

to use a few Negroes from our own colony whose loyalty is beyond doubt to go to the brigand camps and try not only to assist them in their enterprise, but also to persuade them and reassure them of the promise of freedom and settlement under his rule that His Majesty is making them.

(Archivo General de Simancas, Guerra Moderna 7161, Pedro de Acuña to Joaquín García y Moreno, 22 Feb. and 26 Mar. 1793)

## 48) The Emancipation Proclamation of 29 August 1793

*After France declared war on England and Spain early in 1793, Saint Domingue faced imminent invasion. Most of the French troops sent to the colony had already died of tropical fevers. The Civil Commissioners tried to recruit the slave insurgents with offers of freedom, but most preferred to join the Spanish instead. Pretending to have government approval, Sonthonax then took the dramatic step of freeing all slaves in the North Province. Sonthonax's partner Polverel was shocked, although he had just issued his own, less radical emancipation proclamation in the West Province. The desperate military/political situation, Sonthonax's radical past, and growing support for emancipation in France, all contributed to this turning point. The freedom offered the slaves, however, was only a revenue-sharing quasi-serfdom that kept most of them attached to the plantations and denied their own aspirations to become independent small farmers.*

Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. There you have it, citizens: the Gospel of France. It is high time it was proclaimed in all the departments of the republic. Sent to Saint Domingue by the Nation as civil commissioners, our mission was to ensure the enactment of the law of April 4, to fully enforce it, and to gradually prepare without upheaval the general emancipation of the slaves.<sup>6</sup> . . . The French Republic wants all men without distinction of color to be free and equal. Kings are only happy amidst slaves. . . . Do not believe, however, that the liberty that you are going to enjoy is a state of sloth and idleness. In France, everyone is free and everyone works. . . . After becoming citizens by the will of the French nation, you must also become zealous observers of its laws, and you shall defend the interests of the Republic against kings . . . out of gratitude

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6. The law of 4 April 1792 ended discrimination against free nonwhites. Sonthonax's pretense of having orders to prepare the ground for emancipation confirmed for some their fear he had brought secret overtures from the abolitionist Brissot.

for the beneficence it has showered on you. . . . Have the courage to want to be a people, and soon you will equal the nations of Europe. . . .

Article 1: The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen will be printed, published and posted everywhere necessary by the municipal authorities in the towns and villages and by military commanders in the camps and posts.

Article 2: All Negroes and people of mixed blood currently enslaved are declared free and will enjoy all rights pertaining to French citizenship. They will, however, be subject to a regimen described in the following articles. . . .

Article 9: Slaves currently attached to the plantations of their former masters will be obliged to remain there and to work the land. . . .

Article 11: Former agricultural slaves will be hired for one year, during which time they will not be able to change plantations without the permission of a magistrate. . . .

Article 12: The revenue of each plantation will be shared into three equal portions after the deduction of taxes on the entirety.<sup>7</sup> A third will be attached to ownership of the land and will go to the proprietor. He will have use of another third for running costs. The remaining third shall be divided between the cultivators. . . .

Articles 14-18: The slave drivers, who will henceforth be called foremen, will have three shares in the third of the revenue going to the cultivators. . . . The other cultivators aged fifteen and above will have one share. Women aged fifteen and above will have two-thirds of a share. Between the ages of ten and fifteen, children of both sexes will receive a half-share.

Article 23: The crops will be shared out at each harvest between the owner and the cultivator either in kind or in cash at the market rate. . . .

Article 24: In each district there will be a justice of the peace and assessors, whose job will be to adjudicate in disputes between the owner and cultivators, and between cultivators. . . . They will ensure that the cultivators are taken care of when sick, that all do an equal share of the work, and they will keep order in the workforces.

Article 27: Punishment by whipping is absolutely forbidden and will be replaced, for problems of disobedience, by one to three days in the stocks, as necessary. The strongest punishment will be the loss of a part or the entirety of the salary. It will be imposed by the justice of the peace and assessors. . . .

Article 29: Cultivators cannot be made to work on Sundays. They will have two hours per day to work on their provision grounds. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Article 31: Women will not work in the field after their seventh month of pregnancy and will not return to work before two months after giving birth. . . .

7. As the tax rate was 25 percent, the workers actually received one-quarter of the revenues.

8. Slaves had been expected largely to feed themselves, raising food on small plots of land they were given.

Article 33: Two weeks after the promulgation of this proclamation all men who do not own land, are not soldiers, and are not attached to agriculture or employed in domestic service, and who are found wandering will be arrested and put in prison. . . .

(Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, *Proclamation au nom de la République* [Cap Français, 1793], 1–6)

## 49) The Black Auxiliaries of Carlos IV

*Although the Spanish empire had a long history of using black militia and of making treaties with maroons, recruiting the men who had devastated northern Saint Domingue was a controversial experiment. It was particularly fraught, because the Spanish simultaneously appealed to French planters willing to take an oath of loyalty, and many insurgents were their former slaves. Insurgent leaders, like Biassou's adjutant Bellair, learned early on to use the church and king rhetoric favored by conservative Spanish but, once recruited, they proved independent, demanding, and assertive. Spanish commanders like Armona, who was a Cuban planter, were irritated by their familiarity but feared offending them.*

### ***(a) A Spanish officer's orders to his commanders, 15 August 1793***

You should consider our black auxiliaries as skirmishers and not as line-of-battle troops. They are good for laying waste the enemy's countryside, burning and robbing, and for firing at them from behind trees and rocks and from the undergrowth, and that is the type of warfare we have to wage at the moment, so as to force our enemy to surrender by spreading hunger, anarchy, confusion, and disorder. However, you need to stress that they should not kill, burn, or rob on the plantations belonging to those who have joined our side and wish to recognize our king. Our role is to back up our allies and supply them with arms and munitions (albeit reluctantly, because without these things we cannot make war and defeat the enemy).

(Antonio del Monte y Tejada, *Historia de Santo Domingo* [Santo Domingo, 1892], 4:83)

### ***(b) An insurgent black officer addresses the Spanish governor***

For two years we fought without receiving any help and experienced all the fatigue and misery that anyone could ever imagine. . . . We withdrew into a confined space in the mountains determined to die rather than betray our holy