

## The Lava Spread Everywhere

RURAL REVOLUTION, THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND HAITI

The year 1864 dawned with the defeat of Pedro Santana and all his men, in fierce fighting in the north. Santana retreated home to the eastern province of Seybo with two thousand followers, trying to quell an insurgency that had started there, too. He died that fall, disillusioned and frustrated.<sup>1</sup> In a massive military escalation, Spanish authorities brought in almost twenty thousand new troops to crush the rebellion, three thousand soldiers for the capital alone.<sup>2</sup> In comparison, only a few hundred Dominicans guarded Santiago, where the new Provisional Government operated. Rebels dispersed everywhere in campaigns and guerrilla battles. “Dominican society was sleeping on the crater of a volcano,” poet (and Restoration fighter) Manuel Rodríguez Objío wrote. “The volcano opened its immense mouth,” he described, “its flame lit up the beautiful country’s sky, and its lava spread everywhere.” The destruction was shocking. “Whole cities were entombed,” he observed; “mountains of ash rose everywhere.”<sup>3</sup>

As the massive mobilization swept the territory, poor country residents and laborers entered the fight decisively and in great numbers. Although documentation on prominent rural men is lacking (compared with the more extensive paper trail of wealthy figures in towns), historians suggest that many wealthy cattlemen progressed from indifference, to lending money to the rebel cause, to trying to benefit from it.<sup>4</sup> Like wealthier citizens in town, they worried about the popular nature of the war. “We feared that the masses [*muchedumbre*] didn’t have anyone to moderate them,” one admitted.<sup>5</sup> Spanish officials sought to exploit these fears, and regional sentiment, with little success. The movement was simply too popular. “I was seeking to exploit

the antipathy that has always existed between those in the South and those in the North,” Governor Vargas reported, but opposition was far too strong.<sup>6</sup> Loyalist observers commented extensively on the popular nature of the war. It was “a headless rebellion . . . a horrible hurricane . . . a crazy revolution,” one priest remarked, in fear and awe.<sup>7</sup> Tobacco production dropped precipitously, an unavoidable blow to rebel revenue. Violent campaigns spread everywhere. Relentlessly, however, the rebellion continued to grow.

Two major political tendencies emerged in the Provisional Government, established during the first fall of fighting. The first was a studiously raceless republican nationalism, authored by prominent figures, primarily wealthy men from the Cibao, who had been part of the reform movements of the late republic. Like Mexican opponents to French occupation at the same time, they refuted the annexation in no uncertain terms, heartily exhorted republicanism, condemned Spain’s tyranny, and praised independent American states.<sup>8</sup> Their discourse was at once anticolonial and civilizationist. In defense against the accusation of “banditry,” prominent generals assured their audiences they were “Christian and civilized.”<sup>9</sup> In defense against the accusation of “race war” (murmured on the island, shouted in Madrid periodicals), spokespeople responded with anticolonial missives to Spain that remained deafeningly silent on racism and slavery.<sup>10</sup> In these tracts, they wrote freely of Spanish “arrogance” and disdain—“as if we were serfs, or the indigenous conquered in the era of Columbus,” contrived one—but they rarely condemned Spain’s plantation present.<sup>11</sup> To these officials, the appropriate frame of vindication, the respectable anticolonial discourse, was nationalism. In one of Santiago writer Pedro Francisco Bonó’s stories, an insurgent exclaims, “Every day I want to fight more and finish kicking out those whites”—but government members did not echo him.<sup>12</sup>

Leaders who were much closer to the guerrilla movements—idealistic, active, and violent men—emerged, too, embodying the radicalization of the struggle. General Gregorio Luperón, just twenty-four years old, made a meteoric, brilliant rise as a military commander from humble origins in Puerto Plata. He was among the most radical of nationalists and idealists, who, like Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, already dead for his efforts, had begun organizing when the occupation was only a wild rumor. Each revolutionary general had his own plans, command, and supply lines, leading groups of insurgents.<sup>13</sup> Others also quickly ascended to military leadership, including figures like Gaspar Polanco, who rose to be head of the provisional national army—“an informal mambí troop,” such as it was.<sup>14</sup> Fissures between prominent men and these popular leaders grew until, mid-fighting, they reached

fever pitch. In a coup meant to save the revolution, General Polanco ordered the execution of the president, a prominent landowner. Observers were positively scandalized; Polanco was unrepentant. Claiming the presidency on a wave of popular support, he initiated a more revolutionary government in every sense. Idealists who had served the previous administration found a new voice, too. Polanco's ministers reached farther, flooding western Puerto Rico with pamphlets as well.<sup>15</sup> "Citizen Presidents" ruled on both sides of the island.<sup>16</sup>

At the height of the fighting and revolutionary tumult, Haitian authorities continued in a bind between overwhelming popular support in Haiti for the anticolonial rebellion and the threat of Spanish might. Any overt collaboration would ally the Haitian state with a poorly armed faction of an unequal and potentially fatal fight, and Spanish warships remained docked in striking distance. Furthermore, challenges to Geffrard's hold on power compromised his ability to respond. The president's opponents called on popular opposition to his neutrality, sometimes opportunistically, to condemn him, and prominent regional politicians plotted opposition movements with growing frequency. Meanwhile, Haitian citizens in port cities and center-island towns defied all authority to collaborate with the Restoration war. Material and moral collaboration across the island was extensive, "frank and resolved," and hostile observers knew it.<sup>17</sup> "We cannot understand how the Spanish government can believe for one moment that the Haitian people could stay indefinitely indifferent to an issue that, as they accurately perceive, interests them as much as Dominicans," one rebel announced.<sup>18</sup> The northern coast, in particular, bubbled with collaborative activity, with boats hopping from Cap-Haïtien, to Monte Cristi, to Puerto Plata, to Turks and Caicos Islands, Saint Thomas, and other nearby sites.

Collaboration accelerated greatly with the demands (and radicalization) of the anti-Spanish fighting, which was unlike any military mobilization in recent memory. Urgency, opportunism, and political strife, on both sides of the island, multiplied rebel plans. Some anti-Geffrard conspirators called for the north of Haiti to ally with the rebel east. The Provisional Government called for a simple treaty of alliance, later a treaty of federation. Many other rebels, short on resources, looked to Haiti for help in any way possible. "We protest the abuses of the Spanish government . . . , impeding Haitian citizens from taking part in the Dominican cause, which is their own cause," a Dominican author chided.<sup>19</sup> They sent private letters describing Dominican prisoners in shackles.<sup>20</sup> Loyalists and Spanish called Dominican guerrilla fighters *manigüeros*, a reference to their strategic flight to rough and unculti-

vated land. Rebels called the Spanish *cacharros* (pot carriers), mocking them for how heavily they traveled.<sup>21</sup> *Manigüeros* were winning the war. In collaboration on the north coast and in newly radical elements of the Provisional Government, the egalitarian policies, antiracist patriotism, and solidarity forged in struggle grew to be something very difficult to control. After more powerful men wrested power back from Polanco and his revolutionaries, they obliquely referred to a broader “regularization” of the war effort.<sup>22</sup> A full-blown “reactionary clan” began to coalesce by late 1864, in opposition to the ascendant radical leadership.<sup>23</sup> These powerful men, already looking ahead to what they thought might be the end of the war, sought a familiar old network of patronage and hierarchy, in the figure of Buenaventura Báez. Meanwhile, however, popular collaborations and connections to Haiti only grew. The language of a heroic nationalism united them. Three years after Geffrard had resoundingly condemned Spanish occupation, a southern Dominican man carried a copy of his 1861 protest in his pocket as he fought.<sup>24</sup>

### A “Regenerated” Republic

A group of rebel political leaders founded the Provisional Government at the center of Dominican liberal nationalist politics, the Cibao valley. “We have no doubt that our brothers in the Cibao will be the first to embrace the cause of *regeneration*,” a writer had predicted in 1861, and residents of the surrounding towns saw entering the fight as “joining up with the *Cibaños*.”<sup>25</sup> Many of the prominent rebel leaders had experience in political movements of recent years and economic ties to the United States, England, and other sites.<sup>26</sup> Two wealthy Santiago women lent their houses to the early meetings: first, Doña Antonia Batista; next, Madame García. García, born in Haiti, was famous for the most extravagant masked balls in the Cibao valley.<sup>27</sup> Some had entered the annexation loyal to Spain, optimistic about party peace and economic progress. Their disillusionment was rapid, however. Almost all the members of the Santiago colonial municipal government, the same who had butted heads with Brigadier Buceta, were definitively implicated as rebels before the end of the year. Others switched ranks from Spanish to the newly reformed ad hoc government independently. Although a number of prominent Santiagueros cast themselves as fearful witnesses to early popular opposition, all of the witnesses in the March military trials in Santiago were able to carefully restate the rebel goals, months before the Provisional Government ever drafted its inaugural document. “They said they came in the name of the people . . . to reconquer the rights of free men and throw off foreign domination once and for all,” one witness ad-libbed.<sup>28</sup>

As the government formed in late summer 1863, news traveled fast. Suspects in the Puerto Plata trials of August 1863 already knew that a letter had been sent to the queen asking for the return of the republic, probably before the letter even crossed the Atlantic.<sup>29</sup>

Military leaders called on a new history of the “extinguished” First Republic to redeem the territory. Their rhetoric was steeped in tales of heroism and treason. Rebel leaders and others recast 1844—once tentatively called “Separation”—as “Independence,” and the previous republic achieved increasingly glorious, even mythic, proportions. “Dominicans! The homeland of the 27th of February, the country of sacrifices, calls you to her aid!” exhorted one general; many echoed his exact phrasing.<sup>30</sup> A number of the important Liberation Army leaders were veterans of older campaigns. Trinitario veteran Ramón Mella called to other 1844 veterans explicitly. “To my co-citizens. The Republic has called you: to arms! . . . I am a soldier of the February 27th Column, you know me, and I am here to call a few of my own,” he began, continuing explicitly: “Sandoval, Lloveres, Sosa, Maldonado, Juan Suero, Valenas, Marcos Evangelista, . . . do not forget that the Republic that gave you the fame and glory that your *compañeros* have for you.” Spain had already martyred many, Mella reminded veterans, invoking Sánchez but also many earlier military officers killed by Santana during the republic: “[All who have died], rise from the other side of the tomb, crying ‘Revenge!’ ‘Revenge!’ Dominicans! Listen to the patriotic laments of so many martyrs for liberty! . . . The *patria* is demanding REVENGE!”<sup>31</sup> Mella reminded his audience of Santana’s 1845 murder of the woman who might have sewn the first Dominican flag: “And you, my friends of Santo Domingo, do not forget that Santana was the murderer of Trinidad Sánchez!” Other generals also invoked a heroic past of the republic. “Long Live the Dominican Republic . . . on Year 17 of the country,” another general reminded his audience.<sup>32</sup>

The reinvention of a national community required a wiping clean of old caudillo loyalties. The fighting dismantled Santana’s and Báez’s patronage ties significantly. Báez, in Europe, was absent during the height of the fighting. Santana’s network of support catastrophically disintegrated: he could not dole out the military titles and patronage as he had done prior to Spanish arrival; then the rebellion undermined him; finally, he resigned in disgrace from the Spanish administration completely. His death a short time later furthered the fragmentation of his former supporters and swelled the Restoration ranks further.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, anti-Santana sentiment was manifest in the rebel ranks; “Abajo España! Abajo el Gran Pendejo!” was a common

refrain. One poet suggested a sea change in popular sentiment, long in development, away from loyalties to the disgraced caudillo,

Your children, your dear children,  
who used to worship you,  
who adored you fervently  
you must see them celebrating your ruin<sup>34</sup>

The Provisional Government, which personified cross-party loyalties, declared the death penalty for Santana in September 1863. After his actual death from illness a year later, a number of epitaphs excoriated him, including the following:

Here lies a great idiot  
despotic like no other  
he did not understand his fate  
and he died like a pig  
without having done anything good.<sup>35</sup>

The spokesmen of the Provisional Government responded to Spanish accusations (and real vestiges) of party factionalism. Their public overtures, accordingly, were insistently nonpartisan. “We are brothers,” Cabral reminded his audience in 1861, continuing, “Our arms are open to receive you . . . DOMINICANOS ALL, union, strength, enthusiasm and confidence, and I promise you that the Country will be freed.”<sup>36</sup> “Co-citizens, a cordial welcome to all Dominicans, whatever your convictions have been, and in good faith, come take your place in the glorious lines of the *patria*,” a government writer announced, invitingly.<sup>37</sup>

Some leaders’ treatises appealed explicitly to an egalitarian nationalism. Of all the grievous elements of the occupation, “social differences, caused by, among other things, the importations of titles from Spain,” were the most odious, Luperón wrote, concluding, “It is a thousand times more worthwhile to die than to be slaves.”<sup>38</sup> Others concurred. “In Spain there are distinctions of class and trade, that is to say, inequality is consecrated,” an anonymous pamphlet writer observed critically.<sup>39</sup> In their proclamations, the refrain was often that of the former republic—“God, Country and Liberty”—but others deepened its social implications. “Homeland, honor, and humanity,” Ramón Mella exhorted, for example.<sup>40</sup> “DEATH OR LIBERTY,” announced one general; “Liberty, Independence, Union,” and “Liberty—Independence—the heroic Dominican people!” concluded others.<sup>41</sup> Explicitly more radical

was Gregorio Luperón's version, scrawled in boldface: "INDEPENDENCE, EQUALITY, AND LIBERTY," he insisted forcefully during Polanco's administration.<sup>42</sup> "Free by nature, free by institutions, free, ultimately, through the conscience of our dignity—there is no human power that can sully it," Luperón concluded.<sup>43</sup> "FREE, we were born free, and we have broken free from Spanish oppression," a poet proclaimed. "If yesterday we were slaves by means of treachery, today the popular opinion damning those traitors makes them instead the slaves, as we cry, RESTORATION!"<sup>44</sup> The call to arms was universal. "All Dominicans are Soldiers of the Patria. . . . Considering that in Dominican society, there are no privileged classes, everyone without exception should wear war fatigues," the Provisional Government announced, and from age fifteen to sixty, all were expected to fight.<sup>45</sup>

Italy, Poland, Santo Domingo! . . . The Sublime Trilogy  
of Modern Independence!

As Spanish general José de la Gándara, veteran of service on two continents, took the mantle of Spanish governor of Santo Domingo in 1864, he located the Spanish project firmly on the side of reason and civilization. Addressing his subjects with a combination of severity and strained optimism, he assured his listeners that Santo Domingo continued to be an "important province of the monarchy." Rule of law would continue to apply, for "legality is an element of progress and civilization that Spanish nationality promises you," the general maintained, "[along with] powerful resources." The rebels were outside of the law, reason, and civilization itself, he reasoned. To those who had taken up arms, the general directed a chiding message. "You have guns in your hands, but no reason in your conscience; . . . You raise a flag that has no name, that does not protect any element of liberty, peace, and civilization," he accused. "I have the duty to pacify this territory . . . and I expect to see it crowned with the success," he warned.<sup>46</sup> He had ample provisions, it seemed, to deliver on his threats; a royal order of April 1864 authorized the governor to use "any means in his power" to defeat the Dominican insurrection.<sup>47</sup>

Provisional Government authors countered de la Gándara's claims of legality and civilizing logic point by point, even as they largely accepted his premises. Nationalist, "civilized" language ruled their discourse, and they directed missives widely. In the context of British, French, and U.S. acquiescence to the reoccupation, Dominican resistance demanded not just armed struggle locally but a hemispheric defense of their right to self-determination. Representatives of the Provisional Government sought international attention and

condemnation, if not aid. They dedicated the independence declaration to “God, the whole world, and the throne of Spain.” Signatories announced the global import of the fight succinctly: “You have given us the mission of proving to the World, that a weak people cannot have their voice silenced by a large and noble Nation, if they are not afraid to fight for justice.” “We are guided by humanitarian principles, like the rest of civilized Nations,” a declaration insisted. Ulises Espaillat, serving on the Provisional Government’s Foreign Relations Commission, circulated their protests to the governments of England, France, and the United States, “to make manifest to the civilized world the illegal proceedings and sinister and torturous methods [of] Spain.”<sup>48</sup> Rebels invoked the Monroe Doctrine, prodding the war-torn United States to respond, even if only rhetorically. “[Annexation] obviously violates the Monroe Doctrine,” a *Boletín Oficial* editorial implored.<sup>49</sup>

Provisional Government authors made pointed parallels between their struggles for national determination and those of central and southern Europe. From the safety of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Dominican author Félix María del Monte wrote a poem calling the republic an “American Poland,” a “tropical siren” who would redeem herself in struggle.<sup>50</sup> “Italy, Poland, Santo Domingo! Here I have the sublime trilogy of modern independence!” proclaimed the *Boletín Oficial*.<sup>51</sup> Poets wrote elegies to Risorgimento leader Giuseppe Garibaldi in particular, for his actions in Uruguay as well as the Italian peninsula. Ireland and Hungary, too, presented timely comparisons.<sup>52</sup> They were only reiterating what Geffrard had said two years before. His early protest questioned: “Haitians . . . could you consent [to annexation], in the nineteenth century, when Italy, Hungary, and Poland successfully regain their liberty and independence, oppressed by less terrible servitude than Spain?” “History and posterity will applaud our heroism and civilized nations will avenge our defeat and our patriotism,” Geffrard had asserted. The advances of the nineteenth century rendered these claims irrevocable, Dominican authors now argued. “Liberty! . . . Who in the nineteenth century dares to ask what it is? No one; because . . . that orphaned and lonely word . . . is the bravest expression of the world’s future,” an editorial exulted.<sup>53</sup>

Rebels vaunted Haiti’s and the Dominican Republic’s decades-long achievements of independence. Despite invoking glorious independence in 1844, they dated Dominican experimentation with democracy to the beginning of unification with Haiti in 1822, as they chided the queen: “This people enjoyed forty years of political and civil liberty under republican rule, tolerance in religious matters, and innumerable other advantages, not least among them a National Congress and the participation in public affairs that



DEMOCRACY necessarily brings with it, a poor fit with monarchical and even colonial regimes.”<sup>54</sup> A powerful revolution made Haiti free, and the British islands were now “calmly on the path of betterment and progress” after emancipation, an author argued in the *Boletín Oficial*. Haiti’s achievements in just sixty-three years were remarkable, the writer asserted. “Thanks to the democratic system, Haiti has achieved the same level of civilization as exists in sister Republics,” he concluded.<sup>55</sup> “Who, then, should win in this struggle? Spain, that is, the Monarchy . . . or Santo Domingo, the democracy . . . ? . . . Will the cause of humanity and civilization win?”<sup>56</sup> It was the colonizing Spaniards who were uncivilized. Santana might have been a “scandal to civilization” for his collusion, but it was Spain’s Liberal Union government that held the most spectacular blame; it had failed to admit its “embarrassing and willful misconduct . . . in a project as *barbarous* as it is ridiculous.”<sup>57</sup> The Dominican Republic, just like its neighbor, deserved autonomy. Annexation “of a free people to the most despotic and backward Nation of the globe” was disastrous, the authors concluded.<sup>58</sup> Spain has brought “misery and calamities of its own poor administration; their Government . . . has made the country move backward,” the independence declaration accused. Annexation amounted to “tyranny against right, in short, barbarism against civilization.”<sup>59</sup> It was a project “as barbarous as it is ridiculous,” echoed another.<sup>60</sup> Poets called Spain a “proudful sultan,” a barbarous “tyrant” spilling the blood of “noble Americans.” “Wild despotism will never, never be able to relax . . . on heroic ground,” the author warned.<sup>61</sup>

In official addresses, Provisional Government decrees were fairly quiet about connecting Spain’s slaveholding to Spanish misrule on Dominican soil. Cuba could not remain under “a government from another century much longer,” one decree announced vaguely.<sup>62</sup> A handful were direct in using abolitionist declarations as condemnation. “Dominicans: the day has arrived in which Spain, the only country that insists on keeping slaves, should lose her colonies in the Antilles. . . . America should belong to itself,” General Ramón Mella argued.<sup>63</sup> Letter writers to the *Boletín Oficial* talked about local prejudice, however. “I’ll take advantage of the moment to lift a great weight from my conscience,” a man wrote from the capital, “as everything they write here is a big lie; everything they say about treating us well is completely the opposite.” He spoke of relentless, repeated reminders from Spanish officials about how, in Spanish territories, “there cannot be black Generals and black colonels” and openly speculated about the threats to Dominican individuals in other Spanish possessions. “The only thing left to do to disrespect us more is to spit in our face,” he concluded. He urged his

compatriots in Santiago not to believe news of Spanish reinforcements, of the distrust and misery in the capital, and of the strength of the resistance. “Tell all them [in the Cibao] to stay strong,” he wrote, “because this cannot last long . . . reconquer this country again, that’s just music, not even all of Spain can do it.”<sup>64</sup>

#### No, We Do Not Want Your *Lights*

Sometimes, leaders went beyond republican critiques to grapple with and articulate alternative models of civilization. “Prove to the world that you are part of the indomitable and guerrilla peoples who live civilization through customs, words, and its idea,” Francisco del Rosario Sánchez began, “but who prefer liberty to all the advantages of rights.” The advantages of formal rights were nothing but “golden chains,” he concluded.<sup>65</sup> In the developmentalist furor that surrounded the island, some authors also articulated a complicated riposte to Spanish promises. Spanish authorities promised industry, commercialization, and progress. “We want this unlucky country to prosper,” the first Spanish governor had proclaimed.<sup>66</sup> Dominican writers responded to their plans with distrust. While many in their ranks might have wished for greater capital and infrastructure—such hopes had been, after all, at the root of loyalist sentiment among a number of merchants in the Cibao and Puerto Plata—they were suspicious of Spanish-led schemes. “You want to exploit our coal, the silver and gold that is said to abound,” accused an opposition pamphlet in 1861. The writer continued, “Our agriculture is not ruined. It’s true that it is paltry; but that is a result of the number of inhabitants who can dedicate themselves to it. . . . You come to rid of us of property to which we have a perfect right.”<sup>67</sup> Dominican loyalist Manuel de Jesús Galván retorted:

Well, fine: what does the author want? That the rock carbon and the iron remain permanently in their veins and beds, that is to say, hidden and denied to civilization? That’s as much as can be deduced from his verbal mess. Or does he want Santo Domingo to remain as it is, with its paltry agriculture, its virgin forests, its coal deposits, without civilization ever using those elements of well-being and progress? Is that to say he wants the Dominican people to remain immobilized in disgrace . . . limited to stasis, passive in the midst of richness and in view of the progressive march of civilization!<sup>68</sup>

Democracy, not development, was the core principle of civilization, his opponent argued. “We think it better that the small amount be split among

all of our farmers than for two or three of yours to monopolize everyone's work," the *Treason* pamphlet offered testily. Moreover, the author rejected rapacious development; advancement was not worth the cost. And so the pamphlet concluded forcefully: "Spain is mistaken in her conviction, purportedly magnanimous, of the mission to bring to our soil all of the elements of civilization, judging it in a complete state of barbarism, in exchange for domination. Dominicans can tell her: No, we do not want your lights, because we prefer to live in the utmost degree of backwardness, to falling, little by little, shining, into the most degrading servitude."<sup>69</sup> Later government missives compared the nonexploitation of Dominican resources with feminine modesty, calling the territory a "respectable matron of the American world." Despite being small, "we nonetheless appear big in the eyes of the universe," the author insisted.<sup>70</sup> Rebel authors mocked loyalists' willful claims to monopolize civilization and reason. "We rarely read *La Razón*, unless there's nothing to do and we're in a bad mood," *Boletín* writers teased.<sup>71</sup>

### Mass Mobilization, Alliances, and Social Mobility

Government members commented on the vast difference between the fighting and all previous political mobilizations. The liberal movement of 1858 had represented "the revolution of a few, dragging the masses along with them," one author wrote in the *Boletín Oficial*. The new mobilization was far more popular. "In the current revolution, it was the masses who rose up, dragging with them everyone else," he observed; "in this one, the educated have put themselves in service of the masses."<sup>72</sup> As they entered towns, rebel groups sought a pronouncement of loyalty from residents. "Thousands and thousands" signed the Act of Independence.<sup>73</sup> "The authorities and *vecinos* of this town and its surroundings are gathered . . . to pronounce it in favor of the Holy Cause of Independence, unanimously agreeing to raise the glorious Dominican flag," San José de Ocoa's statement read, and nearly two hundred signatures followed.<sup>74</sup>

For all the efforts of the Santiago-based Provisional Government, the dispersed anti-Spanish fighters had to be largely self-reliant. Although sometimes gathered in large numbers, rebels tended to fight in smaller guerrilla groups of several hundred or fewer, gathering provisions and materiel as they could. Dispersed amid difficult conditions, they relied both on their ties to rural families and on their own knowledge of the countryside for food. Rebels often ate the cattle and pigs that roamed free. Plantains, corn, and some meats were purchased when funds permitted, and nonperishables arrived from Haiti. "Every soldier of ours was a *montero*," Bonó wrote approv-

ingly.<sup>75</sup> Munitions were a constant problem, and most of the guns were stolen from Spanish soldiers. Anywhere from seven hundred to three thousand rebels were involved in the Puerto Plata rebellion of August 1863, for example, but many reportedly had just five bullets each.<sup>76</sup> Others reported that as many as one in four had only blanks, while the remaining men had only two or three bullets each, rationed from Santiago. Clothing, too, was in constant shortage. In order to maintain what standing forces did exist, soldiers of the Liberation Army were to receive sixty *papeletas*.

In the chaos of mobilization, men rose to leadership ranks in the army and Provisional Government on an unprecedented scale. Officers' ranks drew from a wider swath of social classes as a result. "The War of Restoration was an event of profoundly popular roots; its leaders just as its soldiers were people from the entrails of the pueblo," Bosch writes.<sup>77</sup> In previous decades, caudillos had mobilized dependents for military operations, largely through patronage ties and the promises of military spoils. In the war against the Spanish, the dynamics were much more diverse. Prowess and organizing capabilities ruled. Some emerged from local notoriety to something more closely resembling prestige. Prior loyalties did not stain capable commanders; a number of military officials and administrators, only the year prior, had been loyal to (and even fighting for) the Spanish. A number of men who became national figures rose from humble origins. Gaspar Polanco, a cattle man from Guayubín, was illiterate, but he was a "capable military chief . . . and brave." Anyway, the disorder of pitched fighting and guerrilla mobilizations secured such trajectories. "On top of this, there was no one who could have given [Polanco] the position, nor was there anyone who could have denied him it," Bosch surmises.<sup>78</sup> Within months, Polanco became the nominal head of the army, a formal title for an informal network of combatants.<sup>79</sup>

Some leaders, capitalizing on the extralegal spaces of the center-island region, were brutal opportunists and violent men. Juan Rondón, for example, was a career cattle rustler; authorities reported that he had accompanied his father on thievery missions on both sides of the border from a very young age.<sup>80</sup> In adulthood, he was at times brutally violent. Allegedly he murdered a pregnant woman from the west and sliced out her unborn baby as she died. The sensational crime was discussed throughout the center-island region. Rondón first clashed with Spanish authorities in March 1863 when, as a passive colonel, he came under suspicion of spreading alarming rumors about the meaning of the announced "state of siege" on the island. His defense was agile. Claiming to be the peón of a woman named Merced Marunga in Las

Matas, he had applied for a license to leave Higüey and return to the center of the island, instead stopping at some point in the capital; all his travels, he argued, were as an innocent dependent. Short of evidence, the commission freed him.<sup>81</sup> Rondón was captured in March 1864 and brought to Port-au-Prince under strict vigilance of the area commander. “Men like that cannot possibly be considered émigrés in Haiti or any other civilized country,” Manuel Álvarez observed.<sup>82</sup> Other caudillo leaders like “El Chivo” were nothing but “vulgar criminals and assassins,” Spanish authorities accused.<sup>83</sup> Haitian officials, too, were weary of the unrest, accusing Dominican border “criminals” of political troublemaking.<sup>84</sup> Other individuals simply had untrustworthy allegiances, scheming to put themselves or friends in power. Ramón Mella was so disgusted with one general that he retreated from the center of the island back to Cibao to regroup.<sup>85</sup>

At times leaders’ cruel tactics and misconduct were so extreme that other guerrilla leaders felt compelled to intercede against, even murder, prominent transgressors. General Pedro Florentino, long established in the center of the island (San Juan de la Maguana), committed considerable atrocities in his southwestern campaigns. He murdered twenty-three people in Las Matas, evidently to take their possessions. “In the small valley near the mountain, the ground was still bloody, and the hair of the victims was still caught up in the underbrush,” a horrified Spanish official alleged, noting that the bodies, left unburied, had been torn apart by wild dogs.<sup>86</sup> The total number of local murders allegedly committed by Florentino and his accomplices—most by machete—was 125, with most of the bodies discarded in the mountains in the same way. A number of Dominican men detained by the Spanish testified that Florentino had “forced” them to travel with his ranks; one even claimed that the general had shot his father.<sup>87</sup> Florentino allegedly turned over the son of a prominent Dominican general to his brother-in-law, Juan “el Ciego,” who marched the captive man to a cemetery and split his head with a machete.<sup>88</sup> Florentino openly gave permission for looting as a way of appeasing his band of soldiers, but his authoritarian grip tightened simultaneously.<sup>89</sup> Harsh punishment of desertion was “of absolute necessity to save the Patria,” he concluded severely. He ordered executions and authorized other officials to do the same.<sup>90</sup> Eventually, Florentino—“rapacious, bloodthirsty, cowardly and inept”—was apprehended and killed by the very rebel leaders he claimed to represent, including the infamous Juan Rondón.<sup>91</sup> Similar conflicts bubbled up elsewhere among abusive leaders and their rivals.

The trajectory of one of the most famous Restoration fighters, Gregorio Luperón—who would influence politics until just years before his death at the end of the century, even as he repeatedly refused the presidency—exemplified the political mobility that military prowess afforded brilliant strategists and leaders. Luperón, the son of a modest fruit seller (he took a version of her French-Haitian name, Duperrón, and was not recognized by his father), learned woodworking and a bit of English from his artisan master during his childhood in Puerto Plata.<sup>92</sup> The international itinerary of his older brother exemplified the extensive regional ties of Puerto Plata: José Gabriel Luperón fought for the Union in the U.S. Civil War, attaining the rank of captain.<sup>93</sup> After some scrapes with authorities and immediately opposing Spanish annexation, the younger Gregorio fled from Puerto Plata to Cap-Haïtien to New York, subsequently leaving for Mexico and Jamaica before returning to Dominican soil under an assumed identity. Sometime in the summer of 1862, he arrived amid the hotbed of conspirators south of Monte Cristi, in Sabaneta; during the next few years, he became a close personal friend and ally of Puerto Rican abolitionist and *independentista* Ramón Emeterio Betances, firebrand liberal priest Father Fernando Antonio Meriño, and other itinerant, anticolonial gadflies. With veteran general Lucas Evangelista de Peña, Luperón fought at Sabaneta in the first rebellions of the spring of 1863, earning himself a death sentence from the Spanish in absentia; he was also, crucially, at the Grito de Capotillo that summer.

Luperón's heroics at the Battle of Santiago catapulted him to military prominence—he was, by his own admission, “guerrillero improvisado”—and he led hundreds in some of the most important battles of the Restoration fighting. After Capotillo, he headed south to face Santana himself at Arroyo Bermejo later that same month.<sup>94</sup> His newfound prowess—and the incredible risks he engaged—might have overwhelmed him briefly; his biographers detail a moment where he almost walked intentionally into Spanish fire.<sup>95</sup> Luperón was literate, but “as any son of a pueblo whose parents did not have the means to pay for school,” Bosch notes.<sup>96</sup> He consistently refused administrative posts that were offered to him. Ricardo Curiel served as Luperón's secretary during the war, and memoirs of the fighting would later be written by fellow Restorationist and friend, poet Manuel Rodríguez Objío. So sudden was Luperón's rise to prominence that in the first few months he would be looked upon with suspicion both by established political-military figures and by the new Provisional Government; he was even jailed for a short time. By early 1864, however, his authority was difficult to contest. Among the most

idealistic of the politico-military leaders of the period, he would also go on to be one of the most influential for decades following, even as the depths of his anticolonial views often took him to the wrong side of the law.

### **Robespierre of a New Kind**

The first president of the Provisional Government, José Salcedo, was a prominent and capable figure. Salcedo, born to Dominican parents in Madrid, enjoyed a profitable income in the north coast as a wood seller and landowner, with a number of dependents living on his land. People respected his stature.<sup>97</sup> He was also an avowed conservative Báez supporter, having even conspired against the liberal Revolution of 1857. In the first year of annexation, Spanish authorities tried Salcedo for the murder of a dependent man on his property. Whether the prosecution was motivated by his opposition to the regime or whether the trial galvanized his opposition, fighting had already begun upon his release. Salcedo arrived with men to the September fighting in Santiago, as the town was already under siege. Promptly, he assumed the presidency of the Provisional Government, less than a month old, to the irritation of some leaders. The rank and file in Santiago, too, saw it as a usurpation.<sup>98</sup> Over the next year, Salcedo continued to campaign as he governed. In August, he dismissed his ministry and ruled with only his personal secretary.<sup>99</sup> He resented Luperón and hoped to replace him with a pliant and wealthy general, a man educated in England and with merchant ties as far as Louisiana.<sup>100</sup> A number of unconfirmed rumors swirled around Salcedo and his small coterie: the first, that he was too conciliatory with Spanish brigadier Buceta, who attempted secret negotiations to recoup Santiago; the second, that he and his powerful allies were maneuvering to bring Báez back to the country; the third, that he was prepared to accept conditions for withdrawal that would leave Spain with control over Samaná or another north coast port. As Spanish forces regained the south, Salcedo seemed too conciliatory, calling for a return to smaller campaigns. He traveled back to Santiago to defend a friend who was suspected of pro-Báez plotting. In the capital city, Spanish authorities publicly celebrated Salcedo's cooperation over prisoner exchange. Suspicions mounted.<sup>101</sup>

Revolutionary figures moved to oust Salcedo. Writing as "A soldier of Capotillo" in October 1864, Luperón urged popular vigilance of all former strongmen and their annexationist collaborators. "Those men comprised a political party that we can call traitors, and since Dominican Independence, since 27 February 1844, they have worked for the ruin of their country," he accused, "those men sold their hearts and consciences to every nationality

but their own.” Báez was as corrupt as Santana, Luperón added stonily. “Beware, liberating soldiers of Independence, beware!” he warned, “Do not have compassion for traitors and traffickers of our freedom! Beware! Beware! Beware!”<sup>102</sup> Supported by other military figures, General Gaspar Polanco—who had been fighting since the siege of Santiago—assumed the presidential post. He ordered Salcedo’s expulsion. Before the ousted president might even be disembarked, however, Polanco ordered him shot. Other generals, Salcedo’s allies, and even some of Polanco’s allies reacted with umbrage and shock. The most radical period of Restoration fighting was about to begin.<sup>103</sup>

The radicalism of Gaspar Polanco’s administration was immediately obvious, from policy to the language of everyday governance. Under Polanco’s brief tenure, “Excelencia, Señoría,” and other titles were abolished.<sup>104</sup> Leaders addressed their fellow fighters occasionally as “los pueblos,” sometimes as “compatriotas,” more often still as “Dominicans,” but with increasing frequency as “conciudadanos” (co-citizens or fellow citizens). So elevated was the language of citizenship that writers called the president “President Citizen Gaspar Polanco,” the ministers became “Minister Citizen Rafael Leyba,” and so on.<sup>105</sup> Not everything was a revolutionary purge; Polanco kept on Salcedo’s vice president, Ulises Espaillat, as an amenable, adept, and idealistic writer and administrator. In fact, he valued civil administration. Polanco and his ministers passed a decree to fund primary school in all the communes and mount a campaign for universal vaccination.<sup>106</sup> “Democracy is the guiding light of the world,” Espaillat wrote. “Equality of rank and rights, popular government, power exercised by the masses, abnegation, generosity, and heroism”—these were the reforms that the revolution sought.<sup>107</sup> Writers filled the pages of the government bulletin with praise for the French revolution, excoriation of monarchy, and an expansion of democratic practice to include the populace. “American society is by nature and necessity plebeian,” one observed.<sup>108</sup> Unnamed authors penned odes to hard work.<sup>109</sup> Polanco did not draft any of those missives himself, of course, but sincere rebels who admired him and eagerly collaborated surrounded him. He and his allies committed to win the war and to revolutionize politics at the same time. Already prominent figures were wondering aloud which region might claim the seat of government after fighting ended. Polanco and his administrators urged them to focus on unity instead.<sup>110</sup> He redoubled military efforts. Rodríguez Objío called him “Robespierre of a new kind.”<sup>111</sup>

The tone of Provisional Government writings directed to Spanish authorities and Dominican loyalists became irreverent. From Puerto Rico and



from Spain, journalists and authorities rained invective on the Polanco administration. One Spanish political cartoonist satirized all the rebels in an imagined pidgin Spanish-Kreyòl.<sup>112</sup> Figures around Polanco responded with absolute defiance. Spanish authorities called Ulises Espaillat an “impenitent revolutionary.”<sup>113</sup> Someone penned a comic opera mocking a prominent pro-Spanish priest:

Stop lying, dear Father, and stop wielding that ancient pen . . .  
 You prove that the Spanish despot has lost.  
 When your ancientness offers me peace with startling quickness if I  
 accept chains . . .  
 Our olive branch is our cannon.  
 Make the Ogre of Castille understand . . .  
 Your letter made me double over with laughter . . .  
 If your pride and brutality think they can dominate my country . . .  
 You are the one who is being played with.

“Stop playing games already,” the author taunted loyalists repeatedly, and the fighting continued.<sup>114</sup>

In the months before Polanco’s rise, military standoffs reached a critical juncture. Dominican rebels could mount long sieges of the Spanish, but they could not defeat them, and supplies of munitions waned.<sup>115</sup> Spanish authorities ordered seizures of rebel goods, but the pace of seizures slowed when there were few possessions left to take.<sup>116</sup> The governor proved totally intractable on Spanish confiscation of pack animals, even though local officials tried to explain to him that the seizures were “the most onerous public service in the land.”<sup>117</sup> “It must be noted that this poverty cannot be so great as supposed,” he observed, in a haughty non sequitur, “given that many jobs . . . are vacant.”<sup>118</sup> The Provisional Government enacted identical measures, decreeing that any soldier deserting—for example, seeking refuge in Haiti—would face confiscation of his possessions.<sup>119</sup> All manner of food—salted meat, flour, vegetables, yucca, yam (ñame), even plantains—continued to be difficult to find in many towns, as boat seizures halted trade from Saint Thomas. High prices kept many “emaciated and weakened by hunger,” a U.S. observer reported gravely.<sup>120</sup> Dominican merchants suffered greatly, cut off from the interior.<sup>121</sup> Prisons and makeshift detentions brimmed with detainees in terrible conditions, as authorities converted various buildings to hold the captives.<sup>122</sup> Even daily meals were improbable for prisoners without family nearby. From the first fall of fighting, prisoners begged for an audience with an official who might see to it that their basic water and sanitary

needs be met, as well as grant them access to a small vegetable garden.<sup>123</sup> Rebel prisoners were made to do all sorts of menial tasks while detained by the Spanish. Four fled at the riverbanks where they had been sent to clean the chamber pots, for example.<sup>124</sup> Others had to do hard labor while in shackles and chains.<sup>125</sup> Improbably, investors continued to send agricultural indenture schemes and other plans to authorities, impervious to the violent and hungry stalemate.<sup>126</sup>

In power by the early fall of 1864, Polanco pushed forward. He began with a campaign of volunteers on an impossible, symbolic mission to attack the entrenched Spanish troops in Puerto Plata. He ordered the creation of regional councils to detect pro-Spanish conspiracy.<sup>127</sup> Aware that inflation was hurting poorer urban citizens and desperately seeking funds, Polanco created a state tobacco monopoly, ordered “forced loans” from prominent citizens, seized goods of those who had defected to Spanish lines, and tried to promote cotton near Dajabón.<sup>128</sup> To Spanish authorities, Polanco’s tone was unyielding. “We are not afraid of your threats,” he warned. “Today all Dominicans are on the front lines for our country, and nothing you say can offend me. We are not afraid of your artillery nor all of your army, we have taken up arms to throw off your yoke, and we will defend ourselves to the death.”<sup>129</sup> He ordered campaigns everywhere. Center-island fighting raged, and campaigns reached all the way east to Higüey. Polanco ordered those who had returned to their homes in the Cibao back out to fight. The call was immediately successful; more than two thousand men remobilized.<sup>130</sup> Spanish authorities also dug in. “A homicidal drama” already sixteen months long, Polanco’s ministers lamented, was spilling “a precious blood, the blood of an unlucky and innocent people . . . resolved to bury themselves in the ruins and ashes piling up around them” before giving up their freedom.<sup>131</sup> Soon, the administration turned to Haiti for help.

### **A Word to the Dominicans, a Word to the Haitians**

As the fighting first recommenced, the Geffrard administration had little choice but to demonstrate cooperation with the Spanish. Santana tried to forbid all communication with Haiti entirely; military and civil authorities were instructed to use extreme vigilance.<sup>132</sup> The *Moniteur Haïtien* announced that Dominican refugees from the border area should be marched to Port-au-Prince. “Haitian authorities have shown themselves to be completely divorced from the movement . . . and desirous of order,” Spanish authorities noted with satisfaction.<sup>133</sup> A smattering of firings followed. Geffrard’s officials dismissed Cap-Haïtien’s governor for allowing rebels to gather there.

Further east on the north coast, another commanding general was fired after he received a prominent Dominican rebel. The new commander at Fort Liberté in Ouanaminthe, General Philanthrope Noël, received explicit instructions not to let anyone cross from the Dominican side without a passport signed by the Spanish governor himself, and he promised to inform Spanish authorities about the suspected whereabouts of prominent insurgent leaders.<sup>134</sup> Madrid officials noted with approval that Geffrard passed on confidential tips that former Dominican minister Felipe Alfau was conspiring in Paris, “as proof of his affection for Spain and her Government and of his good intentions thereto.”<sup>135</sup> When Francisco Bonó, member of the Provisional Government, had visited Port-au-Prince, officials observed a “strict neutrality,” ordering him to leave immediately.<sup>136</sup>

President Geffrard stuck closely to *realpolitik*, but there were also clear limits to his cooperation with Spain. When the Spaniards tried to land a vessel in Manzanillo Bay, individuals from the garrison there ordered them to depart. The rebuffed Spanish commander, disgruntled, sent a courier all the way to Port-au-Prince to ask President Geffrard directly for the right to land troops on Haiti’s northern coast, forty miles west of the Dominican border. President Geffrard starkly rejected the officer’s demand, announcing that he “could not permit one soldier to land on Haytian territory.” The Spanish troops were forced to land near the trenches of the embattled town of Puerto Plata instead.<sup>137</sup> Rumors circulated that Geffrard was quietly formulating his own anti-Spanish schemes. Some alleged that he sought a protectorate for the east, administered by a trinational oversight federation of France, England, and Spain. The British consul had rejected it, reports claimed, leaving Geffrard in the uncomfortable position of continued collaboration. “I am trying and will try to avoid provoking any reason for complaint from the Spanish government,” he reportedly explained.<sup>138</sup>

Semicovert Dominican-Haitian military alliances, meanwhile, could not be stanchd. Haitian border officials and Dominican rebels who had gathered in the center-island area collaborated often. General José Maria Cabral was frequently in Las Caobas recruiting rebels of all flags.<sup>139</sup> Popular organizing was obviously gaining strength. In Puerto Plata, an individual named Filormé brought letters from Haiti, spreading word of help that was to come.<sup>140</sup> Domingo Ramírez had a number of rumored allies and friends in his hometown of Neiba, including high officials of relative standing, like General Pedro Nolasco. He counted on local help and even U.S. aid, according to various sources. Letter writers seeking the alliance of Haitian border officials were friendly, affectionate, and insistent. “Dear General and

friend,” one Dominican letter began, at the very outset of the fighting. “Considering our position today, with ten dead, because of the revolution that we have been planning . . . and the promise that you made to our dear General, Don Fernando Valerio (RIP), I find myself in the necessity of seeking your help, for protection by the army under your command, so that we can shake off and throw out from our land the Spanish standard and its armies. . . . Please remember our friend,” the anonymous writer urged.<sup>141</sup> In a related discussion over jurisdiction and territory, the mingling expatriate groups, center-island residents, and rebels reached an agreement about some of the center-island towns, like Hinche, which had grown to be socially Haitian over the years. The new jurisdictions were to be respected, the parties agreed, in any foregoing collaboration. Rebels and local Haitian officers were supportive of these agreements.<sup>142</sup>

In center-island regions, collaboration with the rebellion grew relentlessly. Popular Haitian collaboration intensified after abolition in the United States, the Spanish consul claimed; Spain was now the only imperial slave power that threatened encroachment. Along the border, officials became openly recalcitrant to extradite Dominican rebel leaders and remit them to the Spanish, since the rebels themselves were simply too popular among the Haitian families living there.<sup>143</sup> Eastern rebels must have received the news eagerly. One Dominican loyalist general tried to mobilize the elite anti-Haitian fears of previous decades—warning that “8000 Haitians were ready to disembark” in the east as an invasion—but his tale evidently held so little salience among Dominican audiences that the rumor, for all its popularity in the 1850s, was never repeated again.<sup>144</sup> Rather, the west was a refuge that many used. In a conciliatory measure, the Spanish had to concede and extend amnesty to those residents who chose to remain in Haiti, trying to entice them to return. Cattle trade through San Juan, to Hincha, to Port-au-Prince continued steadily. Hincha was not well watched at all, Spanish authorities fretted.<sup>145</sup>

To the north, meanwhile, citizens of Cap-Haïtien only increased their support for the Dominican rebels. News of their brazen aid arrived second-hand—from a Canary Island resident in La Vega, from Tortuga via Puerto Plata, from observers in the Turks and Caicos, from rumors on the ground in northern Haiti—but it reached Spanish authorities all the same. In Cap, families offered Dominican rebel exiles housing and protection. Whole groups of Dominican exiles—not just prominent military figures but also groups primarily of women and children—arrived, often via other islands, and more convoys were expected.<sup>146</sup> Living in Cap-Haïtien were allies of political and

military prominence like M. Macajauc, Laguerre Bart, Alexandre Pouget, and General Sylvain Salnave, all of whom were close allies with Dominican general Santiago Rodríguez or otherwise offered direct assistance at different junctures. A Saint Thomas man who regularly traveled between Monte Cristi and Cap, Huberto Marzán, sewed the flag that flew in the early battles of 1863.<sup>147</sup> Reports from Haiti claimed that North American ships entered and left Cap-Haïtien daily, secretly disembarking weapons for the opposition.<sup>148</sup> One Dominican living in Cap-Haïtien allegedly had amassed fifteen thousand locally manufactured bullets and was storing some within city limits and some in nearby Limonade.<sup>149</sup> Northern coast sea traffic can only be speculated. A small boat caught off the coast of Puerto Plata carried wheat, rice, rifles, lead, and a Haitian flag.<sup>150</sup> Whole steamships sometimes arrived, too.<sup>151</sup> “Credible sources” suggested that north coast authorities allowed private American ships to dock with weapons and speculated the aid “could not have gone unnoticed” by the American government, either.<sup>152</sup> Nameless runners ferried messages back and forth from Cap-Haïtien, and even neighboring islands, to Santiago.

Trade, and aid, in supplies and weapons flourished in the interior and on the coast. Many Dominicans who had been living in Haiti for years ferried gunpowder back through Neiba and Barahona.<sup>153</sup> Commanders openly sent missions in search of weapons. “Seek them from Haitian lines, but always mindful of the Country,” one exhorted.<sup>154</sup> A supply line thrived at the center of the island; Haitian women sold soap, mackerel, codfish, flour, salt, and other supplies at Monte Cristi, Guayubín, and Hinche, receiving coffee and tobacco in barter.<sup>155</sup> Everyone knew of the Hinche trade, which was infamous.<sup>156</sup> Runners picked up supplies from the frontier and amassed them in Santiago. Mella allegedly gathered and sold ten thousand *serones* of tobacco to Haiti in exchange for war matériel in late 1863.<sup>157</sup> Alfredo Deetjen, born in Cap in 1824, was an important merchant and politician in Santiago de los Caballeros at the moment of annexation, and he immediately supported the creation of the Provisional Government. At the end of the year, he headed back to Cap to negotiate for more munitions. He then traveled to Port-au-Prince in search of a printing press that could spread the Dominican Provisional Government’s missives. Later, ad hoc officials in Santiago used the press to print money.<sup>158</sup> The Provisional Government announced that the Haitian gourde would circulate in 1864; Spanish sources reported that they sought a loan from Geffrard of 1.5 million gourdes, to be distributed evenly in the north, Cibao, and the south, payable at 6 percent annual interest.<sup>159</sup>

President Geffrard's stance of studied neutrality, in the face of overwhelming popular support and Spanish threats, nearly brought his downfall. Spanish authorities observed the disorder with satisfaction, claiming that the president, Minister Philippeau, and other Geffrard allies feared the Dominican rebel movements as much as the Spanish did. Domestic political opponents blended blatant personal ambition with criticism of Geffrard's approach. Soulouque wrote letters from Jamaica excoriating him, as did other political exiles.<sup>160</sup> Prominent families rallied opposition movements in the south in 1862, in Artibonite the next year, and the north coast through much of 1864. One of the political aspirants, Sylvain Salnave, claimed common cause with the Dominican rebel fight. As Geffrard's personal guard pursued him, he fled into Dominican territory and then Saint Thomas.<sup>161</sup> Making a national tour in the spring of 1864, residents in Saint Marc and Gonaïves received the president coldly. "Upon his arrival, doors were closed, no residents came out to see him, and none of the prominent families attended the dance that was held in his honor," an observer alleged. The family of executed general Aimé Legros was particularly upset. Other recent reforms exacerbated the mood. As the report continued, "The rude measures that Authorities have taken to execute the ban of vodou dancing has contributed to the discontent."<sup>162</sup> In the capital, citizens simply matter-of-factly defied Geffrard's prohibitions. Dominicans came into town with large herds—sixty head of cattle, pairs of yoked oxen, and so on—to trade for flour and other nonperishables. They made their sales and were on their way once more, back to Dominican territory.<sup>163</sup>

As Dominican emissaries lobbied hard for a formal alliance, they emphasized popular support, made appeals to Haiti's internationalist leanings, and warned that a prolonged struggle could result in the absorption of Haiti. Spanish occupation "endangers true Haitian independence," one government spokesperson argued, and he warned that a protracted struggle would endanger Haitian sovereignty. Months before Polanco's administration, in a rare moment of discussing race and racism directly in the *Boletín Oficial*, the author made an appeal to Haiti's antiracist platform. "Haiti, more than anyone, must fight to solve the important problem of the equality of races," he began, "Haiti [is] so close to Cuba that it can, with just a small effort, hear the cries [*ayes*] and laments of a numerous portion of humanity that moans under the weight of the chains of slavery." The author praised Haiti, a "people so rightly proud of their own glory." Simultaneously, he warned that Dominican and Cuban independence were vital, or that Haiti would become "the slave of Spain." He suggested a common political platform, arguing for

a treaty of “alliance, peace, commerce, friendship and borders, by which the political future would be assured for all the inhabitants of both parts of the island of Haiti, forever.”<sup>164</sup>

As months passed, the Dominican Provisional Government stepped up its diplomatic efforts directly to the Haitian people. Another author in the *Boletín Oficial*, probably Espailat, wrote “A Word to Dominicans, a Word to Haitians”:

A curious fact, proven by experience, is that the people always march ahead of their Governments. . . . There is not one Dominican who since the first days of the revolution hasn't asked himself a thousand times a day, why the Haitians do not come to help us, given that we do not have enough arms and munitions. . . . And Haitians ask themselves all the time why Dominicans do not call on them. . . . What can possibly explain this extraordinary and unforeseen reason why? It is precisely the Haitian and Dominican Governments, because there is no other way to explain such a ridiculous fact. How can two peoples composed of the same race, the same political interests, ruled by republican institutions, and who have lived together as good friends, look at each other with indifference when one of them is in danger? Is not the downfall of one the downfall of another? Is the danger of this one not the danger of that? In a word, if the Dominican people fall, does that not precipitate the fall of the Haitian Republic? The Haitian people understand that as well as we do. It seems to us that it is past time that both Governments understand . . . and unite to end foreign domination on the island of Haiti.<sup>165</sup>

“We profess the same political principles,” another author insisted. “The elements that compose the Dominican people are identical to those that compose the Haitian people,” he continued. The writer urged all Dominican men, from fifteen to sixty, to vote in the authorization of an island-wide alliance.<sup>166</sup>

Espailat emphasized the popularity of the anticolonial fight and the solidarity—political and racial—that existed between Haitians and Dominicans. Support for the rebellion, he argued, amounted to a “universal sympathy” that the state could not possibly ignore. He continued: “These truths are too clear. They are within the grasp that even the most humble of Haitian society, without needing explanation. . . . Now think: ask any citizen of Haiti, any one at all, if the Government should help the Dominicans, and they will not hesitate to answer affirmatively. Is it that their logic

has more common sense than the reasoning of a man of State?" His tone was frustrated, exasperated even. "What do you hope to see?" he queried, continuing, "It is a glorious struggle, how long will you remain indifferent?" "Your Excellency's co-citizens are not bothering to hide their sympathies," he reiterated. "Your neutrality is against healthy politics, natural rights, even common sense . . . It is false, illogical and absurd," he pleaded.<sup>167</sup> "You will excuse me when I confirm that Your Excellency's Government has caused this revolution, given that, if it did not, it should have," he wrote, arguing that the fighting was "a necessity not only for the redemption of the Dominican people, but for the rest of the Spanish colonies, and especially for the future of Haiti. . . . Your Excellency's co-citizens are not bothering to hide their sympathies to a cause that has come to be, in a manner of saying, the most natural bond that could possibly exist." Haitians and Dominicans were "united together by the tightest friendship between two neighboring peoples, who for common political and racial reasons, have been born to be brothers," he concluded.<sup>168</sup>

By the summer of 1864, members of the Provisional Government proposed an outright federation. Their letter to President Geffrard that June reiterated the suggestion of a treaty of goodwill, and it included a plan for political integration of the two states. Writing to the "good patriots" of the west, the rebels announced: "Even though the Dominican people have always been very protective of their Independence and their autonomy, and they remain so today, we do not fear establishing, starting now, the basis for a treaty of Federation. We are convinced that the precious gift of our sacred natural rights as free and independent people, rather than be ill-treated, will be secured, for now and for the future. For her part, Haiti should see the step as a means to protect her political existence, against any future compromise."<sup>169</sup> Members of Santiago's Provisional Government personally escorted the missive to Port-au-Prince.

This very same revolutionary energy—and some of the very same actors—sparked a rebellious movement in the north of the island. North coast federation plans were nothing new—they circulated in 1843, for example—but they had never gained much traction. As early as spring 1863, rumors flew that the same north coast Haitian allies who were supporting the Capotillo fight were also hoping to expel Geffrard at the same time, seeking "revolution in both countries."<sup>170</sup> Haitian authorities complained that Dominican agents in Cap-Haïtien were "sowing discord and spreading insults about President Geffrard, accusing him of *españolismo* and suggesting



the benefits to the people of the North if they were to separate and unite with Santo Domingo.”<sup>171</sup> Dominican rebels planned to collaborate with General Ogé Longuefosse. The conspiracy “was very far along, and Dominican insurrectionists were mixed up in it,” the Spanish consul reported from Port-au-Prince. The consul summarized their common objective succinctly: “to make Geffrard fall, separate out the north [of Haiti] again, and unite it with the . . . Dominican insurrection.”<sup>172</sup> General Longuefosse mobilized with three hundred men. Haitian authorities pursued him with a steamship and infantry.<sup>173</sup> Dominican captain Pablo Isidor was captured and arrested with Longuefosse after an attempt on the life of Geffrard’s secretary of state and minister of war, General Philippeau. The National Guard managed to crush the budding conspiracy, but stemming ongoing opposition proved more difficult. Philippeau had two thousand men on high alert, and as many as four thousand were on call. Despite these tensions, the popularity in Haiti for collaboration with the Dominicans continued to grow.<sup>174</sup>

News of this revolutionary scheme almost certainly influenced Haitian officials’ response to Dominican Provisional Government entreaties. Geffrard’s minister of foreign affairs, Auguste Elie, firmly rejected treaty and federation plans, expelling the Dominican emissaries. “This response that you are receiving is more of a general statement than personal communication,” he told them, disdainfully. “I will not mention or even try to verify if the names of your signatories, . . . you are mere inhabitants of the Spanish province, absent of any title.”<sup>175</sup> “You understand very well, sirs, that I do not recognize in you, collectively nor individually, any political rank or legitimate authority, and that we cannot accept any proposition of yours of this or any other sort,” he continued.

According to you, the two peoples occupy two territories that in another time were just one State. Well, which brother separated from which? According to you, the two peoples are of one same race, that is also true, but which brother has looked down on the other? According to you, both peoples are motivated by sentiments of love of liberty and independence, also true, but which of the two has forfeited them? According to you, they profess the same political principles, this is also true, but which of the two has trod on them? They have, you say, the same social ideas, the same customs, the same character—look at History. Is it true, as you claim, that our interests now and in the future are identical? That is also false. The Dominican people are asking Spain again for their independence, and the Haitian people have nothing to ask.

He went on:

Is it true, as you claim, that Haiti will secure her political future through the consolidation of this alliance, lending a hand to the Dominican insurrection? No, a thousand times no. That is also an error! Haiti is, today, a republican government freely governed by a wise, educated, and popularly elected Leader. It has never blossomed more and it does not seek anything more than to develop this nascent prosperity through order and tranquility, respecting the rights of other nations and ready to defend its own. The Government of President Geffrard seeks nothing other than to consolidate Haiti's political existence. . . . There is no one in Haiti who does not continue to feel sympathy for the Dominican people, no one who does not admire their courage and lament their misfortunes. The Government of Haiti shares those popular sentiments, but it cannot forget the duties it must perform and the sacred interests it must protect.

"In light of the current state of friendly relations between the Government of Her Majesty the Queen of Spain and the Republic of Haiti, relations whose preservation is necessary for the tranquility of this country, the Haitian Government cannot recognize any other legitimate authority in the east than that of Her Majesty," the minister wrote. Plainly, "You are trying to drag us into the danger in which you find yourselves, and that has always been a bad way to escape danger." Rather, the Haitian government would continue "strict neutrality . . . moderate and impartial conduct," the rejection letter concluded. Furthermore, Elie copied the entire exchange to the Spanish consul in Port-au-Prince, the ministry of war in Madrid, the governor of Cuba, and the governor of Santo Domingo. "He turns his back more every day, continuing in his neutrality policy that so disgusts the ungrateful Dominicans," a Spanish dispatch claimed gleefully.<sup>176</sup>

Despite Elie's pronouncement, Geffrard slowly increased his diplomatic involvement in the conflict. General de la Gándara met with him several times. After a long meeting outside of Port-au-Prince late in 1864, both parties agreed Haitian mediation was necessary. "His most ardent desire is that we abandon Santo Domingo, and he will help us in every way . . . to find an acceptable solution," de la Gándara observed.<sup>177</sup> Geffrard dispatched two emissaries to Dominican territory to discuss prisoner exchange and other terms of negotiated withdrawal. His public instructions to them were frank and conciliatory, and he lamented the bloodletting. "I would call this paricide," he remarked.<sup>178</sup> The two delegates embarked on a familiar cross-island itinerary: travel by small boat to a town on the northern coast, then

overland travel to Dajabón. A Dominican general traveled from Santiago to receive them with a short note, in French, greeting the “citizen” emissaries. Colonel Ernest Roumain marveled at his welcome. “Impossible to tell you the friendly reception that was made for us,” he wrote. “Our entry into Dajabón was practically an ovation.”<sup>179</sup> Young men of Santiago organized a ball for them on their arrival, he continued, which took place “practically under Spanish bullets.”<sup>180</sup> Santiago, he noted sadly, was “a heap of ruins and rubble.”<sup>181</sup>

In war-torn Santiago, Polanco’s officials met with the Haitian diplomatic envoy for nearly a month. The idealism of the revolutionary Dominican administration was on full display. During a dinner one evening, Dominican officials delivered a number of toasts: to the heroes of the Haitian Revolution, to President Geffrard, and to achieving peace. One official toasted to “social and political solidarity” that ought to reign between Dominican Republic and Haiti. Another brought up hemispheric battles over emancipation. “It is an affront to humanity that the abominable institution of civil slavery still subsists,” exhorted a general, commenting on the U.S. Civil War. “I toast, therefore, to the absolute freedom of man in all the universe, and that American democracy totally uproots slavery from its breast.” A priest toasted, in French, for democratic governments. A civilian toasted to the Haitian and Dominican flags “casting friendly shadows on each other, that their friendship be strong enough to defend their rights from all foreign powers who sought to uproot them.”<sup>182</sup> Time passed as the delegation sent letters back to Port-au-Prince and awaited reply. Dominican authorities wanted to remove noxious Spanish terms from the negotiations and to modify the language of their appeal to the Crown; Geffrard, toeing de la Gándara’s line, insisted on the original language and terms of the Spanish proposal.<sup>183</sup> In Santiago, delegates grew close as weeks passed, signing off on affectionate letters, “à vous de cœur, votre ami de cœur.”<sup>184</sup> At the end of the delegation, Dominican officials refused many of de la Gándara’s and Geffrard’s proposals, but they praised the president for his efforts “for the cause of humanity,” and negotiations about prisoner exchange began in earnest.<sup>185</sup>

### Revolutionary Fever

In retrospect, many combatants considered December 1864 to be the end of the war and the beginning of an extensive diplomatic process of Spanish extrication. There was no revelry. “The country was half-dead, had exhausted its resources, only revolutionary fever sustained it,” Rodríguez Objío wrote.<sup>186</sup> “Traitorous plants are blooming,” Luperón warned Restoration soldiers,

balefully, in late winter.<sup>187</sup> Polanco's administration lasted only ninety-eight days. His powerful opponents, who included landowners and prominent urban families of the Cibao, sought to take back the political scene from the first moments he took power. In late January 1865, they mobilized, eager for the democratic phase of the fighting to end. An armed group arrested every member of Polanco's government and put them in shackles. "No personal interest, no unworthy motive has dictated our conduct," the usurping leaders promised the public.<sup>188</sup> Before even naming a president, the group modified or abrogated almost every Polanco statute. They pursued Polanco supporters returning from Spanish prisons.<sup>189</sup> They scattered his ministers to different corners of the territory. Espaillat they sent all the way to Samaná.<sup>190</sup> They reinstated the 1858 Moca Constitution for a time, easily drafting a new one within the month. They tried Polanco for Salcedo's murder before an Executive Commission, found him guilty, and sentenced him to death. A new president, Pedro Antonio Pimentel, pursued Polanco's supporters as well. He called Polanco and his ilk, common men who had gained power, "engrandecidos."<sup>191</sup> Outgoing missives returned to a republican script. It is a revolution "purely of principles and not of race, as some have tried to claim," a new high cabinet member later insisted. Furthermore, in the wake of radicalism, he observed, "the regularization of the war was a necessity everywhere."<sup>192</sup>

As 1865 dawned, however, the energy of alliances, optimism, and political ferment was high. The Haitian emissary, Captain Roumain, could not refrain from marveling at the sentiment of everyone he encountered between the Cibao capital and the center of the island. "We are truly stunned by it," he effused. "These sirs, whose town offers even a more wrenching portrayal of the calamities which have desolated them, do not content themselves with lodging us and feeding us at their own expense, but they overwhelm us every day with obliging offers of all kinds." Reflecting on his experience, he promised, "We will keep the memory of the kind attention of which we have been the object for a long time."<sup>193</sup> Meanwhile, extraofficial collaborations burgeoned, too. So intense were the military schemes on the northern coast that some observers suspected another rebel federation might form. Observers reported new conspiracies. A Spanish report from Monte Cristi in the first month of 1865 warned that "the prolongation of the war is beginning to give the result that Dominicans and Haitians seek to unite and form an independent Republic."<sup>194</sup> Meanwhile, dramatically, Polanco escaped his captors and headed north, where the ferment was. In a small town on the northern coast, about a third of the way from Puerto Plata toward Haiti, he

raised a special banner that depicted the Haitian and Dominican flags, intertwined. Apparently the flag was in use as far south as Moca.<sup>195</sup> The new Santiago administration pursued him immediately. “Residents of Santiago: the rebellion caused by the naive General Gaspar Polanco has been happily crushed,” new officials insisted. “Calm your spirits and return to your laborious life.”<sup>196</sup> But repression was not so easy. Polanco slipped into the west, and the fighting continued.