out rebellion, whether from the slaves or from the royalist counter-revolution. In a swift coup

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the Commission managed to win over most of the metropolitan troops and colonial militia; D'Esparbès, together with his entire staff and twenty-five other officers, were arrested and sent to France. The Commissioners were assisted by the arrival of reinforcements and two ranking metropolitan commanders loyal to the Republic: Rochambeau, who stayed in St Domingue from November to January, and Etienne Laveaux, a *ci-devant* noble and participant in the recent Republican victories at Valmy and Jémappes. With this help the Commissioners began to reconstruct metropolitan authority in the colony along the lines embodied in their instructions. An appeal was made to the leaders of the black revolt, offering them their liberty in exchange for help in restoring order to the colony. But the black generals replied that those who had just overthrown their King were in no position to promise anyone freedom. The Commissioners, hoping to attract the support of slaveholders of all colours, ordered military operations against the rebel encampments. They were puzzled to discover that the blacks would often prefer to withdraw than to give battle.

Polverel and Ailhaud left for the West and South while Sonthonax took charge in the North. Because of the threat still posed by the black rebels in the North none of the metropolitan reinforcements could be subtracted from this province, leaving the Commissioners in the South and West at the mercy of local forces unsympathetic to the Republic. Ailhaud found such resistance to his authority in Port au Prince that he decided to return to France to warn of the colony's imminent defection. Polverel had more persistence and won support from coloured militia officers who welcomed the decree of April 4th. Fear of slave revolt and a desire not to antagonise the *gens de couleur* induced many planters and merchants to feign acceptance of the Republican authorities until there was a real prospect of replacing them.[48]

While wealthy mulatto proprietors continued to participate in the intrigues of the autonomist municipalities the majority of the free people of colour were attracted by the anti-racist policies of the Republican Commissioners. Because there had been a steady drain of white emigration the free mulattos and blacks now outnumbered the whites by perhaps two to one. In many places they already formed the largest militia units. Coloured officers and soldiers were impressed by the evident determination of Sonthonax and Polverel to dismantle racial discrimination. The Commissioners had no hesitation in promoting coloured veterans who had held commissions in the militia and in the *Légion de St Domingue*: important commands were given to Rigaud in the South, Chanlatte, Beauvais and Pinchinat in the West and Villatte in the North. The *Légion de St Domingue* became the *Légion d'Egalité*. Sonthonax defeated D'Esparbès with the help of the *pompons rouges*

but he dispersed a club of radical white Patriots which committed outrages against 'citizens of April 4th'. He then proceeded to form *compagnies franches*, composed exclusively of *gens de couleur*. Making use of their wide powers the Commissioners dissolved all provincial assemblies and postponed new elections, pending a Republican education and reconstruction of the colony. The Civil Commissioners sponsored new revolutionary clubs, the *Amis de la Convention*, and intermediary commissions with executive powers. Whites and free *gens de couleur* were appointed to these bodies in equal numbers and charged with rooting out royalist suspects, investigating *émigré* estates and raising revenue. The Civil Commissioner spoke of liberating the true Third Estate of the colony. Despite the recognition extended to the free people of colour the Commissioners succeeded in retaining the support of a layer of white colonists – petty officials, notaries, constitutional priests, some merchants and even a few planters. While some Patriots, formerly vociferous in their racialism, rallied to the Republic, others, formerly sworn enemies of despotism, went over to the royalists.

The new Republican order was strongest in the North around Le Cap and Port de Paix, though the extreme North-west was in autonomist hands. In the West and South Polverel enjoyed the backing of the coloured commanders, but had to contend with municipal authorities with no commitment to the Republic and no desire to see the colonial system rehabilitated. In much of the West and South mulatto proprietors preferred 'royalist' autonomism to Republican 'equality'. The municipality of Port au Prince only abandoned its defiance after a full-scale siege and bombardment, but there were not enough troops to secure all outlying districts. Coloured commanders sometimes ignored the contraband activities of coloured proprietors. The local authorities in Môle St Nicolas, Jérémie and Jacmel openly defied the Republican authorities; even nominally Republican municipalities, like that of St Marc, traded and conspired with the British colonies where many émigrés were now to be found. The Civil Commissioners sent some special consignments of plantation produce to Bordeaux from Le Cap but their emergency administration was not adequate to enforcing the colonial regulation of commerce. Any move against suspected royalists and autonomists brought howls of anger from other planters. The Civil Commissioners' commitment to defend slavery left economic power, and control of the plantation militia forces, in the hands of their political enemies.

Republican em

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Republican emblem

News from Europe encouraged the planters and colonial establishment of the Windwards to declare for the King in September and October 1792. Significantly enough the assemblies of these two colonies, dominated as they were by the large planters, had meekly accepted the decree of April 4th when it arrived in June. In a fraught situation the planters realised that it would be folly to alienate a critical section of the free population. The news which precipitated planter rebellion in the Iles du Vent was that of the confrontation between the King and the patriot forces in July and August. Garbled reports relayed by neigbouring British colonies led many to believe that the King had re-established his authority and that the Duke of Brunswick, at the head of a victorious counter-revolutionary army, had crushed the democratic agitations of the Paris rabble. The naval and garrison commanders believed that the time had come to honour their oaths of loyalty to the King. The autonomist-inclined and planter-dominated assemblies were persuaded to form a Federation of the Iles du Vent and to hoist the white flag. The more astute leaders of the planters may have discounted the rumours of royalist victory but they clearly sensed that a moment had arrived in which, with royalist help, they could negotiate a deal with the British. Aware of the unpatriotic disposition of the planters of the Iles du Vent the Legislative Assembly had assembled an expedition of 2,000 men commanded by General Rochambeau to restore

metropolitan authority there. This expedition left France on August 10th, apparently unaware of the Republican insurrection taking place in Paris on the same day. It arrived in the Windwards towards the end of September. The local authorities, and the commanders of the garrison and squadron, refused Rochambeau permission to land, informing him that his instructions had been revoked by order of the King. Rochambeau decided against attempting a contested landing and set sail for St Domingue. In a secret session on October 8th the Assembly of the Federation of Guadeloupe and Martinique dispatched Du Buc on a mission to Europe, with plenipotentiary powers to negotiate with the London government and the leaders of the counter-revolution. The émigré leaders themselves dispatched a commissioner of their own to the Antilles, one Cougnacq-Myon, a former member of the St Marc Assembly. Though the royalists had triumphed in the Iles du Vent they failed to consolidate their gains. Royalist warships were allowed to leave to join the British and persuade them of the advantages of backing the rebellion. On the islands themselves royalist officials suppressed the municipality of St Pierre and persecuted colonial Patriots, forcing a number of them to seek refuge on neighbouring Dutch or British islands or on Ste Lucie, an island with few plantations where the local commander had remained faithful to the metropolis.

The newly elected Convention despatched an envoy, Captain Lacrosse, to inform the colonists of the Iles du Vent of the proclamation of the Republic. Lacrosse arrived in early December aboard the frigate *Felicité*. Discovering that the royalists held the main French Windwards Lacrosse sailed on to Ste Lucie, from where he proceeded to engage in a pamphlet war against the royalists in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Lacrosse urged all Patriots to reject royalist treason and join forces with the *gens de couleur* as an insurance against both invasion and slave revolt.

> Equality, liberty, these are the bases of our government. It is to you, citizens of all colours, that I address myself; we are one and the same family, our union will be our strength; and the slave, your property, must be attached to his labours by the example you give him. Are you not afraid that your crews will desert you at the first cannon shot fired against you by France? Attacked from without and menaced from within, what resistance would you be able to afford?[49]

The republican commander brought news of the consolidation of the new order in France and of impressive victories at Valmy and Jémappes. He assured the colonists that larger forces were on the way. The whites of St Pierre and the free people of colour of Guadeloupe

proved sympathetic to the republican appeals. swelled by victims of royalist persecution and from nearby islands. Fearing the outcome of ar planters and officials evacuated first Martiniq To patriot cheers the *Felicité* sailed into St Pi an enormous *bonnet rouge* on its mast; in Lacrosse embraced a leading coloured citizen.

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proved sympathetic to the republican appeals. The patriot forces were swelled by victims of royalist persecution and by the return of refugees from nearby islands. Fearing the outcome of an armed clash the royalist planters and officials evacuated first Martinique and then Guadeloupe. To patriot cheers the *Felicité* sailed into St Pierre on January 7th with an enormous *bonnet rouge* on its mast; in a ceremony of welcome Lacrosse embraced a leading coloured citizen.

The patriot order in the Iles du Vent, based on the support of metropolitan merchants, a few *cultivateurs* and the majority of *petits blancs* and free people of colour, developed a vigorous Republican culture. There were at least a dozen Revolutionary Clubs dedicated to eradicating royalist treason. A number of *gens de couleur* were promoted to important military commands, among them Magloire Pélage and Louis Delgrès. Rochambeau returned to the islands in February and efforts were made to fortify them against the expedition which, with the outbreak of a wider war imminent, all expected. It was now the turn of patriots to persecute royalist collaborators. Up to this point the slaves of the Iles du Vent had remained quiet; but in March and August there were plantation revolts in Guadeloupe which were only suppressed with considerable loss of life.[50]

The precarious successes of republican colonial policy were jeopardised by the consequences of a war policy which put France on a collision course with Britain and Spain, thus furnishing the autonomist planters with the allies they sought. Brissot had declared that the defence of French liberty required the overthrow of Bourbons throughout Europe. The rhetoric of Danton simultaneously threatened the decrepit empires of the *anciens régimes* and the vigorous commercial interests of Britain's oligarchy. Republican advances, the opening of the Scheldt and plots to subvert Spanish America set the alarm bells ringing in London as well as Madrid. The trial of the King in November 1792, and his execution in January of the following year, was denounced by the British as well Spanish government. British ministers, shocked by the expansionism and commercial protectionism of the French Republic, and tempted by the prospect of Caribbean acquisitions, were ready to encourage counter-revolution in the Caribbean as well as Europe. The Republican decision to declare war on Britain and Spain in January and March 1793 was seen in part as a riposte to British and Spanish collusion with counter-revolution and colonial revolt.

When Du Buc arrived in London in early January he found that the royalist leaders lacked the resources to mount an independent

expedition to the Antilles to regain the French colonies. The Princes had no funds for such ventures; indeed they were borrowing money themselves from de Curt, the wealthy planter who had represented Guadeloupe. The royalist commanders sought without success to extract a loan or supplies from the British government. Du Buc proceeded to negotiate directly with the British government, which itself found colonial royalists easier to deal with than prickly French ultras. As a historian of Martinique puts it: 'The chevalier Du Buc had inherited from his father that logical and realistic mind which had been the admiration of the Abbé Raynal. Together with MM. de Curt, de Clairefontaine, de Perpigna, de Charmilly and Malouet, he undertook negotiations based on the new situation and soon concluded an arrangement with the Ministers of George III whose execution would, he hoped, "satisfy all interests".'[51] The negotiating team was thus representative of the planters of Martinique (Du Buc and Perpigna), Guadeloupe (de Curt and Clairefontaine), St Domingue (Vernault de Charmilly, a former *léopardin*), and the Massiac Club (Malouet). The agreement formally signed with the British government on February 19th 1793 – the Republic had declared war on Britain on January 31st – placed the French Windward Islands 'into the possession and under the authority of His Britannic Majesty'. Britain undertook to restore them to France 'in the case that at the end of the present war, any of the princes of the French branch of the House of Bourbon (to the exclusion of Philippe Egalité and his race) regain the throne'.[52] So far as St Domingue was concerned no such royalist qualification was added. British possession was to continue until 'the allied powers' determined ultimate sovereignty over the colony; the final form of this agreement on St Domingue was not reached until April. These agreements, or propositions, were to be ratified by the colonial assemblies when circumstances permitted.

The invitation issued by the leading French colonists in London seemed to promise Britain easy and substantial gains as well as greater security for its own West Indian colonies. Long before the outbreak of hostilities British ministers were drawing up plans for new acquisitions in the Americas. The richest islands in the New World could be acquired, it seemed, with little trouble or expense; it was expected that British occupations would pay for themselves, through revenues and commerce, as had happened in 1757–63. St Domingue had the added interest that it had become a major supplier of cotton to Britain's manufacturers. While French colonial defences were undermined by disintegration and defection the British would be able to count on the support of the planters and their militias. Moreover there were plans for assembling auxiliary regiments of French émigré planters. In February

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1793 there were said to be 2,000 colonial émigrés then serving with the Princes in Germany and eager to return to the Antilles. Montalembert, Bouillé and even Dumouriez were canvassed as possible commanders for these French forces. As hostilities between Britain and France commenced the British government laid plans for an expeditionary force to be sent to the Caribbean to capture the French islands; profitable in itself, the capture of the French colonies would also, it was hoped, place Britain in a good position to exploit the weakness of Spain, now its nominal ally. For their part the Spanish authorities intended themselves to have a hand in deciding the future of St Domingue.[53]

The revolutionary threat to the Bourbons had led to a state of undeclared war between French St Domingue and Spanish Santo Domingo even before the formal declaration of hostilities in March 1793. The military commander on Santo Domingo, the Marquis de Hermonas, was quite prepared to help black soldiers who were fighting the French Republicans. The rebel columns had been pushed back by a Republican offensive in the last months of 1792 and were desperately short of the supplies needed to maintain the struggle. While Candy, the mulatto leader of a maroon community, came to terms with the French the principal black commanders accepted supplies from Spain and eventually received commissions in July 1793. Jean François and Biassou, commanding several thousand soldiers each, became lieutenant-generals in the army of the Spanish King. One of the most effective black commanders was Toussaint Bréda, or Louverture, an *affranchi* who had joined the rebels shortly after the uprising of August 1791. A man of about forty-six years of age with knowledge of medicine and administration, he had become secretary and aide-de-camp to Biassou; he now commanded his own force of about six hundred men. In a separate negotiation Toussaint obtained a commission as a colonel. The Spanish had acquired invaluable auxiliaries and an influence over a potentially dangerous band of ex-slaves. Spanish officers and French royalists were assigned to advise the black troops. While the Spanish authorities were happy to recognise the freedom of black soldiers, they gave their new recruits strict instructions to respect the regime of slave subordination.[54]

Four wearing years of revolution had unravelled the complex skein of the French colonial regime. Royal power, the *exclusif*, the racial caste hierarchy had all disintegrated. Beginning in August 1791 the slaves in St Domingue had begun openly to contest their subjection. The intensity of the factional conflicts between Patriots and monarchists, whites and

mulattos, creole autonomists and partisans of the *exclusif* had gravely weakened the slave order. The tenacity of the rebels and the sheer size, concentration and numerical preponderance of the slave population had made the revolt impossible to defeat. In the smaller Iles du Vent the free *gens de couleurs* had been much weaker and the different factions had not resorted to the arming of slaves; knowledge of what had happened in St Domingue probably contributed to the avoidance of bloodshed in the tussles between royalists and Republicans.

The slave risings in St Domingue were uneven in extent and duration, but the mass of blacks, whether in open revolt or not, sensed a new power. Like the first tremors of an earthquake the slave revolt had shaken every colonial institution, levelling a few structures but also weakening those which remained standing. The argument about mulatto rights had been transformed by the sight of smoke rising from burnt-out plantation buildings and cane fields. The autonomist inclinations of the French planters, and their willingness to appeal for help to Britain and Spain, had also been encouraged by the spectre of slave revolt. These two colonial slave powers seemed likely to be more consistent and effective defenders of slavery than the representatives of a metropolis mired in revolutionary turmoil. British and Spanish planters and officials on the spot had not waited for instructions before conspiring with French royalists.

As of the spring of 1793 all contenders for power in the French Caribbean were still committed to the defence of slavery: this was true of the British, despite the abolitionist protestations of Pitt and Wilberforce; of the Spanish, despite their bold alliance with black rebels; of the French Republicans, despite the fact that they were led by self-styled 'Friends of the Blacks'; of the colonial Patriots, despite their vaunted detestation of tyranny; of the free people of colour, despite the calls of racial solidarity; of the black generals, despite their resistance to their own enslavement.

In peacetime conditions it might just have been possible to reconstruct French colonial slavery without a monarch and without racial privilege. But could it be done with the black rebels still undefeated and in wartime conditions? In the early months of 1793 the Republican order in the French colonies appeared, against the odds, to have staved off complete disintegration. It had brought together a metropolitan-led alliance of *petits blancs* and free people of colour though not yet restored trade flows. The prospect of war probably helped the Republican authorities in the short run, feeding colonial patriotism and nourishing justified suspicion of the planters' plots. But British naval power meant blockades and the virtual certainty of invasion. Spain, with its new black allies, was poised in St Domingue to

advance across the border. Sapped from
slave rebellion it seemed that only a mirac

Notes

1. Pierre Pluchon, 'Les Révolutions à l'Améri
Antilles et de la Guyanne, Paris 1982, pp. 265–328,
had risen from 136 million *livres* in 1776 to 217.5 r
official valuations. Colonial trade was valued at n
twice as high as those obtained by planters selling
between the two represented mercantile costs and pr
sugar refining and the like. Gross mercantile profit
stemming from near-monopolistic privileges, gave th
motive to see the *exclusif* ended and the metropoli
defending it. French re-exports of Antillean produc
that 72 per cent of French colonial imports were re-
French exports to the Antilles and to Africa paid
leaving France to garner a huge surplus on its re-
'France', in C. Wilson and G. Parker, *An Intro*
Economic History, 1500–1800, London 1977,
Commerce Coloniale de la France à la Fin de l'Anc
740–53.

2. French involvement in the American war co
livres over the period 1776–84, with service pay
slightly larger than the monarchy's *total* revenues
these expenses was that of the Navy and colonies, v
27.9 million *livres*, of which 10.1 million came u
most historians stress that these expenditures bar
noting that they inflated the naval and colonial esta
clerks, contractors, financiers and merchants; while
they continued to make themselves felt well past th
this time about 23 *livres* exchanged for £1 ster
purchasing power of the *livre* in the 1770s was equ
see Jonathan Dull, *The French Navy and America*
xiv, 343–50.

3. Jacques Godechot, 'La France et les probl
Révolution', *Regards sur l'Époque Révolutionaire*
interests of the Bordeaux Parlement see William D
the End of the Old Regime, 1771–1790, London

4. William Doyle, *The Origins of the French*
69–95, 132–3.

5. Patrice Higonnet, *Class, Ideology, and th*
Revolution, Oxford 1981, pp. 44–5; extensive r
colonial trade and plantations is summarised in G
Nobility in the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge 19
development was the field, *par excellence*, of
merchants.

6. For St Domingue see the concise and w
Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occ
Oxford 1982, especially pp. 33–4; and Torcuato
Haiti, Buenos Aires 1984, pp. 21–55. For Marti
Française à la Martinique, Paris 1936, pp. 13–
Phillippe May, *Trois Siècles d'Histoire Antillaise*,

7. Antoine Barnave, *Introduction à la Révolu*

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defenders of slavery than the representatives of
n revolutionary turmoil. British and Spanish
the spot had not waited for instructions before
royalists.

1793 all contenders for power in the French
mmitted to the defence of slavery: this was true
te the abolitionist protestations of Pitt and
panish, despite their bold alliance with black
epublicans, despite the fact that they were led by
the Blacks'; of the colonial Patriots, despite their
tyranny; of the free people of colour, despite the
y; of the black generals, despite their resistance to

ditions it might just have been possible to
olonial slavery without a monarch and without
could it be done with the black rebels still
rtime conditions? In the early months of 1793 the
he French colonies appeared, against the odds, to
plete disintegration. It had brought together a
nce of *petits blancs* and free people of colour
red trade flows. The prospect of war probably
n authorities in the short run, feeding colonial
shing justified suspicion of the planters' plots. But
meant blockades and the virtual certainty of
its new black allies, was poised in St Domingue to

advance across the border. Sapped from within by planter treason and slave rebellion it seemed that only a miracle could save the Republicans.

Notes

1. Pierre Pluchon, 'Les Révolutions à l'Amérique', in P. Pluchon, ed., *Histoire des Antilles et de la Guyanne*, Paris 1982, pp. 265–328, p. 267. The value of colonial exports had risen from 136 million *livres* in 1776 to 217.5 million *livres* in 1789 according to the official valuations. Colonial trade was valued at metropolitan prices which were about twice as high as those obtained by planters selling their produce in the colonies: the gap between the two represented mercantile costs and profits, together with a small amount of sugar refining and the like. Gross mercantile profits in the region of 100 million *livres*, stemming from near-monopolistic privileges, gave the French Caribbean planters a strong motive to see the *exclusif* ended and the metropolis a correspondingly strong motive for defending it. French re-exports of Antillean produce in 1789 ran at 161 million *livres*, so that 72 per cent of French colonial imports were re-exported. Another striking fact is that French exports to the Antilles and to Africa paid for all imports from the Caribbean, leaving France to garner a huge surplus on its re-export trade. See Maurice Morineau, 'France', in C. Wilson and G. Parker, *An Introduction to the Sources in European Economic History, 1500–1800*, London 1977, pp. 174–5; and Jean Tarrade, *Le Commerce Coloniale de la France à la Fin de l'Ancien Régime*, Paris 1972, 2 vols, II, pp. 740–53.

2. French involvement in the American war cost the incredible sum, of 1,063 million *livres* over the period 1776–84, with service payments of 44 million in 1784, a sum slightly larger than the monarchy's *total* revenues in 1776. The ministry responsible for these expenses was that of the Navy and colonies, whose normal annual budget had been 27.9 million *livres*, of which 10.1 million came under the colonial department. While most historians stress that these expenditures bankrupted the regime it is also worth noting that they inflated the naval and colonial establishment, with its retinue of officers, clerks, contractors, financiers and merchants; while these interests did not act in concert they continued to make themselves felt well past the crisis of 1787–9, as we will see. At this time about 23 *livres* exchanged for £1 sterling; it has been estimated that the purchasing power of the *livre* in the 1770s was equivalent to the US$ of 1968. For all this see Jonathan Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence*, Princeton 1975, pp. xiv, 343–50.

3. Jacques Godechot, 'La France et les problèmes de l'Atlantique à la veille de la Révolution', *Regards sur l'Époque Révolutionaire*, Paris 1980, p. 80. For the colonial interests of the Bordeaux Parlement see William Doyle, *The Parlement of Bordeaux and the End of the Old Regime, 1771–1790*, London 1974, pp. 264–85.

4. William Doyle, *The Origins of the French Revolution*, Oxford 1980, pp. 43–52, 69–95, 132–3.

5. Patrice Higonnet, *Class, Ideology, and the Rights of Nobles during the French Revolution*, Oxford 1981, pp. 44–5; extensive noble involvement in the slave trade, colonial trade and plantations is summarised in Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 56–7, 92–101. Indeed colonial development was the field, *par excellence*, of collaboration between nobles and merchants.

6. For St Domingue see the concise and well-judged account in David Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793–8*, Oxford 1982, especially pp. 33–4; and Torcuato Di Tella, *La Rebelión de Esclavos de Haiti*, Buenos Aires 1984, pp. 21–55. For Martinique, Henry Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, Paris 1936, pp. 13–14 and Alfred Martineau and Louis Phillippe May, *Trois Siècles d'Histoire Antillaise*, Paris 1935, p. 90.

7. Antoine Barnave, *Introduction à la Révolution Française*, written in Paris in 1793,

quoted in Albert Soboul, *The French Revolution 1787–1799*, New York 1975, p. 51; see also Emmanuel Chill, *Power, Property and History: Joseph Barnave's Introduction to the French Revolution and Other Writings*, New York 1971, especially pp. 6–9.

8. Arthur Young, *Travels in France during the Years 1787–1788–1789*, I, pp. 104–5; Paul Bois, *Histoire de Nantes*, Paris 1977, p. 247. But the Nantes *cahiers* were mildly liberal and reformist rather than ultra-radical; see Robert Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 174–5.

9. Allan Forrest, *Society and Politics in Revolutionary Bordeaux*, Oxford 1975, p. 33.

10. For colonial proprietors in the Assembly see *Journal des Etats-Generaux*; Lehodey de Saultevreuil, XXXII, p. 159; quoted in M.B. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question, 1789–1791*, New York 1970, p. 2. For the French bourgeoisie on the eve of the Revolution see the discussion in Michele Vovelle, *La Chute de la Monarchie, 1787–1792*, Paris 1972, pp. 62–73; for Marxist assessments of recent debates on the social character of the Revolution see Gregor McLellan, *Marxism and the Methodologies of History*, London 1981, pp. 175–205, and George Comninel, 'The Political Context of the Popular Movement in the French Revolution', in Frederick Krantz, ed., *History from Below*, Montreal 1985, pp. 143–62.

11. Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, pp. 34–5, 405; J. Santoyant, *La Colonisation Française Pendant la Révolution, 1789–99*, Paris 1930, 2 vols, II, p. 425; Lémery, *La Révolution Française à Martinique*, pp. 41–2.

12. Yvan Debbasch, *Couleur et Liberté*, Paris 1967, pp. 82–3; François Girod, *La Vie Quotidienne de la Societé Creole: Saint Domingue au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris 1972, pp. 190–200. See also the contribution by Léo Elizabeth in D.W. Cohen and J.P. Greene, eds, *Neither Slave nor Free*, Baltimore 1972.

13. Jean Fouchard, *The Haitian Maroons: Liberty or Death*, New York 1981. Fouchard's information shows that slave escapes were common in the 1780s; but large-scale *maronnage* does not seem to have grown in consequence (see pp. 287–368), perhaps because the French military authorities achieved a high level of mobilisation in the colony during this decade as troops were withdrawn from North America. Individual runaways often led to *petits maronnages* or flight to the towns. Slaves practising the *petit maronnage* left the plantation but did not go far and often returned; since overseers and planters generally wanted their slaves back those who returned voluntarily, often after negotiation via some third party, might not be punished very harshly. The growth of the black population of the towns seems to have made it easier for runaways to hide in them. Fouchard's book celebrates in lyrical vein the spirit of resistance evident in large-scale *maronnage* and sometimes appears to discount *petit maronnage*; yet the latter would produce a layer of slaves with outside knowledge, experience and contacts, yet a continuing presence within the plantations, a combination that could, under the right conditions, lead to plantation revolts. Debien qualifies Fouchard's emphasis on the revolutionary significance of the maroons in St Domingue. See Gabriel Debien, *Les Esclaves aux Antilles françaises*, pp. 412–13, 424, 466–8. The Maniel maroons appear to have declined from a strength of 800 or so in the 1770s to some 133 in 1785 when they made a deal with the authorities. See Geggus, 'Slave Resistance Studies and the Saint Domingue Revolt', Florida International University, Winter 1983, p. 7.

14. Daniel P. Resnick, 'The *Société des Amis des Noir* and the Abolition of Slavery', *French Historical Studies*, vol. VII, no. 4, 1972, pp. 558–69.

15. See William Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530–1880*, Bloomington, Indiana 1980, pp. 132–52; and Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et Histoire au X Siècles des Lumières*, Paris 1971, pp. 151–60.

16. Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet, 'Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres, 1781', in A. Condorcet O'Connor and M.F. Arago, *Oeuvres de Condorcet*, Paris 1847, VII, pp. 61–140 (with Condorcet's postscript, pp. 137–40).

17. Serge Daget, 'A Model of the French Abolitionist Movement', in Bolt and Drescher, *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform*, pp. 64–79, especially pp. 66–7.

18. Eloise Ellery, *Brissot de Warville*, Boston 1915, pp. 182–215; Brissot's questioning of accumulated property as theft is developed in *Recherches Philosophiques*

sur le Droit de Propriété et sur le Vol (1780). For an i
Norman Hampson, *Will and Circumstance*, London 19
capitalism of this bourgeois spokesman is noted on pp

19. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of*
scope of the activities of the *Amis des Noirs* after th
Resnick, 'The *Societé des Amis des Noirs* and the Abol
Studies, vol. 7, no. 4, Fall 1972, pp. 529–43.

20. Gabriel Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Domingue*
Massiac, Paris 1953, pp. 60–7. Gouy d'Arsy, sometim
of considerable wealth, with estates in St Domingue v
Chaussinand-Nogaret (*French Nobility*, pp. 56–7). H
annual *income* of 3 million livres. His contribution to
was very great, with the Palais Royal becoming the ma
in Paris. While it is difficult to prove the role
revolutionary agitation in the colonies, it seems to ha
more generally see the unbalanced, but not totally mis
and the 'conspiracy theory of history', John Robison,
the Religions and Governments of Europe, London a

21. Quoted in C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins:*
Domingo Revolution, London 1980 (revised edn), p.

22. Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Domingue et la*

23. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, p. 3
see Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *Etre Patriote sous le*
pp. 107–36.

24. Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, pp. 3
Française pendant la Révolution, 1789–1799, Paris 1
Révolution Française à la Martinique, pp. 21–42.

25. Ottobah Cugoano, 'Reflexions sur la traite
EDHIS (Editions d'Histoire Social), *La Révolution Fr*
Paris 1968, 12 vols, X.

26. Michael L. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in*
Years, Princeton 1982, p. 202.

27. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, pp.
Domingue et la Révolution, pp. 187–9.

28. This racist jibe came from the pen of the pat
Paris and shows that it was not only colonial reacti
Club Massiac; c.f. Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Dom*
writer who compromised himself on this issue, th
Laclos (p. 135).

29. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, p.

30. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, p.

31. Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Mart*

32. Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolutio*
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men of colour – mulattoes and free Negroes – wo
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of the *Amis des Noirs* tended to oppose property qu
(for example, the Abbé Sièyes who invented the c
there were some democrats who did not symp
Loustalot).

33. Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Mar*

34. James, *The Black Jacobins*, pp. 73–4.
St Domingue, as in Philadelphia in the 1780s, had
took part in Ogé's revolt as well as *gens de coule*

rench Revolution 1787–1799, New York 1975, p. 51; see
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Writings, New York 1971, especially pp. 6–9.
s in France during the Years 1787–1788–1789, I, pp.
Nantes, Paris 1977, p. 247. But the Nantes *cahiers* were
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); quoted in M.B. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*,
), p. 2. For the French bourgeoisie on the eve of the
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nd George Comninel, 'The Political Context of the Popular
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ır and Revolution, pp. 34–5, 405; J. Santoyant, *La*
nt la Révolution, 1789–99, Paris 1930, 2 vols, II, p. 425;
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eur et Liberté, Paris 1967, pp. 82–3; François Girod, *La Vie*
reole: Saint Domingue au XVIII^e siècle, Paris 1972, pp.
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sur le Droit de Propriété et sur le Vol (1780). For an intellectual/biographical sketch see Norman Hampson, *Will and Circumstance*, London 1983, pp. 84–106, 171–92; the anti-capitalism of this bourgeois spokesman is noted on pp. 186–7.

19. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 97. For the limited scope of the activities of the *Amis des Noirs* after this early enthusiasm see Daniel P. Resnick, 'The *Societé des Amis des Noirs* and the Abolition of Slavery', *French Historical Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4, Fall 1972, pp. 529–43.

20. Gabriel Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Domingue et la Révolution, Essai sur le Club Massiac*, Paris 1953, pp. 60–7. Gouy d'Arsy, sometimes spelt d'Arcy, was himself a man of considerable wealth, with estates in St Domingue worth 3 million *livres* according to Chaussinand–Nogaret (*French Nobility*, pp. 56–7). However, the Duc d'Orléans had an annual *income* of 3 million livres. His contribution to destabilising the regime in 1787–90 was very great, with the Palais Royal becoming the main centre of revolutionary agitation in Paris. While it is difficult to prove the role of the Freemasons in promoting revolutionary agitation in the colonies, it seems to have been considerable. For their role more generally see the unbalanced, but not totally mistaken, classic of counter-revolution and the 'conspiracy theory of history', John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against All the Religions and Governments of Europe*, London and New York 1798.

21. Quoted in C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, London 1980 (revised edn), p. 60.

22. Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Domingue et la Révolution*, pp. 67–78.

23. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, p. 35. For similar scenes in Guadeloupe see Anne Pérotin–Dumon, *Etre Patriote sous les Tropiques*, Basse Terre 1985, pp. 107–36.

24. Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, pp. 34–5; J. Santoyant, *La Colonisation Française pendant la Révolution, 1789–1799*, Paris 1930, 2 vols, II, p. 425; Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, pp. 21–42.

25. Ottobah Cugoano, 'Reflexions sur la traite et l'esclavage' (1788), reprinted in EDHIS (Editions d'Histoire Social), *La Révolution Française et l'Abolition de l'Esclavage*, Paris 1968, 12 vols, X.

26. Michael L. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution: The First Years*, Princeton 1982, p. 202.

27. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, pp. 35–48; Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Domingue et la Révolution*, pp. 187–9.

28. This racist jibe came from the pen of the patriot Loustalot in *Les Révolutions de Paris* and shows that it was not only colonial reactionaries who played the game of the Club Massiac; c.f. Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Domingue et la Révolution*, p. 84. Another writer who compromised himself on this issue, though less blatantly, was Choderlos Laclos (p. 135).

29. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, p. 51.

30. Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, p. 53.

31. Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, pp. 80–1.

32. Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution*, London 1962, p. 145. Lefebvre subsequently observes: 'The universalist claims of the Declaration of Rights indicated that men of colour – mulattoes and free Negroes – would lay claim to its benefits' (p. 172). Since property qualifications for the right to vote, with even stiffer qualifications for the right to be a representative, had already been accepted it was easier to overlook the civic rights of slaves. In fact some three million French men, and all women, were excluded from the franchise (c.f. Soboul, *The French Revolution, 1787–1799*, p. 180). Supporters of the *Amis des Noirs* tended to oppose property qualifications, but there were exceptions (for example, the Abbé Sièyes who invented the concept of 'active citizenship'), just as there were some democrats who did not sympathise with the *Amis* (for instance, Loustalot).

33. Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, pp. 67–86.

34. James, *The Black Jacobins*, pp. 73–4. Some of the Masonic Lodges in St Domingue, as in Philadelphia in the 1780s, had a racially mixed membership; whites took part in Ogé's revolt as well as *gens de couleur*. Ogé opposed a suggestion by a co-

conspirator, Chavannes, to invite slave support. See Jean-Philippe Garron-Coulon, *Rapport sur les troubles de Saint Domingue*, Paris 1797, vol. II, pp. 44–73.

35. Debien, *Les Colons de Saint Domingue et la Révolution*, pp. 210–34; Saintoyant, *La Colonisation Française pendant la Révolution*, II, pp. 22–32.

36. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution*, p. 82.

37. Quoted in Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, p. 82.

38. Debien, *Les Colons de Saint-Domingue et la Révolution*, pp. 262–90; Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, pp. 77–97.

39. James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 75. Kennedy notes: 'Slavery was an economic issue; mulatto franchise was basically an humanitarian one. The provincial Jacobins could indulge their humanitarian proclivities and support this cause with little appparent danger to their pocket books or to those of their fellow townsmen' (*The Jacobin Clubs*, p. 205). The counter-position here of economic and humanitarian issues is too neat, since, as suggested above, the assertion of metropolitan authority in the colonies had economic advantages too, so far as maritime interests were concerned. Not only did 'humanitarianism' usefully embellish defence of the *exclusif* it also promised to secure allies for this, namely the mulattos themselves.

40. James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 80.

41. James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 81. As James himself comments: 'Slavery . . . had now corrupted the French bourgeoisie in the first flush of its political inheritance.' Debien entitles this section of his monograph: 'Le redressement – Avec Barnave vers le Roi (16 mai – octobre 1791)'. See also Vovelle, *La Chute de la Monarchie*, pp. 163–7. The triumvirate, to appease their consciences or their supporters, endorsed a decree suppressing the remnants of slavery in France a few days after their reversal on mulatto rights.

42. The traditional account is given in Fouchard, *The Haitian Maroons*, pp. 340–41, 358. Geggus cites evidence for a meeting which planned the uprising and concedes that a voodoo ceremony is quite plausible. He speculates that the uprising may have benefited from a royalist manoeuvre which backfired, though curiously concludes that, if true, 'the autonomy of the slave insurrection is considerably diminished' (*Slavery, War and Revolution*, p. 40). Fouchard also accepts that royalist intrigues to stimulate slave unrest were abroad at this time (p. 98), though in the end the slaves acted for themselves.

43. The letter to the Governor dated September 4th is cited in Pierre Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture, de l'esclavage au pouvoir*, Paris 1979, p. 26. The report on the killing of Boukman is cited at length in Fouchard, *The Haitian Maroons*, pp. 342–3. The French official report on the revolt estimated that 12,000–15,000 slaves were involved by the end of August, Garran-Coulon, *Rapport sur les Troubles de Saint Domingue*, II, p. 214.

44. Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, pp. 52–3. Cadusch, a colonel of the *maréchaussée*, had helped to promote a 'concordat' between white and mulatto proprietors and was later to play a major part in engineering the British invasion. At this time his views were not yet shared by most planters.

45. James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 106. Biassou and Jean François, though not Toussaint, were later involved as participants in a fairly active slave trade, thus richly meriting James's scorn. See David Geggus,'From His Most Catholic Majesty to the Godless Republique: The Volte Face of Toussaint Louverture and the Ending of Slavery in Saint Domingue', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre Mer*, no. 241, 1978, pp. 481–99, p. 490.

46. Carolyn Fick, 'Black Peasants and Soldiers in the Saint Domingue Revolution', in Fredrick Krantz, *History From Below*, pp. 243–61, on pp. 245–6. This author reports that the rebel-held area was known to the blacks as the Kingdom of Platons.

47. Kennedy, *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution*, p. 208.

48. For St Domingue at this period see Robert Stein, *Léger Felicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic*, Madison 1985, pp. 39–62; Di Tella, *La Rebelión de Esclavos de Haiti*, p. 83; and Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, pp. 46–67.

49. Quoted in Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, pp. 186–7.

50. Pérotin-Dumon, *Etre Patriote sous les Tropiques*, pp. 161–76.

51. Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, p. evident sympathy for those French planters who collaborated it is interesting to note that he became the Vichy government' the agreements concluded see Lémery, *La Révolution Fran* and Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, pp. 395–99.

52. Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, p. 100.

53. Saintoyant, *La Colonisation Française pendant la*

54. José L. Franco, *Historia de la Revolución de Haiti*,

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volution Française à la Martinique, pp. 186–7.
riote sous les Tropiques, pp. 161–76.

51. Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, p. 225. In the light of the author's evident sympathy for those French planters who collaborated with the British to save slavery it is interesting to note that he became the Vichy government's first Minister of Colonies. For the agreements concluded see Lémery, *La Révolution Française à la Martinique*, p. 226, and Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, pp. 395–99.
52. Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution*, p. 100.
53. Saintoyant, *La Colonisation Française pendant la Révolution*, pp. 121–8.
54. José L. Franco, *Historia de la Revolución de Haiti*, Havana 1966, pp. 229, 238–4.