

## Soon It Will Be Mexico's Turn

CARIBBEAN EMPIRE AND DOMINICAN ANNEXATION

At eight in the morning on 18 March 1861, a small group of Dominican officials lowered the national flag from government buildings in Santo Domingo as a few hundred observers, mostly Spanish, watched. “*Españolismo* lives,” effused a Spanish diplomat.<sup>1</sup> Although the republic had been separated from Spain for nearly forty years, Pedro Santana insisted that the annexation was voluntary. The Spanish official with whom the Dominican president had been most closely in communication—an activist governor of Cuba, Captain General Francisco Serrano—emphasized his agreement and support. Only after the ceremony did both officials send word to the governor of Puerto Rico and to Queen Isabel II and her ministers in Spain. Annexation was a *fait accompli*. Preparations had been the talk of Havana for months. “This project is discussed publicly in cafés, paseos, in every house; . . . no one doubts its quick and total completion,” a Havana resident remarked. He was unreservedly ambitious, bragging, “Spain should not limit her aims to the Dominican Republic; it needs the whole island, and the Haitian Republic will be invaded before long.” He urged Spain to be inspired by its recent victory in northwestern Africa toward more wars of conquest. “The deplorable political situation of the United States,” where southern secession had already begun, offered a particular opportunity for other powers. The man predicted more Spanish expansion imminently, boasting, “soon it will be Mexico’s turn.”<sup>2</sup>

Santana and his ministers had a fair amount in common with supporters of French intervention in Mexico, which unfolded almost simultaneously. Both were a small, mainly conservative elite who were tired of political

fighting, wary of the populace, and eager for outside military resources to secure order. They hoped a foreign monarch would centralize the political administration, defeat opponents, and offer strong defense to external threats. They shared ready economic extroversion, but also strong local political commitments.<sup>3</sup> They were nationalists after a fashion, believing that political order, under a foreign monarch, might create more local meritocratic government appointments than successive fractious administrations.<sup>4</sup> The strategy of asking for a protectorate in exchange for limited territorial concessions was nothing unusual, of course; it was an emergency recourse for embattled leaders throughout the hemisphere. The exaggerated political chaos of the Gulf, however—where U.S. power was entering rapidly—made both annexation projects real.<sup>5</sup> Their ease with monarchism was nothing uncommon, either. From Haiti to Brazil, it was a common state-making strategy of the moment, one that was challenged by republicanism but had ample liberal language of its own.<sup>6</sup> After succession battles in the 1830s, Queen Isabel II herself initially represented a symbol of the victory over absolutism in Spain, where moderate liberals enjoyed electoral power.<sup>7</sup> Observers, meanwhile, were surprised but hardly shocked about either annexation, which occurred with the United States deeply preoccupied. Most predicted the Spanish would move into Haiti, too.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter details how Spanish officials, working with Santana and his allies, came to incorporate Santo Domingo as a free-soil Spanish province. For more than fifty years, Spain's remaining overseas possessions—Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—had been in legal limbo, outside of constitutional rule. Centralized, militarized government ruled the islands instead, and “special laws” to reincorporate them never materialized, forestalled both by political divides on the peninsula and by the question of slavery.<sup>9</sup> Cuba's governor, a powerful Spanish authority, believed Dominican incorporation might precipitate liberal reforms throughout the empire. Various Spanish politicians and writers, meanwhile, toyed with unstable discourses about federation, sometimes racial, sometimes moral, sometimes political, sometimes all of these. They intermingled fraternal and racist misuses toward Santo Domingo, always with added aspersion for Haiti. “Blacks are in Haiti and not in Santo Domingo,” a Madrid journalist insisted.<sup>10</sup> Dominican elites indulged and reciprocated them. Beyond these inconsistent narratives of inclusion, real pragmatism drove Spanish officials in the Caribbean. They envisioned a territory that could forestall U.S. advances and host new projects of labor indenture, already dawning in sites around the Atlantic.

## Antillean Geopolitics and Spanish Empire, 1840–1861

By the mid-nineteenth century, both the newly independent states of Spanish America and Spain had definitively emerged from the wake of the wars of independence. The American republics were increasingly integrated in global markets, and their administrations grew.<sup>11</sup> In Spain, General Leopoldo O'Donnell led the moderate Liberal Union Party, which won a majority in the Cortes and presided over a period of political peace. Simultaneously, peninsular liberals finally succeeded in centralizing colonial administration, after years of debate. In 1851, legislators created the General Overseas Directorate (Dirección General de Ultramar), which later gained full ministry status as the Overseas Ministry (Ministerio de Ultramar).<sup>12</sup> Cuba's captain general post was a powerful and important one; multiple Spanish generals solidified their political careers in Havana to return to top positions in Spain. Cuba was Spain's most important possession and the economic heart of Spanish empire.

An unsteady diplomatic rapprochement between Spain and its former colonies grew across the Atlantic, fueled by a transforming imperial climate in Latin America and the Caribbean. As direct investment, loans, and military intervention increased, politicians of the new republics responded collectively to strengthening outside threats in a manner that sometimes drew them, at least discursively, closer to Spain.<sup>13</sup> As the U.S. presence in the region grew stronger, Central American liberal elites called on racial solidarity in murky but insistent terms. They extolled *raza hispana*'s putative racial inclusion (although, crucially, not qua equality but rather via miscegenation) and as a loose aggregate of cultural attributes through which to insist on difference from a potential aggressor, "the Yankee race."<sup>14</sup> Participating republics invited Spain to the 1847 Lima Congress that pondered defensive federation, and Spain finally signed treaties of recognition and peace with a number of the new nations.<sup>15</sup> Journalists of *El Museo de Ambas Américas* and *La Revista Española de Ambos Mundos* sought to tighten Atlantic relations.<sup>16</sup> Spanish politicians embraced the miscegenation tropes, invoking them as a "white legend" for their colonial endeavors.<sup>17</sup> Privately, Spanish diplomats were often derisive about the new states, mocking their civil strife. The political opponents in Venezuela were "more atrocious than savage tribes," the Spanish consul in Santo Domingo reported derisively.<sup>18</sup> In public, however, Spanish commentators waxed poetic about the fraternal possibilities. "Yes, we have lost our rich colonies in America, but there are still millions of men that ought to be our natural allies, given that they are united with us by the

intimate and solid ties of religion, custom, language, and civil legislation,” the consul argued, concluding, “Spanish politics should impede at all costs that the *raza ibero-americana* be absorbed by the *raza yankee*.”<sup>19</sup>

Near Spain’s Caribbean possessions, U.S. expansion was growing both incrementally and through dramatic aggression. Many islands bought foodstuffs from the United States, and U.S.-bound exports also increased. By mid-century, U.S. markets consumed two-thirds of Puerto Rico’s sugar.<sup>20</sup> The 1850 Clayton-Bulwer treaty, which negotiated canal rights through Nicaragua, seemed to signify the peaceful consolidation of joint U.S.-British commercial hegemony in the Gulf region. Britain avariciously consumed cotton from the U.S. South, its financiers supported railroad projects expanding westward, and many eagerly predicted growing U.S. influence, even eventual control, over its nearby neighbors.<sup>21</sup> Massive watershed events, like the War of U.S. Intervention (the “Mexican-American War”) and filibustering in Nicaragua, posed dramatic military threats. Even political overtures bore aggressive and meddlesome undertones. Presidents Polk and Pierce tried to buy Cuba, and some northern politicians supported the plans, despite the complications that expansion posed.<sup>22</sup> Pro-slavery advocates gleefully calculated that new slave states could be carved out of the acquisition, despite Spanish officials’ defiant reply that they would “rather see the island sink.”<sup>23</sup> Outright extralegal expeditions plagued Cuban authorities during the 1850s. The filibuster efforts of Narciso López—whose third invasion attempt ended in defeat in November 1851—enjoyed minority support among some Cuban elites. Disappointed supporters attacked the Spanish consulate in New Orleans when he was captured and executed. Faced with commercial and military aggression, the Spanish Crown was outraged. “Anglo-Americans easily put down roots wherever they manage to get a foothold,” a Spanish diplomat complained.<sup>24</sup> “Two rival races are fighting for the new world,” Madrid’s *La América* agreed.<sup>25</sup>

Massive domestic inequality on the islands—the contests of plantation slavery—made Spanish officials all the more paranoid about retaining control. The conspiracies they feared reflected the ubiquity of the resentment they imagined, their unwillingness to afford agency to domestic resistance, and their preoccupation with what they imagined to be race imperialism. Authorities warned colonial whites that “race war” would result from domestic or international conflict; they imagined “machinations . . . of destroying the white race” at every turn.<sup>26</sup> Authorities feared that individuals were plotting in Curaçao, Jamaica, Saint Thomas, Trinidad, Venezuela, and elsewhere to join Haiti in an unnamed “Machiavellian abolitionist plan” or independence

conspiracy.<sup>27</sup> Years later, the Spanish minister from Washington reported that free and enslaved blacks of various societies from New Orleans (including some Dominican émigrés), New York, and Philadelphia and “those who had been expelled to Mexico” were planning a “simultaneous strike” on Cuba and Puerto Rico, also aided by the British government.<sup>28</sup> Others wrote credulous reports of Haitian emperor Faustin Soulouque receiving aid from Africa and Britain, organizing thousands and thousands of troops for an assault on Cuba.<sup>29</sup> Caribbean officials petitioned constantly to increase Cuba’s and Puerto Rico’s military defenses. A “certain tone of anguish” characterized their repeated letters to Directorate officials in Madrid.<sup>30</sup> In response to a number of real and perceived threats, Puerto Rican and Cuban officials pleaded for more troops and argued that the islands’ defenses were woefully insufficient. Undisciplined troops, lack of supplies, poor infrastructure, meager funding, and a lack of ships usually topped the complaint list. Their refrain—a “permanent complaint,” in the words of one historian—rarely met with satisfactory response from the metropole.<sup>31</sup> In response to filibuster threats, Cuban officials relied on secret agents in a number of U.S. cities for counterintelligence. Governor Juan de la Pezuela re-formed the militia of color in the island, disbanded since 1844.<sup>32</sup> Power concentrated in the office of the captain general, and conservatism reigned.<sup>33</sup>

These same Caribbean authorities lent a sympathetic ear to Dominican petitions. Peninsular Spanish officials had virtually ignored Santo Domingo in its last days as a colony, sending paltry funds just twice between 1809 and 1821. Their attitude reflected, in the words of Luis Álvarez, “the politics of manifest indifference.”<sup>34</sup> Authorities in Cuba and Puerto Rico, however, periodically considered reannexation, sending exploratory missions without directives from Madrid. In the decade after Santo Domingo joined Haiti in independence, an official traveled from Cuba several times, taking a small delegation to Port-au-Prince to discuss the possibility of the devolution.<sup>35</sup> Haitian officials must have greeted the entreaty exceedingly coolly, but the envoy leader hoped for “further friendly negotiations” in the future.<sup>36</sup> The Puerto Rican captain general sent along a letter of approval with a Dominican annexation petition to Madrid in 1847, and the next governor, General Juan Prim, also wrote to Madrid to suggest that annexation would be a strategically sound policy.<sup>37</sup> Madrid officials were slower to be convinced. Spain had virtually no commercial interests in Haiti or the Dominican Republic, and peninsular authorities generally viewed protection requests with a mixture of distaste and disinterest. Too many international complications—and little material gain—would arise from annexation, they

concluded. In response, Dominican envoys appealed directly to Caribbean officials, making entreaties in Cuba from 1843 through 1845, to Puerto Rico in 1845, again to Puerto Rico in 1846, and so on. So many of these island-to-island missions were conducted that the queen passed a royal order insisting that the Caribbean officials consult with the peninsula before they took any actions whatsoever.<sup>38</sup>

After the massive U.S. expansion of the late 1840s, however, peninsular authorities began to direct their attention more acutely to growing U.S. interests on Hispaniola. The northern Dominican coast—Puerto Plata and Samaná Bay in particular—was a likely center of filibuster organizing. The Puerto Rican governor sent an alarmist report in 1852 that a massive filibuster immigration scheme to Hispaniola was underfoot.<sup>39</sup> A coded royal order authorized the governor of Cuba to work with Báez and the governor of Puerto Rico to disembark Spanish troops in the republic should it be necessary. Spain would have to take great precautions in mounting a military response, the report cautioned. If they seemed like an invading force, the “emancipated peoples from both sides of the island, fearing the reestablishment of slavery, would rise up against the government itself and call on the Haitian Empire, thus establishing race war,” the author fretted.<sup>40</sup> “Rare is the boat that enters [Curaçao] that doesn’t bring adventurers of all nations seeking passage to Haiti or Santo Domingo,” another informer reported.<sup>41</sup> Spanish authorities named a secret agent to keep an eye on the republic, commissioned major reports on the state of the island, and ordered further news to be sent regularly to Washington, DC, and Cuba.<sup>42</sup> Spanish officials sent home reports that filibusters planned to take Haiti as well and suggested it would be done easily.<sup>43</sup> The rumors were inchoate: that the French might help reunification (this one was plausible), that reunification would make the island into a “refuge” to thousands of U.S. filibusters (this one was far less likely), and that Haiti would mount some sort of filibuster campaign of its own (this one tapped old fears of imagined Haitian imperialism).<sup>44</sup> Officials worried that the Haitian government itself was “making great sacrifices” to attract Dominican émigrés and other “adventurers of all nations” for unspecified anticolonial ends.<sup>45</sup> With just three hundred men and propaganda, Haitian agents could “revolutionize the island of Cuba,” authorities fretted.<sup>46</sup>

With U.S. treaty attempts in 1854, Spanish authorities considered the U.S. threat even more concrete. The U.S. diplomatic corps in Santo Domingo had impeccable filibuster credentials, and they were dedicated and aggressive. Jane Storm Cazneau reached Santo Domingo in 1853 after more than a de-

cade of pro-slavery and pro-expansion advocacy, as well as tours and boosterism in Texas, Mexico, and Cuba. She wrote for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, the *New York Sun*, and a number of other periodicals under a pen name.<sup>47</sup> She knew infamous filibusters Narciso López and William Walker personally and used her connections with Secretary of State William Marcy to secure her husband's position as special diplomatic envoy to the Dominican Republic.<sup>48</sup> The British and French consuls conspired to oppose Cazneau's 1854 treaty proposal; even though it collapsed, Spanish authorities sprang into action. Spanish secret agents to the Dominican Republic began to report directly to Cuba as well as Madrid, and Cuban and Puerto Rican officials chose diplomatic staff for Santo Domingo at long last.<sup>49</sup> Spain's first commercial agent, Eduardo San Just, arrived in Santo Domingo in 1854. Recent events had only "awoken the Spanish spirit and lively enthusiasm of the inhabitants to repel all the hordes of adventurers from the North who invade this privileged soil," San Just rhapsodized confidently; he added, "The North American question is totally dead for now."<sup>50</sup> Still, concern over the United States' pending treaty (and the alleged concession of the Samaná peninsula) spurred Spain into signing a treaty of recognition in 1855. The treaty authors remonstrated that the territory—the "favored jewel of Columbus"—must be "kept in the command of the RAZA that TODAY populates them, NEVER passing, in whole or in part, to the hands of FOREIGN RAZAS."<sup>51</sup>

Spain finally recognized the republic in 1855 and sent diplomatic staff to both parts of the island, without recognizing Haiti. For all its coercive fraternal language, Spanish diplomacy was totally brusque and tactless. The Spanish consul in Santo Domingo intervened so aggressively to disrupt ongoing negotiations with the United States that even the British consul, himself only recently opposed, expressed chagrin. Privately, San Just permitted even more hostility. He wondered if Santana's administration could "even be called a government" and claimed he was surrounded by "blacks from Seybo, half-naked." The "Dominican government, if you can even call it that, is totally demoralized," he reported, with some satisfaction.<sup>52</sup> He was so rude to Dominican officials that they registered a complaint with the Spanish secretary of state.<sup>53</sup> The newly named emissary to Haiti, Manuel Cruzat, was far worse. Besides being involved in British intrigue that supported Haitian reannexation of the Dominican Republic—"even though I blush to admit it," he managed—his approach was generally blundering and malicious.<sup>54</sup> Seeking an audience with the emperor, Cruzat instead sent his secretary, who "barely [spoke] French, and not a word of Creole," and who subsequently refused to take off his hat in Soulouque's palace when ordered to do so by a

functionary.<sup>55</sup> Cruzat demanded reparations by Haiti's foreign minister for what allegedly happened next: the emperor himself appeared in the window, Cruzat claimed, and allegedly insulted the secretary, "What a person, that fucking white man doesn't want to salute my palace!"<sup>56</sup> "Haitians hate the entire white race," Cruzat complained.<sup>57</sup> The Spanish secretary of state, irritated—he had explicitly told Cruzat to take pains to avoid incident, given the sensitivity of relations between the slave power and Haiti—instead recommended Cruzat's decommission.<sup>58</sup>

The first Spanish consul, Antonio Maria Segovia, reached Dominican soil in late 1855, marking a new escalation of Spanish intervention. Fearing that political divisions in Santo Domingo would inevitably invite U.S. intervention, Segovia proposed a protectorate scheme in which military and foreign policy matters would be under Spanish control.<sup>59</sup> A protectorate was a fairly typical political construction, one that Spanish contemporaries praised. Just a few years later, proponents compared Mexican protectorate plans favorably with Britain's protectorate in Greece and Belgium. Forfeiture of sovereignty might actually "secure . . . independence" by bringing political order and preventing U.S. aggression, Spanish writers argued.<sup>60</sup> Felipe Fernández de Castro, the same official who had made missions from Cuba to regain Santo Domingo from Haiti in the 1820s and 1830s, penned "Proyecto de pacificación de los Estados Hispanoamericanos" from London in 1857, with the idea of a Hispano-American confederation. He was heartily in support of Dominican annexation, arguing that forfeiture might combat ambitious opportunists within the country and also help reduce poverty.<sup>61</sup> Segovia's proposal in Santo Domingo gained no traction, but his matriculation of Dominicans as Spanish citizens did. *El Oasis*, a capital city paper that was fiercely critical of sitting president Santana, ran advertisements for the matriculation throughout the spring and summer of 1856. The consul dismissed all opposition in the capital as mere "calumny."<sup>62</sup>

Through the late 1850s, a number of incidents rattled Spanish nerves about U.S. intent and collaboration on Hispaniola. Diplomatic ties brought a more regular flow of information to both neighboring islands. In the spring of 1859, the newly arrived Cuban governor, Francisco Serrano, warned other authorities that a thirty-five-person expedition of U.S. filibusters had arrived in Haiti with their eyes trained on Cuba, and the Haitian navy seized a Spanish ship suspected of trafficking slaves.<sup>63</sup> News followed that another handful of Cuban exiles arrived in Port-au-Prince the following month.<sup>64</sup> Serrano, meanwhile, was listening attentively to pro-annexation advocates. Mariano Álvarez, the new Spanish consul in the Dominican Republic and an

advocate of annexation, submitted an extensive report that piqued Serrano's interest; the two officials corresponded throughout the year. "There is no country in which nature offers more resources, nor where inhabitants are in a worse state," Álvarez proclaimed.<sup>65</sup> Álvarez saw tremendous prospects for trade and regional strategic advantage, extolling the virtues of Samaná Bay as a fueling station and suggesting that agriculture and the cattle trade—particularly with the plantations of Cuba—could be easily stimulated.<sup>66</sup> Lumber and fine woods (especially mahogany), coal, cotton, tobacco, sugar, coffee, cacao, and mineral resources might all follow, he argued. A handful of wealthy Dominicans, Canary islanders, and Venezuelan émigrés were already planning "large plantations of coffee, sugarcane, and other seeds" on the riverbanks near the capital, he continued.<sup>67</sup> He estimated that annexation could be realized with just two thousand troops and a number of civil servants.<sup>68</sup> Other reports echoed his.<sup>69</sup> For the moment, however, the Crown remained impervious. "We consider all independent republics our best friends," it demurred to one such entreaty in 1859, "so I will limit myself to wishing that your republic might prosper."<sup>70</sup>

### Mythmaking of a Faithful Populace

As negotiations between the Cuban governor and Dominican officials escalated in 1860, Santana and his ministers offered a streamlined, two-part annexation argument: the threat of Haiti and fidelity to Spain. Serious revisionism was necessary. In previous decades, Dominican annexationists had been wildly omnivorous in their petitions. Dominican foreign minister Manuel Joaquín Del Monte was as ready to sign away sovereignty to a French protectorate in 1843 as he was to support Spanish annexation in 1861, for example.<sup>71</sup> In the interim, the French consul reported, quite reasonably, that Santana was "a man of a very French heart."<sup>72</sup> An annexationist minority in the Cibao valley steadily preferred the United States, but they were simply too distant from the southern machinations.<sup>73</sup> U.S. speculators were close to important officials in the capital, too. Lobbying with her husband, Jane Cazneau bribed officials regularly. The Cazneau house was "always so full of officers that he seems almost a member of the Government," one journalist observed.<sup>74</sup> Despite professions of fidelity, Santana was not particularly close with the Catholic Church, either. He kept its lands, seized during unification, to distribute to his allies, and he battled with the archbishop. The new interim archbishop, Fernando Arturo de Meriño, hated annexation and Santana equally.<sup>75</sup> Nor was there anything like an imminent threat from the west. Years after Soulouque's resounding defeat, Geffrard had sought a treaty

for peace and trade between the two states the very moment he rose to the presidency, roundly critiqued the policy of his predecessor, and redoubled his dedication to domestic reforms.<sup>76</sup> Dominican reporters knew this, and they had long since turned their attentions to domestic political instability and pressing economic concerns. “Haiti is not thinking of invading the Dominican Republic, nor any similarly exaggerated idea,” the Spanish consul in Haiti confirmed.<sup>77</sup>

Both Santana’s allies and local Spanish officials were invested in new narratives. As his presidency was collapsing, again, in 1860, Santana’s petitions sounded desperately urgent. Haiti was “an oppressor who made it its task to destroy [Santo Domingo],” he insisted.<sup>78</sup> The new Spanish consul, Mariano Álvarez, was an indefatigable ally, colluding closely with both Santana and his vice president, Antonio Abad Alfau. As Alfau’s brother, also a high-ranking general, traveled to Madrid to lobby for guns and material support, the annexationist coterie focused their attention on the Cuban governor, escalating a letter-writing campaign that lasted all year. In a secret meeting with Cuban authorities, Alfau suggested that Santana was considering declaring the annexation unilaterally.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, Consul Álvarez produced a massive report. Like other Spanish officials in Cuba and Madrid, he emphasized annexation as a means to forestall U.S. aggression, an argument that was almost totally absent from Dominican elites’ petitions. He readily accepted a general paradigm of race war, however. His report described the whiteness of Dominicans (“eight-tenths” and “all Catholic,” he specified, except for “one miserable Methodist church for the black Americans”) alongside the strategic value of the territory itself.<sup>80</sup> “Two enemy races covet this precious Antille,” he maintained.<sup>81</sup>

On the question of Dominican fidelity to Spain, extensive rewriting was necessary. Álvarez and Alfau discussed the history of the country at some length. Together, they rewrote the previous forty years, arguing for an ever-faithful populace who remembered Spain’s “paternal affection” fondly. Both of them insisted that the country’s unique independence process demonstrated Dominican faithfulness to Spain. The 1821 “Brief Independence” (in which a junta in the capital simply declared Santo Domingo to be part of Gran Colombia, several months before the 1822–44 unification with Haiti) had been the work of an “ambitious and traitorous” few, both argued. Unlike other young republics that had broken violently with Spain, the Dominican Republic had, “on the contrary, been the model of fidelity and love to the afflicted Metropole,” Álvarez told the Cuban governor.<sup>82</sup> If the 1821 independence, which lasted two months, was treason or a fluke, neither man

could easily account for unification with Haiti, which lasted peacefully for twenty-two years. There was no space for the Unification period in annexation history, so both men ignored it. The Spanish consul jumped ahead to an entirely fanciful account of 1844 separation from Haiti, alleging that Dominicans hoped “it was an opening for the return of Spanish sovereignty that they had so desired.”<sup>83</sup> Forty years after independence, many expressed “constant desire to tighten relations,” he asserted.<sup>84</sup> Alfau added a hint of elitism to these claims, praising the “most notable of the population” for their Spanishness.<sup>85</sup> Álvarez continued to write letters to the governor and to meet with Cuban officials through the end of 1860 and the beginning of 1861, capitalizing on short visits of Cuban ships.<sup>86</sup>

To cement support for annexation, Governor Serrano commissioned another report from a high-ranking officer in Havana, who submitted a hyperbolic tale of Dominican Spanishness, with ample racist marginalia.<sup>87</sup> Brigadier Antonio Peláez y Campomanes began the memoir with (what he considered to be) praise, reporting, “There are sons of Spain here who preserve our customs with purity.”<sup>88</sup> Even as Peláez tried to emphasize what he perceived to be laudable aspects of Dominican society (i.e., loyalty, whites, anti-Haitianism), he could not contain explicit antiblack venom. The report continued with the traditional narrative of the republic’s 1821 separation—but Peláez embellished his version to make José Núñez de Cáceres, the principal author of *Brief Independence*, not just an ambitious traitor but a “miserable black.” He assured Governor Serrano that the population was “half white” and insisted that they were “noble, hospitable, proud of being Spanish.” Segovia’s mistake in allowing some Dominicans to matriculate as Spanish citizens in 1856 was not the policy itself, Peláez argued, but having allowed black Dominican men to register for Spanish citizenship.

Seasoned in Cuba, Brigadier Peláez indulged extensively in tropes and fantasies of black submission. The idea of Dominican loyalty played easily into elite loyalist fantasies in Cuba and Puerto Rico, the idea that affective bonds of “Spanishness” could override and sublimate massive social inequalities. Although Dominicans were overwhelmingly free people of color, the officer rushed to emphasize that these Dominicans shared deep and visceral affinity for Spain. “I have heard elderly people [of color] recall, on the brink of tears, the happiness and tranquility that they enjoyed with Spain,” he rhapsodized.<sup>89</sup> He invented a servile “poor, black man,” who carefully saved a Spanish coat of arms through all the years of Haitian rule. “Valiant, docile, and submissive, they recognize in whites more capacity and knowledge for leadership and only aspire not to be repressed,” he fantasized. “Despite

twenty-two years of unification with Haiti, the *pardos* and *morenos* of Santo Domingo preserve the language and customs of their former masters,” he continued, as though black Dominicans were recently arrived from Africa.<sup>90</sup> He insisted, too, on a common “hatred” for Haiti.<sup>91</sup> Pleased with the brigadier’s report, Governor Serrano charged Peláez with leading the forces into the newly recolonized territory.<sup>92</sup>

One last figure remained for reinvention: Santana himself. Santana, the same head of state who had been “far too horrible, even for ridicule” and surrounded by “blacks from Seybo, half-naked,” according to the former Spanish consul, became a capable collaborator.<sup>93</sup> Consul Álvarez cast him as a pliant partner who listened to Spanish advice; he was an “astute and wise *campesino*,” he remarked with satisfaction.<sup>94</sup> Santana was “the guarantee of security for the country” in a critical situation, the consul concluded, and other authorities agreed.<sup>95</sup> A subsequent report in Madrid summarized Santana’s arguments, calling the risk of Haitian and U.S. incursion “more critical each day.” Although not ignorant of Santana’s claims to military heroism and amenable to his narratives about the “constant threat” of Haiti, these officials made their security priorities clear. The “more formidable enemy . . . appearing as a disarmed friend” was the United States, the official assessed: “[U.S.] success, sooner or later, cannot be fought . . . even if all the Dominicans are Spanish at heart.”<sup>96</sup>

Santana’s annexation address of 18 March 1861 cemented narratives of sanguine fidelity. “Our national glories are inherited from the grand and noble lineage to which we owe our origin,” he began. He continued, “Numerous, spontaneous, and popular missives have arrived in my hands; . . . today you hope that what your loyalty has always desired might come to pass. Religion, language, beliefs, and customs, all we preserve with purity . . . ; and the nation to which we are so tied today opens her arms as a loving mother who gathers up her son, lost in the tempest in which his brothers have perished.” The entire weight of annexation now lay on Núñez de Cáceres’s shoulders alone. “Only the ambition and resentment of one man separated us from the mother country,” Santana announced. Before becoming enveloped in civil war like “those other disgraced republics . . . [Spain] will give us the civil liberty that her *pueblos* enjoy [and] will guarantee us natural liberty,” he argued. All laws of the former republic were to be respected. In the new state of peace, “She will protect us . . . making one people, one united family, as we always were . . . raising the flag next to the cross that Columbus dug in these unknown lands,” he concluded. “Long Live the

Queen! Long Live Liberty! Long Live Religion! Long Live the Dominican People! Long Live the Spanish Nation!”<sup>97</sup>

### **Annexation in the Shadow of Slavery**

By the 1850s, the idea of political federation, including protectorates, circulated throughout the Spanish empire. The Cuban elites' dissatisfaction with exclusion from power had drawn a significant minority into support of U.S. annexation in the previous decade. One plan from 1851 proposed local autonomy under a reduced Spanish authority in response.<sup>98</sup> One Puerto Rican author called for a partial decolonization of sorts, an evolution of Caribbean holdings into a loose moral Spanish federation; authorities prevented his work from circulating on the island.<sup>99</sup> Federation was a common plan on the peninsula as well. Contemporaries proposed renewing political federation between Spain and Portugal, constructing binational infrastructure and education.<sup>100</sup> Liberal commentators, in support of Dominican annexation, pointed out that Cuba and Puerto Rico's lack of integration into the Spanish constitution was a “most dangerous inequality.”<sup>101</sup> When General Serrano reached Cuba in 1859, he married the daughter of a rich Cuban family, revived the idea of white Cuban representation in Madrid, and hinted that his own executive post might at long last be curtailed.<sup>102</sup> The Cuban governor hoped that Dominican annexation would be the first step in a more centralized legal regime and a transformation of the Caribbean empire from “simple colonies that produce benefits, more or less,” to a resurgent, united Overseas Spain.<sup>103</sup> Spain would make Caribbean residents feel “truly Spanish,” on the path to “total assimilation . . . slowly and gradually procured,” Serrano urged. He had “profound conviction” that the humiliation caused by legal differences prevented progress.<sup>104</sup> With a stronger moral and cultural foothold, Spain could move beyond the three largest Antilles to extend its influence to “the bosom of Mexico” and beyond.<sup>105</sup>

Proponents of Dominican annexation vacillated between narratives of inclusion and exclusion in the same work, even in the same sentence. Mariano Torrente's *Política ultramarina* (Overseas Politics, 1854) argued hard for Dominican annexation to preserve Spanish familial ties in the Caribbean, even as the author viciously condemned emancipation and distanced himself from Dominicans themselves.<sup>106</sup> A longtime official in Cuba, Torrente dismissed the British and French islands as failures and was bald in his antiblack racism and support for imperial aggression in Africa. “In every emancipation system, there are the same evils, the same vices, and inevitable ruin,”

he spat.<sup>107</sup> He unequivocally condemned Dominican subsistence labor and cast doubt on individuals' capacity to transcend it. He warned that the majority of Dominicans—"who are all of color," he interjected—demonstrated "the laziness typical of proletarians, *because one cannot obligate them to work.*" He mystified material scarcity in the territory, complaining, "They prefer to go around in rags, eat nothing more than sugar and plantains, which are obtained with very little labor."<sup>108</sup> After reviewing at some length the changing dynamics of power and commerce with the United States and Britain, Torrente clearly supported annexation of the Dominican Republic, even as he periodically claimed neutrality.<sup>109</sup> Just three hundred men would be necessary if the government were to want to take Santo Domingo as a protectorate, he urged, dismissing the idea of international opposition. "Our rights over that country are undeniable," he wrote. "No nation could justly allege that it had the right to intervene in what can be called purely a family question."<sup>110</sup> Quickly, his language shifted from familial metaphors to possessive ones. "Anglo-Americans . . . cannot detain us in any way," he persisted, "as it is only a matter of the legitimate owner of an errant or lost resource coming back to collect it in light of his indisputable right to do so."<sup>111</sup>

Torrente reconciled Dominican annexation with the imminent end of the slave trade and new controls of free people of color. "The slave trade debate . . . has taken . . . the direction of speculation and politics," he began, in his report for Dominican annexation. The trade had already effectively ceased, with some exceptions, to Puerto Rico. More than a thousand enslaved Africans and Afro-Puerto Ricans were sold from Puerto Rico to Cuba in the late 1840s. "An island with only 50,000 slaves . . . will not fall apart," the governor announced. He did not tolerate open abolitionist discourse on the island, but he felt fairly confident about the island's potential course. "There are enough free workers here to replace them," he wrote, "I hope the exodus continues."<sup>112</sup> An expanding coffee economy raised prices on the coast and drove rural Puerto Ricans to formerly uninhabited interior lands. Their participation in coffee cultivation slowly tied them into systems of credit that bound them more to the coast and the colonial state.<sup>113</sup> Authorities and planters used vagrancy decrees, meanwhile, to push others onto export-oriented farms. Workers were supposed to carry a passbook (*libreta*) that established their occupation, listed their debts, and attested to their conduct.<sup>114</sup> Spanish authorities and planters in Cuba also sought to control free Cubans of color, whose numbers doubled from 1846 to 1861.<sup>115</sup> East Asian contract laborers first arrived in Cuba in 1847; nearly 125,000 arrived in the next two decades.<sup>116</sup> Torrente's proposal for Santo Domingo, similarly,

was indentured African and Asian immigration, to be supervised by Spanish settlers. The indentured workers could “cover the most urgent cultivation needs,” while the abolitionists “could calm down and be sure their wishes had been fully realized,” he wrote.<sup>117</sup> White colonists would oversee everything, and would settle as a “bronze wall” against Haiti and U.S. filibusters. “The greatest degree of prosperity would soon result,” he urged.<sup>118</sup>

Six years after Torrente’s report, Governor Serrano placed heavy emphasis on Dominican consent as annexation began precipitously. A royal order from December 1860 authorized Serrano to take whatever measures necessary to protect the Dominican Republic from foreign invasion. Despite condemnations of annexation from Madrid, the governor felt the order gave him ample leeway to proceed.<sup>119</sup> Another military delegation brought back reports of annexation’s “voluntary” nature after discussions with Santana’s officials.<sup>120</sup> Meanwhile, Santana wrote to Governor Serrano announcing that he planned to effect the turnover to Spain no later than February 1861; later, one of his ministers pushed the date to March.<sup>121</sup> At Serrano’s directive, Santana’s officials solicited signatures of approval in a number of towns throughout the territory. Thirty-three towns and two military posts remitted signatures, totaling about 4,000 signatures out of the republic’s population of about 200,000, or about 2 percent of the country’s citizens.<sup>122</sup> A total of 636 men signed in the capital. By contrast, only 140 did so in Santiago de los Caballeros. The majority of the proclamations, twenty-two out of the thirty-five, were straightforward acknowledgments of reincorporation with little else added; they amounted to a pro forma acknowledgment of Santana’s coup. Just seven of the thirty-five statements mentioned Haiti—allegedly Santana’s primary reason to seek Spain’s protection—whereas others focused on agriculture, political peace, and legal reform.<sup>123</sup> Significantly for annexation’s future, two towns, distant from each other—Barahona and La Vega—reminded the Crown of their promise to leave the republic’s laws intact, mentioning explicitly the continued abolition of slavery.

In Puerto Rico, the governor acted altogether startled by the news, which was sent not by the Cuban governor but preemptively in the form of a letter hand delivered by a Dominican official.<sup>124</sup> Santana “has told me the details . . . and asked for forces and money,” Rafael Echagüe noted. But, he continued, distinctly irritated, “As the Governor of Cuba has been the authority elected by Her Majesty to deal with General Santana relative to this delicate negotiation, as the circumstances [of the matter] have been completely strange . . . , and as I have received no communication, neither from the Government of Her Majesty nor from the indicated Governor, not even

in case an eventuality of this sort might present itself, . . . I cannot adopt any resolution whatsoever.”<sup>125</sup> He declined to send aid to Santana but resolved to write the Cuban governor immediately.

Although news had not yet reached Madrid either, the annexation project was quickly expanding. From Santo Domingo, Mariano Álvarez wrote to the Ministry of State immediately, and Serrano did so as well. The Cuban governor’s 26 March letter to Spain emphasized security; Spanish troops must move in immediately in order to solidify authority, he argued. He urged metropole officials, “Now that we are involved, isn’t our honor at stake?”<sup>126</sup> In the summer of 1861, he sailed to Santo Domingo himself to confront first-hand the political realities of the newly annexed territory. In fact, Serrano and his Havana-based officials threw themselves immediately into the details of the annexation. All Spanish officials involved in the initial annexation and occupation accepted these basic premises that Dominican envoys had laid out: that the laws of the republic be respected, that the rampant and almost worthless paper money be amortized, and that slavery remain absolutely abolished. The task at hand was to reconcile these stipulations—particularly the slavery clause—with Spanish overseas law, and to do so quickly. In June 1861, Governor Serrano named José Malo de Molina, an auxiliary (*suplente*) of Havana’s municipal government, as a special commissioner charged to submit a report on the government and social organization of the extinguished republic; he finished less than a month later and presented it to the governor in Havana in September.<sup>127</sup> Malo de Molina averred that he had gathered data as best he could given the constraints of time and the immensity of the task. “If the subject were not so urgent, perhaps I would tear up these smudged pages,” he wrote.<sup>128</sup>

Both Malo de Molina and Governor Serrano pondered the issue of legislative reform for the new colony. As the Madrid newspaper *Crónica de Ambos Mundos* asked, “If it is true that the same special laws that govern Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippine Islands [will apply]—that is, dictatorial ones—how will Spain respond to the votes and wishes of the residents, who, according to the letter of general SANTANA, want to *adopt the liberties of the Spanish people as their own*?”<sup>129</sup> “It is beyond doubt that the Dominicans are anxious to establish Spanish legislation as soon as possible: but which legislation should this be?” Malo de Molina asked.<sup>130</sup> Another writer suggested that Havana be the capital of a three-island federative government.<sup>131</sup> Havana’s elite would have supported such a plan. In anticipation—or at least desire—of more legislative power in the empire, Cuban authorities had gone so far as to name four

potential senators to Madrid in the event that their representation might be recognized.<sup>132</sup>

None of the federative options answered the question of legal freedom in Santo Domingo. “There is no doubt that the principal desire of those inhabitants is to be equal to the Peninsula, not just because they solicited it at the time of incorporation, but also because it would be positive and infallible proof that slavery would not be reestablished, as some suspect, and as the Haitians have tried to convince the people of color and others who are discontented [with annexation],” Malo de Molina wrote.<sup>133</sup> Serrano concurred that Cuba’s code would not do,

with the supposition that the race of color has limited civil rights, and absolutely no political ones, . . . applied to a country where *pardos* and even pure *morenos* have occupied and occupy high posts in administration and the military, and in which the *everything for everyone* of liberal governments has been known here for so long. . . . Is it feasible to establish, for example, a personal legislation that allows the sentence of flogging for one race, the law that excludes all participation in public office, and all their ramifications, in a country whose social dictionary has erased the word servitude, and in which there is a perfect and absolute leveling among its inhabitants, no matter what their origin?<sup>134</sup>

“The Majesty’s wish is that . . . the province be ruled by the same laws as the other overseas dominions, especially by those of Cuba,” Serrano wrote, but he warned the sovereign that “if such a thing were to happen, it would be to introduce an element of distrust, motivating malcontents . . . to make false interpretations.” The “most essential difference” between the island and its colonial neighbors lay in its social norms; the “same strong and numerous race . . . kept in constant domination” by the laws of Cuba was “interlaced with the white in Santo Domingo, making it impossible, or at least not without great difficulty, to mark the dividing line that law and custom maintain in Cuba and Puerto Rico,” Serrano argued.<sup>135</sup>

Despite royal edicts from May 1861 to the contrary, therefore, both Governor Serrano and Commissioner Malo de Molina concluded that metropolitan law should rule in the newly annexed territory. Peninsular law would suit the territory just fine, Malo de Molina insisted, advising Serrano to disregard earlier recommendations he had made to the contrary. Without slavery and a “diversity of castes,” the issue would not arise, he asserted.<sup>136</sup> Serrano was equally optimistic, even pointed, in his recommendation for

metropolitan law. “I see the annexation of Santo Domingo as a providential event that presents Spain with the necessity of thinking of the means to resolve for itself the grave question that is today being aired in the United States of America, and whose solution must have a very direct influence on the destiny of Cuba,” he wrote.<sup>137</sup> The application of the civil code of Spain in Santo Domingo, “already published so that it may be practically studied, will be perhaps opportune,” Serrano argued. “I do not think there would be a big problem with testing them. . . . Few times has such an opportune situation emerged for a test of this kind: Santo Domingo is a totally virgin populace in this aspect.”<sup>138</sup> “Sooner or later the laws with no political character have to be made extensive to [Cuba and Puerto Rico],” he continued. Colonial reforms already made Cuban law so similar to metropolitan law, he asserted, that “just one step would produce perfect equality.”<sup>139</sup> Certainly, there existed “inconveniences” in Cuban and Puerto Rican society, he admitted (with wild understatement); testing the law in free territory would be the perfect first step to reforms in all of Spain’s Caribbean islands.<sup>140</sup> The mood among the Cuban officials was euphoric.<sup>141</sup>

### The First Jewel in the Spanish Crown: The Debate in Madrid

Noble and humanitarian work! How much blood and money the overseas possessions have cost Spain! How many sacrifices Spain makes even today in the deadly islands of Africa! How much did the continent of America cost her, and how liberal and giving has Spain been! How much has Spain been a true mother to those who gather at her lap in the shadow of her glorious flag!

—FRANCISCO SERRANO

For several decades, Spanish imperial policy had grown more ambitious by increments. In 1844, Spain reclaimed the west-central African island of Fernando Po (Bioko) from the British. A handful of unsuccessful settler projects to the island—including a small group of illegally transported African men, women, and children (*emancipados*) who sought to leave Cuba—followed shortly thereafter.<sup>142</sup> Members of the O’Donnell administration were ready, even eager, to launch joint imperial military expeditions. Spanish troops fought alongside French forces in Cochinchina (Nam tiến) beginning in 1858. They were involved in the joint expeditionary force that arrived in Mexico in 1862 as well, although the expeditionary leader protested after Napoleon III’s plans to instate the Austrian archduke became clear. Spain was unilaterally aggressive as well. The so-called War of Africa (1859–60), a one-year conflict with Morocco over the borders of the North African Spanish towns of Melilla

and Ceuta, enjoyed wild popularity in Spain. Other confrontations stopped short of conquest; Spanish warships aggressively demanded reparations for their merchants or for other perceived slights in Port-au-Prince, Monrovia, and other ports.<sup>143</sup> After Dominican annexation, similar conflicts over reclamations escalated to the seizure of the Chincha Islands as putative payment, bringing outright conflict with both Peru and Chile.

In April 1861, however, when news of Dominican annexation first reached Spain, official reception was initially tepid. Despite repeated entreaties from Dominican officials, both members of the Unión Liberal government and the queen herself had explicitly rejected the idea of annexation in late 1860, the latter suggesting a one-year moratorium on consideration of the matter until November 1861.<sup>144</sup> In fact, the queen denied Governor Serrano's request to send more troops to fortify the island, although the news reached Havana after Cuban boats had already sailed.<sup>145</sup> Prime Minister Leopoldo O'Donnell also had Caribbean government experience: he served as governor of Cuba from October 1843 to February 1848, during the height of the repression of antislavery mobilization. He had resolved near the end of his tenure in Havana that Spain should avoid even the smallest reforms, "even those that appear insignificant." "Alarming concessions have been obtained by simple reforms [that have been] exploited in ways that were not foreseen," he insisted; rather than open up any window for such dangerous reforms, Spain ought merely to send its "most capable and active governors."<sup>146</sup> Any sort of social disorder would yield "the triumph of the colored castes, but if the evil is certain and the danger possibly imminent, the remedy is easy and known[;] it is enough to conserve the status quo with the most scrupulous measures," he insisted.<sup>147</sup> O'Donnell had opposed Dominican annexation entreaties since the 1840s, arguing that Spain should merely cultivate good sentiment in the republic, while "avoiding compromises of any kind."<sup>148</sup>

Madrid's vibrant newspaper sphere reflected only tepid interest in repeated Dominican entreaties throughout 1860. The progressive and democratic press did not even consider that annexation was a possibility and discounted it entirely.<sup>149</sup> When news arrived of Santana's and Serrano's actions, a number of journalists expressed literal disbelief at the event, insisting instead that the Cuban governor must have been merely protecting Spanish soldiers in the area.<sup>150</sup> Journalists voiced serious doubts about the strategic wisdom of the project. The moderate newspaper *El Contemporáneo* noted, "The news that we have about the origin and unfolding of such an important event is so scarce . . . we do not know the role of the Spanish government, nor has any information at all been gathered that guarantees us the unanimity of the

movement.”<sup>151</sup> Moderate *La Época* published a number of condemnations, fretting that relations with other Latin American republics would become “impossible” if they, too, were to fear any such usurpation of sovereignty.<sup>152</sup> The government should take necessary “precautions and guarantees to make clear that the annexation is not an act of ambition by Spain,” another writer opined.<sup>153</sup> The moderate paper *La España* suggested that some sort of a confederation would be a cheaper, more optimal option for Spain, a position it continued to hold for months, even after the debate had been resolved by the queen.<sup>154</sup> Finally, writers at *El Clamor Público* worried about the cost of such a project and reminded their readers that Spain needed development of its own. An author argued that Spain ought to direct all its resources to internal development “before thinking of extending its territory with acquisitions of dubious utility.” Spain’s own industry was “meager and backward,” the author argued, and domestic infrastructure should be the primary focus.<sup>155</sup> Nearly two-thirds of Spain needed colonization of its own, another concluded.<sup>156</sup>

Journalists cast pointed skepticism on Santana’s motives and demanded more proof of unanimity on the part of the Dominican people. The issue of popular consent was key. The Dominican leader was being pragmatic, not sentimental or nationalist, and he had acted because he had “no other means of salvation,” they argued.<sup>157</sup> *La Época* warned that the move might have stemmed from party intrigue.<sup>158</sup> A number of periodicals, then, suggested that a plebiscite ought to be effected before Spain accept the annexation as legal. Not surprisingly, vocally skeptic *La Época* urged O’Donnell’s government not to take “any definite steps in the question of annexation, nor even protectorate, . . . until the sentiments and needs of the island are perfectly clear.”<sup>159</sup> The *Correspondiente de España* optimistically assured its readers that a plebiscite would settle the matter, writing, “In no way will Spain reject the annexation, when they have the conviction that it is the result of a general and spontaneous vote of the people and their legitimate authorities.”<sup>160</sup> It must have seemed, of course, that no such measure was forthcoming. Democratic *La Discusión* complained scathingly, “There is an extremely important difference between president Santana cheating the liberty and independence of a people for his advantage and the Dominican people themselves asking for annexation.”<sup>161</sup> Even after the queen made an official decree recognizing annexation on 19 May, *La Discusión* persisted in demanding approbation by universal suffrage. “That way future complications would be avoided,” the editorial insisted.<sup>162</sup> As the fact of the queen’s approval sank in, such complaints fell on deafer ears.

As the fact of annexation set in, Spanish papers became pragmatic, echoing the uncertainty of Cuban officials about the legislative status of the new colony. The progressive press, clearly unacquainted with Santana's strong-arm political style, wondered aloud if annexation would curtail political liberties in the former republic. They hoped instead that the annexation might foster more self-government and representation in the region, perhaps even representation in the Cortes. Colonial reform was absolutely on the agenda. *La Discusión* urged that the former republic be admitted with all the same rights as a Spanish province and observed, "If this requires us to be more liberal with Cuba and Puerto Rico, let's be so, the time has come."<sup>163</sup> *Las Novedades* concurred, arguing that annexation marked a "propitious occasion" in order to make metropolitan rights more general in the Caribbean.<sup>164</sup> The moderate press, however, toed a more conservative line. Authors were very much opposed to political reforms, citing not only the precedent of past independent movements but also the authors' own investment in the plantation economies of Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>165</sup> More political rights to Cuba and Puerto Rico "would reduce them to the miserable state in which the Mexican state finds itself today," editorials argued. Rather, Spain should just send its best and brightest legislators, *La España* concluded, echoing O'Donnell's own proclamations from the Caribbean more than a decade before.<sup>166</sup> As for Santo Domingo, moderate papers urged that a protectorate status ought to be conferred instead. Any liberal tendencies would thus be detained on the island, and slavery, a "social necessity," would meet far fewer legal complications.

As 1861 progressed, the Spanish press nevertheless soon stirred from its relative ambivalence on the Santo Domingo question to proffer increasingly enthusiastic support. Narratives began to depict the territory as an untapped resource: Santo Domingo was a "magnificent portion of the New World" whose generosity, nobility, and patriotism "overshadowed Spanish ministers' recalcitrance."<sup>167</sup> Its natural resources and strategic Samaná Bay would render it not only an important Spanish stronghold against growing U.S. interests but also a potentially profitable one, Madrid newspapers argued. Many cited the annexation as an act of mercy toward a threatened state destined to be swallowed by Haitian or—"worse for us, though not for the Dominicans"—Yankee imperialism.<sup>168</sup> Not to accept the annexation offer would be to invite U.S. incursion and imperil Cuba.<sup>169</sup> *El Contemporáneo* now found the annexation to be a "necessity" and urged "Columbus's island should not be abandoned again by Spain."<sup>170</sup> Despite their misgivings in April, the bulk of the press became largely supportive of the apparently

“spontaneous” nature of the event.<sup>171</sup> Revisionism came full circle in an article by *La América*, which argued that not to accept Dominican annexation in fact would be a violation of liberal principles:

The novelty of the annexation, was neither as unexpected nor as unforeseen as some think. . . . It is very strange that the liberal theories that predominate today in educated nations are not being applied to the Dominicans’ resolution. . . . It is clear that the Dominicans are fully within their rights to rid themselves of their sovereignty. . . . Spain would be unjustified in the eyes of humanity, if it were to ignore the cry for help from a people in whose veins the same blood runs, whose religion and language are the same as ours, and who is nothing more, in effect, than a ramification of our own family.<sup>172</sup>

Echoing Félix de Bona’s aspirations of cultural confederation, the papers brimmed with optimism about the possibilities of the remarkable precedent.

In quick succession, the “African War” in Morocco and Dominican annexation caused something of nationalist fervor to be whipped up over the prospect of new imperial gains for Spain.<sup>173</sup> Florid elegies of Spain’s past achievements and the language of heroism and civilization permeated the national press. The “drunkenness of a war in Africa [and] a new adventure in Mexico on the old and glorious routes of Hernán Cortes” sparked romantic reveries about Santo Domingo, the “Land of Columbus,” as well.<sup>174</sup> Discourses about these exploits, of course, lent themselves to exaggeration and fancy; historian Francisco Febres-Cordero Carrillo argues that their “rhetoric of action” was intended principally to “anesthetize the middle class, who lacked the means of effective political participation.”<sup>175</sup> Nonetheless, borrowing from the British lexicon of empire, one newspaper reported thusly on the new annexation of Santo Domingo: “The event could not be more felicitous, and we congratulate the Queen of Spain, the Nation, and the Ministry. . . . In just over a year, the Monarchy in which [once] the sun never set, dismembered by revolution, has considerably broadened its limits in Africa and America.”<sup>176</sup> Politicians envisioned nothing less than an adjustment in the balance of power in the hemisphere.

A number of Cubans—creole and Spanish born—offered to serve in the Morocco campaign, petitioning for passage from Cuba with “the ardent desire . . . to march into battle for the holy Spanish cause.”<sup>177</sup> One spectator from Havana urged the creation of a voluntary battalion of free men of color, a plan that he saw as “economical” but also in the interests of “the aggrandizement of the Spanish name,” particularly “should the war take on

another aspect after Tetuán's occupation."<sup>178</sup> A pamphlet from Barcelona—which would later circulate in newly annexed Santo Domingo—proclaimed, "The Africa War is one of the most glorious pages in the history of the Spanish nation in the present century. Everything is great and memorable: the justice of our cause, the enthusiasm of all the classes of the country, the valor and suffering of our soldiers, the intelligence and bravery that guide them to victory, which is the triumph of the Christian Civilization over Islamism and barbarity."<sup>179</sup> The *Times* says Haiti will soon be annexed, we say "let it be so," *La Época* proclaimed. "With all of la Española, discovered by Isabel I and recuperated by Isabel II, the strength of the Spanish in the Antilles is unmatched."<sup>180</sup> Dominican elites praised the Morocco campaign, too. Rhap-sodized the official Spanish paper in Santo Domingo, "Every Spanish bullet carried an idea."<sup>181</sup>

On 19 May 1861—a little more than two months after Pedro Santana proclaimed annexation and ordered a 101-cannon salute to the Spanish flag in Santo Domingo—the Spanish Ministry of State officially approved the measure.<sup>182</sup> "Her Majesty's Government could not ever be indifferent to the fate of the Spanish part of Santo Domingo," the decree read. "To abandon her to foreign intrigue, expose her to the invasions of an enemy race, would have been a very grave political error, and a total forgetting of honor and even humanity."<sup>183</sup> Assured that the act was "spontaneous," "unanimous," "in perfect harmony with the sentiments of all of the population," and even "against the will" of its closest collaborator, Francisco Serrano, the Crown promised to act "for the growth and prosperity of its overseas provinces, benefiting from the benefits of peace and institutions in harmony with modern civilization."<sup>184</sup> "Señor Santana" (who was in fact acting governor from the outset) should announce the news to all the authorities and influential people of Santo Domingo, the report concluded. When the Spanish Parliament convened after a six-month recess in November, the queen reiterated the same now-familiar arguments: that annexation was spontaneous, that a glorious role awaited Spain in the former republic and the rest of the Spanish world, that political independence had wreaked dangers in young republics, and so on.<sup>185</sup> Some representatives bristled at the fact that annexation had been declared in their absence, but news of the event had already been circulating in Cuban and Puerto Rican newspapers for months. Thus, one of the "first Jewels in the Spanish Crown" was officially incorporated by a vote of 200 to 80.<sup>186</sup>

On the issue of legislating the new colony, a royal decree announced a compromise: the criminal and commercial codes of Spain would provisionally rule, but the civil code was to continue to be governed by laws from the

former republic, admitting custom and traditional practice.<sup>187</sup> Of slavery, the Crown wrote that it was “one disastrous thing of many that afflicts societies, but a necessary one in some regions. It will not be extinguished in Cuba nor in Puerto Rico, but neither will it be established in Santo Domingo nor consented to in any form. Santo Domingo finds itself between two Spanish provinces governed by special laws as per the Constitution of the Monarchy.”<sup>188</sup> Some modifications might be necessary, the proclamation admitted, but it insisted that the constitutional distinctions would remain firm. In Santo Domingo, Pedro Santana’s response, passed along to the Ministro de Guerra y Ultramar together with Governor Serrano’s and Malo de Molina’s reports, seemed to presage a peaceful transition to this new administration.<sup>189</sup> The “too-embarrassing case” of Dominican legislation being written in a “strange language” necessarily called for its replacement by Spanish law, he agreed.<sup>190</sup> So, too, did the glowing missive of the newly named regent of the Real Audiencia, Eduardo Alonso Colmenares, laud the changes in government at great length; he announced that the legislative body would take up the Supreme Court cases of the “extinguished republic” right away.<sup>191</sup>

Félix de Bona, president of the Free Society of Political Economy in Madrid, rushed to publish a text that announced a new era in race-based federation. Believing the annexation to be voluntary, he called the reincorporation “of extraordinary importance . . . the only example in history . . . [with] immeasurable transcendence” and with the potential to spark “a moral confederation . . . of the Spanish race on both continents.”<sup>192</sup> He proposed a convention of Spanish American nations, where Spain could have “a pacific and conciliatory influence, an honorary presidency, and without threatening in the least the autonomy of each State . . . an economic union” that would in turn foment “the strength of the *raza*.”<sup>193</sup> “Races, like nations and individuals, have an instinct for their self-preservation,” de Bona argued, and would gain both freedom and strength through confederation.<sup>194</sup> “Races, like nations and individuals, benefit from the right to live and exercise their industry,” he continued.<sup>195</sup> This utopic fraternity was not based on imperial dominance, de Bona claimed; “it does not suit us to enlarge our dominions in America, because it does not suit us to *dominate* anywhere,” he insisted.<sup>196</sup> He continued, “We don’t have the strength to dominate, and even if we did, it would be insanity to spend it on an unproductive and hateful domination.”<sup>197</sup> Spain would be a guarantor of justice and security, beginning in Santo Domingo.

## International Reception of Dominican Annexation

By February 1861, Haiti's government paper, *Le Moniteur Haïtien*, began publishing alarming annexation rumors circulating from neighboring islands.<sup>198</sup> *L'Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orléans* reported that it seemed Spain had purchased Santo Domingo and predicted that Spain would be a "dangerous neighbor."<sup>199</sup> In the weeks that followed, the Port-au-Prince papers published responses from Paris, Liverpool, London, Jamaica, and a number of U.S. cities. The Massachusetts legislature passed a resolution unanimously condemning the annexation. From Jamaica, the *Morning Journal* impugned an "unscrupulous" Dominican president and decried, "The news presages nothing less than the annihilation of the Haitian nationality."<sup>200</sup> Haiti's *Moniteur* reprinted critical opinions that predicted French and British opposition, as well as early signs of confusion from Madrid papers.<sup>201</sup> President Geffrard issued a formal protest when news of the annexation definitively arrived; Kingston's *Gleaner* republished Geffrard's protest in its entirety. "Haiti and Jamaica are the only two countries in the world where blacks and their descendants are permitted to exercise their rights," the paper asserted, gravely. Absent other foreign intervention, they urged Geffrard to resist.<sup>202</sup>

Less than one month after Dominican annexation was declared—surely the news had barely reached U.S. shores—a Confederate attack on Fort Sumter summoned an ever-increasing conflagration. It was in this moment of circumstantial opportunity that Dominican annexation slipped onto the international stage; Spain hoped it would cause as little disturbance as possible. Given their impossible preoccupation, U.S. complaints "might as well be directed at the sky," one Madrid newspaper exulted.<sup>203</sup> Anyway, the annexation fit with the aggressive colonial imagination of the moment. A French paper, *La Presse*, found Spain's "voluntary" premise a bit disingenuous and predicted some opposition, without summoning much outrage.<sup>204</sup> Observers even speculated that Spain might subsume Haiti under the Spanish flag as well. "It will now be for Spain to prove the sincerity of its pledges and to develop the riches of this noble island," one British observer wrote, blandly.<sup>205</sup> *Le Siècle* concluded that France might have just as much claim to the island and supposed Spain "might soon [have] a tour of Mexico!"<sup>206</sup>

On the ground in Santo Domingo, members of Santana's government marked annexation without a hitch. The French consul was not invited, and the Spanish consul awaited instruction. In fact, the act of annexation bore Santana's signature alone; he did not solicit a single consul signature. The French consul allowed as how his only instructions had been to prevent

cession to the United States, and he predicted immediate recognition from Paris.<sup>207</sup> Even U.S. opportunist and sometime commercial agent Joseph Fabens considered that the project had “begun well.” He felt his commercial pursuits might even be abetted by the change in flag. He praised the idea that they might be inviting in U.S. settlers: “How suggestive these facts! What amazing significance in them! Young Spain, breaking through her traditional meshes of intolerance and oppression, at one bold leap . . . !”<sup>208</sup> British consul Martin Hood admitted he was sober, remaining “perfectly quiet” in the matter.<sup>209</sup> He was skeptical of popular reception of the change of flags in the capital, which took place “in complete silence, it was really a melancholic spectacle: men and women were crying; no applause or even an audible whimper . . . and no one shot guns,” he claimed.<sup>210</sup> He predicted the territory’s difficult economic situation was likely to continue and remarked with concern that he would continue to verify the status of any residents of the territory who had escaped from slavery from neighboring Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>211</sup>

From Union officials and observers, reception of the annexation was resoundingly chilly but ultimately muted. Annexation represented a flagrant violation of the Monroe Doctrine and directly opposed U.S. interests in Samaná, authorities observed. New secretary of state William E. Seward took office in March 1861 and urged Lincoln to stir from the inaction of President Buchanan on the Dominican matter. He submitted strongly worded memos from the president to Spain’s representative in Washington, Gabriel Tassara.<sup>212</sup> Nevertheless, President Lincoln explicitly forbade him from issuing a direct ultimatum to Spain. U.S. officials in Madrid did issue protests, but no action whatsoever was taken.<sup>213</sup> “I say, fix your own house,” the former consul to Santo Domingo reported from New York, smugly.<sup>214</sup> A number of newspapers—the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times* among them—expressed disbelief at the events and called for action in defense of the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>215</sup> James Redpath’s *Pine and Palm* gathered protests from readers and news of opposition elsewhere, protesting that the event was “of great importance not only for American commerce, but for the interests of freedom in general, and more particularly, of the races of color in the Americas.”<sup>216</sup> Despite Seward’s urging and popular opposition across the U.S. press, however, the Union was simply too occupied in the secession struggles at hand. Other times, the occupation did not figure into press coverage at all. In a largely disparaging article from 1862, the *Atlantic Monthly* called Spain’s exploits in Morocco “a silly affair” and bristled at Spain’s “entitlement” toward its former colonies, even as it assessed that Spain was “now demand-

ing for their country admission to the list of the Great Powers of Europe.”<sup>217</sup> Although published nearly a year after annexation, the article, inscrutably, did not mention Santo Domingo at all. At least if Spain retook Mexico, the territory might be a bulwark against the “lawless spirits of the South . . . only one step below the devil,” the author supposed.<sup>218</sup>

Disgraced Spanish diplomat Manuel Cruzat—he of the Haitian diplomacy debacle in 1855—provoked a strong reaction from the British consul several weeks after annexation. Serving as the diplomatic secretary to Rear Admiral Rubalcava, who had arrived with military forces from Cuba, Cruzat spoke cavalierly to British consul Hood. Spain did intend to reintroduce slavery, he remarked casually, and owners of fugitive slaves from Cuba and Puerto Rico escaped to the former republic would have “a perfect right” to reclaim them as property.<sup>219</sup> Hood was flabbergasted. “If Spanish rule is enforced of considering all children of slaves as the property of their masters, there will hardly be a single black or coloured person in the country who will be safe from persecution,” he wrote. A flurry of high official communication was exchanged, including repeated promises from Spanish prime minister O’Donnell himself, and British officials’ fears were allayed somewhat. “His Excellency further said that public feeling in Spain was against the Slave Trade,” even if O’Donnell claimed its suppression could not be effected “before measures for substituting other labor were matured,” Lord Russell reported.<sup>220</sup> As a country “naturally inclined to peace, and systematically addicted to commerce,” Britain’s main concern was to avoid foreign conflict, Russell averred.<sup>221</sup> “The formal and repeated declarations of Marshal O’Donnell that under no circumstances will slavery be introduced . . . have removed the main cause which would have led HMG to view the proposed annexation with dislike and repugnance,” the British consul agreed. Given that the other major powers also seemed to be quiescent, and that Britain held itself “as a Power naturally inclined to peace, and systematically addicted to commerce,” the consul concluded that peaceful recognition was undoubtedly the best route.<sup>222</sup>

As weeks passed, general response grew more and more positive. British journalists were sanguine about the prospect for an emancipated Spanish Caribbean empire. The *Quarterly Review*, a London journal, outlined a bright future for Spanish government and economy in which imperial projects such as the annexation of Santo Domingo played an important part. Constitutional government and a growth in national revenue in the 1850s were ample evidence of Spain’s upward trend, the author praised.<sup>223</sup> He disapproved of Spain’s recent military expeditions into Morocco—an acquisition of territory

that the *Review* judged superfluous to Spain's economic advancement—but was enthusiastic and effusive about the annexation of Santo Domingo.<sup>224</sup> Clearly unfamiliar with the history of the republic, the writer made a number of errors in describing its recent history; nonetheless, he concluded that the annexation—as Spanish officials insistently claimed—had been a “free and spontaneous act of the President and people” and as such was “one of the most remarkable events of an age full of startling changes and surprises.”<sup>225</sup> The Spanish government has given the most satisfactory pledges that slavery shall not be reintroduced, he concluded; “indeed, the reintroduction of slavery . . . is morally impossible.” This free labor experiment reflected the growth and optimism of Britain's ally, the journal argued. “It will be for the Spanish Government now . . . to develop the riches of this noble land. A great experiment will soon be in progress in the attempt to raise tropical produce by free labour. We believe it will be a successful one. It must, should it so prove, effect an entire revolution in the present colonial economy of Spain. There will no longer be even a pretext for conniving at the slave trade, and the gradual extinction of slavery within the Spanish dominions will be assured.”<sup>226</sup> Of Spain's role in the emancipated republics of Latin America, the author writes, “It is natural that Spain should, in her renovated strength, turn her thoughts towards those vast countries. . . . The resumption of her ancient dominion [in Mexico], after the recent annexation, . . . may appear to be within her grasp.” He predicted Haiti might follow.<sup>227</sup>

In the face of such limited opposition, it seemed that all was well with the new annexation project. Santana and Cuban officials echoed choruses about the event's spontaneity and support. The *Gaceta de la Habana* reprinted these promises and marveled at annexation's auspicious nature for Spanish empire.<sup>228</sup> Congratulations arrived from Spanish authorities in Manila by midsummer, praising, too, the voluntary demonstration of fidelity by the Dominican people.<sup>229</sup> U.S. influence was at an ebb; only eight U.S. ships reached Dominican ports from January to November 1861, and William Cazneau wrote to Secretary of State Seward that Spanish officials planned on controlling the Mona passage tightly.<sup>230</sup> Elsewhere, hemispheric observers watched the developments with concern. Peru issued a formal proclamation condemning the annexation, and petitioners gathered more than thirty-seven hundred signatures in Jamaica.<sup>231</sup> President Geffrard of Haiti would soon follow with a statement of condemnation. For the moment, however, it seemed that a new era in Spanish colonialism—of the “utmost satisfaction and glory”—was at hand, beginning in the Caribbean.<sup>232</sup>