Jane Landers

4 Black Rebels and Royal Auxiliaries Before, During, and After the French Revolution

The French Revolution launched the so-called Age of Revolutions, and a rich and ever-growing literature examines the alterations in political boundaries or respatialization that resulted. One of the most dramatic of the Atlantic revolutions, the first successful slave revolt in the western hemisphere erupted in 1791 on the divided island known by the French as Saint-Domingue and by the Spanish as Santo Domingo. After bloody years of fighting, France claimed the whole in 1795. This chapter examines how enslaved rebels on that island shaped the changing geographic and political spaces they inhabited before, during, and after that revolution.[1]

Scholars of this world-changing event base much of their research on French and, to a lesser extent, on English sources, thus focusing their perspectives on the last phases of the revolt, but Spain first claimed the island they called Española in the fifteenth century and held two-thirds of it until the nineteenth century. Spain's centuries-long occupation of Española generated extensive, but underutilized, documentary and material evidence that I deploy in this chapter.

Africans, free and enslaved, formed part of the earliest Spanish settlements on Española, and the enslaved who fled bondage found refuge in the island's rugged hinterlands. These Maroons controlled the island's vast interior for more than three centuries, as Europeans competed to control the northern and southern coasts.[2] As early as 1503, Española's Spanish governor, Nicolás de Ovando, complained that runaway slaves could not be retrieved from the Bahoruco Mountains of the interior, and he charged that they were teaching

1 I would like to thank organizers Megan Maruschke, Matthias Middell, Julia Stählin and the Collaborative Research Centre 1199 of Leipzig University for inviting me to participate in the "French Revolution as a Moment of Respatialization" conference. An earlier version of this chapter appeared in J. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

2 J. Landers, "The Central African Presence in Spanish Maroon Societies", in: L.M. Heywood (ed.), *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 227–241.

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the Native Taíno Indians "bad customs".[3] In fact, these two groups made common cause against their oppression at the hands of the Spaniards. Disease, war, and overwork largely decimated the Indigenous populations of Española, and Spaniards introduced African slaves to do the hard work the thinned Indigenous populations could not.[4] In 1519, a number of these enslaved Africans joined the forces of the Taíno chief, Enriquillo, in a fierce and protracted war against the Spaniards. Although Enriquillo eventually signed a peace treaty with the Spaniards and resumed his life among them, the African rebels had no interest in returning to the hard labour of sugar and remained in their Bahoruco redoubts.[5]

With Enriquillo's war ostensibly ended, despite their fears and tenuous control, Española's planters demanded ever more slaves, and by mid-sixteenth century one report estimated the island's black population at 25,000–30,000, the white population at only 1,200, and the Maroon population at 2,000–3,000.[6] It was a demographic moment in which a Maroon victory seemed possible and in the 1540s a series of great Maroon leaders came down from the Bahoruco Mountains to wage what Spaniards called the "Maroon Wars". Famous warriors, such as Diego Guzman, Diego Ocampo, Juan Vaquero, and Lemba, led their Maroon bands in attacks on Spanish haciendas and sugar *ingenios* (factories) and generally contained Spaniards to the capital city of Santo Domingo on the southern coast.[7]

As Spaniards struggled to contain Maroon activity in the interior mountains, they faced additional challenges along Española's northern coast, where escaped slaves found foreign corsairs eager to trade for their turtle meat, cattle

3 Governor Ovando to the Crown, *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de ultramar* V, Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1882–1932, pp. 43–45.

4 For the most accurate research on early African imports into Española, see D. Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

5 J. Landers, "Central African Presence"; E. Woodruff Stone, "America's First Slave Revolt: Indians and African Slaves in Española, 1500–1534", *Ethnohistory* 60 (2013) 2, pp. 195–217; I. Altman, "The Revolt of Enriquillo and the Historiography of Early Spanish America", *The Americas* 63 (2007) 4, pp. 587–614.

6 Alonso de Castro to the Council of the Indies, 26 March 1542, in: J.L. Sáez, *La Iglesia y el negro esclavo en Santo Domingo: Una historia de tres siglos*, Santo Domingo: Patronato de la Ciudad Colonial de Santo Domingo, 1994, pp. 273–274. Many Spaniards had departed the island seeking quicker fortunes in the fabled mines of New Spain and Peru.

7 L. Guitar, "Boiling It Down: Slavery on the First Commercial Sugarcane Ingenios in the Americas (Hispaniola, 1530–45)", in: J. Landers and B.M. Robinson (eds.), *Slaves, Subjects and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006, pp. 39–82.

hides, tobacco, and other products.[8] Spanish governors were determined to eradicate both threats and mounted expeditions against the Maroons and their French and English customers on the offshore island of Tortuga.[9] Finally, in 1605 and 1606, in a move the Spaniards referred to as "the devastations", Governor Antonio de Osorio removed all Spanish subjects closer to the southern capital, thus leaving the northern coast open to occupation by French buccaneers.[10]

In 1679, the Treaty of Ryswick finally granted France the western third of Española. French planters soon established what became a flourishing, as well as destructive, sugar regime in Saint-Domingue. More than half of the slaves sweating in their cane fields were Central Africans, and some began escaping across the new international border to nearby Spanish territory. Some of the fugitives undoubtedly found refuge among the long-established Maroon communities of the Bahoruco Mountains. Others, however, claimed religious sanctuary in Spanish Santo Domingo. Following earlier precedents, in 1679 the Spaniards established the refugees in a satellite town of their own, San Lorenzo de los Negros de Mina, across the Ozama River from the Spanish capital. There they were supposed to become good Catholic subjects. Although parish registers designate most of the residents of San Lorenzo as either Mina, Bran, or Arará, Congos also lived at San Lorenzo, and one, García Congo, served as the sergeant of the town's newly established militia, along with a captain of the Bran nation and a Mina lieutenant.[11]

By the mid eighteenth century, French Saint-Domingue had become the "Pearl of the Antilles" and France's most lucrative colony. Over 400,000 enslaved Africans laboured on the island's plantations, producing 40 per cent of the Atlantic world's sugar, 50 per cent of its coffee, and 40 per cent of France's overseas trade.[12] David Geggus's careful study of plantation records from the north coast found that 60 per cent of the slaves were designated as Congos, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database confirms that most of the imported

8 The corsairs made the offshore island of Tortuga a stronghold. K.E. Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas, 1500–1750*, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998, pp. 97–102.

9 C.E. Deive, *Los guerrilleros negros: Esclavos fugitivos y cimarrones en Santo Domingo*, Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1989, pp. 64–66.

10 C.E. Deive, *Tangomangos: Contrabando y Piratería en Santo Domingo, 1522–1606*, Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1996, pp. 207–217.

11 J. Landers, "Central African Presence". The militiamen of San Lorenzo all served as witnesses at the marriage of free blacks, Simon and Juana, on 31 May 1682, Archivo General de la Arquidiócesis de Santo Domingo, Matrimoniales (marriage register), 1674–1719.

12 D.P. Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793–1798*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, p. 6.

slaves were Central Africans.[13] John Thornton argues that at least some of them may have had military training that they could employ in their subsequent American battles.[14]

The captives leaving Luanda were destined for the massive sugar fields of Española's northern coast to labour in a crop and an environment with which they were unfamiliar. Those profitable sugar plantations hovered above a coastal shelf on which the French built the luxurious city of Le Cap Français. This was a dramatically different space inhabited by at least some of the more "privileged" of the enslaved. On Sundays and feast days, the more acculturated, and trusted, house slaves, overseers, coachmen, and sugar masters often descended from the sugar plantations to the bustling city below to awaiting markets and taverns. There they witnessed newly imported Africans being unloaded from slave ships that crowded the harbour, like the Marie Séraphique, which unloaded hundreds of Angolans to be bought by awaiting planters.[15]

Some of the newly imported slaves quickly fled to join earlier fugitives in the rugged hinterlands where they joined long-lived Maroon communities. Spanish officials in Santo Domingo feared the influx of African *bozales* (unacculturated Africans) and Spanish governors sent out regular military patrols to police the countryside and, when they actually captured escaped slaves, they took them into Santo Domingo for interrogation. One group of 13 men questioned in 1770 included 6 men who identified themselves as Congo, Congo Mondongo, or Mondongo. Bucú, who could speak neither Spanish nor French, must have communicated through an African interpreter. One man was unable to say how long he had been on the run but reported that as soon as he got off the slave ship he ran for the Spanish side – which seems to suggest that (as in the Florida example about which I have written earlier) captives quickly learned to read the geopolitics of their day. Several other captured Congo men had already been branded by their French owners and were able to give some

13 D.P. Geggus, "The Demographic Composition of the French Caribbean Slave Trade", in: P. Boucher (ed.), *Proceedings of the Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* 13/14 (1990), pp. 14–30; Voyages: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/ (accessed 12 February 2019).

14 D.P. Geggus, "On the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Slave Runaways in Saint Domingue in the year 1790", *Slavery and Abolition* 6 (1985) 3, pp. 112–128; J.K. Thornton, "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution", *The Journal of Caribbean History* 25 (1991) 1/2, pp. 58–80.

15 La Marie Séraphique was a well-documented and artistically rendered slave ship from Nantes that unloaded 340 slaves from Angola at Cap Français in 1772. Watercolour by unknown artist, in Musée du Chateau des Ducs de Bretagne, Nantes, France. Published in: E.D.C. Campbell and K.S. Rice (eds.), *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991, plate 6, p. xv.

information about their Christian names, those of the owners, and the names of the sugar estates from which they had escaped. Several reported they had been fugitives for up to four years before being captured on the Spanish side.[16]

Meanwhile, other Africans left behind on French sugar plantations ran to form Maroon communities in the mountains of the French interior. Jean Fouchard identifies a number of them in his study of runaway advertisements in Le Cap's French newspaper. Several who were later key figures in the slave revolt were among them, including the famed Mackandal and Jean-François.[17] Others remained in place for the time being or engaged in *petit marronage* (running away for a short period) until the slave revolt that led to the creation of the first black republic in the hemisphere began on 14 August 1791.

The revolt began when 200 *commandeurs* (commanders) from 100 nearby estates met at the Lenormand de Mézy plantation on Saint-Domingue's northern plain. Saint-Domingue's French planters did not think it unusual: they customarily permitted gatherings of trusted slaves on Sunday for feasts and drumming. This time, however, the slaves met not to dine together but to plan an uprising that would change history. Presiding at that gathering was Boukman Dutty, the allegedly colossal slave driver/coachman for the Clément estate, who some thought to have been possibly a Muslim and/or a Vodou priest.[18] Fragmentary accounts of the meeting state that a "mulatto or quadroon" read an announcement of amelioration legislation passed by the French king and the National Assembly in Paris, after which the assembled slave leaders debated whether to wait for expected French troops or take independent action.[19] This was not the first or the last political debate the rebels would have among themselves, and both political and geographical positions shifted frequently with the tides of revolution and war.

On 22 August, at the place called Bois Caïman (the Forest of the Crocodile), on the Choiseul plantation in Petite-Anse, the plotters met again. After

16 Landers, "Central African Presence". The men who identified as Congo were Bucú, Bautista, Bautista Fransua, and Agustin. Andres called himself Congo Mondongo, and Antonio identified simply as Mondongo. Interrogation by royal notary Francisco Rendon Sarmiento and Don Juan Tomati, 2 July 1770, Santo Domingo, 1101, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Seville.

17 J. Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté* [The Haitian Maroons: Liberty or Death], A. Faulkner Watts (trans.), New York: Edward W. Blyden Press, 1981.

18 D.P. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, p. 84; C.E. Fick, "The Saint-Domingue Slave Insurrection of 1791: A Socio-Political and Cultural Analysis", *The Journal of Caribbean History* 25 (1991) 1/2, pp. 1–40.

19 L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press, 2005, ch. 4.

sacrificing a black pig and drinking its blood, the participants took snatches of its hair to insert in protective amulets, swore a sacred oath, and Boukman launched the full-blown revolt. Among the other slave leaders attending that eventful ceremony were Georges Biassou, Jeannot Bullet, and Jean-François Papillon. Toussaint L'Ouverture, already a freeman, waited at the Bréda plantation to see what would transpire.[20] Within hours, several thousand risen slaves attacked surprised and outnumbered whites, set fire to their great houses and the cane fields, and smashed the sugar refining equipment and tools associated with their brutal labour. Soon, more than 1,000 plantations across the northern plain were reduced to ashes.[21]

From Le Cap, the French Governor General Philibert Blancheland frantically requested troops and assistance from his Spanish counterpart across the border. Governor and Captain General Joaquín García responded that Spain was required to remain neutral, but fearing the rebellion would spill over the illusory border, the Spanish governor also requested military aid from Spain.[22] Frightened refugees from the chaos on the French side soon began appearing at the Spanish city of Bayajá (Fort Dauphin to the French), requesting asylum, which Governor García granted.[23] Meanwhile, despite the official policy of neutrality, Spanish colonists and soldiers alike routinely traded guns and supplies to the rebels across the line.[24] John Garrigus has traced the trade routes that long connected Santo Domingo and Le Cap through which the rebels acquired

20 After carefully analysing the main primary accounts, David Geggus has shown that scholars have mistakenly collapsed two meetings into one: the famous Bois Caïman ceremony took place on 22 August 1791. D. Geggus, "The Bois Caïman Ceremony", *The Journal of Caribbean History* 25 (1191) 1/2, pp. 41–57. For a detailed discussion of contemporary ritual practices performed at nighttime gatherings, see G. Deben, "Assemblées nocturnes d'esclaves a Saint-Domingue (La Marmelade, 1786)" [Night-Time Meetings in Saint-Domingue (La Marmelade, 1786)], J. Garrigus (trans.), *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 44 (1972) 208, pp. 273–284, https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/1205/2016/02/voodoo.pdf (accessed 12 February 2019).

21 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 94–97.

22 Joaquín García to Governor General of Guarico, 31 August 1791, AGI, Santo Domingo, p. 954. Blanchelande also requested aid from Havana's Captain General Luis de las Casas, who, much later, did send some troops.

23 Letters from French refugees from San Luis de Jeremias, requesting sanctuary and lands in Cuba, 1 November 1791. Asuntos Politicos, Leg. 4, N. 35, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC).

24 D.P. Geggus, "The Arming of Slaves in the Haitian Revolution", in: C. Brown and P. Morgan (eds.), *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 209–232.

badly needed guns and supplies as well as apparently spoiled food.[25] This contraband trade effectively kept the struggling slave rebellion afloat.

The earliest phase of the revolt in the north was, by all accounts, the bloodiest: confusion and terror reigned as various rebel bands fought for territory, supplies, and supremacy. The insurgents established a series of camps in Grand-Rivière, south-east of Le Cap, and a week after the fires started, 10,000 slaves were said to have formed into "three armies, of whom seven or eight hundred are on horseback and tolerably well-armed". If poorly armed, many slaves seemed animated by the belief that pig hairs and other charms would protect them. Only weeks after the revolt began, French officials executed a captured rebel who jeered at and mocked his captors. One soldier reported that the man "gave the signal himself and met death without fear or complaint". Hidden in the dead man's clothing were "pamphlets printed in France, filled with commonplaces about the Rights of Man and the Sacred Revolution". Around his neck he wore a "sack full of hair, herbs, and bits of bone".[26] Both might have been considered protective amulets. This syncretism of French political ideology and African *gris-gris* (a protective amulet) was emblematic of the mixed messages and contradictory positions of the insurgents over the next years.[27]

One of the early leaders of the revolt was Georges Biassou, a sugar master who attended the gathering at Bois Caïman and under whom Toussaint eventually served. Biassou described Toussaint as "one of my confederates [. . .] in whom I have total confidence" and as a "man who knows well his God and his religion and a man of the Church living on the Bréda plantation above Guarico (the Spanish name for Le Cap)".[28] Their friendship may have been formed through their connections to the Fathers of Charity in Le Cap, where Biassou's mother, Diana, worked in one of their two hospitals. David Geggus and Madison Smartt Bell believe Biassou was probably a slave driver on the Fathers' sugar plantation near Haut de Cap, where his father, Carlos, may have

25 J. Garrigus, "'Le secret qui règne parmi les nègres': Revisiting the Testimony of Makandal and his 'Accomplices', 1757–1758", workshop paper for "Les resistances à l'esclavage dans le monde atlantique français à l'ère des Révolutions", 3–4 May 2013, Montreal.

26 Fick, "The Slave Insurrection of 1791", p. 23; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*.

27 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 102–109.

28 Jorge [Georges] Biassou to Captain General Joaquín García, 15 July 1793, Guerra Moderna (GM), 7157, no. 7, Archivo General de Simancas (AGS); Toussaint to Biassou, 4 October 1791 and 25 October 1791, cited in M.S. Bell, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2007, pp. 24–25. In the first example, Toussaint closed, "I wish you the most perfect health and am for life your friend."

also worked.[29] The later correspondence of both Biassou and Toussaint was conducted through secretary/scribes, but the interesting political and literary allusions as well as the references to Catholic devotion found in their letters and proclamations also suggest that Biassou and Toussaint may have been influenced by their connections to the Fathers of Charity.[30]

Their correspondence offers interesting insights into the character and actions of other leading figures in the revolution, such as the dapper runaway Jean-François, whom Biassou described as a man "of grand projects, many words, and few deeds".[31] Toussaint ridiculed Jean-François for the fanciful titles and colourful uniforms he adopted and the Cross of Saint Louis with which he decorated himself, yet most historiographic accounts have Jean-François assuming general command of the rebellion on Boukman's death.[32]

Early in the uprising, M. Gros, a French lawyer and chronicler of the slave revolt, was captured by the "monster" Jeannot (whom he called Johnny), and he later published an account of the two months he spent in the rebels' upland camps. Gros witnessed and later described Jeannot's horrible torture and executions of his fellow captives, but he described other rebel leaders, like Biassou, somewhat more favourably. After Jean François ordered Jeannot executed, Gros spent time in Biassou's Grand Rivière camp at Dondon, and he was pleasantly surprised by the "iron discipline" he maintained. Against the odds, Biassou had organized a polyglot and untrained mass into a formidable fighting force that he commanded for almost four years as general of the "Conquered Territories of the North". Biassou's fearful reputation may have been a useful tool. Gros wrote, "The well-known Character of Biassou filled me with Dread; though I was agreeably surprised at seeing him extremely disposed to Peace".[33]

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29 Communications from Madison Smartt Bell, 25 September 2005 and from David Patrick Geggus, 15 September 2008. I am indebted to both for their assistance, their friendship, and their fine scholarship. An older account claims that the godfathers of Biassou and Toussaint were both slaves at the Providence Hospital of the Fathers of Charity and places Biassou at the Bréda plantation for some time. S. Alexis, *Black Liberator, The Life of Toussaint Louverture*, London: Macmillan Company, 1949, pp. 12–13, 30.

30 Bell, *Toussaint Louverture*, pp. 64–65. The beloved Jesuit, Father Pierre Boutin, like Father Sandoval and Father Claver in Cartagena, was noted for his efforts to evangelize Africans and learn African languages. M. de Saint-Méry, *A Civilization That Perished: The Last Years of White Colonial Rule in Haiti*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1985, pp. 116–117, 120.

31 Jorge [Georges] Biassou to Captain General Joaquín García, 15 July 1793, GM 7157, no. 7, AGS.

32 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, p. 106; Fick, "The Slave Insurrection of 1791", p. 24.

33 M. Gros, *An Historick Recital, of the Different Occurences in the Camps of Grand-Rivière*, Baltimore, MD: Adams, 1793, pp. 22–23, 40, 42. Two of Toussaint's letters to Biassou from this period are signed Médecín General, but Madison Smartt Bell points out that the language

Meanwhile, in that fateful summer of 1791, rebellion had also broken out in the southern and western provinces of Saint-Domingue. Mulattoes who had once lived among white Frenchmen now rose against them, joined by unknown numbers of Maroons from the Bahoruco Mountains. Among the most notable of the southern rebels was Romaine Rivière, a free black coffee planter born in Spanish Santo Domingo. Terry Rey describes Romaine's transformation from planter to rebel and his even more amazing transformation into Romaine-la-Prophétesse. Claiming to receive messages and instruction from the Virgin, the Prophétesse commanded great loyalty from his forces encamped at Trou Coffey. Driven by religious and revolutionary fervour, Romaine's forces destroyed the French city of Léogane, in the western province, as their counterparts were also burning Le Cap in the north.[34]

Following these major assaults by the rebels, the French National Assembly declared amnesty for all free persons for "acts of revolution" and sent three revolutionary commissioners to try to establish some order in Saint-Domingue. When a copy of the amnesty proclamation reached Biassou's camp, he had it read aloud to his troops (to whom, actually, this decree would not have applied because they were slaves). Apparently the slaves understood this and declared their determination to continue the war, but Toussaint had the proclamation read a second time and then gave a speech that allegedly so moved the masses that they seemed willing to return to their plantations.[35] But the rebels of the south burned Port-au-Prince that October.[36]

In November, only three months after the start of the rebellion, and not long after Jean François's execution of the sadist Jeannot, French forces killed the famed Boukman, but many other lesser-known rebels still commanded a network of military encampments across the northern plain. The rebels at Biassou's camp at Dondon did not hear of Boukman's death until a month later, and then Gros wrote, "[I]t was impossible to describe the Effect it had upon the Negroes", who believed he had been "killed in one of the justest [sic] of all Causes: the Defence of his King".[37]

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reflects an equality of one to another. This familiar tone might derive from their long acquaintance. Toussaint to Biassou, 4 October 1791 and 15 October 1791, from the private collection of Gérard Berthélemy, cited in Bell, *Toussaint*, pp. 24–25.

34 T. Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess: Abbé Ouvière Romaine Rivière, and the Revolutionary Atlantic World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

35 Fick, "The Slave Insurrection of 1791", p. 29.

36 John Carter Brown Library, "The Haitian Revolution, 1791–1792", https://library.brown.edu/haitihistory/6.html (accessed 29 March 2019).

37 Gros, *Historick Recital*, p. 34.

The rebellion had lost two powerful leaders but another was emerging. Sometime during this period, Toussaint allied himself to his old friend, Biassou, becoming his aide and camp physician (Medecín General). Despite his lesser title and customary modesty (or some might argue, secrecy and guile), Toussaint shaped the rebels' subsequent negotiations with colonial authorities.

After months of fierce fighting, and recognizing their material limitations, the northern rebel leaders began negotiations to try to secure amnesty.[38] On 4 December 1791, in a move C.L.R. James describes as "Judas work", Biassou, Jean-François, and Toussaint sued for peace and offered to return the rebellious slaves to their plantations in exchange for their own freedom and political rights and those of their families and officers.[39] Jean-François bluntly told the chronicler Gros, who was by that time serving as his secretary, "In taking up Arms, I never pretended to fight for the General Liberty of the country". Gros credited Toussaint with persuading Biassou to accept a reduced number of pardons in the offer.[40] Biassou and Jean-François sent two letters to the newly arrived French commissioners, but the reactionary planters of the Colonial Assembly of Saint-Domingue rudely, and unwisely, rejected their offer to lay down arms in exchange for the freedom of their families and some of their troops, and so the war raged on.[41]

In January 1792, as Governor Blanchelande massacred hundreds of women, children, and elderly camp followers at Platons, Biassou led several spectacular raids on Le Cap, including one on the Providence Hospital of the Fathers of Charity, where his mother had once served. Jean-François also had success in capturing Ouanaminthe on the Spanish border (known in Spanish sources as Juana Méndez), which would become his headquarters.[42]

Meanwhile, influenced by Abbé Grégoiré and the Amis des Noirs (Friends of the Blacks), the French National Assembly voted, in April, suffrage for free people of colour. Once again, the obdurate Colonial Assembly stood firm and

38 The leaders had to hide their plans from the black masses they had mobilized and whom they feared they could not control. Gros, *Historick Recital*, pp. 40, 47.

39 Jean-Francis and Toussaint both recognized that they were betraying their compatriots, L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 125–128; C.L.R. James, *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, London: Allison & Busby, 1980, pp. 104–106.

40 Gros, *Historick Recital*, p. 42.

41 Ibid., pp. 44–47.

42 I had followed other historians in believing Biassou raided the hospital to rescue his mother, Diana, allegedly slaying patients on his way out, but David Geggus points out that letters written to Biassou before that time sent regards to his mother and sister (Personal communication, 15 September 2008).

ruled slavery perpetual.[43] At this impasse, the National Assembly dispatched 6,000 troops and a second set of commissioners to Saint-Domingue. Hoping for a better result than that they had earlier received, in July the "Chiefs of the Revolt" wrote another lengthy statement to the Colonial Assembly and the new French commissioners, proclaiming the justice of their rebellion and their equality with the "avaricious" whites who had oppressed them.[44]

In August, the National Assembly deposed Louis XVI and declared France a republic, although that news did not reach Saint-Domingue until October. Meanwhile, although half of the French army had quickly died of disease, the remaining troops, under Etienne Laveaux, energetically pursued the rebel forces, engaging in a series of battles on the northern plain outside Le Cap. But even as thousands of black royalists fought in his name, Louis XVI went to the guillotine and the rebels were left without a king to defend.[45]

In February 1793, England and Spain declared war on France and both powers began courting the black rebels of the northern plain. British forces, based at the port city of Saint Marc, concentrated their efforts in the west and south of Saint-Domingue and were not as directly involved with the northern insurgents, who rejected their overtures to accept those of Spain.[46] Information about the revolution circulated with lightning speed across the Caribbean and triggered powerful reactions everywhere, but accurate information about the dramatic events engulfing them were hard for any of the participants, black or white, to come by.[47] It is hard to say what the rebels knew of the British system and what it could offer, but the French colonial devil they did know.

In June, fierce fighting broke out between the French governor of Saint-Domingue, a native who sided with the local planters, and the forces of the radical French commissioners who had declared the slaves free. Le Cap was soon in flames and panicked whites, many accompanied by their slaves, fled the city for ships bound for Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, and New Orleans and Santiago (Cuba). Many more also sought refuge among the nearby Spaniards.[48]

43 Bell, *Toussaint*, p. 38.

44 Ibid., p. 27.

45 Ibid., p. 41.

46 On the British engagement with the insurgents, see D.P. Geggus, *Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793–1798*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

47 J. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*, New York: Verso Books, 2018; D.P. Geggus, "Slavery, War, and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean, 1789–1815", in: D.B. Gaspar and D.P. Geggus (eds.), *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 1–50.

48 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp.157–160.

In an overture to the Spanish across the border, Georges Biassou wrote Governor García to ensure his position as leader of the black royalists: "I am the chief of the Counter-Revolution [. . .]. I began the war, almost without arms, without munitions, without supplies, and almost without resources on 23 August 1791, a time that will always be remembered among the most magnificent of the Universe [. . .] signed Jorge [Georges] Biassou, General of the Conquered Territories of the North of Santo Domingo, 15 July 1793".[49] For additional support Biassou also produced a statement from Toussaint addressed to the Spanish king from Dondon on 15 July 1793, acknowledging Biassou as "our true General [. . .] who we have always recognized as such" and recommending the title of Generalissimo be conferred on him "to do otherwise would be unjust since it is his by right".[50]

Thereafter, conflicts between the already competitive Biassou and Jean-François only deepened. From his camp at San Miguel, Biassou continued to bombard the Spanish governor with proofs of his leadership and demands that he recognize it. Biassou repeatedly attacked Jean-François as "vain" and his presumptions to leadership as "absurd". He pointed out that his rival only held the town of Juana Méndez (Ounaminthe), wheras thousands had surrendered to him. He added, "[T]here is not an obligation that he [Jean-François] does not owe me".[51]

Other rebel leaders tried to mediate the differences between the two squabbling rebels. Commandant Jean Guiambois wrote Biassou from his camp Cebert on the Artibonite Plain. Addressing Biassou as "dear brother" and "dear General", he argued that if he and Biassou and Jean François united forces and hearts, they would save lives: "We are three chiefs, but one heart." He continued that there was more glory in peace than in further bloodshed and that past evils should be forgotten and vengeance foresworn.[52] Toussaint was also

49 Jorge [Georges] Biassou to Captain General Joaquín García, 15 July 1793, GM 7157, no. 7, AGS. This document is also signed by Field Marshall Belair.

50 Jorge [Georges] Biassou (from San Miguel) to Captain General Joaquín García, August 24, 1793, GM 7157, no. 7, AGS.

51 Jorge [Georges] Biassou (from San Miguel) to Captain General Joaquín García, 15 July 1793, GM 7157, no. 7; 23 August 1793, GM 7157, no. 8; 24 August 1793, GM 7157, no. 6; 25 September 1793, GM 7157, no. 13; Captain General Joaquín García to Jorge [Georges] Biassou, 29 October 1793, GM 7157, no. 15, AGS.

52 In his letter to Biassou, Guiambois included a letter sent him by Lambert that also deplored the bloodshed and destruction and urged him to end the horror of war and bring peace, schools, and manufacturing to their beautiful island. In doing so, Lamberts wrote he would be known as "Major Guiambois, Savior of the New World", rather than "Avenger of the New World". Comandante Guiambois to General Biassou, 5 August 1793, GM 7157, no. 11, AGS.

worried and issued a call for unity, liberty, and equality, signing himself for the first time as "Toussaint Louverture, General of the armies of the king [of Spain]".[53]

Despite the bickering, Spain's black allies made gains during the fall of 1793 and Governor García kept the crown well informed of the desperate battles fought on the northern plain. Jean François took Dondon, but the French forces retook it, with serious losses on both sides. Toussaint was finally able to regain Dondon and raise the Spanish flag over the much-contested camp. Toussaint also took Marmelade on his second attempt, leading Governor García to praise his "sagacity" in the latter battle.[54]

Perhaps in response to these victories, in August 1793, the French Commissioner Léger-Félicité Sonthonax took the initiative to offer the northern rebels freedom and alliance in the name of the French Republic, but he did so independently and Saint-Domingue's Colonial Assembly would have none of it. The rebel leaders Biassou and Jean-François allegedly responded, "Since the beginning of the world we have obeyed the will of a king. We have lost the king of France but we are dear to him of Spain who constantly shows us reward and assistance. We therefore cannot recognize you until you have enthroned a king".[55] They even convinced the commissioners' Kongo-born envoy, Macaya, to join them. Macaya later proclaimed, "I am the subject of three kings: of the king of Congo, master of all blacks; of the King of France, who represents my father; of the King of Spain, who represents my mother".[56]

Opting for monarchy, and with no French king to claim their loyalty, Biassou, Jean-François, and Toussaint finally accepted the Spanish offer of alliance. In November 1793, at the border town of San Raphael, the Spanish Governor Joaquín García, ceremoniously decorated Biassou, Jean-François, and Toussaint with gold medals bearing the likeness of the King Carlos IV, and he presented them with documents expressing the gratitude and confidence of the Spanish government. Toussaint actually received the medal meant for Hyacinth, a young Vodou priest who had once tried to persuade his followers that the French soldier's bullets were water and who had been assassinated

53 Bell, *Toussaint*, pp. 18–19.

54 Comandante Joaquín Garcia from San Rafael on the French attack on San Miguel, 22 July 1793 and 12 August 1793, SGU 7158, pp. 38–45, AGS.

55 R. Blackburn, "'The Black Jacobins' and New World Slavery", in: S.R. Cudjoe and W.E. Cain (eds.), *C.L.R. James, His Intellectual Legacies*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, pp. 81–97, 86; James, *Black Jacobins*.

56 Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, pp. 160.

shortly before. The crown also gave 12 silver medals to selected lieutenants, such as Benjamin, who served under Jean-François.[57]

Spain designated its new armies of risen slaves the "Black Auxiliaries of Carlos IV", a much more formal title and affiliation than earlier or later black militias ever received.[58] There is uncertainty about their troop strengths since neither Biassou nor Jean-François kept exact records, but each claimed leadership of between 5,000 and 6,000 men.[59] Newly supplied and under a Spanish flag, the forces of Biassou, Jean-François, and Toussaint fought many bloody battles against the French. One of the rebels' primary supporters, Father Josef Vásquez, himself a mulatto, wrote from Dajabón that "if divine Providence had not favoured us with the blacks [allies], we would have been victims of the fury of the savage masses". He added that although the Spaniards did not fully trust the new allies who fought back the slaves, "it is they who have taken prisoners, they who have given the King 200 slaves, and they who have fought the campaign".[60]

In February 1794, Jean-François successfully attacked the French camps of Pierrot and Petit Tomas at Port Margot, returning afterwards to Bayajá with 20 prisoners from Pierrot's forces. Captain General Joaquín García quickly dispatched the French enemies to prison in Puerto Rico, but he granted sanctuary to 44 French refugees fleeing the violence. García also sheltered another French group of 160 persons from Le Cap, who escaped to Bayajá by boat in fear of the mulatto General Villate, who command the capital. In reporting these events to his superiors, García included a list of the 16 camps between Bayajá and the French capital of Le Cap, giving details about the leaders and their troop strengths, their arms, and the defences of each.[61]

By early 1794, Spain's black troops controlled the entire northern plain, but the ongoing disputes among the leaders of the Black Auxiliaries had become so worrisome that King Carlos and his Council of State met to discuss how they should be reconciled. Both were convinced that Biassou's three white

57 The three chiefs swore submission and vassalage to the Spanish king in the house of Don Matias de Armona on 8 November 1793. Estado (ES)13, AGI. Captain General Joaquín García to the Duque de la Alcudia, 18 February 1794, ES 14, doc. 86, AGI. On Hyacinthe, see Geggus, "The Arming of Slaves in the Haitian Revolution", pp. 209–232.

58 On the long tradition of black military service for Spain, see J. Landers, "Transforming Bondsmen into Vassals: Arming the Slaves in Colonial Spanish America", in: Brown and Morgan (eds.), *Arming Slaves*, pp. 120–145. And for French precedents in Saint-Domingue, see D. Geggus, "The Arming of Slaves in the Haitian Revolution", in: Brown and Morgan (eds.), *Arming Slaves*, pp. 209–232.

59 Ibid.

60 Father Josef Vásquez to the Vicar of Santiago, 12 December 1793, ES 11, no. 98, AGI.

61 Governor Joaquín Garcia to the Duque de Alcudia, 20 February 1794, 14, no. 77, AGI.

secretaries, the Frenchmen Cavaux de Franqueville and LaPlace and the Canary Islander, José de los Reyes, were behind Biassou's torrent of complaints, and they ordered them summarily arrested and sent to prison in Puerto Rico.[62]

Biassou's petulance may have triggered Toussaint's surprising attack on his childhood friend and former leader at Ennery in March 1794 (however, I have not yet found explanatory evidence for this puzzling event). The Spanish commander at San Raphael, General Juan Lleonart, was able to broker a rapprochement between Toussaint and Biassou the following month and it is clear from his reports that he regarded Toussaint as the more dependable of the two allies. He wrote, "It is on him that we can count for his judgement, prudence, loyalty, and piety".[63]

But Lleonart's trust in Toussaint's loyalty was betrayed. The French General Laveaux reported that Toussaint "placed himself under the banner of the Republic on May 6th". Perhaps to put a better spin on what Biassou called a "Faustian bargain", Toussaint later claimed to have transferred his service to the French Republic only in June in response to its emancipation proclamation.[64] Scholars theorize that Toussaint's defection from the Spaniards was in part motivated by his own ambition and that he felt his advancement within the Spanish camp was blocked by Biassou and Jean-François.[65]

Before long, his former allies were losing battles against Toussaint, who surprised and defeated Spanish forces at San Raphael on 6 May 1794. David Geggus describes that event as a "massacre", and San Raphael's commander must have rued his earlier positive assessment of Toussaint's "loyalty and piety". The violence suffered by Spain's Black Auxiliaries at San Raphael may have triggered subsequent violence.

As Spain's position weakened, on 7 July 1794 Jean-François forces massacred more than 1,000 French men, women, and children, who had accepted Spanish offers of protection at the border town of Bayajá. Eyewitness accounts by the Spaniards describe Jean-François's forces arriving on horseback to surround the town and Spanish attempts to get as many women and children on boats before the attack started. When it did, the Spaniards, holed up in their

62 King Carlos IV, 1 March 1794, GM 7159, no. 11 and no. 14; Council of State, September 26, 1794, GM 7159, no. 61, AGS.

63 Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, pp. 119–136.

64 Ibid.

65 T.O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789–1804*, Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1973, pp. 83–84; C.E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990, p. 184; Bell, *Toussaint*, p. 92. The exact date of Toussaint's *volte-face* is still debated among scholars.

houses with as many of those French still left behind as they could save, described the pitiful sounds of the massacre that followed. Before leaving, Jean-François forces emptied the government warehouse of all the guns, uniforms, and other supplies they could carry. They also took the military treasury of 1,600 pesos. Lengthy Spanish investigations followed and produced detailed reports of the losses.

Although contemporaries and scholars agree that Jean-François was in charge and responsible for Bayajá, Jean-François tried to divert attention to Biassou and his men, whom he accused of similar atrocities. Jean-François claimed that "although General Viasou [sic] made war under the same banners as we, my conduct, the direction of my troops, their discipline, and their military operations have always been better." Jean-François argued that if "disorders" occurred after Biassou's troops arrived on the scene and he should be found culpable, Biassou should be punished as required by the law.[66] Although Spaniards were also involved in the killings, the Spanish governor of Bayajá, the Marqués of Casa Calvo, later referred to the incident as a "cruel crime" that "inspired in the sanguinary hearts and entrails [of the blacks] the reckless belief that they had retaken the town and saved the Spanish garrison from a plot against them by the French émigrés".[67] If the black troops actually believed that the returning French planters, who had rejected their freedom, plotted to overturn the Spaniards, who had accepted it, then their actions become more explicable, if no less bloody. C.L.R. James writes that Jean-François had spent the morning in the confessional with Father Vásquez and that it was the priest, in fact, who gave the command to commence the slaughter. If true, the actions of Biassou and Jean-François on that horrible day at Bayajá may have been sanctioned by their own beloved priest and counsellor.[68]

In 1795, the Directory of the French Republic finally concluded a peace with Spain, and the Treaty of Basel ceded western Hispaniola to the French, thereby respatializing the island once again. Spain also agreed to disband the Black Auxiliaries of Carlos IV. Scarred by the "crimes" of Bayajá, Governor Casa Calvo recommended that the crown abolish black military employment and titles immediately. Bothered by the auxiliaries' "pretensions to superiority", he argued that he had seen evidence of their fury at Bayajá, and "although they paint themselves with other colours, they are the same who murdered their

66 Jean-François to Captain General Luis de Las Casas, 12 January 1796, ES 5-A, no. 28, AGI.
67 The Marqués of Casa Calvo to Captain General Luis de Las Casas, 31 December 1795, ES 5-A, no. 23, AGI.
68 James, *Black Jacobins*, pp. 151; Geggus, "Slavery, War and Revolution"; Scott, "The Common Wind".

owners, violated their wives, and destroyed all those with property". He also warned that some of the Black Auxiliaries thought the abandonment of their property would excuse their crimes and be proof of fidelity but that their sacrifices were only "illusions" and were made in their own self-interest. Governor Casa Calvo told Biassou, Jean-François, and the other military leaders they would have to evacuate Española because the French Republic did not find their presence "compatible", but he urged the "simple soldiers" to remain as they had been offered freedom by both the French Republic and Spain. The former would need labourers to restore the burned plantations.[69]

The black armies wanted, instead, to maintain their units, ranks, salaries, and rations and to embark together for some designated place where they should be given lands to cultivate and be permitted to form a town. They had not given up everything to return to their former states. They argued that they would then constitute a ready force, able to fight for the king of Spain wherever he should care to send them. There was, in fact, royal precedent for this; only decades before, the militia of the town of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose in Florida, also composed of former slaves, was evacuated en masse to Cuba in 1763, granted homesteads together, and allowed to retain their militia titles and perquisites.[70]

The governor and captain general of Santo Domingo, Joaquín García, who had once written glowing reports about the exploits of the "valiant warriors" now urged their deportation to Havana. García was already under serious pressure from angry Spanish citizens who were also being forced to evacuate the island and were urging Spanish troops to mutiny and renounce the treaty with France. In such a volatile situation, García did not even allow the black troops time to dispose of their property or settle family affairs before leaving.[71]

In the rapid evacuation, families were separated and Biassou was forced to leave behind his own mother, whom he had allegedly rescued from slavery in the early years of the revolt.[72] The embittered black general lodged a formal complaint against Governor García and urged his dismissal.[73] Casa Calvo's

69 The Marqués of Casa Calvo to Captain General Luis de Las Casas, 31 December 1795, ES 5-A, no. 23, AGI.

70 Ibid.; J. Landers, "An Eighteenth-Century Community in Exile: the Floridanos of Cuba", *New West Indian Guide* 70 (1996) 1/2, pp. 39–58.

71 Captain General Joaquín García to the Duque de la Alcudia, 18 February 1794, ES 14, no. 86, AGI; Captain General Joaquín García to Captain General Luis de Las Casas, 25 January 1796, ES 5-A, no. 36, AGI.

72 Petition of Jorge [Georges] Biassou, 14 September 1796, Cuba 1439, AGI.

73 Complaint of Jorge [Georges] Biassou, 31 May 1794, ES 13, no. 11, AGI.

predicted the Black Auxiliaries would expect "the same distinctions, prerogatives, luxury, and excessive tolerance" in Cuba that they had enjoyed in Bayajá. He assured the captain general of Cuba that he never promised the "venomous vipers" they would be allowed to remain in Havana.[74]

On the last day of December 1795, Spanish officials carefully recorded the exodus of the remaining Black Auxiliaries of Carlos IV from Bayajá on the north coast. A few days earlier, others had sailed from Ocoa on the south coast.[75] All were destined for Havana, but after the captain general of Cuba refused to receive the exiles, they were dispersed across the Atlantic. The black rebels who had become royal Spanish auxiliaries had waged four years of a bloody race war and were viewed with the utmost suspicion anywhere they landed. The largest group, led by Jean-François, finally landed in Cádiz, where they became the focus of constant surveillance. Other contingents settled in Campeche (Mexico), Portobelo (Panama), the coast of Guatemala, and St. Augustine (Florida).[76] Like most exiles, they longed to one day return to their former homes, and some also hoped to resume their former positions of power.

From Cádiz, Jean-François wrote to his lieutenant, Juan Santiago in Guatemala, hoping to reunite his troops and their families in Central America, a plan that never materialized. Meanwhile, from Florida, Biassou petitioned the Spanish crown to allow him to move his followers to the more important port of Havana. When the crown failed to respond, Biassou next offered to travel to Spain and join the royal forces battling French enemies in Europe, but this proposal was also ignored. The post-revolutionary diaspora of Spain's black veterans fragmented their troops, but they always hoped to regain their place in history. They were successful slave rebels who had fought a bloody war and freed themselves and large numbers of their families and troops by force of arms. Seasoned by war against French planters, French and British troops, and their own countrymen – and well-acquainted with "dangerous notions" of

74 Marqués de Casa Calvo to Captain General Luis de Las Casas, 31 December 1795, ES 5-A, no. 23, AGI.

75 Report by Captain General Luis de las Casas, 13 January 1796, ES 5-A, no. 28, AGI; Luis de Las Casas to Duque de Alcudia, 8 January 1796, ES 5-A, no. 24, AGI.

76 Archivo General de Centro America, A2/120/2265/folios 4-5v. Documents on the expenses for the transport of Black Auxiliaries of Santo Domingo to Portobelo, 4 March 1797, Asuntos Politicos, Leg 6, N. 39, ANC. On this group, see R. Soulodre-La France, "The King's Soldiers: Black Auxiliaries in the Spanish and British Empires", paper delivered at the American Historical Association, New York, 2009. Also see J.V. Ojeda, *San Fernando Aké: microhistória de una comunidad afroamericana en Yucatán*, Mérida, Yucatán: Ediciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, 2001; and R. Cáceres and P. Lovejoy (eds.), *Haití: revolución y emancipación*, Costa Rica: Universidad de Costa Rica, 2008.

liberty, equality, and fraternity, despite their monarchical rhetoric – these men became objects of fear throughout the Atlantic world.[77]

Meanwhile, the shattered space that was the island of Saint-Domingue remained a site of bloody turmoil as Toussaint struggled to build and acquire recognition for a new state, rebuild a ruined economy, unify the island by invading the Spanish territory, and negotiate his political survival as "Governor for Life". Betrayed by the French with whom he had cast his lot, Toussaint died of desolation and hunger in a French prison in 1803. It fell to Toussaint's successor, Jean Jacques Dessalines, to finally declare the independence of Haiti on 1 January 1804. After 15 years of a bloody race war, Haiti was the first state to win independence in Latin America and the first black republic in the Atlantic space, but it remained a pariah among nations. In the tumultuous decades that followed, it remained a fragmented space and does to this day, divided by political boundaries and race.

77 White fears of such men and their "notions" are described in M.-R. Trouillot, "From Planters' Journals to Academia, the Haitian Revolution as Unthinkable History", *The Journal of Caribbean History* 25 (1991) 1/2, pp. 81–99. See also D.P. Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession during the Constituent Assembly", *American Historical Review* 94 (1989) 5, pp. 1290–1308; and "Slavery, War, and Revolution"; J.G. Landers, "Rebellion and Royalism in Spanish Florida: The French Revolution on Spain's Northern Colonial Frontier", in: Gaspar and Geggus (eds.), *A Turbulent Time*, pp. 156–177.