

# Expulsion of Sonthonax

Toussaint Louverture

1797

Sonthonax, who had signed the proclamation liberating the slaves in the Northern province of Saint-Domingue, and who'd named Toussaint General-in-Chief, was forced by Toussaint to leave Saint-Domingue. In the account he sent to the Directory, Toussaint accused Sonthonax of wanting to declare independence and of advocating the slaughter of the white population. The issues between them were complex: Toussaint was angry because Sonthonax wanted to demobilize some of the black troops, while Sonthonax found Toussaint too cozy with the white planters. In the battle between two strong personalities, one was bound to lose.

**General Toussaint:** Commissioner, you are too well known. The safety of the colony demands that you leave for France.

**Commissioner Sonthonax:** Let's forget all this. Let's end all this I promise to give you all own, all you want

**General Toussaint:** I want nothing. I need neither gold nor money, nor anything at all. You must leave. The safety of the colony demands it.

**Commissioner Sonthonax:** But all is peaceful here. What do you have to fear?

**General Toussaint:** Nothing at all. You pretend to ignore what I know. If the city is peaceful it's against your wishes: it's only because I sent people out calling for calm. But you must leave. (With heat). I spoke with commissioner Raimond to tell him that you must leave. He sought to have me moderate my position by having me see the regrettable consequences because of your character and the problems that might follow. Well then, I take the events on myself. I will give an account of my conduct to the Executive Directory, but you must leave.

**Commissioner Sonthonax:** So you have decided to have me leave.

**General Toussaint:** Yes, very much so.

**Commissioner Sonthonax:** My dear general, how can you so roughly treat the founder of freedom? Is it not I who proclaimed it in the colony? Is it not I who made your happiness? Is it not I who defended your cause? Is it not I who named you General-in-Chief?

**General Toussaint:** You know full well that you proposed this rank to me several times, and I always answered that it didn't matter to me. If you only named me general-in-chief so that I could commit crimes I no longer want the post. It is not I who am offended, it is the interests of

France that are threatened. And with or without the rank of General-in-Chief I never had any other intention than to maintain and ensure the freedom of my brothers and to save this colony for France. As long as this goal is achieved I care little for the rank.

**Commissioner Sonthonax:** You deserve it. You have the capacity. Without you we would not have found here an inch of French land on our arrival. That's what led me to make you the proposals.

**General Toussaint:** It's no longer a question of all this. You must leave. In order to respect the word of honor I gave you I didn't want to say anything to commissioner Raimond concerning the proposals you've made me. If so, he'd be in as much a hurry as I to have you leave. If need be, I won't let it be known that it is I who forces you to leave because, being my chief, I don't want to render public an act of insubordination that could have disastrous results. Go fill your place as representative of the people (though you were only named to it through intrigue). But leave. You know just how necessary this is. Leave, and no one will know the motive. I don't want to destroy you, but I want you to leave.

**Commissioner Sonthonax:** Since you've decided and it's impossible to argue with you, I'll leave. But I need letters of congratulation and I'll go to France as representative of the people.

**General Toussaint:** I'll give you whatever you want, for I consider your departure absolutely necessary for the safety of the colony. Leave, and don't try to cause any upset. Leave quickly, in order that there not be any trouble, and I promise you no one will ever know what happened between us. But if the least disorder occurs, and you act in bad faith in fulfilling the promise you just made me, I'll put you on the boat by force ...

**See also:**

Toussaint's report to the directory in which he accuses Sonthonax of wanting to slaughter all the whites in Saint Domingue. Find it here:

<http://wp.stu.ca/worldhistory/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/07/You-Want-to-Slaughter-All-the-Whites.pdf>

Taken from: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/toussaint-louverture/1797/expulsion.htm>

**Source:** *Extrait du rapport adressé au Directoire executif par le citoyen Toussaint Louverture, general en chef des Forces de la République française a Saint-Domingue.* Chez P. Roux, imprimeur. Cap-francais, n.d. [1797];

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