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EMANCIPATION IN ST. CROIX; ITS ANTECEDENTS AND IMMEDIATE
AFTERMATH

INTRODUCTION

The slave uprising of 2–3 July 1848 in St. Croix, Danish West Indies, belongs to that splendidly isolated category of Caribbean slave revolts which succeeded if, that is, one defines success in the narrow sense of the legal termination of servitude. The sequence of events can be briefly rehearsed. On the night of Sunday 2 July, signal fires were lit on the estates of western St. Croix, estate bells began to ring and conch shells blown, and by Monday morning, 3 July, some 8000 slaves had converged in front of Frederiksted fort demanding their freedom. In the early hours of Monday morning, the governor general Peter von Scholten, who had only hours before returned from a visit to neighbouring St. Thomas, summoned a meeting of his senior advisers in Christiansted (Bass End), the island's capital. Among them was Lt. Capt. Irminger, commander of the Danish West Indian naval station, who urged the use of force, including bombardment from the sea to disperse the insurgents, and the deployment of a detachment of soldiers and marines from his frigate *Ørnen*. Von Scholten kept his own counsels. No troops were despatched along the arterial Centreline road and, although he gave Irminger permission to sail around the coast to beleaguered Frederiksted (West End), he went overland himself and arrived in town sometime around 4 p.m. before Irminger did. No sooner had he alighted from his coach than he addressed the swarming multitude of slaves insisting on their freedom: "Now you are free, you are hereby emancipated". (Von Petersen 1855: 94–142; Larsen 1928: 252–67; Lawaetz 1940: 174–91; Vibæk 1966: 286–96; Hansen 1970: 355–96).

Emancipation by gubernatorial fiat abruptly terminated 16 hours of riotous but surprisingly bloodless activity. The absence of bloodshed and the *dénouement* of freedom distinguishes this uprising from other "late" slave rebellions in the Caribbean. Bussa's 1816 rebellion in Barbados, the Demerara uprising in 1823 and the Jamaica Christmas rebellion of 1831 were all characterised by spectacular blood-letting and no immediate consequential change in the slaves' legal status. (Craton 1982: 254–321). None of those uprisings in the British West Indies had been predicated on the declared, as distinct from the rumoured, intent of the metropolitan government to emancipate the slave population. The slaves in the Danish West Indies, on the other hand, had had the crown's assurance in the previous year that general emancipation would take place in 1859, with an interim dispensation of Free Birth to take effect from 28 July 1847. (R/A, GTK, NEER 1847). Nevertheless, the St. Croix rebellion shares common ground with those abovementioned in the British West Indies, in that it derived as much from aroused expectations as it did from a perception of oppression.

The uprising followed more than a decade and a half of ameliorative changes introduced under the liberalizing stewardship of Von Scholten, governor general since 1828. During the 1830s, the work day's length was strictly regulated; slave owners' discretionary powers of punishment drastically reduced; public auctions banned and the keeping of plantation journals for regular inspection made mandatory. (R/A, GTK, CANS 1834–1843: *passim*). In the 1840s, Saturday was conceded as a free day, to facilitate its use as a market day in place of Sunday, which was now consecrated to religious observance and secular instruction, Wage payments at the rate of 4 Reales per day were introduced for plantation work undertaken on the prescribed free day. (Ørsted 1844: 259–61). Significant improvements were also registered in the quality of slave housing which was approvingly viewed by an eye as critical as Victor Schoelcher's (Schoelcher 1843: 20–21). The first publicly supported elementary schools for slave children were opened with appropriate ceremony in 1841, and by 1846 their existence had been formalized by an ordinance authorizing 17 schools distributed between St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. Jan,

the establishment of a board, a curriculum, examination procedures etc. (Hall 1979: 1–45). Von Scholten's strategy was based on a calculation of the inevitability of emancipation in the Danish, once emancipation had taken place in the British, West Indies. Since he deemed it no longer a question of whether but when, he sought by this reforming dispensation to smooth the transition to full freedom when it should arrive (R/A, GTK, CANS 1834–1843: 1834a; 1834b). His metropolitan principals and the increasingly vocal Liberal politicians in Denmark's provincial assemblies gradually came to share the governor general's emancipationist perspective (Jensen 1931–1934: 608–611) and by 1847 the issue had been sealed by royal proclamation.

For all the world therefore, the Danish West Indies appeared set on a course for an untraumatic termination of chattel slavery. Amelioration and the royal proclamation apart, there were other favourable auguries which suggested a smooth passage. There was no well developed tradition of slave revolts. The Danish West Indies, unlike Jamaica, had passed but once through the fiery crucible of actual revolt, and that 1733 uprising in St. Jan (Westergaard 1917) had been conclusively put down with assistance from the French. Ethnic rebellions of the sort which frequently plagued Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward and Windward islands while their slave populations were predominately African, were never a feature of the Danish West Indian experience. As for conspiracies, only that in St. Croix in 1759 (R/A, GTK 1760; Westergaard 1926) created a briefly sustained ripple of anxiety. Nor were there to be further conspiracies, actual or attempted revolts, as the slave populations of the Danish West Indies became increasingly creolized after the late eighteenth century. In St. Croix itself, a useful index of the creolization process was the astonishingly high incidence of church affiliation, which by 1835 was 99 per cent of the island's total slave population (Hall 1980a: 25). Yet those confessional affinities appear, if anything, to have reinforced the quest for "respectability" at the expense of "reputation" (Wilson 1973). That emphasis, and its concomitant, an accommodating rather than an adversary mind-set, is perhaps best explained not so much by religion's opiate effect, as by the structures within those denominations permitted to practise in the

Danish West Indies: the state Lutheran Church, the Roman Catholics, the Moravians, and to a lesser extent the Dutch Reformed Church. None of these offered the same possibilities as the non-conformist Baptists and Methodists for slave leadership within the congregation; nor, by the same token, the possibilities for the emergence of movements such as the "native Baptists" with their potential for political radicalisation (Turner 1982).

Notwithstanding the apparent order and calm of mature creolized slave society in the Danish West Indies, there were persons, as late as 1847, who recognized that the will to resist was as constant as servitude itself; that the grace period — virtually apprenticeship before emancipation — could conceivably be interrupted by what was euphemistically called "unforeseen circumstances" (Hall 1983b: 52). The slaves for their part had responded to the Law of Free Birth not with unalloyed enthusiasm as might have been anticipated, but rather with impatience born of dissatisfaction that their children were beneficiaries of an imperial largesse which they would have to wait more than a decade to enjoy (Hall 1979: 33). Free Birth as policy had respectable international pedigree: the Venezuelans had implemented it in 1821 (Lombardi 1971: 48–53); Buxton had canvassed it in the British Parliament in 1823 (Klingberg 1968: 182). But in the Danish West Indies, the asymmetry which it established was productive of the very tensions the metropolitan government sought to avoid.

There is evidence, moreover, which indicates that since at least 1800, the slaves particularly in St. Croix, were less and less in thrall to whiteness as a megalithic instrument of social control. Its erosion as a formidable deterrent had been promoted by intimate contact with a growing cadre of Anglo-Irish plantation supervisory personnel which did not exactly command respect. Nor were there grounds to be in awe of a colonial polity whose power traditionally had been less than hegemonic. Most particularly, its exiguous resources of force, which had virtually invited the 1733 uprising, encouraged the conspiracy of 1759 and had proved risibly inadequate to respond to the British invasions of 1801 and 1807, were no more prepossessing in 1848 than they had ever been (Hall 1983b). Whatever other calculations the slaves might have

made in 1848, there is very little doubt that they considered the odds favourable because of the feebleness of the colonial military posture.

Emancipation by gubernatorial fiat foreclosed the possibility of the Akan-style alternative polity envisaged by some earlier Caribbean slave rebellions, and of which the regime of Dessalines, as Michael Craton has perceptively noted, was the ultimate expression (Craton 1982: 251). The St. Croix insurgents had no such political order in contemplation. Their aspirations, like those of their Jamaican counterparts in 1831 or Barbadian equivalents in 1816 (Craton 1982: 252, 257, 294, 332) did not transcend the regularisation of a proto-peasant status well established by 1848 (Hall 1980a; 1983a). Victory achieved through the mediation of state approval also left intact, with the exception of legal slavery, the institutional structures of the colonial polity, including the mechanisms for the administration of law and order. Many of the predominantly non-Danish planter class and some sectors of officialdom, moreover, shared little of Von Scholten's reforming enthusiasm or racial optimism, however guarded (Hall 1979: 15–22). Soured by an emancipation which they thought premature, angered by a rebellion which they deemed impertinent, they sought an early opportunity to restore the social order which had prevailed up to Monday 3 July 1948.

THE COURT MARTIAL: PROVENANCE, SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE

In the early hours of Tuesday morning, a group of the recently emancipated was shot down just outside Christiansted. There was retaliatory looting and destruction for the next three days on estates in the centre, south, west and north of the island. On Thursday, Von Scholten suffered what would now be diagnosed as a nervous collapse, and the lieutenant governor of St. Thomas, Frederik Oxholm was invited to assume command of the civil government (Von Petersen 1855: 94–142; Larsen 1928: 252–67; Lawaetz 1940: 174–91; Vibæk 1966: 286–96; Hansen 1970: 355–96). Oxholm arrived on Saturday and the 530 troops which he requested of the governor of Puerto Rico arrived on Friday

(N/A, RG 55 Box 9, 1848a, 1848b). But long before then, Irmingier had moved decisively to assert the power of constituted authority, to demonstrate to the newly emancipated that freedom was not licence. On Tuesday, Frederiksted was put under a state of emergency by a commission consisting of Irmingier, Capt. Frederik von Scholten, the governor general's brother, Capt. Castonier, the fort commandant, and Chief of Police Øgaard: if the freedmen came back to town and assembled in groups of more than ten, they would be fired on by the fort cannon and the frigate, still at anchor in the harbour (von Petersen 1855: 126–27).

Irmingier's role as *primus inter pares* in this commission can be assumed from the superiority of his rank and the fact that he commanded resources far superior to anything Castonier had at his disposal. By Wednesday he had manifestly taken charge, relieving Castonier, albeit temporarily, of the command of the fort, and using his marines to demolish a block of buildings obscuring the fort's line of fire towards the landward approaches from the north and east. By Thursday 6 July, the commission had been enlarged to include the commanding officer of Frederiksted's Fire Corps, Major Gyllich, and Crown Prosecutor Sarauw (Von Petersen 1855: 126–27). This enlarged commission issued a second proclamation on Thursday which had the effect of extending the emergency beyond Frederiksted: "any person or persons opposing the authorities or in any other manner combining for illegal or violent purposes will be dealt with as rioters and instantly shot" (Von Petersen 1855: 129).² The mass arrests began the same day and the court martial proceedings in Frederiksted on Friday 7 July.

The court sat uninterruptedly for the next five weeks. It examined more than 100 prisoners, heard evidence from other recently emancipated slaves, from freedmen before emancipation, from estate owners, agents, overseers, book-keepers and from government officials. Those apprehended were far more than could be accommodated in the very fort to which most of the terrified whites of western St. Croix had fled only a few days before. The overflow were confined on the Ørnen and on cargo boats in harbour (Hansen 1970: 394). The court consisted essentially of the members of the commission mentioned above, with

High Court Assessor Louis Rothe as chairman. Irminger did not participate, but the draconian spirit of the trials breathed his love of discipline and strong measures as the only effective method to deal with the perpetrators of the uprising and participants in its destructive aftermath. Within a week, eight persons had been executed on charges ranging from felonious wounding and arson to riotous assembly.

In resorting to the Court Martial, Irminger and the commission drew upon an instrument with the best antecedents. In the previous century a parallel had been drawn with frequency and facility between the slave society of the Danish West Indies and one in which Martial Law or the Articles of War were in force. The population disparity between slaves and whites fostered a desire for absolute obedience and a state-of-siege mentality which manifested themselves in actual or proposed provisions of the Slave Codes and the manner of their administration (Hall 1977). Summary justice of the drumhead variety followed in the wake of the 1759 conspiracy (R/A, GTK 1760) and there were resonances of approval from eighteenth century commentators such as Hans West (West 1793: 134) and a governor general in the 1780s, Major General Schimmelmann (R/A, GTK 1785a).

Above all, however, the elaboration and justification of the military parallel was the work of State Counsellor Lindemann, who produced in 1783 one of the better known draft slave codes. More than a quarter of those 43 articles dealing with "Slaves and Punishment for Misdeeds" had their inclusion justified on the basis of similar provisions in the military code (R/A, GTK 1783a). Proposed punishments for theft and perjury were similarly based, as were proposals for the maintenance of law and order (R/A, GTK 1783b). In those paragraphs dealing with unlawful and riotous assembly aimed at rebellion, Lindemann provided the most explicit bases for the Court Martial of 1848. With Danish War Articles 600 and 601 to guide him, Lindemann proposed that punishment should be terrifying and as summarily swift as a military court. Experience had shown, he said, that slave cases were not only costly but time consuming, and as a result the significance of the punishment was lost by the time it came to be administered. To obviate protracted hearings, Lindemann called

for the use of military process, specifically the "Stand Ret" or Court Martial (R/A, GTk 1783c).

Riotous assembly on the part of slaves aimed at rebellion, had thus been deemed mutiny as far back as 1783. Little did Lindemann realise that his prescriptions would come to apply where the "mutiny" had "succeeded". Those were the paradoxical foundations on which free society was established in St. Croix. The victors were made to suffer the fate of the vanquished. But this was the heavy price required of those who dared to turn the wheel but not full circle. That price was inherent in a strategy of revolution which eschewed violence and had objectives of too limited a character to disturb the balance of power relations. Free society's partruition in such inauspicious circumstances boded ill for its healthy growth. The cataclysmic eruption of the "Great Fire Burn" in St. Croix 30 years later can only be fully understood in the light of the unresolved tensions of 1848 (Skrubbeltrang 1967: 189-218; Marsh 1981: 78-91).

At another level of significance, the Court Martial through its depositions,³ provides the only source from which the revolted slaves of 1848 speak. For comparable trials conducted during the slave period the reliability of the evidence, invariably given under duress, must always be treated with a certain caution. In the instant case, however, the fact that those on trial were freedmen, of however recent vintage, is an important distinction lending weight to a presumption of greater reliability. Moreover, in its totality, the evidence, from ex-slave as well as other deponents, has a degree of internal consistency which puts its plausibility beyond reasonable doubt. The trial transcript is thus an important source of information. *Inter alia*, it sheds light on the modalities of planning and mobilisation; the leadership role of individuals; the objectives of the planned revolt; collective expectations and attitudes; the particular role of women, now, no less than before, somewhat more than silent bystanders in Afro-Caribbean resistance to oppression.⁴ It demonstrates the rage and passion with which the freedmen settled old scores, and provides from the inventory of destruction brief glimpses of the life-style of plantation whites and the internal appointments of their houses.

The officers of the Court, for their part, were motivated by a

range of concerns somewhat narrower than those which might preoccupy subsequent historians. Apart from the dispensation of exemplary punishments, the purpose of the Court Martial from their perspective was twofold: to enquire into the origins of the emancipation movement and to determine the extent of, participation in, and culpability for the disturbances between Tuesday and Thursday. Naturally, they led evidence to establish foreknowledge, preparation, motive, timing and leadership; and, attempting to anticipate the thrust of the eventual metropolitan enquiry (Lawaetz 1940: 192–216) to probe the connection, if any, between the governor general and those who planned it.⁵ Reading through the transcript, the distinct impression prevails that the members of the Court merely went through the motions in the interrogations relating to the post-emancipation disorders. One senses them springing to life, alert and more attentive in the heat and tedium of those long tropical summer days, when there was evidence bearing on the emancipation movement, even though involvement in it could not be deemed an offence after 3 July.

THE TRIAL EVIDENCE: PROLOGOMENON TO REVOLT

As was the case with so many previous slave uprisings in the Caribbean, that in St. Croix derived some of its inspiration from rumour, garbled intelligence and misplaced belief in the imminence of emancipation. A great many of the freedmen examined confessed to having heard months before that emancipation was impending. Such talk of emancipation, it appears, gathered momentum after the provisional government of the Second Republic had decreed general emancipation in the French islands in April 1848. This was the tenor of the depositions respectively of Cuby from Envy and Jack from Prosperity (R/A, VLA 1848: 132, 167–68). Johannes from Bog of Allen said that at least since June he had heard slaves out in the country say:

it was their understanding that the King had already for some time past granted freedom to people here, but that this emancipation had not been publicised because the planters opposed it (R/A, VLA 1848: 140).⁶

This view, that emancipation had already been granted, reoccurs in the examination of Frederik from Mt. Pleasant. Chamberlain Ferral's recollection was that when the emancipation proclamation was read on that estate on Tuesday 4 July, Frederik had remarked that if the proclamation had not been printed that day, "it had stuck in their throats for a very long time". Frederik denied the remark, but conceded having said that the proclamation was printed neither on Monday nor on Tuesday. This was a view shared by many slaves in Frederiksted on Monday. According to Frederik they claimed that they had been free for a long time but that the proclamation had been withheld (R/A, VLA 1848: 176, 178–79). If Moses from Butler's Bay is to be believed, at least one white person felt similarly, namely a Mrs. Beech whom he alleged to have heard berating her husband on Tuesday for being a party to withholding the promulgation (R/A, VLA 1848: 158). None of these deponents, however, admitted to knowing anything about the planned march on Frederiksted before Sunday night.

There were others who had heard from a week before that Monday was the target day on which they would withdraw their labour and demand their freedom (R/A, VLA 1848: 177). A slave, George Francis, was alleged to have told the Rosehill workforce on Saturday to turn out with sugar bills and sticks on Monday, but nothing was said about going to Frederiksted. Similar advice had also been given at Rosehill by Richard from neighbouring Mt. Stewart, and Patrick from Punch, another northside estate. Adam from Rosehill admitted, before being sentenced for setting fire to a canefield, that a week in advance Gotlieb Bordeaux, also known as General Buddoe, an artisan from La Grange, had told him they should all "look to their time" and to inform others (R/A, VLA 1848: 39). But Buddoe himself denied knowing anything about the planned events of Monday before Sunday afternoon. Indeed, Buddoe claimed that his source of information was Charles of Butler's Bay. But the latter denied that allegation, insisting he knew nothing prior to Sunday evening (R/A, VLA 1848: 32, 204–205). Martin King, whom the Court said was commonly believed to be a leader of the emancipation movement, also denied any foreknowledge of a plan before Sunday evening. If

he is to be believed, he did not fancy its chances of success even as late as Monday morning (R/A, VLA 1848: 111).

As it transpired none of the persons examined admitted knowledge of a plan earlier than the preceding Friday. On that day, Moses of Butler's Bay said he heard slaves on the way to and from the West End saying there would be no work on Monday. Even so, he knew nothing of a concrete development before he heard the conch shells, known in local creole as *tuttue* (Schmidt 1788: 204), being blown on Sunday night (R/A, VLA 1848: 140). There was even one witness who claimed to have heard nothing before Monday at lunch time (R/A, VLA 1848: 171). It is also interesting to notice that not even those freedmen from Martin King's Bog of Allen or Buddoe's La Grange seemed to have, or admitted to having, any previous information as to what was to transpire. One witness from Bog of Allen told the Court that when the bells started to ring and the shells were being blown on Sunday evening, neither he nor anyone else on the estate, so far as he knew, had any idea of what was afoot. Joseph from Prosperity, who lived on neighbouring La Grange, said he knew nothing before Sunday evening (R/A, VLA 1848: 122, 132).

Counsels of discretion aside, this suggests that the plan had been conceived and passed on to a few chosen persons whose task was to organise their individual estates, and to sound the signals on Sunday night. Limiting knowledge of the plot to a few trusted lieutenants explains the success with which disciplined secrecy was maintained to such a remarkable degree in the planning of the uprising. Further, it enabled its implementation to enjoy all of the optimal advantages of surprise. There were no betrayers in a total slave population of nearly 20000. The compact size, favourable terrain and intense development of St. Croix, where no estate was ever much more than a kilometer from its neighbour, facilitated ease of communication between the leadership without the need to rely on intermediaries of questionable trustworthiness.

Leadership

Whilst the evidence led at the trial is not especially forthcoming with details of prior planning, it positively identifies leadership roles and suggests the identity of ultimate leadership. Specific

individuals either unilaterally assumed, or, more plausibly, were delegated specific tasks for the occupation of Frederiksted. On Monday morning when the crowd there was in front of the office of the Chief of Police, a building which was subsequently destroyed, Augustus from Concordia was self-confessedly “in command to get the crowd in line”. His leadership role was emphasised by the sword he had in hand, and by way of further emphasis, the blood of a duck, killed by the same sword, smeared on the front of his shirt (R/A, VLA 1848: 21–22). On Monday evening, still in his bloodstained shirt, he was at Hogensborg estate shouting that he had orders “to decapitate anyone who didn’t declare himself free since all were now free”. One man for whom the notion of general emancipation was too much to accept, told Augustus he was not free since he had not been manumitted by his master. Augustus promised to decapitate him too. His role as leader is also confirmed by his participation on Monday in a symbolic act of climactic catharsis: the rooting up of the beating post, the *Justits Støt*, in Frederiksted’s market square and its dumping into the sea (R/A, VLA 1848: 22, 24).

The first shred of evidence relating to ultimate leadership came from Will of Annally estate. Questioned about his activities in Frederiksted on Monday, he admitted being there and having in his possession a demi-john of rum stolen from the premises of the grocer Moore. But the demi-john was “taken from him or rather smashed”. He did not say by whom (R/A, VLA 1848: 110). However, Frederik von Scholten in his eye witness account published subsequently, pointed out that the crowd in front of the fort and adjacent to Moore’s grocery, was being commanded by Buddoe. He forcibly prevented the looting of goods and spirits and “smashed the containers with his sword” (Von Petersen 1855: 110). Will either suffered a genuine bout of amnesia, or like so many other witnesses would give nothing away regarding preparation or leadership. One other shred of evidence on leadership came from Edward of Rosehill estate. He told the Court that when George Francis enjoined the workforce on Saturday to turn out on Monday, he made it sound as though Moses of Butler’s Bay was the “chief organiser” (R/A, VLA 1848: 178).

Despite intensive interrogation, neither Buddoe nor Martin

King admitted to organising the uprising. Such an admission in any case, with emancipation accomplished, would have been a work of supererogation. However, there was a direct attribution of leadership to Buddoe and Martin King from the four men condemned to death on 11 July: Decatur from Bethlehem for rioting and theft; Friday from Castle for a similar offence; Augustus from Concordia for felonious wounding and Adam from Rosehill for arson. In his original examination on 9 July, Friday deposed that Martin King was to be blamed for everything. On the day he was sentenced, Friday first admitted to using the general's name, i.e. Buddoe, not the governor general, to stir up the crowd, but later came back at his own request to inform the court that "Bordeaux was at the head of everything" (R/A, VLA 1848: 20, 28, 35, 41).

Decatur, who admitted breaking open Moore's iron safe from which a lot of money had been removed, also asked to make a statement to the Court after his death sentence had been pronounced. As far as the Court could make out, he explained that it was Buddoe who made the slaves on northside estates rise for freedom and come into town (R/A, VLA 1848: 38, 39). Adam too, asking the Court to make a statement after his condemnation, reaffirmed his earlier testimony that Buddoe had instructed slaves that they should take their freedom by fair means or foul. Augustus for his part reinforced these statements by adding that on Sunday Buddoe had told slaves that come Monday, they should "tell the white man they would no longer be slaves" (R/A, VLA 1848: 41, 42).

What is of further interest about this group of testimonies, is that with the exception of Friday, they all stated in the most emphatic terms that Buddoe gave no orders for looting or destruction. Friday claimed that Buddoe gave him instructions on Tuesday to destroy Carlton estate (R/A, VLA 1848: 41). But there was an abundance of countervailing evidence from other ex-slaves, from white plantation help and government officials that Buddoe strove to maintain order on Monday and on the days following (R/A, VLA 1848: 61, 62, 89, 120).⁷ Friday's statement about Tuesday, even if true, does not alter the weight of the evidence from the other three in relation to Monday. One would have good grounds to believe that Decatur, Augustus and Adam,

their minds wonderfully clarified by the prospect of impending execution, were unlikely to have given collectively misleading testimony. There was nothing to be gained by exonerating Buddoe from instigating violence on Monday. If that part of their testimony stands the test of reliability, so should the other portion relating to Buddoe's ultimate leadership.

Strategy and Objectives

If the proceedings help to clarify the locus of leadership, they also shed some light on organisational strategies. None of the testimony is explicit on this point, but there were enough statements at the trial to indicate that the slaves intended to use the strike weapon as a lever to force the issue of their freedom. Industrial action as a form of ultimate protest was no novelty among Caribbean slave populations. It had been advocated, though unsuccessfully, by Nanny Grigg in Barbados in 1816, Deacon Quamina in Demerara in 1823 and more recently by Sam Sharpe in the Jamaica Christmas uprising of 1831 (Craton 1982: 261, 281, 300). The predetermined signal for Monday's strike was the blowing of *tuttues* and the ringing of plantation bells. Both signalled emergencies such as fire, or work-start and stoppage. But when the signals were given, Frederik von Scholten, whose house lay high enough for a good view of the countryside, could see no fire (von Petersen 1855: 94, 96). At that time of night, work could not, obviously, be beginning. This was indeed an emergency signal, but for a final work-stoppage.

The most concrete testimony of the connection between withdrawal of labour and its use as a bargaining counter for freedom, came from the condemned Augustus. Buddoe, according to him, had told slaves on Sunday that they were not to go to work on Monday *and* to tell the whites they would no longer be slaves. The connection was also made explicit by Edward of Rosehill. Where the connection was not explicit, others nevertheless showed awareness of an impending strike. Moses from Butler's Bay, as mentioned earlier, had heard about this on Friday, and Robert Lucas, the carpenter at Betty's Hope, said that when he went to town on Saturday to buy turpentine, "several persons" had informed him that there was to be no work on Monday (R/A, VLA 1848: 42, 177-78, 140, 157, 94).

The seriousness with which the work-stoppage was enforced is well illustrated by Martin King's experience on Monday. By his own account, the work force at Bog of Allen had gone to work on Monday, a circumstance which raises questions about his leadership influence up to this point. On instructions from the overseer, Williams Naest, King took the plantation wain to drive to the West End. Having descended the escarpment to the Centreline as far as St. George's, where his wife Severine lived (R/A, VLA 1848: 123), Martin King stopped to get a cart whip. He was met by an angry crowd, led by Decatur among others, who unhitched the mule and drove the cart into the cane piece, telling Martin he was not to drive to the West End. It may well be that Martin wanted to use the opportunity of his instructions to be present in Frederiksted for reasons connected with the events of later that day. But so far as Decatur and the others were concerned, the mere appearance of collaboration on Monday morning, which driving the cart symbolised, was a betrayal. Phillipus of Mt. Pleasant was sufficiently enraged to hit Martin over the arm with a cutlass and force him to join in the march to the West End (R/A, VLA 1848: 112).

The difficulty of implementing a work-stoppage aimed at emancipation, is illustrated not only by what Martin King reported as happening at Bog of Allen on Monday morning. Habits of a lifetime were not easily dispelled. Even at Mt. Pleasant to which the enraged Phillipus was attached, some work had begun on Monday morning. The driver there, Jørgen, told the Court, however, that he was threatened with decapitation for this lapse by John Simmons, one of the men eventually condemned, and two others (R/A, VLA 1848: 71). Whatever the difficulty of its implementation, the strategy obviously struck a responsive chord. Forced labour was the essential badge of a servitude they were being asked to endure patiently for another eleven years until general emancipation in 1859. But in the meantime freedom had already come since 1847 for their newborn children; since 1838 for the British West Indies, including Tortola scarcely a cannon shot from St. Jan; and more recently since April for the French West Indies.

The deeply felt resentment is expressed in the language and

behaviour of Decatur, Phillipus and John Simmons. Comparable freedom, to work not at all, or on their own terms, was the substance of that independence they hoped to achieve that Monday and to maintain thereafter. This was the spirit which informed the behaviour of Edward of Rosehill on the morrow of emancipation. In an encounter with his erstwhile owner Van Brackle from neighbouring Spring Garden on the northside, Edward announced: "Mr. van Brackle here is your hoe and your cutlass. I will no longer work for you and if I work I will buy them for myself". Where upon, he threw the tools at Van Brackle's feet (R/A, VLA 1848: 175-76). The principle of voluntary work on freely negotiated terms was, before Monday and after, the only acceptable and dignified basis on which to establish the status of a free peasantry to which they aspired. It would take another generation to achieve. But for the present the objective was a powerful motivating force, and the strategy had a certain attractiveness, particularly when it promised the circumscription at worst and the avoidance at best of bloodshed.

VIOLENCE MANQUÉE: 2-3 JULY 1848

St. Croix's birthday of freedom was not, however, entirely bloodless nor characterised by an absolute absence of violence. Only incredible levels of discipline, universally applied, could have restrained physical assault on persons and property on that day. Yet the evidence indicates that those levels of discipline were in large measure realised. Two incidents involving attacks on white persons were proof of the rule by the proverbial exception. The first is not contained in the trial transcript but in Frederik von Scholten's account. It involved Major Gyllich, commander of the Fire Corps. Riding into town on Monday, he was chopped at by someone as he passed through a crowd, managed to parry the blow and after shouting, "I am a friend not an enemy", and throwing his sword on the ground, was allowed to pass (Von Petersen 1855: 102). Gyllich subsequently proved his *bona fides* by riding around on Tuesday, accompanied by Buddoe, and attempting to restore calm without force on several mid-island

estates (R/A, VLA 1848: 121–22). The conviction that he was sympathetic may have saved Gyllich when discipline briefly disintegrated on Monday morning.

The second incident involved Augustus from Concordia and John Lang, owner of Paradise, on the road between that estate and Good Hope on Monday afternoon. Each gave a slightly different version of how the incident began, but they concurred on how it developed, namely, that Lang who was unarmed took a stick from an old man and fetched Augustus two smart blows. In retaliation Augustus slashed with his sword at Lang inflicting a serious wound to the arm and a less serious wound to the hand (R/A, VLA 1848: 22, 33–34). By Augustus' own admission, and that of William Mc Farlane who saw him shortly after the event, he was pretty far gone in drink (R/A, VLA 1848: 29). There were thus important extenuating circumstances attending Augustus' loss of self control.

The other exceptional incidents of violence immediately preceding emancipation, involved the destruction and plunder of three houses in Frederiksted in the course of Monday: the Police Station and residence of Frederiksted's Chief of Police Andresen; Police Adjutant Didrichsen's house and Moore the grocer's shop cum house. The evidence led at the trial is not especially helpful as to motive in the case of the first two. It is possible to infer, however, that Peter von Scholten's absence in St. Thomas was widely known among the slave community and that in his absence the revolting slaves directed their protest at those whom they perceived as representing authority. This would help in accounting for the assault on Major Gyllich. Such an interpretation also lessens, if not discredits, the conspiratorial theory which suggests links between the governor general and the plot to revolt (Von Petersen 1855: 132; Prosch 1848: 416–17). Frederik von Scholten records it as his understanding that the slaves had come into town on Monday morning to "negotiate" with Frederiksted's Chief of Police for their freedom (Von Petersen 1855: 101). The destruction of the Police Station and the Police Adjutant's house must therefore be construed as a consequence of the slaves' frustration at not being able to extract freedom from this quarter (Hansen 1970: 373–75), as an expression of the seriousness of their intent

and a symbolic gesture of defiant uncompromising militancy. No examinee confessed to being in either police building and the trial record thus contains nothing to convey the electric atmosphere of that highly charged morning. The closest it comes is in the deposition of Malvina of Big Fountain who, standing outside Didrichsen's house, was unable to get in "as it was filled with people" (R/A, VLA 1848: 87).

A similar crushing throng was present at grocer Moore's. The sack of his building on Strandgade (Waterfront Street), in close proximity to and in full view of the fort, was inspired by the slaves' belief that Moore had advised the Fort Commander to "shoot them down like dogs". Moore's cook, Edward, who was present heard the crowd shouting the accusation. There was such an enormous crowd that he was unable to identify anyone as particularly responsible or who led the charge. They burst through the street door which gave access via a staircase to the rooms above which were locked. The doors to them were broken down by crow bars and axes obtained from the cellar (R/A, VLA 1848: 169–70).

It was impossible for the Court to apportion individual responsibility for the destruction and sack of any of the three houses, although Decatur's condemnation was specifically related to the rifling of Moore's iron safe (R/A, VLA 1848: 36). But on the day in question, the destruction of Moore's house gave the slaves an important psychological boost by emphasising their considerable advantage in tactical and strategic terms. It would have been easy to follow Moore's alleged advice, strafe Strandgade and mow down the insurgents either from the water battery or the gun emplacements at the fort's entrance. But this was not an option the whites could exercise. The slaves, in effective control of the town, had accomplished this without bloodshed in it. A burst of grape shot would have indiscriminately killed those in the streets while the looters in Moore's shop needed only to go through the back entrance into the street behind. This was the reason that Irminger demolished all the buildings obstructing the cannons' line of sight towards the north and east on Wednesday. Had the Fort Commander opened fire on Monday, the likelihood was that the slaves would not only have killed whites in retaliation but also put fire to Frederiksted (Von Petersen 1855: 104).

The vulnerability of the towns to fire was notorious. The slaves knew this and it led them to deploy a strategy in which the threat of Frederiksted's total destruction was their ultimate bargaining counter. When Frederik von Scholten ventured out of the fort with the Roman Catholic priest and some of the more courageous whites to calm the slaves in the streets, one of the leaders told him: "We can't fight the soldiers since we have no weapons, but we can burn and destroy if we don't get our freedom — and we will do it". This was no idle boast; it was clearly part of a well laid plan:

... close to the fort, behind a corner house and out of the cannons' reach was a large group of slave women with trash and dry cane leaves which, at the first volley from the fort, they would have lit and thrown through windows and doors. Since most householders had by then left their houses there would thus have been nothing to prevent such a fire spreading rapidly through the town (Von Petersen 1855: 103).

ATTITUDES TO THE FUTURE. RACE AND CLASS

The proceedings of the Court Martial also help to answer the question whether the slaves had developed ideas relating to a future less immediate than the acquisition of freedom. Accompanying the desire for freedom was an aspiration to property in land. There even seemed to be a sense in which that aspiration was born of a conception of land as *patria* to which they and not the whites had an exclusive claim. A similar view prevailed among the equally creolized slave population of Barbados in 1816 (Craton 1982: 258). Nelson, interestingly enough a *bosal*, who had worked at Mt. Pleasant, declared on Tuesday that if anyone attempted to arrest him he would cut them down "since the land belonged to them". A virtually identical expression came from Andreas of Envy, who told John Randall Findlay, a freedman before emancipation, that "the land would now belong to them, namely the blacks" (R/A, VLA 1848: 51, 74). Land as property was the indispensable basis of their independence as peasants. Beyond that, however, there were visions that transcended mere peasant subsistence and looked to the continuance of the mono-crop export economy run by freedmen. John Simmons told Richard

Doute the book-keeper at Big Fountain that there was enough land to plant cane and that they could build their own ships to bring provisions in (R/A, VLA 1848: 46). James Heyliger, one of those executed, made an important distinction between the destruction of plantation buildings and the destruction of cane in the field, since the latter "would be the country's loss" (R/A, VLA 1848: 4). This desire to own land and to maintain on it the production of cane as an export staple, probably explains why Adam's arson attempt at Rosehill was the only one such.

The corollary of those ambitions was that the whites would have to leave the estates or remain on them on a footing of equality at best or subordination at worst. The collective attitude of the slaves, where it did not celebrate their own race, condemned whites *qua* whites, denigrated them as figures of authority and judged them unflatteringly in terms of class. By the 1840s a great many of the overseers and book-keepers on estates in the Danish West Indies were Irish or Anglo-Irish, usually humble crofters in search of their fortune. More often than not, they were less familiar with plantation routine and management techniques than the slaves they were supposed to supervise. Their penchant for liaisons with slave women had a long history and this, with a predilection for drink and general hell-raising, made them a disruptive force on most plantations (R/A, GTK 1785b; *Fædrel-andet* 1841a, 1841b). Such white estate help did not invite the respect of the slave gangs. Karen Fog Olwig has graphically illustrated this in the case of St. Jan, instancing an 1847 case in which a slave Johannes abused the overseer Glasco in the most derogatory and scatological terms: "You are a come-and-go, my master is head-judge. You, pskaw! You a shitting ass (sic) Blanco" (Olwig 1977: 405 n. 19). The heat and excitement of the emancipation uprising and its aftermath was an opportunity for the expression of race consciousness; for the villification of whites generally and plantation help in particular; for expressions of challenge to and rejection of their authority.

Racial consciousness inspired the threat on Tuesday by Martin William of Hamsbay to Emilia of the same estate that "he would take off her head if she was on the white people's side" (R/A, VLA 1848: 78). Charles of Butler's Bay on the previous Sunday evening

had threatened anyone taking the whites' side with similar punishment. John Simmons, for his part, had a utilitarian concept of racial solidarity: he told the book-keeper at Montpelier that it was a good thing to proceed against whites as they had, or it would be the worse for blacks (R/A, VLA 1848: 32, 46). From racial consciousness and solidarity it was an easy transition to racial animosity. According to Eveline, a domestic in Frederiksted, Christian, a former house servant to the regimental surgeon, took very unkindly to a remark from a white school teacher to behave himself on Tuesday. Christian's reply was that he would not permit any white man to speak to him like that, and he would consider it a small matter to sever his head from his body. Christian denied the remark, but conceded that he was unable to recall everything he had done, drunk as he was at the time (R/A, VLA 1848: 57, 58). Indeed, even before the disturbances began on Sunday evening, racial animosity was in evidence. At Montpelier, Henry, incensed at the overseer's rebuke for impertinence on Sunday afternoon, declared that "his spirit was such that white people should be very careful with him" (R/A, VLA 1848: 80).

The decision to revolt was an effect of the renting of that veil of respect which clothed whites in slave society. But it was also cause. Several incidents involving manhandling, attempted manhandling and abusive remarks on and after Monday 3 July, demonstrate the extent to which the blacks of St. Croix were no longer contained by the established devices of social control. At Envy on Tuesday, several blacks from Negro Bay armed with machetes charged the book-keeper, who was only rescued by the timely intervention of some of Envy's workforce. Charles Conally, overseer at Hope, had a similar experience on Tuesday when he lost a silver watch and a watch chain (R/A, VLA 1848: 10, 162-63). Comparable examples can be cited from Camporico, Carlton, Sprathall, Mt. Pleasant and Spring Garden estates in the period between Monday and Tuesday (R/A, VLA 1848: 48, 54, 62, 71, 90).

What this as product suggests, is a process of "demystification" of whites, and it was exemplified preeminently in the behaviour of Isaac of Prosperity, from Tuesday a close associate of Buddoe. On Thursday at Hamsbay, Buddoe arrived with Isaac and others to

remind the owner, John Elliot, that slavery was abolished and along with it, the whip from the field. Elliot was told that if he did not agree to working conditions which the freedmen found acceptable, the plantation would be taken from him and any other likeminded white. To emphasise the point, Isaac struck the floor with his sword, declaring, "No nonsense Elliot". On Wednesday at Prosperity, again accompanying Buddoe, Isaac let his old book-keeper know that he had "an account to settle with him" and that it was a good thing he had not met him. The rapid evaporation of deference which this signifies is well illustrated by the third incident involving Isaac. With Buddoe at the estate The William on Tuesday, they both wanted to know who had given orders for work to resume there. Thomas Murphy, the overseer, assured them that he had given the orders and that the workforce would be paid. Whereupon, Isaac grabbed Murphy by the scruff of the neck, told him to behave himself and be quiet or he would rough him up (R/A, VLA 1848: 32, 38, 108, 133, 134).

Hated and disrespected, overseers and book-keepers were also objects of distrust. An important aspect of the immediate management of freedom, therefore, appears to have been to get white plantation help to leave the estates and to disarm them. The first objective was consonant with an aspiration to property; the second with a desire to minimize their vulnerability and to protect themselves, if the need arose, with weapons other than sugar-bills and cudgels. The depositions at the trial do not suggest by their number that the desire to drive the whites from the estates was a widespread phenomenon. But its existence on widely separated estates points not so much to spontaneous indignation on the part of individuals, as to a pre-arranged plan. At Adventure on Wednesday, Peter from Kingshill, a central estate along the Centreline, exclaimed: "Why is this white man still on the plantation?" (R/A, VLA 1848: 91). At Sprathall on the northside, "a large part of the workforce" demanded on Tuesday that the overseer, book-keeper and owner should never set foot on the property again (R/A, VLA 1848: 29). At Montpelier, another northside estate on Wednesday, Henry, cutlass in hand, told Hewson the overseer in threatening tones that he wanted whites "cleared away from the estates" and that it was best if they hid

themselves (R/A, VLA 1848: 79–81). Moorehead, the lessee of Camporico in the south was similarly threatened on Wednesday (R/A, VLA 1848: 16). The geographical spread of these estates — Kingshill from which Peter derived, in the island's centre; Sprathall in the northwest; Montpelier in the north; Adventure in the south and Camporiso in the southwest — is sufficiently wide to discount pure spontaneity as an explanation.

The plan to disarm whites on Tuesday and subsequently was said to have originated with Buddoe. Samuel and John from Camporico, both of whom engaged in a spectacular if unsuccessful horseback chase to seize the bookkeeper's gun, claimed to have received such orders (R/A, VLA 1848: 15). Buddoe disclaimed responsibility, although he admitted to riding around to several estates on the northside on Tuesday, requiring the usual distribution of food allowances and enjoining the workforce to look after animals (R/A, VLA 1848: 32, 105). There is no doubt, however, that he used the occasion to get overseers and others to hand over their firearms. Such was the case, for example, at The William on Tuesday, when in the company of Isaac from Prosperity, he demanded and got overseer Murphy's gun (R/A, VLA 1848: 133).

Buddoe's denial has the ring of veracity. If he intended to collect the guns himself, he might well have given no order. The fact is that the discipline which had prevailed up to Monday, had begun to wear thin by Tuesday and individuals like Samuel and John simply took matters into their own hands. The breakdown was facilitated, in the absence of regular rations in those confused days, by hunger and by drink: The continuance of the allowance arose as a specific issue on Tuesday at several estates (R/A, VLA 1848: 61, 101, 133, 152). A cow was slaughtered at Montpelier; sheep there and at Concordia; pigs at Sprathall and at Mt. Stewart where ducks were also slaughtered (R/A, VLA 1848: 79, 80, 100, 115, 134). Numerous witnesses confessed to being heavily under the influence of drink after emancipation was declared (R/A, VLA 1848: 24–26, 29, 38, 67, 81, 97, 103, 112, 126). There is some evidence too that some of the rum consumed so extensively might have been ritually drunk to symbolize binding engagement. Cuby testified that on Wednesday morning he was offered a

mixture of rum and gunpowder by some of the workforce from Negro Bay (R/A, VLA 1848: 179–80).⁸ In such circumstances the revolting freedmen were less susceptible to the restraints of leadership. It is interesting to observe that after Buddoe had collected arms at The William, the workforce from Sprathall arrived some hours later to make the same demand on overseer Murphy (R/A, VLA 1848: 83, 84). At Carlton on the southside on the same day, there was also an attempt to seize the book-keeper's gun (R/A, VLA 1848: 59, 82). At Montpelier on Tuesday a freedman, Frederik, had already come into possession of a firearm. Asked to give it up by the Roman Catholic priest accompanying the party to read the emancipation proclamation, Frederik is alleged to have claimed that they had taken all the overseers' guns in the country. Making allowances for hyperbole, the remark if true, reinforces the view that the disarming of white plantation help by Buddoe alone, or by increasingly indisciplined subordinates, was a cardinal feature of the planning post-Monday. More importantly, Frederik is again alleged to have said that the guns would only be returned when they could have greater trust in overseers, or when they behaved better (R/A, VLA 1848: 176, 179).⁹

Here, distilled, was the very essence of the matter. Overseers and book-keepers, standard bearers of the *mission civilisatrice* had been weighed in the scales and found severely wanting. They generated hatred, animosity, contempt, distrust and bitterness. Augustus at Concordia smashed up the sick house precisely "because he had been locked up in it many times". Others too like Catherine from Carlton or Isaac from Prosperity, mentioned earlier, equally victims of arbitrary detention and the whip, had searing recollections as the basis for settling old scores (R/A, VLA 1848: 22, 82). Persistent bitterness inspired Joseph from Anguilla to shout treateningly at Envy estate: "Where is that fellow Lorentz? It's him I want". (R/A, VLA 1848: 83, 85). It would equally explain the insistence independently by Neddy from Grove Place and Pressent from Jealousy that Lucas' house at Mt. Pleasant should be destroyed, as it was a prison (R/A, VLA 1848: 51, 172). The fact that Thomas Clarke was overseer at both Jealousy and Mt. Pleasant which was contiguous (R/A, VLA 1848: 71) was, in all probability, not an unrelated circumstance.

PROPERTY DESTRUCTION: 4-5 JULY 1848

Against this background, it is no matter for surprise that the extensive looting and destruction which characterised Tuesday and Wednesday, 4-5 July, were directed almost exclusively at the houses and personal effects of white plantation personnel.¹⁰ The trial transcript is replete with instances, not of mere destruction of such property on several estates, but symbolic acts of violation and humiliation fuelled by extremities of rage. The many occasions (R/A, VLA 1848: 6, 43, 47, 48, 51, 58, 59, 69, 76, 160) on which ex-slaves bedecked themselves with threecornered hats, swords, military jackets and belts of whites who had fled in terror, were not so much gasconade as calculated demonstrations of the fact that the mighty had fallen. The looting of food supplies: salted fish and beef, flour, cornmeal, sugar, rum, beer and wine from the provision cellars of several estates (R/A, VLA 1848: 10, 18, 24) answered similarly not merely to the needs of hunger. Such looting represented as well the symbolic rejection of that authority in which control of plantation rations was vested. Chopping off the locks of provision cellars or breaking down the doors to them was arguably a form of cathartic release no less satisfying than the uprooting of the *Justits Støt* on Monday.

The almost endless catalogue of destroyed houses and personal property belonging to overseers and book-keepers invites a similar interpretation. Mannings Bay, Envy, Lower Love, Castle, Concordia, Adventure, Golden Grove, Jealousy, Sprathall, Hamsbay, Diamond, Ruby, St. George, Wheel of Fortune, Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Stewart, Good Hope among others, suffered in varying degrees. Apart from houses partially or wholly destroyed, the inventory of items most frequently mentioned as destroyed or stolen included clothing, bed linen, beds, bedsteads, wardrobes, cupboards, washstands, dining tables, porcelain, glassware, silverware, goldplate, objets d'art (R/A, VLA 1848: 8, 18, 23, 29, 72, 83, 86, 112, 115-17).

Another common *leit-motiv* which informs all the accounts of destruction, is the extraordinary violence. The explanation inheres only in part in the freedom with which rum was available from plantation stores. It inheres even less in Adam's religious

ST. CROIX: Location of some estates, 1848. Source: Map of the Danish West Indies (Copenhagen: Foreningen for de danske Atlanterhavsøer, 1907).

assignment of cause to "the devil in his head" for setting fire to the fields at Rosehill. One has to look elsewhere for the springs of that volcanic passion which led individuals systematically to demolish a dining room at Concordia; reduce a divan, clock and clock-stand there to splinters; or impale Lucas' globe at Mt. Pleasant on an improvised bayonet (R/A, VLA 1848: 51, 115-17). The effects in question could simply have been taken away as booty. Rum and "the devil" merely quickened an impulse to destroy whose roots lay deep in the long suffered indignities and abuses of servitude.

WOMEN

One interesting aspect of the rampage between Tuesday and Thursday was the important contribution of women. It was pointed out earlier that they had assembled the trash with which to set fire to Frederiksted, should that prove necessary. At Negro Bay on Wednesday they again comprised another trash detail when Big Robert threatened to burn the owner's house down (R/A, VLA 1848: 8). Frederik von Scholten in this connection made the very interesting observation that:

Among the black population, women play a role of great importance. They do the same work that the men do and their physical build and size render them formidable adversaries in the rough and tumble of a fight. Throughout the disturbances they were more aggressive, vengeful and altogether more violent in their passion than the men (Von Petersen 1855: 117).

The trial transcript bears this out substantially. Rosaline, described by her former owner Jane Jackson as giddy-headed and childish, underwent no instant metamorphosis when she made the soberingly pointed remark: "Is there a war on? That can't be for in that case they would have burnt the town just as in St. Domingue" (R/A, VLA 1848: 135).

Women displayed a rage no less primordial than the men's. Slavery had after all made no distinction as to gender, and their sex had laid them open to the additional disadvantage of harrassment, not to mention the perversion of normal maternal relations.

It is no wonder therefore that Mathilda from Frederiksted was an active instigator outside Moore's grocery; that a woman was co-leader with Big Robert in the sack of Negro Bay; that Sey, a woman from neighbouring Manning's Bay was also identified as a moving spirit at Negro Bay (R/A, VLA 1848: 54, 55). Another Manning's Bay woman, Sara, chopped off the legs of Knight's piano at Negro Bay, and was only prevented from chopping up the rest when Martha, who belonged to the estate workforce, lay on top of it to protect it (R/A, VLA 1848: 143). At Lucas' Mt. Pleasant, Penny from adjoining River took the first blow at the door with a cudgel, and when it did not give, proceeded to attack another door. The overseer Thomas Clarke commented that Penny distinguished herself with "threats of murder and cutting people's heads off". At the same estate, Present from Jealousy who had described Lucas' house as a prison to be destroyed, chopped up a cupboard (R/A, VLA 1848: 71, 172-73). It was Rachel wielding an axe who reduced the divan at Concordia to splinters (R/A, VLA 1848: 115). Violent in destruction, the women were remarkably resourceful in plunder. Unable to remove a whole mattress at Sprathall, Else removed the ticking and took the cover (R/A, VLA 1848: 135). Women were the main removers of plunder at Concordia and a large number of other estates (R/A, VLA 1848: 87, 116, 142-43, 174).

DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSES

It should be emphasised that not all the freedmen succumbed to such transports of fury. Notwithstanding the fact that Buddoe's writ had ceased to run island-wide since the morning of Tuesday 4 July, and such influence as Martin King possessed had begun to wane, their stand against destruction and plunder, of which the Court took note (R/A, VLA 1848: 32, 41-42, 120), apparently had some effect. For some freedmen, the psychological bond with familiar things and places, masters' as well as their own, or a *Weltanschauung* defined by the plantation as world, was not readily rupturable by the transition to freedom. Many drivers were as resistant to plundering as others were active in instigating it. Some

like Jacob Washinton, former crookgang driver at Spring Garden and son of the book-keeper Jasper Washington, perhaps had special reason to resist the rioters (R/A, VLA 1848: 90). The same would be true of William Borch, former driver of the same estate, who had a reputation for excessive use of the wip in the field, and from whom a number of freedmen sought "satisfaction" (R/A, VLA 1848: 80, 96). But there are no special circumstances to explain why John Peru, former driver at Upper Love, or Isaac at Paradise, both attempted to prevent destruction and pillaging on Wednesday (R/A, VLA 1848: 27, 152). Drivers apart, there were many former slaves, male as well as female, who protected property on many estates in the immediate aftermath of emancipation. They hid household effects in the quarters, in canefields and in trash, or bravely barred entrance to provision cellars at Enfield Green, Camporico, Bog of Allen, Rosehill, Carlton, Mt. Pleasant, Negro Bay, Adventure, Envy and elsewhere (R/A, VLA 1848: 5, 15, 30, 38, 53, 60, 69, 89, 179).

Among those free before emancipation, the events on and immediately after Monday 3 July, also produced no unilinear response. In Frederiksted there was a strong suspicion of this group as originators of the plot and potential allies of the insurgents. Nevertheless, it was their restraining influence, Frederik von Scholten reports, which accounted for the destruction in town being limited to three houses (Von Petersen 1855: 98–99, 101, 105). That restraining influence was also in evidence in the rural milieu, where by a growing convention in violation of a 1747 law, some freedmen before emancipation were allowed to live. Thus Edward Hein who lived on Negro Bay did his best to prevent destruction at neighbouring Golden Grove; Richard Gumbs disarmed the leader of the invading band at Hamsbay, and Samuel William openly deplored the use of violence at Bog of Allen (R/A, VLA 1848: 30, 54, 85). The latter's wife and five children were slaves up to emancipation. But his response is in radical contrast with that of Mathaeus, another freedman before emancipation, whose wife Sally had also been a slave. Mathaeus was the driver of one of the carts in which effects were removed from Negro Bay. At Negro Bay too, it was another *ancien libre*, Christopher from Manning's Bay, who allegedly helped in the removal of a hogs-

head of rum (R/A, VLA 1848: 44, 55). No common pattern of behaviour thus emerges. But this is hardly a matter for surprise in view of the disparities of economic achievement, aspirations and status among pre-emancipation freedmen (Hall 1980b: 69–72).

EPILOGUE

The evidence from the trial establishes that the slaves of St. Croix pursued their purpose of achieving emancipation with unwavering single-mindedness. However, on the very morrow of emancipation there were signs of atomisation. In the trial itself freedmen freely accused other freedmen for their part in the events after Monday. Those who had achieved freedom earlier were themselves no more united programmatically. Such internal divisions weighted the scales in favour of constituted authority which remained intact despite the upheavals. The executions, and Buddoe's deportation at his own request (R/A, VLA 1848: 105) robbed the freedmen of their best potential leadership. Vanquished victors, the freedmen of St. Croix were poorly placed to confront the challenges of the first generation of freedom.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the XIII th. Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians, Guadeloupe, April 1981. I would like to thank Arnold Sio and Richard Price both of whom made constructive comments and offered some useful suggestions.
2. All translations from the Danish are by the author who accepts sole responsibility for their accuracy.
3. The transcript records are in Danish although the depositions themselves were most probably rendered in English creole, the *lingua franca* of St. Croix slaves long before the end of the eighteenth century (West 1793: 325).
4. The Danish Slave Trade Abolition Ordinance of 1792 abolished import duties on female slaves until the trade's final cessation in 1802, and exempted such slaves from poll tax if used for field work, while doubling that tax on male slaves (Green-Pedersen 1979: 408). This policy reversed a well-established bias

towards towards males in St. Croix's slave population. By 1840 of a total of 18605, female slaves comprised some 52.2 per cent (Alexander 1843: 6). The preponderance was even more marked in the towns of St. Croix where in 1839 they accounted for some 62.6 per cent of the slave population (Hall 1983a: 19–20; Tables 2.4 and 2.5).

5. The popular literature holds that Gotlieb Bordeaux (General Buddoe) who played a leadership role of some significance during and just after the revolt, was an intimate of the governor general's (Ramløv 1967).

6. It certainly would not have been the first demonstration of obstructionist behaviour by the plantocracy to official policy. Frederik V's 1755 *Reglement for Slaverne* was withheld for this reason (Vibæk 1966: 146–47), and they were not exactly models of cooperation with the governor general's reforms in the 1840s (Hall 1979).

7. These are the testimonies respectively of an ex-slave from Sprathall estate, a book-keeper from the same estate, an overseer from Adventure and Major Gyllich, Commander of Frederiksted Fire Corps.

8. The absence of grave dirt was significant. Its use for ritually binding engagements in the "African" period of slavery has been noted for example by Handler and Lange in the case of Barbados (Handler & Lange 1978: 202, 207–208), and it figured prominently in the preparations for the 1759 St. Croix conspiracy (Schuler 1970: 23). It may well be that the absence of grave dirt in 1848 constitutes a useable index of creolization at that point.

9. Frederik denied the remark although Chamberlain Ferral, Van Brackle and Edward from Rosehill each independently corroborated the others' testimony.

10. Only two houses belonging to owners appear to have been destroyed: the notorious Lucas' at Mt. Pleasant and Richard Knight's at Negro Bay (R–A, VLA 1848: 47, 121). Remarkably high levels of absenteeism seem to have prevailed in St. Croix in the 1840s, thereby reinforcing the position of overseers etc. as the predominant point of contact with white authority on the estates. Of a sample of 83 estates in St. Croix in 1840, 41 or 49.3 per cent belonged to owners who were absentee. Richard Knight also appears to have been a recent purchaser of Negro Bay as in 1840 it was owned by the heirs of John Cooper and managed by Hugh Kerr, attorney for several other estates (R/A, GTk, CANS 1834–1843: 1840).

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