

Toussaint Louverture's 'Dictatorial Proclamation' *1801*

It was Victor Schoelcher, Toussaint's biographer, who labeled this proclamation, "dictatorial". It contains almost all the elements of Toussaint's domestic policies for Saint Domingue.

Cap Francais, 4 Frimmaire [Frimaire], Year X [November 25, 1801]

Since the revolution, I have done all that depended upon me to return happiness to my country and to ensure liberty for my fellow citizens. Forced to combat internal and external enemies of the French Republic, I made war with courage, honor and loyalty. I have never strayed from the rules of justice with my enemies; as much as was in my power I sought, to soften the horrors of war, to spare the blood of men ... Often after victory I received as brothers those who, the day before, were under enemy flags. Through the overlooking of errors and faults I wanted to make even its most ardent enemies love the legitimate and sacred cause of liberty.

I constantly reminded my brothers in arms, general and officers, that the ranks to which they'd been raised were nothing but the reward for honor, bravery and irreproachable conduct. That the higher they were above their fellow citizens, the more irreproachable all their actions and words must be; that scandals caused by public men had consequences even more dire for society than those of simple citizens; that the ranks and functions they bore hadn't been given to them to serve only their ambition, but had as cause and goal the general good. ...

It is up to officers to give their soldiers with good lessons good examples. Every captain should have the noble goal of having his company the best disciplined, the most cleanly attired, the best trained. He should think that the lapses of his soldiers reflect on him and believe himself lowered by the faults of those he commands. ...

Having always regarded religion as the basis of all virtues and the foundation of the happiness of societies, in one of my proclamations, at the time of the war in the south, I laid out the obligations of fathers and mothers, their obligation to raise their children in the love and fear of God.

Nevertheless, how negligently fathers and mothers raise their children, especially in cities. They leave them in a state of idleness and in ignorance of their principal obligations. They seem to

inspire in children contempt for agriculture, the first, the most honorable, and the most useful of all states.

Barely are they born than we see these same children with jewels and earrings, covered in rags, their clothing filthy, wounding the eyes of decency through their nudity. Thus they arrive at the age of twelve, without moral principles, without a skill, and with a taste for luxury and laziness as their only education. And since bad impressions are difficult to correct, it is certain beyond any doubt that they will be bad citizens, vagabonds, thieves. And if they are girls, then they are prostitutes all of them ready to follow the prompting of the first conspirator who will preach murder and pillage to them. It is upon such vile mothers and fathers, on students so dangerous, that the magistrates of the people must ceaselessly keep an open eye.

The same reproaches equally apply to cultivators on the habitations. Since the revolution perverse men have told them that freedom is the right to remain idle and to follow only their whims. Such a doctrine could not help but be accepted by all the evil subjects, thieves and assassins. It is time to hit out at the hardened men who persist in such ideas.

As soon as a child can walk he should be employed on the habitations according to his strength in some useful work, instead of being sent into the cities where, under the pretext of an education that he doesn't receive, he goes to learn vice, to add to the horde of vagabonds and women of evil lives, to trouble by his existence the repose of good citizens, and to terminate it with the final punishment. Military commanders and magistrates must be inexorable with this class of men. Despite this, they must be forced to be useful to society upon which, without the most severe vigilance, they will be a plague.

Since the revolution, it is evident that the war has made perish many more men than women. In addition, many more of the latter, whose existence is based on libertinage, can be found in cities. Entirely given over to concern for their attire, a result of their prostitution, they want to do absolutely nothing that is useful. It is they who receive harbor all the evil subjects, who live on the products of their crimes. It would be all to the honor of magistrates, generals, and commandants to not leave a single one in the cities. The least negligence in this regard would render them worthy of public lack or esteem. ...

As for domestics, each citizen should only have as many as are necessary for indispensable services. The persons in whose homes they reside should be the first overseers of their conduct and should not tolerate anything in their conduct contrary to good morals, submission, and order.

If they are thieves they should be denounced to military commandants so they can be punished in conformity with the law. And since under the new regime all labor deserves a salary, every salary demands work. Such is the invariable and firm will of the government.

An object worthy of its attention is the surveillance of foreigners who arrive in the colony. Some among them, knowing only through the reports of enemies of the new order of things, of the changes that have taken place, make statements which are all the more dangerous in that they are avidly listened to by those who, basing their hopes on the troubles, ask only for pretexts. Such straying must be severely punished. The carelessness of public functionaries in this regard will harm the confidence of which they are in need and will have them looked upon, with justice, as accomplices of the enemies of freedom!

The most holy of all institutions among men who live in society, that from which flows the greatest good, is marriage ... Thus a wise government must always occupy itself with surrounding happy couples with honor, respect and veneration. It should only rest after having extirpated immorality to the last root. Military commanders, and especially public functionaries, are inexcusable when they publicly give themselves over to the scandal of vice. Those who, while having legitimate wives, allow concubines within their houses, or those who, not being married, live publicly with several women are not worthy of command: they shall be dismissed.

Idleness is the source of all disorders, and if it is allowed with one individual I shall hold the military commanders responsible, persuaded that those who tolerate the lazy and vagabonds are secret enemies of the government.

In keeping with his faculties, no one under any pretext is to be exempt from some task. Creole mothers and fathers who have children and properties should go there to live and work, to make their children work or to oversee their labor; and in moments of rest they should, either themselves or through instructors, teach them the precepts of our religion.

It is through these means that useful and respectable citizens will be formed, and we will distance forever from this colony the horrible events whose memory should never be effaced from our minds.

Consequently, I decree the following:

- I Any commander who during the late conspiracy had knowledge of the troubles which were to break out and who tolerated pillage and murder or who, able to prevent or block

the revolt allowed the law that declares that "life, property and the asylum of every citizen are sacred and inviolable"; to be broken, will be brought before a special tribunal and punished in conformity with the law of August 10, 1801. Any military commander who, by lack of foresight or negligence, has not stopped the disorders that have been committed, will be discharged and punished with one year in prison. In consequence of this a rigorous inquest will be carried out, according to which the government will pronounce on his destiny.

- II All generals and commanders of *arrondissements* and quarters who in the future will neglect to take all necessary measures to prevent or block sedition will be brought before a special tribunal and punished in conformity with the law of August 10, 1801.
- III In case of troubles, or upon indication that such will break out, the national guard of a quarter or *arrondissement* shall be at the orders of the military commanders upon their simple requisition. Any military commander who shall not have taken all the measures necessary to prevent troubles in his quarter, or the spreading of trouble from a quarter neighboring to that which he commands, and any military man, be he of the line or the national guard, who shall refuse to obey legal orders shall be punished with death.
- IV Any individual, man or woman, whatever his or her color, who shall be convicted of having pronounced serious statements tending to incite sedition shall be brought before a court martial and punished in conformity with the law.
- V Any Creole individual, man or woman, convicted of making statements tending to alter public tranquility but who shall not be worthy of death shall be sent to the fields to work with a chain on one foot for six months.
- VI Any foreign individual found in the case of the preceding article shall be deported from the colony.
- VII In all the communes of the colony where municipal administrations exist, all male and female citizens who live in them, whatever their quality or condition, must obtain a security card. Such card shall contain the name, family name, address, civil state, profession and quality, age and sex of those who bear them. It shall be signed by the mayor and the police superintendent of the quarter in which lives the individual to which it shall be delivered. It shall be renewed every six months and paid at the price one *gourdin* for each individual, and the sums coming from this are destined for communal expenses.
- VIII It is expressly ordered that municipal administrators are only to deliver security cards to persons having a known profession or state, irreproachable conduct and well assured means of existence. All those who cannot fulfill the conditions rigorously necessary to

obtain it will be sent to the fields if they are Creole, or sent away from the colony if they are foreigners.

- IX Two weeks after the publication of the present act, any person found without a security card shall be sent to the fields if they are Creole and if they are foreigners deported from the colony without any form of trial if they don't prefer to serve in the troops of the line.
- X Any domestic who has not been judged worthy of obtaining a certificate of good conduct upon leaving a house in which he or she served, shall be declared incapable of receiving a security card. Any person who, in order to favor them shall have delivered them one shall be punished with one month in prison.
- XI Dating two weeks after the publication of the present act all managers and drivers on habitations are to send to the commanders of their quarter the exact list of all the cultivators on their habitations of every age and sex, under penalty of one week in prison. Every manager and driver is the first overseer of his habitation. He is declared personally responsible for any kind of disorder that shall be committed, and for the laziness and vagabondage of the cultivators.
- XII Dating from one month after the publication of the present act, all commanders of quarters are to send lists of the cultivators of all the habitations of their quarter to the *arrondissement* commanders under penalty of discharge.
- XIII The *arrondissement* commanders are to send list of all the habitations of their *arrondissements* to the generals under whose orders they serve, and these latter to the governor as quickly as possible, under penalty of disobedience. Said lists, deposited in the archives of the government, shall serve in the future as the immutable bases for the fixing of cultivators on the habitations.
- XIV Any manager or driver of a habitation upon which a foreign cultivator shall have taken refuge shall denounce him to the captain or commander of the section within twenty-four hours under penalty of one week in prison.
- XV Any captain or commander of a section who through negligence allowed a foreign cultivator on a habitation in his section for more than three days shall be discharged.
- XVI Vagabond cultivators arrested in this way shall be taken to the commander of the quarter, who will have them sent to the gendarmerie on their habitation. They will be confided to the special surveillance of the drivers and managers and they shall be deprived of passports for leaving the habitation for three months.
- XVII It is forbidden for any soldier to work on a habitation or for private individuals in the cities. Those who want to work and who will obtain the permission of their officers shall be employed in labors for the account of the republic and paid according to their work.

XVIII It is forbidden for any soldier to go to a habitation, unless it is to see his father or mother and with a limited permit from his chief. If he fails to return to his corps at the stated hour he shall be punished in accordance with military ordinances.

XIX Any person convicted of having disturbed or attempted to disturb a married couple shall be denounced to the civil and military authorities, who shall render an account to the governor, who shall pronounce on their fate in accordance with the needs of the case.

XX My regulations on cultivation, given at Port-Républicain the 20th of Vendémiaire of the year IX [1800], shall be executed exactly as stated. All military commanders are enjoined to execute it rigorously and literally in all that is not contrary to the present proclamation.

The present proclamation shall be printed, transcribed on the registers of administrative and judiciary bodies, read, published and posted wherever needed, and also inserted in the *Bulletin Officiel de Saint-Domingue*. A copy shall be sent to all ministers of religion for it to be read to all parishioners after mass.

All generals, military commanders and all civil authorities in all departments are enjoined to maintain a firm hand in ensuring the full and complete execution of all of these dispositions on their personal responsibility and under penalty of disobedience.

Taken from: [http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Toussaint_Louverture's_'Dictatorial_Proclamation'_\(1801\)](http://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Toussaint_Louverture's_'Dictatorial_Proclamation'_(1801))

Source: Schoelcher, Victor (1889). *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*. Paris: Paul Ollendorf. (Available online: Google books) 1882 reprint: Karthala. Paris ISBN 2-86537-043-7

Translated by Mitch Abidor marxists.org

CopyLeft: Creative Commons (Attribute & ShareAlike) marxists.org 2004.