

11-13-2007

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“Under the Bloody Hatchet of the Haitians”: Thomas Jefferson’s Foreign Policy

Concerning the Haitian Revolution, 1791-1806

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Date of Approval:
November 13, 2007

Keywords: Eighteenth Century, Diplomatic Relations, Foreign Trade, Haiti, Toussaint
L’Ouverture

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Dedication

Without the support of my loving wife, Joy, the completion of this thesis would be an empty achievement. She has stood by me as a help-mate and a source of inspiration. Because of this, I owe and freely give to her my eternal, unwavering love and devotion.

Acknowledgements

I wish to humbly extend my gratitude toward my professors. Only through the gracious sharing of their expertise and acumen have I been able to hone my historical analysis. Always with open doors, they were willing to meet countless times to discuss my research. Special thanks are extended to my first professor of history, Dr. David Alexander, and committee members: Dr. John Belohlavek, Dr. Philip Levy, and Dr. Robert Ingalls. These historians have not only shaped me professionally but have also set a paramount standard that will continue to inspire me for years to come.

I would also like to acknowledge my beloved parents. Having been raised in a family that valued education and encouraged intellectual debate, and still continues to do so, kindled in me a life-long love of learning. Thank you all.

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ABSTRACT

At first glance Thomas Jefferson’s presidential actions concerning the Haitian Revolution seem to denote racially motivated decisions predicated upon fear. However, through a deeper analysis of primary documents, Jefferson’s position appears more economically and politically ambitious. By 1791, the French colony of Saint Domingue held the title of the richest colony in the Caribbean and the world’s leading producer of sugar. In addition, Saint Domingue consumed about sixteen percent of all of America’s exports. Jefferson’s personal opinions concerning revolution and trade on the island of Saint Domingue contradict the statements of his administration. Partisan politics manifested a stern voice within the Republican Party that cried out for an end to all trade with the island.¹

Thomas Jefferson’s republican and revolutionary ideals of freedom, as well as the ideals of many Americans, became transformed by the social transgression of the Caribbean blacks against white hegemony. Their actions, along with press accounts, become “grotesque” in comparison to pure republican and revolutionary ideals. Jefferson, though publicly in tune with the wishes of his party, used his chief advisors to carry out a foreign policy that appeased the South and allowed for continued trade with Saint Domingue. Contemporary historians often categorize Jefferson’s foreign policy

concerning Haiti as a completely racist agenda. For example, historians frequently cite Jefferson as having said he would, “reduce Toussaint to starvation,” but in reality this excerpt comes from a report sent by Louis Pinchon, the French chargé d’affaires, to his superiors. While labeling this report false seems excessive, ignoring the possibility of exaggeration by Pinchon and placation by Jefferson becomes a dangerous oversight. Through a fresh analysis of primary documents, especially those used out of context, an understanding emerges that portrays Jefferson not as a racial equalitarian or as “a man intellectually undone by his negrophobia,” but as a political figure who acknowledges the republican values inherent in revolution and, at the same time, the necessity of economic prosperity to sustain the United States.²

Introduction

Amidst a violent storm on the French colonial island of Saint Domingue the local voodoo high priest, Zamba Boukman, incited a passionate rage among the sugar plantation slaves. Painted with moonlight and shadowed by flickering torches he gathered the members of a recent insurrection and began a sacred voodoo ritual. The *heathen* cleric delivered a fanatical crescendo of chants to the enthralled congregation. He sucked the blood of a sacrificial pig and began a Creole prayer for his people, calling on the incensed slaves to obey their true god and to “throw away the symbol of the god of the whites.” The horde seethed with revenge as the Catholic cross conjured within the slaves a hatred that stung like the lashes of subjugation. He then loosed the hope of republican ideology by pleading with the people to “listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks in the hearts of us all.” A reckoning began that humid August night in 1791, and the reprisal found the brutal slave masters recumbent in their plantation homes and ignorance. Boukman’s mob showed no mercy.³

The 452,000 slaves of Saint Domingue had endured decades of forced labor and outrageous cruelty on the island’s sugar, coffee, cotton, and indigo plantations. With only 40,000 whites in the colony, severe subjugation became essential to enforce their hegemony. One macabre account told of Coomba, a slave girl who had the misfortune of exciting the desire of her master and the jealous wrath of her mistress. Intent on ending the affair expeditiously, the mistress ordered Coomba’s head cut off and served to her husband for dinner. Another horrid tale related how a master viciously whipped a black

fiddler for simply playing a wrong note at a dance. Though barbaric abuses such as these occurred infrequently the daily degradations left the world-weary slaves callused, bitter, and on this night, violent toward the white tyrants of Saint Domingue. The slave owners had levied humiliation, torture, rape, and murder upon their chattel, but at one moment, on one night the breaking point had been reached. As a segment of Saint Domingan slaves began their retribution, little remained standing in their wake of terror and revenge. One throng of slaves marched from plantation to plantation burning or murdering everything and everyone in their path. They displayed a white child impaled on a stake as a grotesque banner and as a warning to any white who dared to impede their ferocious judgment. Saint Domingue had endured minor slave rebellions before, but the political climate at this time would produce a tempest of carnage and a truly free black state in the western hemisphere. For slave owners in the American South, these events warned of the possibility of future slave revolts on their own plantations and an end to their affluence. For American merchants in the North, the situation put their economic hold on the French colonial consumers into question. Yet despite sectional concerns, all of America watched with intrigue and confusion as this slave uprising created a black revolutionary who challenged its republican ideals and prosperity.⁴

Besides destruction and bloodshed, the Haitian Revolution also produced a brilliant young leader named Toussaint L'Ouverture. Born a slave on a Saint Domingan plantation, Toussaint, a frail child, spent a good deal of his youth ill. Determined to conquer his sickly childhood, he committed himself to exercise and athleticism. His father received a certain privileged standing among the plantation slaves and eventually Toussaint also shared this status. The benefit afforded him the opportunity to gain a

humble but noteworthy education. He learned French and Latin from his godfather and often studied political and military strategy in *Caesar's Commentaries*. His father, most likely a former African chieftain, showed him the application of medicinal herbs. As Toussaint entered adulthood, his master, Bayou de Libertas, took notice of his broad base of knowledge and appointed him steward of all plantation livestock, a position usually held by white men. This leadership experience would aide him greatly during his military campaigns and political dealings with the infantile, yet powerful, republic of America.⁵

After Boukman's insurrection, Toussaint remained with de Libertas for about one month. During this time, he protected the plantation and his owner from the reprisals that rapidly spread from estate to estate. When the plantation became too dangerous, he sent Madame de Libertas to the safety of Le Cap. The port city held a large colonial militia and stood as a bulwark against marauding rebels. At the same time, Toussaint made provisions for his wife and two children to settle safely in Spanish controlled San Domingo. Once all arrangements had been made for his family and his master's wife, Toussaint, at the age of forty-five, joined the revolution.⁶

Using his medical knowledge, Toussaint became a general doctor within Georges Biassou's rebel camp. Biassou led one of the many splintered revolutionary forces that answered directly to Boukman. He soon recognized the potential Toussaint possessed and quickly placed him in charge of a small garrison of men. In less than a month after Toussaint had joined the revolt, he became one of its leaders. In October of 1791 he wrote to Biassou. His letter portrayed a man with a keen sense of military aggression and, paradoxically, a man who earnestly wished to avoid further bloodshed. He expressed to Biassou that if able he "would like to have crowbars in order to have the rocks of the

mountains of Haut du Cap fall to prevent [the slave owners' forces] from approaching.” He then, in the very next line, conveyed a desire to know exactly where the “powder works” stood in Haut du Cap in order to improve the effectiveness of his planned attack. Such a complexity of character would soon present Toussaint as the clear revolutionary leader after the fall of Boukman, Biassou, and others. But this complexity would also confound American observers as they attempted to resolve images of a slave revolt so near to their own soil with comparisons of Toussaint’s and George Washington’s military prowess for the cause of *liberté*.⁷

While the violence grew in Saint Domingue, Americans fervently read accounts of this slave revolt in what they called Saint Domingo. Newspapers in both the North and South posted accounts that pushed American fears concerning blacks to the forefront of politics and society. Americans daily mulled over headlines such as, “Six hundred white persons fell under the bloody hatchet of the Haitians!” Such rhetoric struck terror into the hearts of the slave-holding populace, those politically moderate concerning slavery, and even stern abolitionists. These uneasy feelings also existed within the federal government. Representatives, such as Republican John Randolph from Virginia, warned of the “cut-throats from St. Domingo,” and many others posited similar views. But while some fanned the flames of panic, others responded with the responsibility of republican brotherhood and economic interest. Using their own political publications they expressed a desire to continue prosperous trade with the rebellious colony, and remembered the financial woes of their own colonial rebels a mere decade earlier.⁸

Press accounts, positive and negative, transformed Toussaint into the personification of the “bewildering events in the French West Indies.” American

businessmen considered Toussaint to be “conservative in economic matters,” and greatly looked forward to the possibility of capitalizing on exclusive trade rights. His dedication “to reestablish the colony as the world’s leading exporter of sugar and coffee” excited American merchants even more. Though many newspapers sensationalized the horrors of Saint Domingue, some editors in both the North and South reported on the benefits of Toussaint. One southern newspaper even championed him as a “man of no inconsiderable talent” who liberated “his unhappy country from the miseries of French tyranny.”

Another southern editor, obviously attempting to contradict the accounts of bloodlust in a rival newspaper, declared that Toussaint, despite being a man of war, “could not ... be accused with having spilt the blood of the innocent.” Still other southern papers took a more dramatic approach and fabricated stories involving Toussaint’s wife being tortured by French authorities while with child. Editors employed such falsehoods in hopes that the accounts would first increase circulation and then create sympathy for Toussaint, Saint Domingue, and continued Caribbean trade. Some southern slave holders stood as “anti-French” before “anti-Negro.” Slaves represented agricultural prosperity, and as such, a vital part of the southern economic body. Most slave owners would much rather attempt to “reform” rebellious slaves than have them immediately executed. If nothing else in the mind of the plantation farmer, slaves were at the very least expensive pieces of property.⁹

With the Federalist Party firmly at the political helm in Philadelphia and after the passage of several state-level immigration restrictions against the importation of Saint Domingan slaves, the threat of rebellious influence upon American slaves became distanced in the minds of many citizens. Yet, the issue still ominously hovered on the

horizon of partisan lines. Despite the democratic ideals professed by its leader, the Republican Party would later use the Haitian Revolution to clearly divide political agendas. For the majority of Federalists, lavish commercial profits and the employment of over five hundred merchant ships muffled the shrill fears of some slave owners concerning a colonial revolt to a mere whimper.¹⁰

In the early 1790s, America's economy flourished with the help of foreign commerce. Control of commerce or exclusive rights to trade meant substantial increases in wealth and power. Americans in both the North and South wanted to monopolize the trade in the West Indies, regardless of their feelings toward the institution of slavery. As a result, policy makers designated these colonial outlets for the surplus of American wares as a chief concern. Although the racial tensions of Saint Domingue prior to 1791 troubled many Americans, especially those in the South, a Federalist controlled Congress placed these fears on a secondary tier.

A majority of Anti-Federalists had aligned themselves with the Federalist agenda until the rebellion of 1791. Shortly after this event, a steady stream of southern Anti-Federalists and some Federalists began to change their position as slaveholding constituents and legislators sounded the tocsin. For example, the Federalist governor of South Carolina, Charles Pinckney, who had earlier promoted Caribbean trade, quickly wrote to the colonial legislature of Saint Domingue and offered his support for fear of a spreading influence in the American South. He then sent a dramatic warning to President Washington stating that, "a flame ... will extend to all the neighboring islands, and may prove [displeasing] ... to the Southern States."¹¹

After the initial shock concerning events in Saint Domingue, fiscally minded officials from both political parties began to emerge. Despite the threat of slave insurrection spreading to the American South, a trading partner second only to Great Britain could not be allowed to slip away. Nevertheless, by 1793 sectional opinions clearly varied over the slaves who had succeeded in taking up arms against their masters. Southerners showed caution toward the initial revolt in Saint Domingue, fearful that it might spread to their borders, but the issue of slavery did not completely direct American foreign policy towards Saint Domingue in 1791. Previously all state legislatures among the original thirteen colonies proposed stipulations, some more successful than others, to slowly dissolve slavery within a relatively short amount of time. “King Cotton” had not yet ascended to his throne, so less labor intensive crops reigned in the South. The absence of the cotton gin coupled with public opinion and government policy allowed slavery to move out of the foreground of political issues in the first half of 1791. The burgeoning country’s policymakers promoted prosperity and the wealth of *their* nation above sectional differences.¹²

The Haitian Revolution had a profound impact on no less than three of the founding fathers’ administrations. George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson all played major roles in the transformation of this French colony into a free black state. The foreign and diplomatic choices of these great leaders helped shape the future of the island and dictated a continuation of their prescribed policy over the next half-century. Their decisions helped formulate an American policy based primarily on imperialism and commerce, and secondly on race relations.¹³

Many historians have categorized Jefferson's actions on the basis of his personal views regarding blacks. Jefferson did hold discriminatory beliefs towards blacks, but he based his foreign policy primarily on American commercial interests and the best possible opportunities for domestic prosperity. Jefferson's fear of public debt and the post-revolutionary American society's demand for order shaped his foreign policy towards Saint Domingue. Simplifying his diplomatic policy on the principal basis of race undercuts the complexity of Jefferson's republican ideals and his commitment to the economic success of a nation that had become the realization of these principles. Though history has often levied upon Jefferson the role of racist in response to the Haitian Revolution, all three administrations promoted a foreign policy that attempted to ensure neither want nor suffering for the people of the United States.

The founding fathers forced the former slaves of Saint Domingue to pay the price of America's prosperity. Through Federalist and Republican choices American merchants easily draped their nets of over the wealthiest colony of the Caribbean. And while the young republic hauled in its profits, the major European powers gutted the Caribbean accordingly alongside America. Jefferson served as the fulcrum on the scales of trade. The republican principle of majority rule tipped the scales in America's favor as it demanded prosperity at the expense of others. The blacks of Saint Domingue stood alone against all the major powers of the world.

Chapter 1

“Pointing Out the Way to Struggling Nations,” 1781-1791

In March of 1790 William Hunter, Jr., mayor of Alexandria, Virginia, addressed a public gathering celebrating the return of Thomas Jefferson from France. Mayor Hunter copiously praised an already famous Jefferson with flattering embellishments and overreaching claims. He proclaimed Alexandria, “a commercial town,” beholden to Jefferson for all his “enlightened representations to the Court of France.” According to the mayor, Jefferson’s “indulgencies . . . secured” a healthy trade in Alexandria. Next, Hunter announced that Jefferson had thereby “freed commerce from its shackles,” and even “destroyed the first [attempt] in this Country towards establishing a Monopoly.” The mayor then auspiciously concluded his speech with the wish that Jefferson continue to “fulfill the high expectations of a free and republican people.”¹⁴

Hunter’s inflated tribute illustrates the perception of many American citizens concerning Jefferson and America’s economy. The American people, especially those within his home state of Virginia, believed Jefferson, even while in France, to have their economic needs as the leading concern. Many championed him as the architect of the founding republican principles of their country, and at the core of these principles stood economic freedom and the prosperity of the nation. In the minds of the general American populace the inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness equaled wealth and affluence.

However, Jefferson's public response to Mayor Hunter's address emphasized the political influence of the powerful American example rather than the country's economic success.

Jefferson curtailed the praise of his own efforts to establish financial gain for America and instead promoted the republican example that currently shaped the political atmosphere of the French Revolution. While Jefferson expressed his happiness "to learn that [the citizens of Alexandria] have felt the benefit from the encouragements to our commerce," he stressed that America remained "indebted for those encouragements solely to the friendly dispositions" of France. Jefferson then attributed even greater importance to the American model of republican government. For him "the only form of government . . . not eternally at open or secret war with the rights mankind" stood as a beacon to the rest of the oppressed world. Jefferson asserted that, "while [American citizens] are securing the rights of ourselves and our posterity, we are pointing out the way to struggling nations who wish, like us, to emerge from their tyrannies also." Citing France as the prime example, Jefferson believed that American economic and political freedom had sparked a revolution in "the great and good country."¹⁵

For Jefferson the right of a people to "alter or to abolish" any form of abusive government formed the foundation for republican government. He firmly believed "just power" extended "from the consent of the governed." Yet Jefferson would never openly admit that the blacks of Saint Domingue had the right to revolt against their colonial assembly or France. His devotion to the economic expansion of his own country and to the majority rule of a democratic republic continuously guided his actions. His complex position in American society and political aspirations would never allow for such an avowal. Jefferson's conviction to ever-increasing the good of his country far outweighed

any racial prejudices he possessed. The diplomatic decisions of Jefferson towards the Haitian Revolution defied modern racial and discriminatory conceptualizations. His personal feelings towards slavery and blacks lay buried under his republican ideology, personal economic principles, patriotism, need for self preservation, and some widely popular misconceptions about the biology of blacks.

Jefferson's republican principles had been greatly transformed over the decade prior to his address in Alexandria. In 1781, ten years before that fateful night in Saint Domingue, Jefferson wrote a rebuttal to the theory that all American livestock and produce was inferior to then European equivalents. The theory derived from the French naturalist Comte de Georges Louis Leclerc Buffon. Buffon argued that all American species had originated in Europe and become separated from the higher breeding lines. This separation had therefore caused inferior stock. Jefferson, ever the consummate defender of American trade, composed *Notes on the State of Virginia* to answer the challenge. Jefferson meticulously cataloged every scrap of information on Virginia available. He examined everything from sea ports and rivers to manners and religion. He also included some of his personal beliefs concerning the inferiority of blacks.

Responding to the queries presented in his work, Jefferson suggested that blacks, among other items, had "less hair on the face and body" and produced more sweat which caused them to possess "a very strong and disagreeable odour [sic]." He also asserted that blacks "require[d] less sleep" and that their faculties "in reason [were] much inferior." Significantly, even with circulation in America and France, no major challenge presented itself to contradict Jefferson's claims concerning blacks. He revealed his prejudices, which mirrored the prejudices of many Americans, and gave an eerie prophesy of the

events to come in Saint Domingue by declaring that instant emancipation would “produce convulsions which [would] probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.” Yet even with all his prejudices, Jefferson still acknowledged the immorality of slavery. He longed for and feared “a total emancipation” that would extend from “the consent of the masters, rather than by [the slave’s] extirpation.” While his prejudice clearly affronts twenty-first century sensibilities, to categorize Jefferson’s foreign policy decisions involving the Haitian Revolution as racist seems extreme. Within the same publication Jefferson attacked the peculiar institution as having “removed [the] only firm basis” of the nation’s liberties, that basis being “a conviction . . . that these liberties are a gift from God” and not given or taken by man. Jefferson could, if he so desired, separate his prejudices from his policies.¹⁶

From the beginning of Jefferson’s political notoriety on the national stage, he questioned the institution of slavery and the slave trade. He became a conflicted man who saw his southern home reliant upon slavery and worried that this dependency would bring about its economic and moral downfall. When the opportunity presented itself, Jefferson almost immediately attacked the problem at what he believed to be the root – the slave trade. Though Congress had it stricken from his original draft of the Declaration of Independence, he openly denounced the slave trade as an “execrable commerce,” and affirmed that King George “waged cruel war against human nature itself” for allowing it to continue. The founding fathers considered such affirmations at this time too volatile and dreaded that an openly aggressive stand against the slave trade would alienate much needed support from the South. Although Jefferson held racist views, his republican ideals remained pure and unsoiled from his own discriminations. He earnestly hoped that

the self-evident truths of republican ideology would spread throughout an oppressed world, and when asked to serve as Minister to France he accepted the position as an opportunity to extend republican principles.¹⁷

While in France, Jefferson enjoyed the benefit of a vast ocean of separation between himself and direct political contact with American opinions. This allowed him to freely express his more controversial political views. He took great delight in debating political theory with his dear friends James Madison, Abigail Adams, and James Monroe. Early in 1787, after hearing reports of Shays's Rebellion he affirmed to James Madison, "that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and ... necessary." Though a group of "ignorant, wrestles desperadoes," as Abigail Adams described them, revolted against the very government Jefferson helped to establish, he defended the Shaysites. He explained to Abigail his hope that the authorities "pardoned" the rebels' prized "spirit of resistance to government." Later that year he expressed his most blatant opinion on the matter to William Stephens Smith when he declared that "the tree of liberty must be refreshed ... with the blood of patriots and tyrants." Clearly Jefferson believed that people subjected to an oppressive government possessed the right to revolt. At this stage, however, it remained unclear if Jefferson extended this right to blacks.¹⁸

During 1787 to 1789 Jefferson's continued correspondence from France became dominated by two overshadowing affairs. As he expressed a multitude of opinions concerning the deliberations of the newly assembled Constitutional Congress, he also reported on the unfolding events of the French Revolution. His understanding of the revolution and its violence is pivotal to producing a complete picture of his foreign diplomacy concerning Saint Domingue. An esteemed scribe of republican ideology

emerged from the mobs of Paris with political beliefs sympathetic to those who shed blood for the cause of liberty. Most of his initial observations described the Assembly of Notables in Versailles as pompous windbags playing out “the follies of nations in their dotage.” Even the Marquis de Lafayette, a member of the assembly, suggested to Jefferson that perhaps the group should change its name to “not able.” Eventually though, the magnitude of the situation revealed itself to Jefferson and hope for a French republic replaced his mockery.¹⁹

Jefferson became so optimistic for the prospect of a French republic that he informed James Monroe and George Washington that France’s “present disquiet will end well,” and that a “free constitution” should be achieved “without having cost them a drop of blood.” Jefferson’s grave miscalculation soon became self-evident. Violent mobs roamed Paris and perpetrated horrendous acts. As these undertakings foreshadowed the carnage of Saint Domingue’s so-called *Black Jacobins*, Jefferson conveyed stark images of the tempest that raged in the streets to John Jay. He told of “60,000 citizens . . . armed with the muskets of the Bastille” marching into the capital and roaring “vive la nation.” Revolutionaries “of all forms and conditions” brandished a myriad of weapons from “pistols [to] . . . pruning hooks” as they rallied for the cause of *liberté*. Yet even as Jefferson continued to describe the mob violence and decapitations throughout July and early August, he remained convinced that such exploits were necessary to the success of the revolution.²⁰

Jefferson “saw so plainly the legitimacy” of the mob atrocities he witnessed “with [his] own eyes.” For him these events merely represented a process that rendered to France “as clean a canvass to work on as we had in America.” Jefferson surmised that the

temporary hostilities would pass, and “the good sense of man” would reclaim the country. He asserted that man’s “qualifications for self-government” could reign supreme if “reason [was] left free to exert her force.” The brutality of the French Revolution led Jefferson to believe that democracy could be forged in violence and shaped with republican ideology. The natural rights of men, as he had previously concluded, urged them to feed the tree of liberty with the blood of villains as well as the blameless. Without such a precious and costly sacrifice, man would become complacent in his freedom and cheapen the very nature of democracy.²¹

Jefferson’s reflections upon revolutionary France also led him to contemplate “the question [w]hether one generation of men has a right to bind another.” Though he based his question in the context of political authority and not slavery, his conclusions offer insight into his later diplomatic interpretation of the Haitian Revolution. Jefferson maintained that a generational government could exist whereas entirely new laws and representatives came about every nineteen years. He furthered his position by declaring the “self evident” truth “that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living,” and that no living man should be governed by the laws of the dead. Jefferson presumed that the people of a society, even the sub-altern, should not be subjected to oppressive archaic laws and had a moral obligation to future generations to revolt against such tyranny. A broad interpretation of these admissions suggests that Jefferson intended for these principles to apply to all oppressed peoples regardless of color. The validity of such an interpretation shall always be debated and overshadowed by Jefferson’s earlier racial misconceptions. Yet Jefferson’s own grandiose, all-encompassing avowals shed light on

the possibility that his diplomatic decisions concerning the Haitian Revolution were driven more by financial concerns than by racial fears.²²

As Jefferson acknowledged, “the rights of the whole can be no more than the sum of the rights of the individuals.” The egalitarian nature of such statements opened the possibility of persons like Toussaint L’Ouverture, a former slave, making a declaration of liberty for him and other Saint Domingan rebels on the basis of individual freedom. The implementation of republican ideology for the cause of rebellious slaves became evident as the American press chronicled the Haitian Revolution and characterized Toussaint as a hero. Some Americans accepted these representations, and of course, many others refused to believe blacks capable of governing themselves. While Jefferson admired the growing effect of American democracy on Europe, he remained unaware of the impact of republican ideology on an island colony so essential to American trade until 1791.²³

Though Jefferson correctly identified the influence of the young republic from across the Atlantic he did not foresee American political thought immediately extending into the Caribbean colonies. Yet a mere eighteen months later the blacks of Saint Domingue, ripe with republican ideology and its “voice of liberty,” would revolt against the tyranny of the French colonial planter class. As Jefferson viewed “the insurrection of their Negroes” with some trepidation, most of his concern lay chiefly with “matters of commerce” and the economic stability of his fledgling nation.²⁴

American merchants had established a firm commercial relationship with the West Indies by the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1790 America boasted nearly five hundred merchant ships engaged in open trade with Saint Domingue. The island represented one of the wealthiest and busiest colonies in the western hemisphere. Its

strategic position prevented a British monopoly on Caribbean trade, offered a military vantage point, and created a climate and soil excellent for agriculture. Financial records for 1789 held that the colony accounted for more than one third of France's entire foreign trade. The colony produced over 200,000 tons of commodities annually which equaled approximately 130 million dollars. By 1790, the colony's officially registered commerce equaled all of America's foreign trade, and Saint Domingue's illegal trade most likely produced equal amounts of wealth. The vast array of commodities traded with the island colony included fish, lumber, manufactured wares, guns, ammunition, and gunpowder. Saint Domingue also exported massive quantities of molasses, cotton, indigo, coffee, and sugar. Foreign nations across the globe sought out the shining jewel of the French West Indies. America alone consumed two-thirds of all the coffee and sugar produced in Saint Domingue. While all of these goods held indispensable value for American merchants, the greatest value of Saint Domingue was the large quantities of American exports it consumed. The American market would drown in excess products without the colony's ports open to America's over-production and exports. The United States needed Saint Domingue for a healthy balance of trade. Boukman's insurrection and the subsequent revolution complicated that balance and required Jefferson to weigh republican ideals against economic prosperity.²⁵

As a result of this expansive trade network, American foreign policy began to focus on Saint Domingue during George Washington's administration. In 1789, shortly before the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, Washington ascended to the presidency and appointed Jefferson as Secretary of State. To carry out his policy Washington relied heavily upon the suggestions, advice, and decisions of his fellow Virginian. Jefferson

supervised all diplomatic and commercial decisions involving Saint Domingue during Washington's first term. Though Jefferson expressed a kindred feeling towards France and its plight as a republic, his primary concern centered on the financial stability of the United States. Knowing that Saint Domingue had immense commercial wealth and provided a vast amount of revenue for the United States, Jefferson positioned the American economy to take full advantage of the colony. In 1790, amidst the revolution and as a result of its economic woes, France began to place limitations on commercial trade between the United States and Saint Domingue. In response Jefferson immediately conveyed his belief to William Short, an American envoy in Saint Domingue, that the commercial interests of America within "the French West Indies" must be preserved.²⁶

Jefferson acted on his beliefs by appointing Sylvanus Bourne as consul to Hispaniola instead of France. The appointment alluded that America would recognize Saint Domingue's independence from France. Jefferson interpreted the commercial treaty of 1778 and the consular convention of 1788 with France as stipulating that America could appoint a consul directly to a foreign colony instead of the appointment going through the colony's controlling nation. France quickly and curtly disagreed. Hoping to stall a reaction from Paris, Jefferson did not officially recognize Bourne as a consul and within a year he resigned from the position. Although the United States appeared to placate France, the situation served as a warning. Jefferson's appointment of Bourne became America's first non-military aggressive action towards France over the commercial trade of Saint Domingue. Jefferson prepared to defend America's commercial interests and financial stability.

After the insurrection of Saint Domingue began, the Washington administration saw an opportunity to increase American trade. When Jean de Ternant, the French minister to America, asked Washington for help in Saint Domingue, Washington seized the moment. The president replied that America would “render every aid in its power to quell the alarming insurrection of the Negroes of Hispaniola.” The new republic of France had a desperate need to increase its financial revenue due to its unstable economic relations with Great Britain and other European countries. Washington’s administration answered the cry for help with open coin purses. The American capitalization of Saint Domingan trade began with a promise of support for imperialist France and commercial profit. As Secretary of State, Jefferson became the architect of these policies.²⁷

Chapter 2

“Nor the Wish to Intermeddle,” 1791-1796

Unrest in Saint Domingue was widespread by the spring of 1791. Shortly before Boukman’s uprising, other black and slave revolts had surged and expired throughout the island. Most notably, Vincent Ogé led an armed band of free mulattoes against French authority and even acquired weapons from American abolitionists. His platform called for enfranchisement of free blacks only and allowed for slavery to exist within the colony. Despite the continuation of slavery within his plan, the militant abolitionists hoped to at least disrupt the plantation system periodically. Ogé’s attempt failed and he met with the French executioner in March of 1791. Such revolts became commonplace as the mother country convulsed under its own pains of revolution, and Secretary of State Jefferson watched and waited for the ports of opportunity to open wide for American commerce.²⁸

On May 13, 1791, about three months before Boukman avenged his people, Jefferson wrote to his “would-be” Consul Sylvanus Bourne in Hispaniola and American diplomat Fulwar Skipwith in Saint Martinique. Both letters stressed the importance of America’s new “train of unparalleled prosperity” and noted that “a formal acknowledgement of [American] Consuls in the French colonies” remained “inconvenient” at the present time. Furthermore, Jefferson argued that the colonial unrest in Saint Domingue stood “as a family affair,” and that America had “neither the right nor the wish to intermeddle.” Jefferson shrewdly examined the unfolding disorder within

Saint Domingue and strongly wished to capitalize on the situation despite any kindred feelings towards France, prejudices, or republican ideology. Intervention by Jefferson's envoys would have jeopardized America's economic stake in the island. The "strong link of mutual necessity" now became a pipeline of American prosperity that "not a nation under the sun enjoy[ed] more." Jefferson apprehensively welcomed the colonial instability as long as America continued to receive financial gains from France's woes.²⁹

While these slave uprisings continued less than seven hundred miles from the American South, Jefferson entertained an enlightening correspondence with Benjamin Banneker, a black mathematician and astronomer. In his letter to Jefferson of August 19, 1791, Banneker proudly professed to be of the "African race," emphasizing that all races had been "endowed ... with the same faculties." He petitioned Jefferson to "embrace every opportunity, to eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas" which led others to view blacks with "an eye of contempt." To illustrate the potential for achievement within his race, Banneker included a copy of his recently completed almanac. Jefferson responded favorably by stating that "such proofs" demonstrated "that nature has given to our black brethren talents equal to those of the other colors of men." Jefferson furthered his opinion by attributing any "appearance of ... want" in blacks "to the degraded condition of their existence." This marked a clear position for Jefferson concerning blacks. His previous prejudices in *Notes on the State of Virginia* had weakened and given way to a more positive racial philosophy. Although Jefferson would indeed struggle with the belief in a fully peaceful coexistence between whites and blacks for the rest of his days, he remained hopeful of such an accomplishment. Even as reports of Oge's revolt and other "serious disorders" poured in, Jefferson acknowledged the potential of blacks

and certainly could remove any hindrances from his thoughts in order to procure wealth for Federalist merchant or Southern planter markets.³⁰

Throughout 1791 Federalist thought dominated the arena of American government. Congress and Washington's cabinet made certain that commerce outweighed slavery as the nation's major concern. Jefferson, though he often supported the southern planters over foreign commerce, aligned himself somewhat with the Federalists' diplomatic agenda, acknowledging the need for a healthy foreign trade in order for the agrarian portion of American society to reap the benefits. The Washington administration commissioned Jefferson to begin collecting information on America's commerce early in 1791. The newly formed government compiled a meticulous catalog of commodities, amounts, and locations where these items were most traded. Jefferson had a direct hand in the gathering of this data, and his specific focus on trade with Saint Domingue revealed the importance of this colony. The vast quantities of molasses, sugar, coffee, rum, and excess American wares that flowed in and out of the island made it a major port for Caribbean-American trade. With the hope of further entrenching American trade in the region, Washington's administration took notice of Jefferson's *Report on the Privileges and Restrictions on the Commerce of the United States in Foreign Countries*. The administration then positioned itself in support of France against the slave uprising in Saint Domingue, believing this to be the most economically beneficial decision at the time, as its actions would demonstrate. Though the fear of influence from this slave rebellion lodged itself in the minds of southern planters, nationally it grew to become only a secondary issue in the early 1790's due to Washington's foreign policy and the growth of the American economy.³¹

International tensions between Great Britain, France, and Spain began to change the position of the United States. The Franco-American alliance had clearly strengthened in the 1780s as a result of French aid offered to the colonists during the Revolutionary War. Yet France had provided support with a primary consideration for its own interests. America now took the same philosophy in their support of France amidst their ally's internal and external strife. By late 1791 Franco-American relations began to slowly weaken as Britain and France moved ever closer to war and trade became increasingly difficult. In October of 1791 Fulwar Skipwith reported to Jefferson that the ports within Martinique, a French territory in the Caribbean, were "shut against [American] flour." Later that same month Louis Alexandre, a French diplomat writing from Bayonne, also warned Jefferson that Paris might suspend American free-port status within Bayonne as well.³²

Jefferson quickly wrote to William Short, the American minister to France, and urged him to express "our sincere attachment to France and all it's [sic] dominions" and particularly "to ... our neighbors ... whose interests had some common points of union with ours, in matters of commerce." Jefferson wished to continue "furnishing [Saint Domingue] the necessaries of life in exchange for sugar and coffee for our own consumption" despite the hostilities that plagued the island. The delicate situation required Jefferson to offer aid to France but not an excessive amount that would cause any reprisal from Britain. Earlier, while Jefferson and Washington visited Virginia, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton took it upon himself to provide the French minister M. de Ternant with one thousand arms and forty thousand dollars from the treasury. Hamilton, true to fashion, believed the request to fall within his jurisdiction and

the wishes of Washington. Annoyed at Hamilton's assumption of power, Jefferson now cautiously denied any additional requests from France. Yet even as the complications mounted, Jefferson and the entire Washington administration knew that the growth and stability of the American economy depended on healthy trade with both Great Britain and France. The total of American exports purchased by these two countries equaled nearly eleven million dollars, about sixty percent of the total exports, at the end of the fiscal year in 1792.³³

The Washington administration attempted to enact new trade agreements with France, hoping to maintain profits with their long-time partner. Throughout late 1791 and 1792 Jefferson asked for added concessions for America concerning Saint Domingue. In 1792 Edmund Genet, the new French minister to America, received orders to negotiate a treaty that would produce unrestricted trade between the United States and France's colonies in the Caribbean. Due to various disagreements on the part of both countries the attempt failed, and as no surprise, during this time America and France made no increase in trade. Jefferson repeatedly attempted to fully open trade between France and America in Saint Domingue but with no success. Because of this major hindrance to American commerce, Washington and many in Congress turned to Great Britain which added to the complexity of Caribbean trade.³⁴

Great Britain and Spain finally declared war against France in 1793. Immediately thereafter, Great Britain and Spain began their occupation of Saint Domingue under the guise of restoring order to the colony. Spain took control of the eastern part of the island, renaming it San Domingo, and Britain seized western Saint Domingue. Diplomatic relations began to unravel existing commercial alliances, and new trade agreements

needed to be established among all of the major powers of the 1790's. The Washington administration had unofficially pledged their assistance to France to defend Saint Domingue against Britain and Spain prior to the British and Spanish occupation of important commercial ports on the island. Washington feebly hoped that the fighting between Britain and France would center in Europe, leaving the Caribbean open for American traders. However, after the British and Spanish occupation of Hispaniola, American neutrality seemed impossible. If America remained neutral during the present war, it risked the loss of ships to each country that could accuse the United States of trading contraband with its enemy. In addition, America's reputation for smuggling in gulf waters enhanced the possibility of being pulled into the war. With warring armies near their borders, America's dream of territorial expansion would swiftly vanish. Though Washington had announced a declaration of neutrality in April 1793, his administration deftly saw the possible consequences of a continuation of this policy and speedily made the decision to sign the Jay Treaty with Britain. This treaty would cement the relationship between the United States and its greatest commercial partner. Since Britain controlled most of the major Caribbean ports, the treaty offered American traders British protection and continued prosperity. The agreement marked a pivotal turn for American allegiances that had been firmly established since the inception of the country. The Treaty of Alliance with France had unofficially ended.³⁵

The problematical situation surrounding Saint Domingue presented new difficulties in foreign relations for America. Adding to the complexity, the former slave turned military leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, skillfully played all opposing sides against one another. He possessed strategic abilities and a keen political understanding which

attracted a large force under his command. In 1793, Toussaint and his men joined Spanish forces at the beginning of their occupation based on Madrid's promise to abolish slavery in San Domingo. By 1794, however, Spain had taken no actions towards fulfilling this promise, and as the British gained control of the western part of the island, they reinstated slavery over the rebelling free areas. During this same time, France, haphazardly recognizing the potential of the slave rebels, had partially and weakly attempted to abolish slavery in Saint Domingue. The French hoped to quell the slave insurrections and concentrate their forces against the British who occupied some of the most valuable ports on the island. On February 4, 1794 the French Convention declared the abolition of slavery within France and its colonies, though the enforcement of such a decree was heavily ignored by the whites within Saint Domingue. Nevertheless, Toussaint seized the opportunity and pledged his firm allegiance to France while in the process declaring that he and his men had always been loyal subjects. Disheartened over Spain's failed promise and seeking to maintain any abolition of slavery in Saint Domingue, Toussaint and his seasoned men deserted the Spanish and marched against the English in 1794. The black general claimed to fight under the French flag yet acted independently and refused to recognize the French provincial government or cooperate with the official French military unless their goals matched his own. Toussaint's enemies included any force that did not promote the complete abolition of slavery within Saint Domingue.³⁶

As the individual ex-slave armies, including Toussaint's, began to fight independently, each force sought out its own alliances with its own agenda, but Toussaint's army seemed to achieve the greatest success. Separately, the French forces

had faced defeat against the British in Saint Domingue, but with the help of Toussaint and his men they began a victorious campaign. Toussaint's men, as well as the other ex-slave armies, possessed an intimate knowledge of the island's terrain and the inherent ability to survive in an extremely inhospitable climate. These factors alone made all the additional black and mulatto troops valuable assets to the French army. Toussaint's military prowess, however, set him apart. Yet Toussaint's tendency to act independently and his desires for freedom and eventually enfranchisement of Saint Domingan blacks and mulattos became his undoing. Toussaint's autonomous nature caused America, Britain, Spain, and France to respectively desire and fear the possibility and repercussions of an independent Saint Domingue.

In 1794 the administration transformed its appearance and platform. Jefferson, for personal and political reasons, retired to Monticello, and late in the year Washington devised a new strategy. Through an independent Saint Domingue, America could gain an enormous economic victory, but a major obstacle still remained. A large percentage of the American South continued to favor French colonial authority on the island. Due to the violence of the slave uprisings, the South welcomed a large number of planters from Saint Domingue during the years 1793-1794 despite state-level restrictions concerning the importation of Saint Domingan slaves. By 1797 French refugees in the United States had reached upwards of twenty thousand. White French émigrés from the Caribbean greatly influenced American politics, helped shape the constituency of the major political parties, and secured the Haitian Revolution as a major political issue throughout the 1790s. In 1794, the federal government gathered roughly fifteen thousand dollars in emergency funds for the Saint Domingan refugees, and state governments also supplied

aide on the local level. The South apprehensively embraced their fellow slave holders. Because of vivid press accounts and the de-humanizing nature of white hegemony towards blacks, the South still harbored a fear that slaves brought from Saint Domingue would sow the seeds of revolt throughout their own slave quarters. The state of Virginia passed legislation in 1793 that delivered capital punishment to anyone who “excit[ed] slaves to insurrection or murder,” and in 1795 North Carolina completely prohibited the importation of slaves from the West Indies. As the fear of Saint Domingan slaves inspiring revolts in the South and the southern sympathy extended towards the white émigrés increased, the Federalist government continued to cast their economic lot with Britain.³⁷

While Federalists gravitated towards Britain and their control of Saint Domingue, they soon became labeled as Anglophiles and Republicans as Francophiles. However, the broadness of these stereotypes over-simplified the true nature of the Washington administration. The cabinet fully agreed on the need for strong trade relations between America and Saint Domingue. Britain merely controlled the colony at the time, and the Republican lean towards France increasingly became the minority opinion. France had lost control of Saint Domingue, and as more Caribbean ports fell into British hands, the Federalists gained political ground with their decision to back Britain.³⁸

America had aligned itself with Great Britain for economic gain with the Jay Treaty, but not at the total expense of its relationship with France. By signing the treaty with Britain the United States hoped to trade openly with the British and the French within Saint Domingue. Although both nations discouraged America from trading with the other, neither had the ability to completely stop America from trading with whomever

it pleased. As the war between Britain and France continued, the seizure of American ships became more common. France confiscated the most vessels within the French West Indies. Since Britain controlled the major ports in Saint Domingue and France needed more supplies from America than it could purchase, France was forced into seizing American ships. Unconcerned with foreign policy, American traders and smugglers conducted business with any country that could purchase their goods, and Britain soon became the primary consumer. The outcome seemed obvious to American merchants. According to Joseph Fauchet, the French minister to the United States, the seizure of American ships in Saint Domingue clearly increased hostility between the two countries. The American public, including large portions of the South, became increasingly anti-French.³⁹

Due to merchant influence in the American economy and in the government, “anti-France” protests began to occur with greater frequency. The merchants spoke their will, and the American government championed their cause. It appeared that Washington’s administration had succeeded in avoiding a war with Britain and could openly continue to trade with the colony of Saint Domingue.⁴⁰

After Congress officially ratified the Jay Treaty in 1795, foreign relations between the United States and France quickly soured. The British established a blockade around Saint Domingue and firmly controlled the major commerce of the island. Britain had almost succeeded in cutting off France from supplies, but American smugglers still maintained trade with the French occupied ports of Saint Domingue. Again American economic interests superseded government decisions. A dependency for American goods in Saint Domingue grew from blatant smuggling, and healthy profits followed. The

United States had created the need for unrestricted trade between itself and the ports of Saint Domingue through its own *illegal* activities. The war between Britain and France made American goods a necessity and Saint Domingue a captive market.⁴¹

France recognized the severity of the economic situation within Saint Domingue and quickly sent its envoys to negotiate with America. French diplomats desperately asked the Washington administration for aid but to no avail. As the strain of war took its toll on the French economy, France ended its war with Spain but continued battling Britain in order to salvage the most profitable half of the island. The Treaty of Basel officially made the eastern portion of the island a Spanish possession in 1795. Spain renamed their new acquisition Santo Domingo. Though Spain now owned Santo Domingo, it did not control the area. Rebels who fought against outsiders and each other wrought havoc throughout the territory. Because of this unrest, Spain never firmly established a strong colonial power in Santo Domingo, and as a result, America traded openly there. This made Saint Domingue an even greater financial prize. If America could control the trade of Saint Domingue with the absence of French or British interference, as in Santo Domingo, the increase in profits would be substantial.

In late 1795 France appeared to have lost its hold on Saint Domingue. At that time the Washington administration understood that Britain directed the majority of commercial trade throughout Saint Domingue. By 1796 the Federalists openly supported the Jay Treaty with Britain and showed little concern for diplomatic relations with France. Despite setbacks to Franco-America relations such as the "Citizen Genet Affair," staunch Republicans took the opposite stand and promoted good standing with France while turning away from the newfound alliance with Britain. The French government

needed America's support if they planned to regain economic and political control of Saint Domingue. But again the Washington administration was not openly forthcoming with any assistance. France made one last effort before the presidential election to capitalize on the sympathies of the Republican Party. On the night before the election of 1796, new French Minister Pierre Adet followed direct orders from his government and severed diplomatic relations with the United States. This action moved Washington to alert his government "against the insidious wiles of foreign influence." France's effort failed, and John Adams, a firm Federalist, won the election of 1796.⁴²

Although Thomas Jefferson ascended to the vice presidency under Adams, he had little effect on the Saint Domingue situation for the next four years. Federalists hailed the election as a great victory. Jefferson now assumed a political position that a short time earlier John Adams had bluntly described as "nothing" and possibly "everything." Republicans, grasped blissfully to the latter part of Adams' description, and desperately hoped that Jefferson "could be everything." They were bitterly disappointed. The Republicans exerted influence occasionally but mostly watched and waited for the repercussions of the Adams administration to take effect. The two clashing political parties still saw the solution to economic control over Saint Domingue differently, but both desired increased wealth from the colony.

Chapter 3

“The Murderers of Our Own Children,” 1797-1800

Six months after President John Adams waxed poetically at his inaugural ceremony on the faults of the Articles of the Confederation and its “insurrection, threatening some great national calamity,” the new vice-president wrote to a friend concerned with the on-going slave insurrection in “St. Domingo.” Seeing the Haitian Revolution as a bloody look into the future, Jefferson expressed the need for an emancipation of American slaves. Knowing full well the complexity of the issue, he surmised that an end to the peculiar institution “be a matter of compromise between the passions, the prejudices, and the real difficulties” of the whole affair. In his mind emancipation coupled with colonization to Africa or the West Indies seemed the only true solution to avoid the violence of Saint Domingue coming to America. He stressed the urgency of action by emphatically announcing that, “if something is not done, and done soon, we shall be the murderers of our own children.” But these graphic images in Jefferson’s mind still paled in comparison to his fear of financial ruin. As a result, the Sage of Monticello abandoned any serious attempts to bring about emancipation.⁴³

A conflicted Jefferson toiled with the necessity of economic stability, the immorality of slavery, the need for emancipation, and the fear of black reprisals. However, to merely conclude that Jefferson existed in a heightened state of apprehension and fear of freed slaves would be a grave mistake. The vivid accounts of slave violence in Saint Domingue fueled a natural fear that, while clearly linked to a racial

conceptualization, can be separated from the individual paradigm. His fear of violence or harm transcended race. The “murderers” are represented as white not as black, and it is the *sin* of the parents that causes the demise of the children. The *sin* exposed by Jefferson is the denial of emancipation while “justice, policy, and necessity” battle due to a fear of inescapable debt. Any racial fear that Jefferson might have possessed, and probably did possess to some degree, became overshadowed by his fear of financial instability for the country and himself.⁴⁴

As the Adams administration distanced its policies from Jefferson, he anxiously contemplated the financial woes of the country as well as his own. In 1798 he wrote to John Taylor and expressed his dissatisfaction with the Adams administration and also addressed his fear of debt. According to Jefferson, until “the reign of witches pass[ed] over,” the American people would suffer “deeply in spirit, . . . incurring the horrors of war, and long oppressions of enormous public debt.” In 1816 Jefferson again gave another vivid account by describing “public debt” as the “fore horse” of a “frightful team” that left “in its train wretchedness and oppression.” Having such phrases as “the horrors of war,” “long oppressions,” and “wretchedness and oppression” so close to a mention of “public debt” clearly denotes the importance of Jefferson’s intense fear concerning national financial ruin.⁴⁵

Jefferson illustrated the ranking of his financial fear superior to his racial fear when, as vice president, he professed the need for emancipation and colonization, but made no attempts to actually bring this about. In Jefferson’s mind, emancipation of slaves, whether his own or in the South, foreshadowed a complete economic downfall. In 1820 Jefferson would metaphorically summarize these thoughts with the passage “we

have the wolf by the ears ... Justice is in one scale and self-preservation in the other.” A few years after this epiphany, Jefferson also surmised that emancipation and colonization to Africa or the West Indies would require somewhere in the range of twenty-five years and 900 million dollars. He further concluded that the immense cost coupled with the fact that many would simply “not go” made the idea “impossible to look at ... a second time.” Due to the Adams administration’s exclusion of Jefferson from key diplomatic decisions, his inaction towards Saint Domingue from 1797 through 1800 can be seen clearly. As he patiently waited for “spells” of the Federalist “witches” to dissolve, he held firm to his wolf’s ears with inaction.⁴⁶

While Jefferson toiled with the fear that debt would destroy him and the country, events within Saint Domingue, mainly the ascension of Toussaint L’Ouverture to power, routed a new course in diplomacy. This new course caused the Adams administration to deal with L’Ouverture directly. The revolutionary leader emerged as a formidable adversary of the British and a rebellious self-proclaimed ally to the French. Although aligned with the young Republic of France, Toussaint often acted independently. He exploited every opportunity to achieve racial freedom, equality, and eventually colonial emancipation from France. Independence might prove dangerous for Saint Domingue. This meant breaking away from French support and acquiring a formidable enemy in the process. His lip service to the French government was an attempt to at least temporarily achieve a respite. Though Toussaint seemed to gracefully move atop his precipice of diplomatic deception, any mis-step would end in disaster. He quickly assumed control over the French military forces within the colony, and on May 1, 1797 bestowed upon himself the title of General in Chief of the French Army in Saint Domingue. Many

French authorities worried about indulging Toussaint with such power, but the French government knew that without the support of his forces in Saint Domingue, France would lose the colony to Britain.

In August of 1797, after L'Ouverture received his new title, he enacted plans for the independence of Saint Domingue. He forced Léger-Félicité Santhonax, the highest-ranking French official in Saint Domingue, to leave the island. The Executive Directory, outraged over Toussaint's actions, immediately sent General Thomas Hédouville to restore French control. Toussaint refused to recognize Hédouville's authority and established himself as the true representative of France within Saint Domingue. General Hédouville soon realized that the colony now rested in the hands of an ex-slave hell-bent on creating a Saint Domingue of his own design.⁴⁷

By 1797 Britain, strained financially and militarily, strongly considered withdrawing from Saint Domingue. The cost of the campaign had exceeded British funding and the number of troops lost to disease and Toussaint's forces climbed higher everyday. Britain's difficulties increased when Napoleon forced Austria to sign the Treaty of Campo Formio on October 27, 1797 which broke apart the last remnants of the First Coalition and left Britain virtually alone. General Hédouville attempted to exploit Britain's declining position and offered terms for British withdrawal, but Toussaint again rebuffed the French general. He curtly refused to recognize Hédouville's authority and continued his fight against the British.

The Adams administration attentively peered at the developments in Saint Domingue. America's leaders and merchants feared that Britain would soon take advantage of Toussaint's position and negotiate exclusive trade rights, thus seriously

injuring American commerce in the Caribbean. Adams, with the support of his cabinet, sent word to London that American exclusion from commerce in Saint Domingue would not be tolerated. Adams wrote to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering as early as October 14, 1797 stating, “Santhonax’s departure for France will be no relief to our commerce, nor will any negotiations going on, or treaties we can make, until our vessels arm in their own defense.” Adams now stiffened in response to commercial interference from Toussaint, the French government, or British forces. The long-time Anglophile president now deviated from the traditional Federalist response and prepared for the possibility of military action to protect American commerce in Saint Domingue.⁴⁸

In 1798 just as Adams had feared, the commander of the British forces in Saint Domingue, General Thomas Maitland, met with Toussaint to discuss terms for a British withdrawal, plus an immediate recognition of independence. The account of French General Pamphile de Lacroix even cited that Britain would recognize Toussaint as King of Saint Domingue. Further provisions stated that Britain would not interfere with the government of Saint Domingue “during the entire duration of the present war.” The clause “present war” referred to the on-going conflict between Great Britain and France. The same provision also insured that L’Ouverture and his colonial forces did not interfere with the British colony of Jamaica. Britain stood to benefit substantially. By plucking Saint Domingue, arguably France’s most valuable colony, out of its enemy’s hand, Britain could then profit through trade privileges and supply additional troops towards the war effort. As Maitland’s negotiations concluded, he had gained exclusive trade rights with the colony in exchange for the recognition of Saint Domingue as an independent country. However, General Maitland had acted on his own accord. The clandestine

summit had taken place without the approval of the British government, which remained unwilling to give such lofty concessions to L'Ouverture or any credence to Maitland's negotiations. At the same time, the American government refused to recognize Maitland's agreement and demanded that American diplomats be allowed to meet with their British counterparts.⁴⁹

The Adams administration promptly began steps to insure that Maitland's negotiations were declared unofficial and that American commercial interests retained access to Saint Domingue. Rufus King, the American minister to Great Britain, received knowledge of the agreements between Toussaint and Maitland and immediately notified Secretary of State Timothy Pickering. Pickering foresaw the potential for profit from the island as early as November 1798, and made clear to Jacob Mayer, an American consul to Cap Français, that an independent Saint Domingue would remove all impediments to American commerce. Unfortunately, the secretary of state had neglected to imagine the possibility of Britain arranging exclusive trade rights. General Maitland's unsanctioned treaty threatened to block the United States from prize ports in the Caribbean. King continued to inform his superiors as events in Saint Domingue unfolded. Late in 1798 King met with British officials, and under direct orders from the president and secretary of state, he informed the British government that America must be allowed to trade with Saint Domingue. In addition King stated that if Britain recognized Saint Domingue as an independent nation, then any country could maintain the right to trade there. America simply refused to give up its Saint Domingan commerce. In response, Britain saw an opportunity to hurt France economically, but not wanting to relinquish control of Saint

Domingue's most valuable ports, granted American merchants only limited commercial access.⁵⁰

A short time before King's diplomatic conferences concerning Maitland's agreement, America entered the Quasi War with France prompted by the French seizure of American vessels trading with Britain. The main body of the conflict between America and France consisted of only two naval battles in the Caribbean. France had focused the bulk of its concern and forces elsewhere. Napoleon prepared for the conquest of Egypt and the projected assault of the English-led Second Coalition. Because the majority of the French army was stationed in the opposite hemisphere, and because America never issued a formal declaration of war against France, the Quasi War became an apt title. Despite its scale, this conflict further complicated the matter of American trade with Saint Domingue. If Saint Domingue maintained colonial status, then Adams could threaten to blockade the colony's ports under the Articles of War. Such an option seemed unlikely considering the insufficient size of the American navy and the impossibility of preventing any significant amount of smuggling. An official recognition of an independent Saint Domingue meant free and open trade, but would further the conflict between America and France. If the United States refused to officially acknowledge Saint Domingue as independent, it would allow American merchants to continue open trade with the colony and leave the matter of the island's status to France. Economically, *unofficial recognition* allowed the Adams administration to deal directly with Toussaint.⁵¹

As Franco-American relations deteriorated, attacks from French privateers operating out of Saint Domingue became more frequent. In 1797 Secretary of State Pickering reported to Congress that in a mere eleven months France had seized 316

American merchant ships. Adams saw an opportunity to stem some of the French privateering that had cost American merchants vast amounts and concurrently exploit L'Ouverture's weakness. The rebel leader found himself without a major ally. Paris saw him as a mutineer, London saw him as a liability that endangered their control of key Caribbean colonies, and Philadelphia was unwilling to *openly* embrace such an infamous character. An aware Adams asked Congress for a suspension of trade with France, including the French colony of Saint Domingue, with the hope that this suspension would force Toussaint into commercial negotiations with America. Congress complied in the summer of 1798. Though the suspensions lasted only about eight months, they produced their desired effect. American smuggling prevented serious harm to the American economy and hurt Saint Domingue's economy enough to cause Toussaint to realize the definite need for full American trade. Toussaint immediately sent his representative, Joseph Bunel, to Adams with an explicit request to re-open trade between America and Saint Domingue.⁵²

After Adams entered into negotiations with Toussaint, he faced domestic dissention as he openly dealt with the ex-slave turned revolutionary. The administration saw the economic benefits that an independent Saint Domingue represented, but the repercussions of fully recognizing that independence worried the president greatly. He needed to negotiate for American trade but wanted to avoid the appearance of a partnership with Toussaint. Such an alliance would cause alarm throughout the American slave-holding population.⁵³

In March of 1799 Robert Goodloe Harper, a Federalist congressman from South Carolina, started rumors of Toussaint planning to incite slave insurrections throughout the

southern United States. Pickering displayed his diplomatic skills when he succeeded in convincing the representatives from South Carolina that the idea originated with the embittered General Hédouville and that L'Ouverture had refused the general's offer. Republicans and Federalists now worried together that the repercussions from acknowledging the independence of Saint Domingue would not justify any amount of commercial wealth gained from the colony. Fears of race wars and slave insurrections troubled the American populace as they and their government incessantly described Saint Domingue as, "an immense scene of slaughter."⁵⁴

Though American newspapers greedily exaggerated gory tales of Saint Domingue, southern fears were all too real. In 1800, James Monroe, the governor of Virginia, wrote to Jefferson concerning rumors of an impending "negro insurrection" within their home state. Not long afterwards, Virginian authorities uncovered plans for a slave insurrection. The accused architect of the plot, a slave owned by Thomas Prosser called Gabriel, was later charged, captured, and executed along with twenty-six others for their involvement in the conspiracy. The public immediately connected the event with Saint Domingue. Even Monroe later warned that the "scenes" of Saint Domingue "produce[d] an effect on all the people of colour [sic]" throughout the South, and that white men maintained a "duty to be on guard to prevent any mischief resulting from" L'Ouverture's actions. Notwithstanding the lack of any evidence linking Gabriel and Toussaint, American newspapers also quickly fabricated a connection between them. Pro-slavery and anti-slavery papers alike sought to establish a bond between the two insurrectionist leaders. Some journals concluded Gabriel's plot to be a "French plan," and others warned slave owners to "remember ... the tale of St. Domingo's fate" because

“tho’ [sic] Gabriel dies, a host remain.” Jefferson, ever mindful of the “possibility of danger from that quarter,” still pleaded with Monroe to “stay the hand of the executioner” lest others at home and abroad denounce Virginia for “indulg[ing] a principle of revenge.”⁵⁵

While American fears of slave revolt fomented and plots unfolded, President Adams continued his plan to establish an *unofficial recognition* of Saint Domingue. First, Adams re-opened trade with Saint Domingue on February 9, 1799. Then one month later, Adams appointed Edward Stevens to the position of American Consul General to Saint Domingue. Apprehensive of foreign and domestic reactions, he still refused to proclaim any official recognition of an independent Saint Domingue. In April of 1799 Adams wrote to Pickering declaring, “independence is the worst and most dangerous condition [the West Indies] can be in for the United States.” Adams clearly believed that the economic supremacy of the United States over Saint Domingue depended upon the non-recognition of independence for Saint Domingue. The Adams administration traded with Saint Domingue as if it were an independent state, but continued to officially recognize the territory as a colony of France in order to avoid any backlash from politicians at home or in London.⁵⁶

Toussaint L’Ouverture again showed his political prowess during the continued drama between Saint Domingue, the United States, Great Britain, and France. He had attempted to negotiate exclusive trade agreements with Britain through Maitland and at the same time attempted to forge a trade alliance with America. While American involvement altered Toussaint’s economic plans, the major world powers dealt directly with him. The new leader had firmly established his authority on the island. This keen

and deceptive political strategist played the major powers against one another. When rumors surfaced of Toussaint's intent to declare independence in April of 1800, he quickly denied the accusations to the French diplomat, Talleyrand. The French government accepted Toussaint's denial but readied itself to reoccupy Saint Domingue. France wanted no more of the ex-slave general.

While France prepared to reclaim Saint Domingue, Adams issued proclamations that fully opened all trade between the United States and Saint Domingue. These decrees opened ports that had been previously and exclusively under British control to American merchants. The British government acknowledged Adams' decrees in the hope that the presence of additional American goods would hinder France's attempt to re-establish their authority over Saint Domingue. But some naval officers within the British fleet misinterpreted Adams' proclamations as a breach of the finalized trade agreement among Britain, Toussaint, and America on June 13, 1799. As a result of this misinterpretation, some of the British fleet, unaware of London's position, began seizing American merchant vessels who traded in the newly opened ports of Saint Domingue. This action strained the rapport between America and Great Britain that had been established to maintain economic control over the island. Regardless of the hundreds of American traders in the Caribbean, Adams worried that the British would eventually try to press United States commerce out of Saint Domingue and eventually the entire West Indies. He also feared that France would succeed in their attempt to reclaim Saint Domingue under the direction of Napoleon. As the Quasi War continued on, the French fleet seized more American ships. In response Adams concluded that the best course of action lay in signing a treaty with France.⁵⁷

On September 30, 1800, the United States signed the Treaty of Morfontaine. This treaty ended the Quasi War and crafted new trade stipulations for trade between France and America. The treaty stated that colonial commerce would take place through the mother country but made no explicit mention of Saint Domingan trade. Adams' foreign policy towards the island still embraced the idea of an American dominated West Indian commercial market. Without surprise the United States' demand for increased revenues had easily dwarfed L'Ouverture and any problems he presented. With peace between America and France, Adams no longer needed to negotiate with the Caribbean revolutionary. Toussaint stood between Adams and American profits from Saint Domingue. Though the revolutionary leader gained some success, America and France would eventually destroy him while Britain abandoned him. America's insatiable economic hunger sealed L'Ouverture's fate.

American merchants and smugglers had sold weapons, ammunition, and supplies to all parties involved in Saint Domingue. The foreign woes of Britain and France profited Americans whenever possible. With United States goods moving into Saint Domingue, Toussaint succeeded in establishing his authority in the west and extended his control to the Spanish side of the island, San Domingo. When America entered into the Treaty of Morfontaine, an outraged Toussaint placed trade sanctions on America. He trusted American smugglers would continue to bring him military supplies and the injuries sustained by the American economy would force Adams to the negotiating table. The sanctions included the closing of certain ports, increased tariffs on American goods, and severe restrictions on American consignees. Toussaint recognized the shift in American policy and hoped to align the United States with his goals. Unfortunately for

him, Saint Domingue's dependency upon American commerce proved to be too great. He soon repealed or reduced most of his sanctions on American trade, but in a short period he would need to deal with a new president.⁵⁸

Chapter 4

Re-Thinking the “Dangerous Example,” 1800-1806

The election of 1800 produced a different set of circumstances. When Thomas Jefferson took charge of the American government, he immediately began to build on the Treaty of Morfontaine and embarked on revitalizing America’s wounded relationship with France. Yet while a concerned Jefferson attempted to nurse the spirit of *fraternité*, he also planned to retain Saint Domingan trade. While secretary of state he had calculated the total revenue earned from Saint Domingue and Santo Domingo between the years 1791 and 1793. With this information he commanded expert knowledge of the potential commercial wealth within Hispaniola. Saint Domingue opened its harbors wide to American exports, and greedily consumed a multitude of products. These products included mainly, but not exclusively, lumber, iron, coal, rice, wheat, lead shot, and gun powder. Without this market, and with none to take its place, America would have choked on its excess goods. Jefferson, like many presidents, now needed to balance foreign diplomacy with domestic prosperity. The fear of Saint Domingue’s “dangerous example” to the southern states became overshadowed by an America crippled with public debt. Once again Jefferson’s economic fears decided his foreign policy towards Saint Domigue.⁵⁹

According to Louis Pichon, the French chargé d’affaires, Jefferson pledged in 1801 “to furnish [the French] army and fleet with everything and to reduce Toussaint to

starvation,” provided that France make peace with England. Pichon in turn confirmed Jefferson’s promise to the French government, fully convinced of Jefferson’s support. At face value this document appears to suggest that the Jefferson administration promoted the colonial subjugation of Saint Domingue by France. Often misrepresented as Jefferson’s own words, this document is in fact a paraphrased version of Pichon’s conversation with the Virginian. The validity of these statements must be questioned. While Pichon states that Jefferson vowed to supply the French army and navy with provisions, Jefferson did not completely fulfill this declaration. American merchants continuously sold arms to French, British, and rebel troops in Saint Domingue. All the while Jefferson made no serious attempts to stop this practice. Though it remains highly unlikely that Pichon falsified his account, it is possible that he misinterpreted the exchange.⁶⁰

Secretary of State James Madison had assured Pichon just days before his meeting with Jefferson that the “United States would never ... favor anything that might injure the Republic [of France] in its rights and prerogatives” concerning Saint Domingue. But in the same breath he cryptically added that “the United States accepted things in that colony without attempting to judge them.” Even Jefferson indicated, by Pichon’s own account, that if France somehow suspended commerce between America and Saint Domingue then the United States would “fall out with Toussaint” regardless of public opposition against the black leader.⁶¹

Jefferson exhibited a strong belief in manifest destiny concerning Saint Domingue, New Orleans, and eventually all of the Louisiana Territory. In 1795 he professed that “the force of events hands over the French colonies to us; France enjoys

the sovereignty over them and we, the profit from them.” In his first inaugural address Jefferson asserted his desire to promote “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.” He desired monetary gain without the cost of war and without snares from other countries pulling America into war. The events that encompassed Saint Domingue challenged Jefferson’s policies. It now became the president’s turn to cautiously maneuver atop his precipice of diplomatic deception.⁶²

While Jefferson vowed aid to France, he also made no serious attempts to stop American merchants from selling arms to L’Ouverture. When Pichon had confronted the Jefferson administration expressly about the United States’ trade with Toussaint, Madison masterfully replied that the relationship held only mere commercial value, and that America wholeheartedly advocated a return of French control to Saint Domingue. This was again Pichon’s interpretation of the proceedings. Undoubtedly Madison placated the French envoy; when Congress passed legislation prohibiting government arms sales to the Haitian rebels, Jefferson did not heavily enforce the law. Jefferson balanced the dealings with Pichon and Toussaint carefully. If the president showed favor too far in one direction, then the opposite party could possibly ruin America’s commercial benefits in Saint Domingue. Napoleon’s navy and Toussaint’s army stilled possessed enough strength to blockade American goods. Because Jefferson and his administration maintained this delicate balance of trade, the situation in Saint Domingue continued without large-scale French military involvement for most of 1801. Not until France surrounded L’Ouverture and his fate seemed sealed did Jefferson begin firm trade restrictions against the island. Determined to gain France’s favor in order to acquire New Orleans, Jefferson continued to denounce government sponsored arms sales to the rebels

of Saint Domingue though smuggling remained a problem throughout his presidency. He simply sought to cut off Toussaint in order to fill government coffers from the expansion of territory. The color of the rebel leader's skin and the racial fears it sparked became eclipsed by economic opportunity.⁶³

Jefferson had heard rumors of a possible retrocession of the Louisiana Territory from Spain not long after he had taken office. He knew all too well that once France obtained the territory the right of deposit for American merchants might be revoked at the port of New Orleans. Without delay the president readied Robert Livingston, the American minister to France, to protect the United States' commercial rights along the country's essential vein of commerce. The French government began the retrocession process as early as October 1, 1800, but complications slowed the process. On that date Spain began negotiations, but France postponed their military occupation of the territory. War between France and Great Britain had prevented France from shipping deployments of troops past the Caribbean into the Mississippi Valley. Napoleon attempted to station troops in the Louisiana Territory in order to access vast grain supplies for his troops and additional profits to finalize his planned European conquests. To achieve this occupation of the Mississippi Valley he needed to first subdue Saint Domingue.⁶⁴

Napoleon, hoping to move French troops into Saint Domingue, informed the British that if L'Ouverture remained in power, then France would be forced to recognize the independence of the colony. Britain dreaded that an official declaration of independence for Saint Domingue might inspire the slaves in its key Caribbean colonies. Sensing Britain's unease, Napoleon suggested the British blockade permit French forces to occupy Saint Domingue and reestablish French rule. The British quickly agreed. The

circumstances that surrounded Saint Domingue at the end of 1801 had minimized British trade, and the war between France and the Second Coalition neared its end. American smuggling and the destruction of many Saint Domingan plantations from rebel fighting had caused England's profits to shrink, and if Napoleon controlled the island, Britain stood to profit by ending the possibility of Toussaint's influence on its slave holding colonies in the Caribbean.⁶⁵

With London's blessing, Napoleon sent General Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc and 30,000 experienced troops into Saint Domingue. In February of 1802 Napoleon ordered Leclerc to first establish French control over the island and then proceed to the Louisiana Territory. One month later France and Britain signed the Treaty of Amiens ending the long war between the great powers. For Napoleon, this treaty ended all the distractions keeping him from a North American extension of the French Empire. The British forces of the Second Coalition no longer stood as a bulwark in the Caribbean and the subsequent Louisiana Territory.⁶⁶

Napoleon sought to move into Louisiana once Toussaint had been defeated. The extension of the French Empire into North America became a temptation of power and profit that the French dictator could not resist. Tobias Lear, the new American consul on the island, wrote to Madison in March of 1802 and reported that while some of Leclerc's regiments awaited orders to occupy Louisiana, they could not be spared. Jefferson then commented, "What has been called the surrender of Toussaint to Leclerc, I suspect was in reality the surrender of Leclerc to Toussaint." The president immediately increased his attempts to secure American commercial rights in New Orleans. The administration had

expected lengthy retrocession negotiations and feared a French military occupation in close proximity to America, but now they planned to press Napoleon into negotiations.⁶⁷

Jefferson heeded the Treaty of Amiens as a warning. America needed to avoid a French occupation of the Louisiana Territory at all costs. The economic implications of Napoleonic forces in and around New Orleans would prove devastating to American commerce. Westward expansion would cease and the resources of an ever growing population would be severely limited. Napoleon's Caribbean army stood as an imminent threat of possible invasion and an American economic collapse. To hinder Napoleon from advancing in the Caribbean, Jefferson continued his policy of salutary neglect on arms sales in Saint Domingue and American merchants persisted in selling military hardware to any group able to make a purchase.

In an effort to stall or cut off supplies to Toussaint, General Leclerc's forces blockaded all Saint Domingan ports, except the French controlled ports of Cap Français and Port-au-Prince, to American shippers. The Jefferson administration, indignant over these actions, watched helplessly as once again American ships and cargoes were seized. Pichon demanded that Jefferson order American merchants not to trade in prohibited ports, but Jefferson responded that United States merchants in Saint Domingue would not be subject to French military law. He refused to enforce any law prohibiting American commerce in the closed ports of Saint Domingue. He further avoided Pichon's demands by offering the excuse that the power to stop American trade in Saint Domingue rested with the United States Congress, and if debated there, the issues of slavery, independence, and commerce would cause major conflict within the government.⁶⁸

With Jefferson proclaiming to Pichon that his hands were bound by bureaucracy, General Leclerc at once seized American merchant vessels and arrested violators in response to the president's refusal to act. As a result, anti-French sentiment again grew in the United States during 1802. American newspapers widely published anti-French sentiment such as the arrest accounts of merchant sailors and naval heroes John Rodgers and William Davidson. Once released, their published sagas depicted the horrors of Saint Domingue prisons and sent much of the American public, especially the merchant community, into an anti-French frenzy.⁶⁹

Though anti-French feelings grew, a large percentage of southern slave holders still supported French control of Saint Domingue. This opinion stemmed from the widespread fear of possible "Toussaint-inspired" slave revolts in the South. Jefferson sympathized with the apprehension of the South but also capitalized on the profit driven commercial trade with Saint Domingue. The evil oppression of public debt would not enslave American commerce. Most American merchants still desired to trade with the island as a separate entity, but many requested non-recognition of Saint Domingue as an independent country. Jefferson adhered to this policy primarily for economic reasons, not solely because of racial fears. This policy helped to deter France from ever completely controlling Saint Domingue again. But when Napoleon's forces seemed to steer closer to the Mississippi Valley, Jefferson quickly ordered Madison to inform Pichon that American drafts for supplies would be withheld if France planned an expedition into Louisiana. Through this ultimatum Jefferson again sought to protect American commercial interests over any racially motivated dread of inspired slave revolts within the American South.⁷⁰

Leclerc's troops marched further into Saint Domingue and unknowingly towards defeat. The blistering heat and lethal insects on the island washed away the strength of the French soldiers with sweat and blood, as the troops waited desperately for supplies and reinforcements that never arrived. Napoleon, having only recently signed a treaty with Britain in March of 1802, once again prepared for a new war with his old adversary and hoarded supplies. With Napoleon unable to spare any additional troops or goods for the expeditionary forces in Saint Domingue, Leclerc and his men wearied from exhaustion and lack of provisions. Jefferson, in an attempt to force the French dictator's hand, made good on his earlier threat and suspended the drafts of supplies indefinitely and allowed American ships to trade openly with the black rebels of Saint Domingue. Leclerc seemed destined to fail, but through a series of deceptions and in fighting amongst the splintered black rebel factions, French forces took Toussaint prisoner in May of 1802.⁷¹

Despite Leclerc's capture of the black general, a large number of rebels still fought against France. Napoleon's obedient officer fatally ventured to control the uncontrollable. As the French continued their mission, a new enemy appeared. Yellow fever destroyed the last remnants of an already weary French army. At first the disease presented itself as nothing more than the nuisance of an itchy insect bite. Then the swarms brought with them a pestilence of what seemed like biblical proportions. Hosts of mosquitoes brought the death toll to an astounding one hundred or more per day, and jaundiced corpses littered the outskirts of the French camps. Leclerc, also succumbing to the illness, feebly struggled to establish order.⁷²

Upon hearing reports that Leclerc had captured Toussaint, Napoleon believed the colony to be under renewed French control. But rebel factions from within the island prolonged the fighting and obstructed the reestablishment of French colonial rule. In the summer of 1802 Napoleon hastily re-imposed slavery on the colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe, believing that he had restored his dominion over his Caribbean colonies. The rebels of Saint Domingue and even the men who had deserted Toussaint, invigorated by the fear that slavery would return to Saint Domingue, brutally attacked the remaining French forces. This final swell at long last sealed the fate of French control on the island.⁷³

Fatigued from war and illness, Leclerc's body ultimately surrendered to yellow fever on November 2, 1802. Finally acknowledging the grave situation of his soldiers in the Caribbean, Napoleon immediately sent reinforcements and ordered General Donatien de Rochambeau to continue the fight. Rochambeau's attempts to contain the rebels proved no more successful than Leclerc's methods. The warring divisions of blacks and mulattos each competed to claim the throne left vacant by Toussaint, but none showed any desire to return to the old standard of colonial rule. Trusting Rochambeau to restore order, Napoleon concentrated on his European empire. Tension rose quickly between France and Britain, and due to the inadequacies of the Treaty of Amiens, Napoleon readied himself for the looming war. Lacking the funds for another long series of campaigns against Britain, the replenishment of troops and the treasury quickly became his first objective. Suddenly the importance of Saint Domingue faded and the impossibility of a French controlled Mississippi Valley became clear within the despot's mind.⁷⁴

While Napoleon hurriedly gathered funds, Spain revoked the American right of deposit at New Orleans and completed the retro-cession of the Louisiana Territory to France. Jefferson immediately dispatched James Monroe to join Robert Livingston, an American diplomat already in Paris, to complete the acquisition of the port of New Orleans. Unbeknownst to Jefferson or his envoys, Napoleon had concluded in April of 1803 to sell all of the Louisiana Territory in order to finance the imminent war with Britain. Madison and Livingston successfully took advantage of “the languishing state of the French finances,” and capitalized on Napoleon’s “abandoning [of] the West India Islands.” In July of 1803 Jefferson succeeded in purchasing the entire Louisiana Territory for fifteen million dollars, and within a few days Britain declared war on France. The peace between France and Britain had lasted only slightly over a year, and Napoleon now turned his attention completely away from Saint Domingue. After Rochambeau suffered a brutal defeat on November 19, 1803, French forces surrendered to Dessalines, the new leader of the largest rebel army. To add insult to injury, as the remaining troops pulled out of Saint Domingue for redeployment into Europe, the British fleet seized Napoleon’s transport ships. The rebels, many of whom were former slaves, officially declared their independence on January 1, 1804 and renamed the island Haiti.⁷⁵

Jefferson deftly protected American trade in Saint Domingue from serious damage throughout Napoleon’s efforts to control the island and extend the French Empire into North America. The president continued his commercial policies until shortly after the Louisiana Purchase. A change in policy towards the newly formed nation of Haiti occurred directly because of America’s possession of the Louisiana Territory and not solely because of any racial fears harbored by the government’s leaders or the American

South. Jefferson's administration received some harsh criticism from both Republicans and Federalists over the Louisiana Purchase and his proposed spending cuts for the American military. The critics wanted assurance that Jefferson's purchase would yield a profit that justified the costs. In addition to the rising criticism that plagued the administration, the boundaries of the Louisiana Territory also presented difficulties. Jefferson knew that these negotiations included Spain and he needed Napoleon's help in obtaining a favorable outcome for America. The shrewd president also saw an opportunity for the United States to take possession of Spanish Florida. Success with that territory depended on the support of France. Napoleon's terms included an end to American trade in Haiti in exchange for France's support in America's negotiations with Spain. For this reason, and not because he was crippled with fear of an independent black nation, Jefferson suspended all American trade within Haiti. Southern slave holders quickly championed the president's decision as an indication of his disapproval of Haiti, but Jefferson merely used this as an attempt "to produce favorable dispositions" towards the annexation of Florida and the boundary dispute of the Louisiana Territory.⁷⁶

General Dessalines, the new leader of Haiti, promoted such a drastic anti-white policy that Jefferson's decision to stop all trade with the island late in 1804 quickly earned support from the general American public. During a public show of strength Dessalines ripped away the white section of the French tri-colored flag to illustrate his contempt for the remaining white planter class in Haiti. He then attempted to systematically exterminate all whites still lingering on the island. Before Dessalines carried out this atrocity, die-hard New England Federalists mustered enough support to block the embargo against Haiti during an 1805 session of Congress. Merchants from

Philadelphia even presented Desslines with a crown when he declared himself emperor in October of 1804. The radical black leader took great care to not execute American or English whites in hopes of securing favorable trade. But the majority of the American population, especially those in the South, saw no national distinctions within his specified race war. Most white Americans came to the conclusion that violence against French whites was violence against all whites.⁷⁷

Though Jefferson had traded with Dessalines in order to prevent a North American extension of the French Empire, the president refused to answer a letter from Dessalines concerning American recognition of Haiti and a renewal of trade between the two nations. Amidst reports of Dessalines' brutality, Jefferson's refusal to respond illustrated an apprehension that any ties with the radical leader would lead to an unfavorable end of the negotiations surrounding Florida and Louisiana Territories, and not an apprehension of racial violence. The potential economic gain from these vast areas outweighed the American commercial benefits in Haiti. Although Jefferson endured pressure from the southern slave-holding populace to isolate Haiti as early as 1801, his policy showed an economic focus as his primary concern. By 1806 a newly elected Jeffersonian Congress approved the embargo against Haiti, and Jefferson signed the bill prohibiting all trade with Haiti in February of that year. America continued this policy of isolation and non-recognition of Haiti until 1863.⁷⁸

Conclusion

The prejudices of many white Americans caused them to believe that slaves and free blacks rising against white plantation owners constituted a transgression of expected societal norms. This social transgression becomes more apparent when examined through Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the "carnavalesque." White America of the 1790s and early 1800s identified the slave revolution of Saint Domingue through the conceptualization of what Bakhtin referred to as the "grotesque" other. As they defined and consumed accounts of the rebellious "hordes" of slaves as irreprehensible cannibalistic "cut-throats" brandishing "bloody hatchet[s]," post-revolutionary white American cultivated their own identity. Through such vivid and biased distinctions of slave reprisal, transgression flows freely because "established authority and truth [became] relative," thereby shifting customary paradigms. "Differentiation [became] dependent upon disgust," and an "erosion" of revolutionary ideology took place.⁷⁹

Post-revolutionary white America quickly suppressed all uprisings that challenged societal order and the *status quo*. Although much of the world had categorized white Americans as rebels within the previous two decades, by 1791 the majority of the young country longed for stability. The Haitian Revolution created a new republican ideology within American rhetoric. White Americans became willing to deny blacks, the "grotesque" other, their humanity through a justification based on the preservation of white freedom and equality. As America stumbled through this modification of republican ideals, a minority of whites questioned the hypocrisy of casting judgment

upon other rebellions. In 1794 Jefferson rebuffed President Washington's denunciation of democratic societies involved in the Whiskey Rebellion as "an attack on the freedom of discussion [and] the freedom of writing, printing and publishing." Jefferson even declared the president's use of force against the Pennsylvanian farmers as a "justification of arming one part of the society against another" in "civil war." As America became more involved in L'Ouverture's struggle, one member of the Pennsylvania legislature asked, "... if one treats the insurrection of the negroes [in Saint Domingue] as rebellion, what name can be given to that insurrection of Americans which secured their independence?"⁸⁰

Jefferson also struggled with America's convenient exceptions to republican ideology towards Haiti. While he easily made justifications for Shays' Rebellion, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the French Revolution, he hesitated with the black-governed island. Though at times he liberated his personal views from the fetters of class and racial distinctions, he always remained encumbered by fears of financial failure and debt. His internal conflict concerning emancipation coupled with the fear of violent retribution from slaves, financial instability, and public debt caused him to take advantage of every economic opportunity in Saint Domingue. Not until the need for cooperation with Napoleon concerning the boundaries of the Louisiana Territory did Jefferson cease trade with the island. The estimated profit from Louisiana seemed to outweigh the profit gained from Saint Domingue. Despite Jefferson's economic policy, the anxieties of slave owners remained strong and were often voiced in government.

Southern slave states had some influence on Jefferson's policy towards Saint Domingue. To deny completely the sway of this constituency is impossible. But

proportionally, this group did not direct Jefferson's policy as a majority. Jefferson's chief concerns rested with the overall stability and prosperity of the American economy and not with race. By the early 1800s the plantation system of the South had fostered a continual need for slavery, an institution whose existence depended upon white hegemony. While fears of slave revolt spread through the South, Jefferson attempted to appease the slave-holding states but never at the expense of damage to the economy. Even while the southern states demanded non-involvement with Saint Domingue, Jefferson continued to allow the sale of weapons to Toussaint and his successors. At the same time Jefferson sold weapons and supplies to the French until it appeared as if Napoleon would succeed in occupying the Mississippi Valley. Jefferson saw the developments regarding the Louisiana Territory and the right of deposit at New Orleans and firmly believed these issues held the economic future of America. His decisions regarding Saint Domingue showed a sharp focus on the financial stability of America.

As Jefferson's economically driven foreign policy shaped the development of the western hemisphere, his republican ideology also underwent a transformation. Years later he defined this change as he declared "economy among the first and most important republican virtues, and public debt as the greatest of the dangers to be feared." The transgression of the blacks in Saint Domingue against the established social order became a transgression in the "psychic form" or meta-physical realm of republican virtue. Within Jefferson's modified republican ideology the deniability of humanity towards rebellious blacks in Saint Domingue becomes justified not on the basis of racial superiority but on the virtue of economic stability and self preservation. Though race influenced his decisions profit always subdued any of Jefferson's prejudices.⁸¹

Jefferson directed United States foreign policy first and foremost through trade. His decisions developed an economic policy rooted in capitalism and expansionism. This policy affected the great powers of the nineteenth century and forced them to take notice of the expansion and stability of American commerce. Through Jefferson's actions, America began to establish the permanence of its power in the western hemisphere and fulfill its manifest destiny. Perhaps Jefferson succinctly stated the reasons for the confusion concerning his true motivation in his first inaugural address when he said, "When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground."⁸²

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¹ A note should also be made about the name of Haiti. The country does not assume the name Haiti until its independence. As a French colony, its proper name was Saint Domingue. Americans often referred to the French portion of the island as San or Saint Domingo. This can become cumbersome in analysis as the Spanish controlled portion of Hispaniola was named Santo Domingo. For the purposes of clarification, all references to San or Saint Domingo will be changed to Saint Domingue; Donald R. Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," *Journal of the Early Republic*. Vol. 2, No. 4, (Winter, 1982), 362-363; Ludwell Lee Montague, *Haiti and the United States, 1714-1938* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 32.

² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Translated by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), 10, 18-19; Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 5, 6, 191; Michel Foucault, *Language/Counter-memory/Practice* Edited by D. F. Bouchard, Translated by D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 160-161. I am applying here Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the "carivalesque," Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's theories on transgression, and Michel Foucault's theories concerning identity and the "mask" of society. These theories will be elaborated upon in the paper's conclusion. France, *Affaires Etrangères, Correspondence Politique, Etats-Unis*, LIII, 177-178. Unpublished. As cited in Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the U.S. with Haiti 1776-1891* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941). For examples of Jefferson as a racist see Michael Zuckerman, *Almost Chosen People: Oblique Biographies in the American Grain*, (Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 196.

³ C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, October 1989), 87.

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⁵ James, *Black Jacobins*, 17-20, 91-92.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 103; Toussaint L'Ouverture, "Toussaint to Georges Biassou October 15, 1791," Général Nemours, *Toussaint Louverture fonde à Saint-Domingue la liberté*. Translated by Mitch Abidor at www.marxists.org

⁸ Richmond, Virginia *Inquirer* June 9, 1804., *Annals of Congress*, 6th Congress, 3rd Session, 991, 7th Congress, 2nd Session, 385.

⁹ Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 84, 33-34, 85-87. See also *Columbia Mirror and Gazette*, May 25, 1799, *Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser*, July 3, 1802, *Enquirer* (Richmond), January 15, 1805, and *Louisiana Gazette* (New Orleans), March 5, 1805.

¹⁰ Donald R. Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti." *Journal of the Early Republic* 2, no. 1 (1982), 363.

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¹² Zuckerman, *Almost Chosen People*, 180; Rayford W. Logan, *The Diplomatic Relations of the U.S. with Haiti 1776-1891* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 34.

¹³ Hickey, *America's Response*, 362.

¹⁴ Julian P. Boyd, "Address of Welcome from the Mayor of Alexandria, March 11, 1790," *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, New Jersey: University of Princeton Press, 1961), vol. 16, 224. The

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²³ *Ibid.*, “Jefferson to James Madison Sept. 6, 1789 Paris,” 445.

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²⁸ Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence*, 18.

²⁹ Thomas Jefferson Randolph, ed., “Jefferson to Fulwar Skipwith May 13, 1791,” *Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies, from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Volume 3, 2nd edition, (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830); Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence*, 4.

³⁰ Boyd, Charles T. Cullen, ed., “Benjamin Banneker to Jefferson August 19, 1791,” “Jefferson to Banneker August 30, 1791,” “William Short to Jefferson August 24, 1791,” *Papers of Jefferson*, vol. 22, 49-54, 97-98, 70.

³¹ Thomas Jefferson, *Report on the Privileges and Restrictions on the Commerce of the United States in Foreign Countries* (1793). As cited from the Avalon Project at Yale University <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jeffrep2.htm>.

³² Boyd, Charles T. Cullen, ed., “Fulwar Skipwith to Jefferson Oct. 1, 1791,” “Louis Alexandre to Jefferson Oct. 28, 1791,” *Papers of Jefferson*, 180-181, 237-238.

³³ Boyd, Charles T. Cullen, ed., “Jefferson to William Short Nov. 24, 1791,” *Papers of Jefferson*, 329-331; American State Papers, *Commerce and Navigation*, Vol. 1, 104-1906. As cited from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsp.html>. Total exports to Great Britain, France, and their dominions for 1791 equaled \$17,571,551.45.

³⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, ed., “Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-1792,” *Annual Report, American Historical Association for 1903* (Washington, 1904), II, 204-211.

³⁵ American State Papers, *Commerce and Navigation*, Vol. 1, 104-1906. Britain consumed about \$7 million worth of U.S. exports.

³⁶ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 41, 63-64.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 45-46; Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence*, 108-109.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

³⁹ France, *Affaires Etrangères, Correspondence Politique, Etats-Unis*, II, 370.

⁴⁰ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 61.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴² Samuel Flagg Bemis, “Washington’s Farewell Address; A Foreign Policy of Independence,” *American Historical Review*, XXXIX (January 1934), 250-268. Also, the French Ministers for the previously discussed period and their terms of service are as follows: Edmond Charles Genét, 1792-1793; Joseph Fauchet 1794-1795; Pierre Adet 1795-1796.

⁴³ John Adams, "Inaugural Address, March 4, 1797," as cited from the Avalon Project at Yale University (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/adams.htm>); Paul L. Ford, ed., "Jefferson to St. George Tucker, August 28, 1797," *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904), VII, 166.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Jefferson to John Taylor, June 1, 1798," Peterson, ed., *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, 476; Ibid., "Jefferson to Samuel Kercheval, July 12, 1816," 558.

⁴⁶ Ibid., "Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820," 567-568; Ibid., "Jefferson to John Taylor, June 1, 1798," 476; Ellis, *American Sphinx*, 320. See also Jefferson to David Bailey Warden, December 26, 1820, and Jefferson to Jared Sparks, February 4, 1824, Ford, ed., *Writings of Jefferson*, X, 173, 289-293.

⁴⁷ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 64.

⁴⁸ John Adams, "Adams to Pickering October 14, 1797," *The Works of John Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1853), 553-554.

⁴⁹ Pamphile de Lacroix, *Memoires pour servir a l'histoire de la revolution de Saint Domingue* (Paris 1819), I, 346. Monograph on Haiti; Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 65-66.

⁵⁰ Toussaint L'Ouverture, "Letters of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Edward Stevens, 1798-1800," ed. J. Franklin Jameson, *American Historical Review*, XVI (October 1910), 64; Rufus King, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, Comprising His Letters, Private and Official, His Public Documents and Speeches*, ed. Charles R. King (New York: 1884-1900), II, 474, 476-477.

⁵¹ Dudley W. Knox, comp., *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi War between the United States and France: Naval Operations from February 1797 to December 1801* (Washington, 1935-1938), I, vi; II, 284. The term Articles of War refers to the Royal Navy's Articles of War first established in the 1650s, amended in 1749, and thereafter commonly used throughout Europe and North America as a standard of maritime law. I use the phrase "unofficial recognition" to describe how America dealt with Saint Domingue as an independent nation in every respect, especially commercially, but never openly acknowledged their independence in order not to cause unrest in the American South or with diplomatic and commercial relations with Great Britain and with France after the Quasi War.

⁵² Toussaint L'Ouverture, "Letters of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Edward Stevens, 1798-1800," ed. J. Franklin Jameson, *American Historical Review*, XVI (October 1910), 64.

⁵³ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 73.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Donna, ed., "Papers of James Bayard, 1796-1815; Letters of R. G. Harper," *Annual Report, American Historical Association for 1913* (Washington 1915), II, 90; Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 124-125.

⁵⁵ Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 49, 47. See also "James Monroe to Jefferson, April 22, 1800" and "James Monroe to Brigadier General Mathews, March 17, 1802." Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 101, 117-118; "Jefferson to Monroe, September 20, 1800," *Papers of Jefferson*, vol. 32, 160.

⁵⁶ John Adams, *The Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1853), VIII, 634.

⁵⁷ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 110-111.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 112-113.

⁵⁹ Thomas Jefferson, *Report on the Privileges and Restrictions on the Commerce of the United States in Foreign Countries* (1793), As cited from the Avalon Project at Yale University. <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/jeffrep2.htm>. The amount for exports to the French West Indies alone equaled an estimated \$8,524,179.00. American State Papers, *Commerce and Navigation*, Vol. 1, 104-1906. France, *Affaires Etrangeres, Correspondence Politique, Etats-Unis*, LIII, 177-178.

⁶⁰ France, *Affaires Etrangeres, Correspondence Politique, Etats-Unis*, LIII, 177-178.

⁶¹ Ibid., 169-178. See also Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 117-120.

⁶² Turner, "Correspondence of the French Ministers," II, 564; Thomas Jefferson, *First Inaugural Address* (Washington, 1801), <http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/text/04jeff1.htm>. See also Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁶³ Ibid., 169-170vo.

⁶⁴ Montage, *Haiti and the United States*, 41-44.

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- ⁶⁵ Napoleon I, *Correspondance de I; Publiee par ordre de l'Empereur Napoleon III*, (Paris, 1858-1870), VII, 317-320.
- ⁶⁶ Thomas Fleming, "Napoleon's Invasion of North America," *What If: The World's Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, vol.2 (Berkely Publishing, September 2002), 141.
- ⁶⁷ Montague, *Haiti and the United States, 1714-1938*, 43-44. See also "Lear to Madison, March 22 and 29, 1802" and "Jefferson to McKean, June 14, 1802."
- ⁶⁸ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 130.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.
- ⁷⁰ France, *Affaires Etrangeres, Correspondence Politique, Etats-Unis*, LIV, 304-310.
- ⁷¹ Fleming, "Napoleon's Invasion of North America," *What If*, 146; See also Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 133-140 and James, *Black Jacobins*, 333-335.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 140.
- ⁷⁴ Fleming, "Napoleon's Invasion of North America," *What If*, 141-147.
- ⁷⁵ Henry Adams, *History of the United States During the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison* (New York, 1930), I, Bk. II, 25; Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 145-150.
- ⁷⁶ Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 179.
- ⁷⁷ Montague, *Haiti and the United States*, 45-46; James, *Black Jacobins*, 369-374.
- ⁷⁸ James, *Black Jacobins*, 369-374; Fleming, "Napoleon's Invasion of North America," *What If*, 147; Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*, 148-150; Montague, *Haiti and the United States*, 45-46.
- ⁷⁹ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 10, 18-19, 26, 40; Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 191, 5-6; Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 20; Richmond, Virginia *Inquirer* June 9, 1804., Annals of Congress, 6th Congress, 3rd Session, 991, 7th Congress, 2nd Session, 385; Jordan, *White Over Black*, 375; Zuckerman, *Almost Chosen People*, 176. See also Foucault, *Language / Counte-memory / Practice*, 160-161.
- ⁸⁰ Zuckerman, *Almost Chosen People*, 175-183; "Jefferson to James Madison, December 28, 1794," *Portable Jefferson*, 467-469; Jordan, *White Over Black*, 378. See also Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*, 2-3, 107.
- ⁸¹ "Jefferson to William Plumer, July 21, 1816," *The Thomas Jefferson Papers*, Library of Congress, Folio 207. Digital image available at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page049.db&recNum=0297>.
- ⁸² Jefferson, *First Inaugural Address* (Washington, 1801), <http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/text/04jeff1.htm>

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