

Boyer Falls, Separation Begins, 1844

A hero of the revolutionary fighting, President Jean-Pierre Boyer rose to power and held it for nearly two decades. He took power in the north of Haiti in 1818, reunited the north and south in 1820, and – as a number of Dominicans in the eastern capital city organized independence plots of their own – joined the eastern part of the island, formerly Spanish Santo Domingo, to the Haitian Republic in the early winter of 1822. The Unification, which came to be known in later Dominican historiography as the Occupation, realized a goal enshrined in the constitution of the Haitian republic: unification of the whole island against outside aggression. Faced with the impossible political options of France's so-called indemnity or continuing to brave constant threats to the state's existence, Boyer chose to assume payment, renegotiating where he could. Debt curtailed the most ambitious of political reforms, just as it was a burden on those who were expected to shoulder the cost across the whole island. Dominicans, urban and rural, could not have been eager to assume that obligation as their own, although evidence seems to suggest that the levies occurred infrequently. Polemic as it is understudied, the Unification period demands further research.

By the early 1840s, serious problems exacerbated discontent with Boyer's tenure everywhere. Destruction from an earthquake in May 1842 devastated Cap Haïtien and Fort Liberté, reaching as far as Santiago de los Caballeros in the east. From the southern city of Les Cayes, frustrated anti-Boyerists and democratic reformers penned the Praslin Manifesto that fall, calling for sweeping constitutional reform. Dominican collaborators concurred, vocally critical of Boyer's collapsing tenure. The president left the island in March 1843. Meanwhile, General Charles Rivière-Hérard, even as he promised to safeguard and champion the reforms, began marginalizing the constitutionalists and summoning the support of the army. Barely two months after he claimed the presidency, a small group of activists easily overturned unified rule in the Dominican capital. Rivière-Hérard opposed separation and sent troops eastward, but his own rule was short. By late spring 1844, western political interests ushered another aspirant into power, the elderly Philippe Guerrier, who passed away after barely a year in the post.

The document that announced Dominican separation was a manifesto penned by a large landowner, Tomas Bobadilla. Bobadilla and its signatories were fiercely critical of Rivière-Hérard's betrayal of the 1842-3 reform efforts. They announced separation – avoiding the word independence – expressing their disappointment with a litany of ills and the hope for a more democratic political future. The document rewrites history as well. Even as Bobadilla allowed that many Dominicans received the onset of unification in 1822 positively, he presents a narrative of economic and agricultural decline from that date, as well as major disruptions in land tenure. Given the near-total paralysis of non-subsistence agriculture in the period of Spanish rule just prior (1809-1822), his assertion was, at best, exaggerated. Party factionalism, too, had its origins well a priori to the unification and persisted after separation, as deep divisions the months following emphasized. Pedro Santana, son of an important military figure and an adept commander in his own right, easily supplanted Bobadilla as the nominal president. Protectorate intrigue – hinted at in the manifesto itself, mentioning France and Spain as possible benefactors – continued and even intensified in following years. Divergent interests gripped the new government.

The second document here details the withdrawal of Haitian families, officers, and functionaries from the eastern part of the island. As Thomas Madiou and others observed contemporaneously, the event was exceedingly calm. Rivière-Hérard had already taken most of the armory's weapons with him as he retreated. A Dominican regiment of formerly enslaved men and others known as the African Battalion initially opposed the handoff, and there were several small battles over the next months, but life largely continued as normal for the great bulk of the east's rural populace. Madiou, for his part, wrote favorably of the events of separation; he was critical of Boyer. At any rate, mobilizations around Les Cayes necessarily drew attention westward. As the *piquet* peasant movement challenged his rule, Rivière-Hérard, too, left to exile.

Manifesto of the Inhabitants of the Eastern Part of the Island, Formerly Spanish or Santo Domingo, On the Causes of its Separation from the Haitian Republic
16 January 1844¹

The due attention and respect for the opinion of all men and civilized nations, demands that when a people who have been joined with another desires to reassume its rights, reclaiming them and dissolving their political ties, they declare frankly and in good faith, the causes that motivate their separation, so that it is not believed that ambition or the spirit of novelty might motivate them. We believe to have demonstrated with heroic resolve that when the evils of a government are tolerable they should be endured, rather than doing justice by abolishing its means; but when a long series of injustices, violations, and injuries, continuing to the same end indicate the intention to reduce everything to despotism and the most absolute tyranny, it calls on the sacred right and duty of the people, to throw off the yoke of such a government and provide new guarantees, assuring its future stability and prosperity...

This is why the inhabitants of the Eastern Part of the Island formerly known as Española or Santo Domingo, using their rights, spurred by twenty-two years of oppression and hearing from all parts clamors for the Country, have made the firm resolution to separate permanently from the Haitian Republic, and to constitute a free and sovereign state.

Twenty-two years, for one of those accidents of fate, the Dominican People have suffered the most ignominious oppression... Twenty-two years the inhabitants have been deprived of all of their rights, violently depriving them of what benefits they were due, considering them to be add-ons to the Republic. And before long they even lost the desire to free themselves from such humiliating slavery!...

No Dominican received Boyer then without showing signs of wanting to sympathize with his new co-citizens: the most common of the populations they were occupying, going out to greet him, thought they were getting from him, who had just received the title of Pacifier of the North [of Haiti], the protection he so hypocritically had promised. More slowly...they all became aware that they were in the hands of an oppressor, of a wild tyrant!...

Through a disruptive and machiavellic system, Boyer forced the richest and most prominent families to emigrate, and with them the talent, wealth, commerce and agriculture: he pushed away from his Cabinet and principle posts the men who could have represented the rights of their co-citizens, sought the remedy for ills and manifested the true needs of the Country. Scorning all principles of public and human law, he reduced many families to indigence...[H]e destroyed agriculture, trade, shook the wealth from the churches, scornfully wore out and crushed religious ministers, taking from them their assets...

Later, to give his injustices an appearance of legality, he dictated a law that the property of those who had migrated would devolve to the State...Still not satisfied in his greed, with sacrilegious hand he attacked the property of the sons of the East; he authorized theft and fraud with the law of July 8, 1824; prohibiting the community of *terrenos comuneros* (commonly-deeded lands), which through agreements and the utility and needs of families, had been conserved since the discovery of the Island, to use them for the benefit of his State, ruining livestock raising and impoverishing a multitude of heads of family. He did not care! Destroy everything, ruin it! That was the goal of his insatiable greed!

Productive in coming up with ills to realize the work of our ruin and to reduce everything to nothing, [Boyer] put in place a monetary system that has senselessly reduced families, employees, merchants, and the general republic by degrees to the greatest misery. With such aims the Haitian Government propagated its corruptive principles...

This was the sad portrait of this part, when on January 27 of last year, from Les Cayes in the South of the Island a cry for reform rose up: it inflamed the inhabitants; they adhered to the principles of the September 1, 1842 manifesto, and the Eastern part entertained the idea of a happier future, but in vain! So much that good will got them! Commander Rivière proclaimed himself Head of Operations, interpreter of the will of the sovereign people: he dictated laws to his whims: he established a government

¹ Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti, Tome VIII: de 1843 à 1846* (Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1985), 106-115 [or in Spanish: Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi *Guerra Dominico-Haitiana* 29-38].

with no legal basis, without taking into account any of the inhabitants of this part [of the island], who had proclaimed themselves in favor of his revolution; he traveled about the Island, and in the Santiago province, without legal base, a painful reminder of the sad epochs of *Toussaint* and *Dessalines*, bringing with him a monstrous administration that demoralized everyone; sold jobs, ripped off churches; destroyed the elections that the towns had set to give themselves representatives who would defend their rights; and this as ever to leave this part in misery with the same fate, and provide himself with candidates who would elevate him to the Presidency even without special mandate of his principal supporters; so it was, by threatening the constituent assembly and giving strange messages to the army in his command, he became President of the Republic...

On the pretext that this part contemplated a territorial separation, via Colombia, the prison cells of Port-au-Prince were filled with the most ardent Dominicans, in whose hearts love for the Country ruled, with no other aspirations but those of bettering its fate...

Our condition has not improved at all: the same affronts, the same treatment as by the former administration, the same or higher taxes, the same baseless monetary system that works to the ruin of its inhabitants and a small-minded Constitution that will never make the country happy, has sealed the ignominy, depriving us against natural right even the last thing that remained for us as Spaniards: of native tongue!, and cozying up on one hand to our august Religion, so that it disappears among us... [These violations]...decide the matter in favor of our Country, as they did in favor of the Low Countries against Philip II in 1581. Under the authority of these principles, who would dare condemn the resolution of the people of Les Cayes, when it rose up against Boyer and declared him traitor to the country?

And who would dare critique ours, declaring the Eastern Part of the Island separated from the Haitian Republic?...

If the Eastern Part was considered as voluntarily incorporated to the Haitian Republic, it ought to enjoy the same benefits as those whom it has joined...

When the sons of the West revised the constitution in 1816, this part did not belong to Haiti, nor to France, the Spanish flag waved in its forts...What is very clear is that, if this Eastern Part, belongs to a dominion other than that of its own sons, it would be to France, or to Spain, not that of Haiti... Considering...that a people has a right when it has voluntarily been dependent on another, for protection, to be free of its obligations in the moment that the other fails, even if for reasons of impossibility... Considering, lastly, that for differences in customs and the rivalry that exists between one side and the other, there will never be perfect union nor harmony... It is resolved to separate permanently ...to protect and guarantee a democratic system; the liberty of citizens abolishing slavery forever; the equality of civil and political rights without regard to origin or place of birth; properties will be inviolable and sacred; the Apostolic and Roman Catholic Religion will be protected in all its splendor as the State religion, but none will be persecuted nor punished for his religious opinions; freedom of the press will be protected; responsibility of public functionaries assured; there will be no seizure of goods for crimes or infractions; public education will be promoted and protected at the cost of the State; special privileges will be pared to the minimum possible; there will be a total forgetting of votes and political stands taken up to this date, as long as individuals subscribe in good faith to the new system. Military rank and office will be preserved under rules to be established. Agriculture, science, trade, sciences and the arts will likewise be promoted and protected, for people who have come to live here just as those born in our soil. Lastly, as quickly as possible, a currency will be emitted that has a true and real backing, without the public losing what money it has with the Haitian seal...

DOMINICANS! (This name includes all the sons of the Eastern part and those who wish to follow our destiny). Our national interest calls us to unity! Through a firm resolution we show our selves to be worthy defenders of liberty: we sacrifice hate and personalities on the altar of the Country: that the sentiment of public interest be the motivation that brings us to the cause of liberty and of *Separation*; with it, we do not diminish the happiness of the Western Republic, we realize ours.

Our cause is holy; we will not lack resources...because if it were necessary to do so, we would in that case use those that we could obtain from abroad...

Unite, Dominicans! Now is the opportune moment from Neiba to Samaná, from Azua to Monte Cristi, opinions are uniform and there is no Dominican who does not proclaim: SEPARATION, GOD, COUNTRY AND LIBERTY.

Santo Domingo, January 16, 1844 and Year 1 of the Country.

Surrender of the Santo Domingo Garrison²

Today, February 28, 1844, year 41 of Independence and Year 2 of Regeneration.

Under the mediation of Mr. the French Consul, and in the presence of members of the Commission designated by the governing Junta and those named by General Desgrottes, commander of the plaza of Santo Domingo and provisional commander of the arrondissement, undersigned, have arrived at the following capitulation:

Article I – Guarantee of property, particularly legally acquired.

Art. II- Respect to families and protection and support.

Art. III- Honorable departure of public functionaries.

Art. IV- Frankness and loyalty in both parties' conduct.

Art. V.- Problem-free departure for all citizens.

Art. VI. Military officials or other citizens who want to leave can only do so ten days after the date of this surrender. Safe-conduct passes will be delivered by the Junta to those who prefer to travel by land rather than by sea; other citizens will have an entire month to leave the arrondissement, that month beginning March 10.

Art. VII. The arms of the troops garrisoned in Santo Domingo will be turned over to the hands of the French Consul who will return them to soldiers belonging to Haitian regiments as soon as they return to their home; officers will keep their arms and will not be required to turn them over.

Art. VIII. The Fort and the Arsenal will be immediately evacuated by Haitian troops after the signature of this surrender.

Art. IX. The treasury and the archives likewise will be turned over to the hands of the governing Junta by the Administration, who will turn over accounts to the Commission designated by said Junta to review them, giving discharge and pay to the troops and functionaries from arrears to this date, this liquidating the debts contracted by the Haitian administration for services rendered.

Art. X. Given the advanced hour, it is agreed that the undersigned commissaries will not gather until tomorrow, February 29, at precisely 8 a.m.

Two copies made on the below day, month, and year.

Signed: DOUCET, PONTHEUX, DEO HERARD, PAUL JN-JACQUES, ROY, BERNIER, CAMINERO, MD AYBAR, CABRAL, FRANCISCON XAVIER, DUCASTE aîné, PEDRO MENA.

Approved by the general, plaza commander and chief of overseeing the Arrondissement.

Signed: DESGROTTE

² Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti, Tome VIII: de 1843 à 1846* (Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1985), 103-4.