

THE CARTA DE JAMAICA 1815. SIMÓN BOLÍVAR AND THE FATE OF INDEPENDENCIA AS REVOLUTION IN SPANISH AMERICA

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Abolition of slavery was the key to
Spanish American Independence.¹

The goal of life of Simon Bolivar
was glory.²

¹ Hugh THOMAS, *The Slave Trade. The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440 - 1870*, London, Picador, 1997, p.576. Slavery and the slave trade were really the keys to social revolution in Spanish America as well. The problem is that there was abolition of the slave trade, but only unfinished abolitions of slavery in the Independencia of „Gran Colombia“ e.g. Colombia and Venezuela; see: Manuel CHUST, “De esclavos, encomenderos y mitayos. El anticolonialismo en las Cortes de Cádiz”, *Mexican Studies/ Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 11/2 (Summer 1995), pp.179-202; and Manuel CHUST and Ivana FRASQUET, *Tiempos de revolución. Comprender las independencias iberoamericanas*, Madrid, Fundación MAPFRE/Santillana Ediciones, 2013; for the role of blacks in the independence of Mexico see Ted VINCENT, “The Blacks Who Freed Mexico”, *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. LXXXIX/ 3 (summer 1994), pp.257-276. I would like to thank David C. Carlson, N/A Bexar County Spanish Archives (USA) for the improvement of the translation.

In September 1815 Simón Bolívar has written the famous *Carta de Jamaica*. Two hundred years later, in 2015 should take place, I believe in June, in Kingston, a congress at the 200th anniversary of the Carta de Jamaica. I have written the text for this congress. Unfortunately, it did not take place. To the congress which was held in September, 2015 in Havana at the 200th anniversary I could not go. Thus I will publish the paper here. It has been written directly by me into English.

² Richard W. SLATTA, *Simón Bolívar's Quest for Glory*, College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2003.

Simón Bolívar arrived in Kingston, Jamaica in May 1815. He resided at 33 Princess Street in downtown Kingston after an assassination attempt in the guesthouse of Rafael Pisce at the corner of Prince and White streets.³ In the British colony, Bolívar asked for military, political and financial support from the British.⁴ He devoted his stay also to the analysis of the *experiencia independencia* which he had led in central Venezuela since 1813⁵, grew out of a theoretical justification of Creole hegemony and a more concrete objective for the continental revolution in programmatically-visionary form. The famous *Carta de Jamaica*, together with the *Discurso de Angostura* (1819),

³ Paul VERNA, *Bolívar y los emigrados patriotas en el Caribe (Trinidad, Curazao, San Thomas, Jamaica, Haití)*, Caracas, Edición Instituto Nacional de Cooperación Educativa [INCE], 1983; Tomás POLANCO ALCANTARA, *Simón Bolívar: Ensayo de interpretación biográfica a través de sus documentos*, Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1994, p.505; Paul VERNA, *Petión y Bolívar: una etapa decisiva en la emancipación de Hispanoamérica, 1790-1830*, Caracas, Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1980., p.131; and Paul VERNA, *Robert Sutherland: un amigo de Bolívar en Haití: contribución al estudio de los destierros del Libertador en Haití, y de sus expediciones de Los Cayos y de Jacmel*, Caracas, Ed. Fundación John Boulton, 1966.

⁴ “Carta de Bolívar a Ricardo Wellesley, fechado en Kingston el 27 de mayo de 1815, por la que solicita el auxilio de Inglaterra para la Independencia”, in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, 27 vols., Caracas, Cuatrocentenario de la Ciudad de Caracas, 1964-1975, (vols. XVIII-XXXIII, 2004-2010), vol. VIII (1972), pp.10-13 (Doc. 1293); “Comunicación de Bolívar fechada en Kingston el 29 de Mayo de 1815 dirigida al Duque de Manchester, Capitán general y gobernador de la Isla de Jamaica, solicitándole audiencia e indicándole el propósito de partir para Inglaterra” in *ibid.*, pp.14-15; see also Joselyn M. ALMEIDA, “London-Kingston-Caracas: The Transatlantic Self-Fashioning of Simón Bolívar” in *Romantic Circles* (http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/sullenfires/almeida/almeida_essay.html#9 [May 16, 2015]. The text of the present article is partly my translation from an unpublished text entitled Michael ZEUSKE, *Die Unabhängigkeitsrevolutionen Spanisch-Amerikas und die Entstehung der Nationalstaaten 1800-1900. Das nördliche Südamerika (Neu-Granada/Kolumbien, Venezuela und Kuba)* (forthcoming); see also Michael ZEUSKE, *Von Bolívar zu Chávez. Die Geschichte Venezuelas*, Zürich, Rotpunktverlag, 2008; Michael ZEUSKE, *Simón Bolívar. History and Myth*, Princeton, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2012.

⁵ First of all, for the so-called *guerra a muerte* (“war to the death”), see “Artículo de Bolívar fechado en Kingston el 15 de agosto de 1815 dirigido al editor de The Royal Gazette sobre los sucesos de la lucha por la independencia”, in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.54-58 (English translation, *ibid.*, pp.59-68); see also Karen RACINE, “Message by Massacre: Venezuela’s War to the Death, 1810-1814”, *Journal of Genocide Studies*, 15/2 (May 2013), pp.201-217, and Manuel HERNANDEZ CONZALEZ, *La guerra a muerte. Bolívar y la campaña admirable (1813-1814)*, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Ediciones IDEA, 2014.

form the genuine text of the heroic illusion in the *independencia*.⁶ At the same time, the letter is a turning point for Bolívar's separation from the traditional Creole concept of military rebellion.

Bolívar revealed in his letters written during his time in exile in Kingston his personal motives, in addition to the salient drives of his character: what led him to continue fighting for independence. They must be taken with a grain of salt, however, for they were intended for the complete Creole leadership (that means *criollo español (blanco)*) group: "Our enemies have us put before the terrible alternative in Mexico as in Venezuela to fight for life or to lose it on the scaffold".⁷ A radicalized group, which numbered less than 200 young men of the Creole elite and some groups of radical liberals as well as well as adventurers/corsairs (including Luis Aury, Louis Brion, Renato Beluche, McGregor, Ducoudray-Holstein, radical Spaniards, and others like the Pole Felipe Mauricio Martín (Filip Maurycy Marcinkowski) supported the idea of independence at all costs, mostly connected to the strict desire to

⁶ The most detailed study of the Carta de Jamaica is "El Libertador escribe en Kingston el 6 de septiembre de 1815 la profética Carta de Jamaica dirigida a Henry Cullen sobre la emancipación americana" (Doc. 1302), in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.74-248 (Contestación de un Americano a un caballero de esta isla, Kingston, 6 de septiembre de 1815, in *ibid.*, pp.222-248; see first version in Spanish: <http://uniondelsur.menpet.gob.ve/interface.sp/database/fichero/free/27/1.PDF> (May 15th, 2015); see: Michael ZEUSKE, "Regiones, espacios y hinterland en la independencia. Lo regional en la política de Simón Bolívar", in Germán Cardozo Galué and Arlene Urdaneta Q. (comps.), *Colectivos sociales y participación popular en la Independencia Hispanoamericana*, Maracaibo, Universidad del Zulia/El Colegio de Michoacán/Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2005, pp.147-162; Michael ZEUSKE, "Historia social precedente, historicismo marxista y el carácter de ciclo de las revoluciones. La obra de Manfred Kossok", in Lluís ROURA and Manuel CHUST (eds.), *La ilusión heroica. Colonialismo, revolución, independencias en la obra de Manfred Kossok*, Castelló, Universitat Jaume I, 2010, pp.63-97; Michael ZEUSKE, "Una revolución con esclavos y con Bolívar. Un ensayo de interpretación", *Memorias. Revista Digital de Historia y Arqueología desde el Caribe*, vol. 8/14 (June 2011), pp.5-47 (<http://rcientificas.uninorte.edu.co/index.php/memorias/article/view/2006/1288>); Michael ZEUSKE, "The French Revolution in Spanish-America with some thoughts about Manfred Kossok as Marxist Historian of 'bourgeois revolutions'" (forthcoming in *Review*, Binghamton). Regarding the *Discurso de Angostura*, held at the opening of the constitutional congress 1819 in Angostura (now Ciudad Bolívar) see Simón Bolívar, "Discurso pronunciado por el Libertador ante el Congreso de Angostura el 15 de febrero de 1819, día de su instalación" (Doc. 83), in Vicente LECUONA (comp.), *Proclamas y discursos del Libertador, 1811-1830*, Los Teques, Biblioteca de autores y temas mirandinos/ Homenaje al bicentenario del Libertador Simón Bolívar, 1983, pp.202-235; see also "Discurso del Libertador ante el segundo congreso de Venezuela" (Doc. 3589) in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. XV (1982), pp.1-415 (Transcripción del manuscrito original (Versión Hamilton) in *ibid.*, pp.5-36; El texto en inglés in *ibid.*, pp.147-179).

⁷ "Contestación de un Americano a un caballero de esta isla, Kingston, 6 de septiembre de 1815", in *ibid.*, pp.222-248, here p.222.

win militarily.⁸ These groups formed a blocking minority of the revolution. A strategic orientation for a social revolution was much needed.

In the *Letter from Jamaica* Bolívar started from the ideology of his class, that of the trade and mercantile-reliant oligarchical group of urban-based, wealthy *mantuano* families. But Bolívar was giving it a continental form. He formulated the hegemony of the Creole oligarchies claim of the political movement called *independencia* (undeliberate against this class). Bolívar stressed the need for a centrally run continental revolution and the impossibility of a continental state, whether Republic or Monarchy. He marked off his differences of action against the ideal ideas of Miranda (a continental state⁹) and other abstract models.

Bolívar had understood that the future social and political organization had to be based on national foundations and republicanism.¹⁰ As a diffuse national ideology, he presented continentalism as the most important political proposal in the fight against the (theoretically) centralized colonial power and the spiritual foundation for a possible new position in the sub-continent (that of an Spanish American continental federation). For the future political organization of nations, Bolívar designed Constitutional models that were similar to the British, but retained the shape of the Republic. The various aspects of his political and institutional program Bolívar hoped later to combine in an overarching „continental“ federalism to steer the divergent individual interests of the new States with their oligarquic elites by a Continental Congress. The constitutional illusion he attacked ahead of his time reflected the eye-catching peculiarities of *independencia* and responded to the demands Creole ideologues and politicians. Here Bolívar was in continuity with Creole variants of liberal epoch debates in the Age of Revolutions, 1776-1848.

⁸ Tulio ARENDS, *Sir Gregor Mac Gregor. Un escocés tras la aventura de América*, Caracas, Monte Avila Editores, 1991; Matthew BROWN, "Inca, Sailor, Soldier, King: Gregor MacGregor and the Early Nineteenth-Century Caribbean", *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol.24/1 (2005), pp.44-70; Ursula ACOSTA, "Ducoudray Holstein: Hombre al margen de la historia", *Revista de Historia*, vol.II 2, San Juan de Puerto Rico (1985), pp.63-89; Guillermo A. BARALT, "Ducoudray Holstein y la Noche de San Miguel", in Baralt, *Esclavos rebeldes: Conspiraciones y sublevaciones de esclavos en Puerto Rico (1795-1873)*, Río Piedras, Ediciones Huracán, 1985, pp.47-49; Teresa SONTA-JAROSZEWICZ, "Militares polacos al servicio de Miranda y Bolívar en la guerra de Independencia", *Tiempos de América. Revista de Historia, Cultura y Territorio*, 16 (2009), pp.25-38. For the background: Edgardo PEREZ MORALES, *El gran Diablo hecho barco. Corsarios, esclavos y revolución en Cartagena y el Gran Caribe*, Bucaramanga, Universidad Industrial de Santander, 2012; William C. DAVIS, *The Pirates Lafitte: The Treacherous World of the Corsairs of the Gulf*, Orlando, Harcourt Books, 2013.

⁹ Michael ZEUSKE (ed.), *Francisco de Miranda y la modernidad en América*, Madrid, Fundación Mapfre Tavera, 2004.

¹⁰ James SANDERS, "Atlantic Republicanism in Nineteenth-Century Colombia: Spanish America's Challenge to the Contours of Atlantic History", *Journal of World History*, 20 (March 2009), pp.131-150.

Bolívar differed from the bulk of liberal debates henceforth in clear recognition of the need for a social revolution, as base of the republican rupture with the Bourbon Crown and the need for strict centralization of leadership – that what Clément Thibaud calls “césarismo”.¹¹ Therefore, the terms „América” and „Unidad” (unity) formed the core of the programmatic self-understanding of Bolívar. This resulted in even the transitory moment of a deeper social revolution (abolition of slavery and an attack on *latifundista* ownership¹²) in the *Carta de Jamaica*. Bolívar, seized under the “Americans” (*americanos*)¹³ for the first time not only Creole, or white men. ### He wrote, pointing to the inaccuracy of official statistics, that “the majority of residents have rural and often wandering apartments (*errantes*). There are farmers, herders, nomads, lost [and] surrounded by dense and immense forests, and between lakes and abundant streams isolated by lonely levels ... Then there are the tributes paid by the natives, the penalties for the slaves; the taxes, tithes ~~and taxes~~ that weigh on the peasants and the other misfortunes that removes the poor Americans from their homes”.¹⁴ With the latter, he addressed also the problem of runaway slaves and *llaneros* (*cimarrones*), the “cowboys” of the Southern Venezuelan plains (who had sided with royalists, initially).

Also Bolívar pointed out that the lack of a “legitimate, just and liberal government” and “anarchy” (*i.e.* subaltern people’s movements, like *pardos*, *canarios* [*isleños*], poor whites, *llaneros*, slaves) had plunged the first republic in Venezuela (1811-1812 and 1813-1814) into a “chaos of revolution”. For Bolívar these attempts had been marked by a lack of government experience by the Creoles. Chaos and revolution, however, Bolívar understood now as offering opportunity. A change in the conceptualization of the term “revolution” is clear. This is the Archimedean point of the *Carta de Jamaica*.

As the most important issue of practical politics, that is, especially the acceptance of Creole hegemony, Bolívar analyzes the relationship between religion and enthusiasm for the revolution. Both were phenomena that affected the thinking and mentality, education and socialization of the wider masses. It also played a pivotal role in Bolívar’s search for genuinely

¹¹ Clément THIBAUD, *Repúblicas en armas: los ejércitos bolivarianos en la Guerra de Independencia en Colombia y Venezuela*, Bogotá/Lima, Planeta/ Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 2003.

¹² See “The Slave Hinterlands of South America”, in Jeremy AADELMAN, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*, Princeton/ Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2006, pp.58-64.

¹³ “Contestación de un Americano a un caballero de esta isla, Kingston, 6 de septiembre de 1815”, in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.222-248, here p.230 and p.231 (*pobres americanos* – poor Americans).

¹⁴ “Contestación de un Americano a un caballero de esta isla, Kingston, 6 de septiembre de 1815”, in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.222-248, here p.231.

American traditions. The main importance had for him the problem of the “zeal” of larger no-Creole populations for a movement led by the patriotic elite. For this purpose, he wrote: “Fortunately, the leaders of the Independence of Mexico have made with the best skill fanaticism’s advantage by having declared the famous Virgin of Guadalupe the Queen of the Patriots [and] they invoked her in all difficult cases and on their flags. Thus, the political enthusiasm has made the religion a powerful mix that has spawned a vehement zeal for the holy cause of liberty”.¹⁵ It is clear that Bolívar was looking for political and ideological means to mobilize the masses, which distrusted the Creole oligarchies as direct oppressors. Despite misperceptions of the situation in Mexico, and in spite of at least socially wrongly equating the leadership there with that of Venezuela, this problem had the highest importance for the future of the *independencia* as revolution. Despite his elitist enlightenment education, Bolívar followed up on the thoughts given of the lower classes of Venezuelan people. He sought ways to make this highly emotionally charged thinking about the enthusiasm for the revolution politically and militarily usable. He even went a step further when he realized that this popular enthusiasm could only be implemented through symbols rooted in the traditions, religiosity and culture of the mostly mixed-race and Indian peasant masses. With his study of the figure of Quetzalcoatl he roamed even the extremely difficult problem of syncretism. Bolívar did not return to these problem areas later. For a white Creole revolutionary group in the epoch of liberal bourgeois revolutions, the chasms that opened with such a view were too big.¹⁶ In addition, knowledge about the real backgrounds vast, which was also shown insofar that Bolívar drew only the syncretism of Mexican civilization into consideration (and not the Venezuelan). In terms of the Creole hegemony the significance of passages of the *Carta de Jamaica* (empathy with slaves and other subalterns, the “zeal” of the masses) results from the problem “how to get the masses of colonial oppressed people under Creole leadership”.

It is significant that the *Carta de Jamaica* was not printed until 1818, and first, it seems, only in English.¹⁷ Few knew the Spanish handwritten text. Therefore, the letter is an expression of the search and the self-understanding of Bolívar, as well as his self-fashioning as continental leader, a kind of inner

¹⁵ „Contestación de un Americano a un caballero de esta isla, Kingston, 6 de septiembre de 1815” in: Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp. 222-248, here p. 247.

¹⁶ Rebecca EARLE, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810–1930*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007.

¹⁷ “La traducción al inglés”, in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp. 85-93.

program that spread in its basic elements as a Creole project of continental America's freedom only in the following years in the patriotic camp. Theoretical *hegemonization* of the anti-colonial popular movements and the formation of patriot military leaders after this project proved henceforth a firm bond.

The major "inner" social and political problem for Bolívar was the position of equality in his concept of "América". On this subject Bolívar touched at the same time questions regarding the social status of free people of color, the Indians; he devoted himself to slavery, to owner-slave relations and aspects of the agrarian question. As put forth in the corollary letters around the Carta de Jamaica, simply by selecting the issues they address, and partly an apology for the attitude of the oligarchy, partly a threat of the political consequences of a radicalized or even altered concept of equality and revolution represents.

Bolívar dealt with the difficult political balance in conditions of freedom that there had been, in his opinion, in all the previous republics of history. He moved towards all issues from the standpoint of policy. The form of Republic was an absolute limit for him.¹⁸ In this respect, he was in the liberal Enlightenment tradition of looking for the "best government". The specific conditions of a plantation-slavery society led him to analyze up to the realization that it was not only different climatic, geographical and regional reasons, "fanaticism" and "outdated opinions" that controlled the political behavior of people as proclaimed the great social theories of his time. In addition, the real social, economic and cultural problems of slavery were important for his policy. Therefore, they had to be held accountable for their own actions into the equation. In a future society, education and formation should ensure equality among men. However, in those Jamaican days of 1815 Bolívar mainly focused on practical and pragmatic issues and the problem of legitimacy. For this purpose, he designed a view of history at large in a "master narrative". Inclusive of a politically useful history in times of crisis and revolution became apparent. The colonial history offered for him the image of a tercentenary ignorance and weakness. Bolívar always repeated that Spain had kept *América* for three hundred years in passivity.

A further consideration is that no foreign power helped the South Americans, as was the nascent United States helped by direct French and Spanish intervention. Britain itself did not use the favorable opportunity to take revenge on Spain in South America for the shame of defeat in 1783. The Duke of Wellington, who was once destined to command an expedition to liberate America, on the contrary led the Luso-British armies and Spaniards in open battles against the French in the Peninsular War.

¹⁸ Joshua SIMON, "Simon Bolivar's Republican Imperialism: Another Ideology of American Independence", *History of Political Thought*, vol. 33/2 (2012), pp.280-304.

Nevertheless, even worse consequences would have - after Bolívar - the missing material supports of the British. In his view, very logical, he therefore concluded also that the cruelty of the fight between 1812/1815 (e.g. the War to the Death) arose from this weakness stemming from the colonial relationship. First, because the Patriots in their weakness could not prevent the cruelty of their "Spanish" opponents. That's why they had to resort to the same means in order to survive at all. The mechanisms of a Revolutionary War were clear. Actual weakness also contributed to a lack of enforcement power of the central leadership, to split and continued breakdown of the patriotic movement. The splitted units were local military chiefs, divided into as many parts as their number amounts. Thus, Bolívar described further structuring elements of *independencia* – the fragmentation and *caudillismo*.

Despite this list of weaknesses of the patriotic movement, Bolívar deceived at this time significantly more than the revolutionary will of its class of oligarchic urban elites, at the same time he valued the possibilities of success for Pablo Morillo. The illusion to be able to ally the masses to the Creole leadership formed one of the main drives for Bolívar's activities.

The *Carta de Jamaica* is the centerpiece of a corollary of most important letters and texts written by the *Libertador* in Kingston. The self-understanding of a slaveholder (Bolívar was, like all members of the Creole oligarchy, particularly the *mantuanos*, a slaveholder, we never should forget this) in relation to slaves and slavery, as well as the desperate effort for British support expressed in two more letters of Bolívar, that saw the light of day in Kingston in 1815.

For the first time in Bolívar's writings had such clarity appeared about the social and economic problems of slavery and a plantation economy. Still in keeping with the romantic clichés of his time, but with a significantly higher level of reality and reflection than in previous letters or manifestos. The problem reads, as announced by a little notice to Louis Brion, who by that time was in southern Haiti: "Yo mismo no voy a esa isla [*Haiti* – MZ], porque no quiero perder la confianza que hacen de mí estos señores, pues ..., las manías aristocráticas son terribles [I will not go myself to this island [*Haiti* – MZ], because I do not want to lose the confidence that these gentlemen do of have in me, since ..., the aristocratic manias are terrible]".¹⁹

¹⁹ "Carta de Bolívar fechada en Kingston el 16 de julio de 1815, dirigida a Luis Brion" (Doc. 1298), in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.54-58 (English translation, *ibid.*, pp.48-50, here p.50); see the careful reconstruction of Southern Haiti as Caribbean portal of revolution and migrations: Sibylle FISCHER, "Bolívar in Haiti: Republicanism in the Revolutionary Atlantic", in Carla CALARGE, Raphael DALLEO, Luis DUNO-GOTTBERG and Clevis HEADLEY (eds.), *Haiti and the Americas*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2013, pp.25-53.

These other, very, very important writings not half as often cited as the *Carta de Jamaica*, but also written in Kingston in September of 1815, perhaps after all efforts failed to secure support from the British, addressed clearly the fundamental problem of internal equality, “the difference of castes constituting the population of this immense country”.²⁰ Bolívar signed as “El Americano” and gives an explanation about the “manías aristocráticas” [aristocratic manias – that means the relationship owner-slaves and the *mentalité* of the owners]²¹ of himself and the other Creole slave owners of the Caribbean. He speaks openly about the “experiencia que nos ha suministrado el curso de nuestra revolución [the experience which has provided us the curse of our revolution]”²² Bolívar explained in detail what for him at this time formed the core of the living conditions of the “pobres americanos [poor Americans]” which he had portrayed in the *Carta de Jamaica*.²³ It came to the peculiar phenomenon that Bolívar, where he directly contemplated the slave and Indian problem, was drawing on the idyllic language arrangements of liberal enlightenment, using at the same time arguments of Catholic Spanish social theory. Bolívar as a slaveholder himself justified bonded labor in Spanish America as a paternalistic, and therefore “mild” slavery. At the same time, Bolívar made it abundantly clear that never could the superiority of the Creoles and their leadership be up for grabs or even held in question. Here lay his upper class, patrician “blind spot” from the perspective of the higher-born Spanish-American Creoles.

The Creole patriot wrote,

From fifteen or twenty millions of inhabitants who are scattered all over this great continent of indigenous, African, Spanish nation and mixed races, it is certain that the smaller portion is formed by whites; it is also certain that the intellectual qualities they [the whites] possesses give it a relative equality, and an influence.²⁴

²⁰ “Artículo del Libertador escrito en Kingston después del 28 de Septiembre de 1815, dirigido al redactor o editor de The Royal Gazette de Jamaica” (Doc. 1304), in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.262-271, here p.262.

²¹ “Carta de Bolívar fechada en Kingston el 16 de julio de 1815, dirigida a Luis Brion” (Doc. 1298), in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.54-58 (English translation, *ibid.*, pp.48-50, here p.50).

²² “Artículo del Libertador escrito en Kingston después del 28 de Septiembre de 1815, dirigido al redactor o editor de The Royal Gazette de Jamaica” (Doc. 1304), in Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.262-271, here p.262.

²³ Sociedad Bolivariana de Venezuela, *Escritos del Libertador*, vol. VIII (1972), pp.222-248, here p.231.

²⁴ “Artículo del Libertador escrito en Kingston después del 28 de Septiembre de 1815, dirigido al redactor o editor de The Royal Gazette de Jamaica” (Doc. 1304), *ibid.*, pp.262-271, here p.262.

All this he held, exercised a positive effect on the harmony and unity between the people, in spite of the numerical disproportion between one color—the Creole European-descendant or “white” and the other, or mixed-race, African descended and Indian inhabitants. A reader is almost convinced in this letter, to believe in sarcasm, or even cynicism, or to a kind of moral mirror for his Creole friends as well as other slaveholders, when Bolívar wrote:

El colono español no oprime a su doméstico [*his house-slave* - MZ] con trabajos excesivos; lo educa en los principios de moral y de humanidad que prescribe la religión de Jesús. Como su dulzura es ilimitada, la ejerce en toda su extensión con aquella benevolencia que inspira una comunicación familiar. El no está aguijoneado por los estímulos de la avaricia, ni por la necesidad, que producen la ferocidad de carácter, y la rigidez de principios, tan contrarios a la humanidad

[The Spanish colonist does not oppress his domestic [*His house-slave* - MZ] with excessive work; he educates him on the principles of morality and humanity prescribed by the religion of Jesus. As his sweetness is unlimited, exercised in its entirety with that kindness that inspires a family communication. He is not spurred by the stimulus of greed, not by necessity, producing the ferocity of character and the rigidity of principles, as opposed to humanity].²⁵

The latter bad properties Bolívar imputed to Protestant, that is, North American, English, Dutch and Huguenot slaveholders. He continued: “The Indians admired the Spaniards from the beginning of the Conquista as a kind of higher being [!],” and summarized that “Esta parte de la población americana es una especie de barrera para contener a los otros partidos ... El Indio es el amigo de todos” – and also a friend of the Creoles, because, he reasoned: “menos reclama la preponderancia; aunque su número excede a la suma de los otros habitantes”.²⁶ Then Bolívar comes directly to slaves and to the slavery question and provides a kind of economic and moral consideration, which summed up the basis of his own attitude to the agrarian question, particularly on the problem of access to land.

Bolívar started from the criticism of the French traveler F. Depons on the inefficient slavery practiced in Venezuela: “The Spaniard has made the slave a companion to his indolence.”²⁷ Bolívar quoted from Depons’ *Voyage a la partie orientale de la Terre Ferme* (1803) and added: “In a way, this truth has become the cause of happy results”. Thus, Bolívar picked up in Spanish America and Spain widespread criticism from certain parts of the Creole

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.263.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

oligarchies, above all, ideologues and church on the high productivity of the English, French and Dutch plantation slavery.

El esclavo [Bolívar wrote] en la América española vegeta abandonado en las haciendas, gozando, por decirlo así, de su inacción, de la hacienda [*provision grounds* – MZ] de su señor y de una gran parte de los bienes de la libertad ... [el esclavo] se considera en su estado natural, como un miembro de la familia de su amo, a quien ama y respeta.

[the slave in Spanish America vegetates abandoned on the haciendas [big cattle and horse ranches - MZ], enjoying, so to speak, by his inaction, of the hacienda [*provision grounds* - MZ] of his master and large part of the assets of freedom ... [the slave] is considered in his natural state as a member of the family of his master, whom he loves and respects].²⁸

Then Bolívar listed the priorities of Creoles criticizing the effective more productive plantation societies of (former) Saint-Domingue, Jamaica, Barbados and Dutch Suriname: they incited the greed and aroused needs that produced a ferocity of character and the hardness inhuman principles would bring forth. A prime example of aristocratic critique of the dynamism of plantation capitalism! Bolívar wrote:

Spanish America did all this not necessary, it is not loving this extravagant and expensive needs and had enough gold, silver and fertile land available, as well as a very friendly environment. That is why the Americans (*americanos*) already possess a kind of individual independence, and the races would not exterminate each other.

One is tempted to add: as in Saint-Domingue/ Haiti - but Bolívar did not write it at this passage (but he accused the *jefes españoles de Venezuela* of following the example of Saint-Domingue). Of course, the fundamental experience and fear of all white upper classes of the Caribbean plantation zone shimmers.²⁹

Bolívar continued this theme, noting that all races in America had plenty of room and really, there would be everything in abundance. After individually-psychologizing assessments of individual races, he concluded: "Así, pues, parece que debemos contar con la dulzura de mucho más de la mitad de la población [so it seems that we have to reckon with the gentleness of a lot more than half the population]."³⁰

With all that Bolívar outlined in rosy colors—an almost idyllic picture of the legitimacy of the struggle of the Creole patriots and the natural, willing

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.264-265.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.264.

acceptance that this would be received with by the mass of the population. The text was at this time much a mixture of propaganda and apology, but reflected widespread thinking in Bolívar's class, as at all base positions of the ruling ideology of all plantation and slaveholders in the Caribbean. Bolívar also reflected the beginnings of modern, "scientific" racist ideologies which were spreading in the whole Atlantic and European world:

Obsérvese además la diferencia que existe entre los cautivos de la antigüedad y los miserables trabajadores de la América; aquellos eran prisioneros de guerra, acostumbrados al manejo de las armas, mercaderes y navegantes ricos, filósofos profundamente instruidos, que conocían sus derechos y todos sufrían impacientes las cadenas. Los modernos [esclavos negros] son de una raza salvaje, mantenidos en su rusticidad por la profesión a que se les aplica y degradados a la esfera de los brutos.

[Also note the difference between the captives of antiquity and the miserable workers of America; the former were prisoners of war, accustomed to handling weapons, merchants and rich sailors, deeply educated philosophers, who knew their rights and all suffered impatient chains. Modern [black slaves] are of a wild race, held in their rusticity by profession and exiled to the sphere of the brute].³¹

Such racist arguments were well known in the elite circles of enlightened men in the Caribbean.³²

The main point of this text is its end. Bolívar threatened the abolition of slavery because of the "indifference of Europe" [= at this time Great Britain]

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.265-266.

³² See, for example, the work of Francisco de Arango y Parreño, "Blancos, como sus dueños, y a veces más capaces que ellos, eran en general los siervos de la antigüedad [...] De color negro, de pelo, de facciones diversas y de costumbres salvajes, son en su origen los esclavos modernos, y, - aunque esta desigualdad entre ellos y los [esclavos] antiguos hace grande diferencia [...] la naturaleza quiso que el hombre negro se distiguiese del blanco [White persons, like their proprietors, and sometimes more capable than they, were in general the serfs of the antiquity [...] Of black color, of [ugly] hair, of diverse features and of wild customs, are in their origin the modern slaves, and, - although this inequality between they and the ancient [slaves] does big difference [...] the nature wanted that the black man differs of the white [man]], in Francisco ARANGO y PARREÑO, "Representación de la Ciudad de la Habana a las Cortes, el 20 de julio de 1811", *Obras de D. Francisco de Arango y Parreño*, La Habana, Publicaciones de la Dirección de Cultura del Ministerio de Educación, 1952, vol.II, pp.145-187, here p.158 (neue Ausgabe: *Arango y Parreño, Obras*. Ensayo introductorio, compilación y notas García Rodríguez, 2 Bde., La Habana, Imagen Contemporánea, 2005) (online: <https://archive.org/details/obrasdelexcmose01arangoog> (January 14th, 2014)). See also Michael ZEUSKE, "Slavery and Racism in Nineteenth-Century Cuba", in Manfred BERG & Simon WENDT (eds.), *Racism in the Modern World. Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaption*, New York/Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011, pp.105-121; also Michael ZEUSKE, "Una revolución con esclavos y con Bolívar", pp.5-47; and Michael ZEUSKE, "La Independencia: Unvollendete Revolution mit Sklaverei und Bolívar", in Stefan RINKE et al. (eds.), *Bicentenario: 200 Jahre Unabhängigkeit in Lateinamerika. Geschichte zwischen Erinnerung und Zukunft*, Stuttgart, Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz/Akademischer Verlag, 2011, pp.147-182.

and despite or perhaps because of his idyllic and racist depictions of slavery and the lives of slaves in Spanish America in the Kingston text. His desperate text reveals also the fact that he was in negotiations with southern Haiti (Alexandre Pétion) since mid-1815:

El abandono en que nos ha dejado [*Europa=Great Britain – MZ*] es el motivo que puede, en algún tiempo, desesperar al partido independiente [= *Creole elites and Bolívar – MZ*], hasta hacerlo proclamar máximas demagógicas para atraerse la aura popular ... La desesperación no escoge los medios que las sacan del peligro.

[The neglect in in which we have been left by [Europe = Great Britain - MZ] is what can, at some time, the independence party [= Creole elites and Bolivar - MZ] despair to proclaim demagogic maxims to attract the popular aura ... The desperate do not choose the means left to it from the perilous circumstances].”³³

The recognition of the need for written analysis of the slave problem as well as the size and scope of the political utopia of a free *América* (the sum of his stay in Jamaica) and radical measures of the abolition of slavery (which will be finally realized in Haiti with the insistence of Petión)³⁴ and then with Bolívar’s decrees of abolition in the hinterland of Venezuela in 1816-1818³⁵) constitute the genius of Simón Bolívar as the leader of an incipient social revolution (1816-1818). For the survival of this revolution, Bolívar also put pirates and corsairs in his services. The Capuchin Convento close to Angostura offered rich resources, including beef cattle, tanned leather, horses and mule smuggling. Although the social dimension of the revolution later failed (the problem of an “unfinished revolution”), the application of the results of Bolívar’s stay in Jamaica was an important part of the ultimate attainment of *independencia* as revolution as well.³⁶

After Bolívar’s Jamaican and Haitian sojourn, a British naval officer, James Stirling, wrote:

³³ “Artículo del Libertador escrito en Kingston después del 28 de Septiembre de 1815, dirigido al redactor o editor de The Royal Gazette de Jamaica” (Doc. 1304), pp.262-271, here p.266.

³⁴ FISCHER, pp.25-53

³⁵ ZEUSKE, “Una revolución con esclavos y con Bolívar”, pp.5-47.

³⁶ Michael ZEUSKE, “Regiones, espacios e hinterland en la independencia de Venezuela. Lo espacial en la política de Simón Bolívar”, pp.39-58. Because of the proclamations of a social revolution (abolition of slavery, 1816) and the first steps of regulating the problem of access to land in 1817-1818 (sequester of the possessions of loyal Creole elites; conquest of the lands and herds of the Capuchin monks in Guayana, 1817) gave Bolívar the possibility to have a territorial basis at Angostura and to strengthen the military dimensions of the revolution by corsairs, foreign soldiers of fortune, and officers, see Matthew BROWN, *Adventuring through Spanish colonies: Simón Bolívar, Foreign Mercenaries and the Birth of New Nations*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2006; Michael ZEUSKE, “The French Revolution in Spanish-America”.

Esta alianza ha abierto los ojos del país acerca de los verdaderos designios de los líderes insurgentes y cambiado esencialmente la naturaleza de la contienda. Mandan los mismos hombres, pero no es ya el mismo partido [...] La primera medida que tomaron fué ofrecer la emancipación y libertad a los esclavos si abrazan su causa ... Tal paso aumentó la fuerza del partido [de Bolívar y los patriotas], pero destruyó su respetabilidad [!], y las pocas gentes [se refiere a “gente” de las oligarquías –MZ] que habían trabajado por principio en favor de la independencia del país, abandonaron el grupo que tanto aceleraba su propia ruina. Además de tener conexiones con Santo Domingo [Haití], los insurgentes atrajeron a sí, con la esperanza del botín, todos los desertores de la Indias Occidentales. Sin embargo, estos hombres, aunque merezcan mal el nombre de patriotas que han asumido, agregan fuerza a la causa por su valor y audacia [Stirling refers to “pirates” and corsairs – MZ].³⁷

James Stirling was, at the same time, a spy in the service of His Majesty, who had in 1816-1817 explored the conditions in Venezuela's coastal territories between Caracas and La Güira (where the main plantations were located).

³⁷ I have translated only the first part: “This alliance [between Bolívar and Pétion – MZ] has opened the eyes of the country about the true intentions of the leaders of the insurgents, and it has changed the essence of the matter. It commands the same people, but it is no longer the same party” – see: “Informe del capitán (inglés) Stirling al contra-almirante Harvey, febrero de 1817, cfr.: Caracciolo, Parra-Pérez, *Mariño y la independencia de Venezuela*, 5 vols., Madrid, Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1954-1957, vol. II, pp.301-308, here p.307 (this is my translation from Spanish; the original is: “Stirling's report on the situation in Venezuela, 12 February 1817” The National Archives [TNA], London (Kew), Foreign Office (FO) 72/205 – which I wasn't able to consult).