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Simón Bolívar and José Bonifácio Against Slavery: An Analysis of Latin American Abolitionisms

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Simón Bolívar and José Bonifácio Against Slavery: An Analysis of Latin American Abolitionisms

Amaury Patrick Gremaud ^α, Alexandre Ganan de Brites Figueiredo ^σ & Mârcio Bobik Braga ^ρ

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INTRODUCTION

From the 16th to the 19th century, America was marked by slavery. The first African slaves crossed the Atlantic a few years after Columbus' voyage. The adoption of a work regime that was already practiced in Europe and that was immeasurably expanded in America during the four centuries that followed began. It was not until the end of the 18th century, and especially throughout the 19th century, that the institution of slavery was called into question.

More consistent debates about abolition, in general, began to take place in America along with the independence movements and the consequent constitution of new States, which involved the (re)construction of its main institutions from the rules, laws, and customs inherited from the colonial period. In the support of those struggles, America was marked by disputes between the different conceptions regarding the institutions that would prevail in the recently emancipated States, among them, slavery. Its end, the way it should or could be ended and the fate that would be given to the freedmen divided the position. Intellectuals and politicians, free whites and Creoles, slaves and ex-slaves were divided over the answers to these questions. If, on the one hand, there were defenders of slavery, on the other, there were also anti-slavery advocates divided into various positions. We can thus establish a simple typology.

The slavers defended, for different reasons, the institution of slavery and its permanence in the new States. Some of them were reformists and proposed possible changes in the system, and new arrangements, without effectively destroying slavery. This ambiguous position has made them the target of criticism from both abolitionists and defenders of the slave system, insofar as they claim that slavery is a whole and that either the reform does not end with the whole - abolitionist critics - or, effectively, puts the everything in check - slave criticism. In turn, the antislavery morally condemned slavery, and this moral condemnation could be based on religious, ethical, philosophical, political, or even economic aspects.

Among those who were against slavery there were, on the one hand, abolitionists, defenders of the eradication of slave labor, and, on the other hand, those who understood the problem more as an inter-individual rather than a collective issue, that is, they did not believe that the issue should be treated as a social problem. For them, the exercise of anti-slavery in practice would be in the dissemination of their ideas and in the defense of the granting of manumissions, for example. Thus, the end of slavery would take place through a kind of voluntary eradication, conducted by the dominant pole of the binomial "lords vs slaves". In this view, the owners would accept not having more slaves due to moral reasons, including possible economic or political motivations (including fear). Therefore, in this view, there is no forecast of a social "solution" to the issue, nor a collective proposal for transformation, or social change. Therefore, it is possible to understand this position as a paternalistic anti-slavery, as a "manorial virtue", and not as a political position, but even this paternalism could be highlighted if this practice actually expanded. Arturo Roig points out these limits:

"Logically, this paternalism and this liberality had for this same class [the "criollo" elite, large landowners] their already established codes and, with them, their meaning and limits. Excessive paternalism and freedom came dangerously close to the margins of what was permitted and, therefore, could emerge as a threat against the stability of the very systems of the existing codes".¹

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¹ Free translation by the authors. Roig (1984, 31) "*Lógicamente que ese paternalismo y esa liberalidad tenían para límites. Un paternalismo y una liberalidad excesivos se aproximaban peligrosamente a los márgenes de lo permitido y podían presentarse, por tanto, como una*

For abolitionists, there is a political will to end slavery and this is not an individual issue: emancipation or abolitionism is a social project to eradicate slavery. However, there are important questions of method and design for the form of post-slavery society. What would be the role of freedmen in this society? There are different types of abolitionists depending on the answer given to these questions. A more moderate group, the so-called “gradualists”, defended that the end of slavery should take place gradually, in stages. On the other hand, the most radical abolitionists, or the “abolitionists themselves”, defended immediate abolition and rejected the possibility of an intermediate situation between slavery and freedom. In addition, other important issues separated the defenders of abolition, such as the need or not to indemnify landowners, the need or not for abolition to be accompanied by social reforms such as agrarian reform, the extension or not of full citizenship to freedmen., among others.

Sometimes these established categories within the taxonomy above can lead to some confusion and classification difficulties. There is, for example, a group of emancipationists who believe that slavery, after some changes, such as the extinction of trafficking and/or the law of the free womb, tends to end on its own. They believe in the definitive eradication of slavery by “natural extinction”, without shocks, without crises, without violence, that is, without the need to fight for the act of abolition itself. This position is very close and can, at times, be confused with individual anti-slavery, who have the same perspective of a peaceful end to slavery. The difference is that collective attitudes, for the former, were necessary to put the eradication of slavery on the right track.

Another possible overlap may be between reformers and moderate abolitionists. Changes in the format of slavery and the different steps to be taken towards eradication may be the same or similar. But reformers still see a necessary link between nations and slavery, considering it impossible for the latter to survive without slave labor, even if modified. In turn, abolitionists or emancipationists see, at least, a future without slaves. This is the case of Simón Bolívar and José Bonifácio, two actors in independence who, although they agree with abolition, will have different considerations on how to do it. Both are supported by this extensive debate on slave labor that was already carried out on both sides of the Atlantic.

I. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ANTI-SLAVERY

Anti-slavery currents may have regional specificities and imply actions with local characteristics, but they are part of large international intellectual movements that gained a lot of strength throughout the 18th century. The fight against the idea of slavery, as it

was outlined at the beginning of the 19th century, is something quite different from the old isolated criticisms of that institution. Criticism, by the way, was always present, but the defenses of slavery always ended up imposing themselves.

The basis of critical revisionism that spread in the 19th century was the criticism of the idea that there are differences between human beings. With this, equality was affirmed, in principle, between humans, in addition to the moral condemnation of an act that started from the principle that one human being is different from another and, therefore, that he can be less free than the other.

Two Basic Sources Embody this Conception: Natural Law and the so-called “evangelical egalitarianism”.² The new natural law theses are behind practically all Enlightenment thinking, including the conceptions of a new science that emerges – Political Economy. For Natural Law, all men are equal, or rather, are naturally equal and free. This thought hits strongly anti-slavery paintings in France, especially among the Enlightenment - with Raynal, Diderot and even Voltaire, and very strongly with Montesquieu. For these intellectuals, there would not be different stages of evolution in societies as a result of differences in nature or due to natural differences between human beings. If there were differences in stages in societies, they were due to other and multiple historical causes, and there was no room to justify slavery on the basis of the inferiority of human groups or the inequality of states of nature. The slave trade itself is considered void, as can be seen from the entry in the Enciclopedia. In part, these theses are also found on the other side of the English Channel, among English natural law experts.

Even within the group of natural law experts, there were divisions and distinctions, bringing together aspects of more radical or moderate abolitionism. The Haitian Revolution, which will be discussed later, also built a legal thesis that legitimized it and that will accompany “Haitianism”. The center of this thesis is the exclusion of the property right from the list of natural rights. Thus, while equality and freedom (currency of the Republic) was unquestionably the rights of all, granted by “nature” and, therefore, inherent to the human being, the property was considered only a civil right (Rojas, 2013). This is a vision contrary to the liberalism guided by John Locke and to the current that will prevail among republicans in America (and in Europe).

Condorcet, one of the most important theorists and inspirers of this movement, also affirmed the equality of all and established part of the bases for the condemnation of slavery, which will also be read in Turgot and will be reproduced among the Economists of the early 19th century. These, along with the English

² The two sources are presented by Bosi (1998) and Dorigny (2019).

political economists, starting from the ideas of equality between men, ended up also collaborating in the anti-slavery defenses when trying to demonstrate the inefficiency and the problems of an economic system based on slavery.

The second theoretical source is found in the debates within the Christian religion and in the rise of the so-called “evangelical egalitarianism”. It grew especially in the Anglo-Saxon Reformed world and then spread. For these egalitarians, the origin of all men is the same, it is unique and it is in Adam and Eve. The inequality between branches of the human species is criticized, such as that resulting from the curse of Ham, son of Noah and his descendants³, who supported part of the defense of African slavery (from the Ethiopians, “sons of Ham”). This idea, even if biblical, could not overlap with the Genesis narrative: a unique origin of humanity, the so-called monogenesis. These revisionists, especially the Quakers, began to condemn per se any hierarchy of men by nature and, thus, the idea that there could be some difference between them that would justify slavery. Little by little, monogenism imposed itself on polygenism, even returning to the arguments that had already been applied in the Valladolid Controversy, about American Indians.⁴

Furthermore, even within Christianity, the inversion of the Catholic thesis of slavery appears as a way of combating sin. For Quakers, slavery is not the fruit of sin or justified by sin, like that of Ham, but rather, on the contrary, it is the source of that sin. Where there is slavery, there is a subversion of good customs, therefore there is sin. The classic Catholic thesis found already in Saint Augustine, says that slavery can exist for those who were imprisoned in a just war – war against sin, sinners are those who had the opportunity to “see the Light”, and to “understand the word of God,” but they denied it and fought it. It is their sin that justifies slavery. At this point, the thesis argues that slavery is a condition of redemption, a purge of sins, and a blessing for Africans, as it would bring Ethiopians to Christianity (slavery and catechesis complement each other). Thus, we see a new inversion in the thinking of the revisionists: where slavery is seen, the degradation of good customs and sin is perceived, degradation that comes from the subjection of one man to another and that does not lead to the purge of one's sins, but to the magnification of the sins of the other.

³ Ham is the son of Noah who saw his father drunk and naked, receiving the condemnation, extended to his offspring, of being inferior and subjected to the other sons of Noah and their descendants. Cam would have migrated to Africa, in constructed interpretations.

⁴ In which the famous contrast between Las Casas and Sepúlveda took place, in which Las Casas defended the human and unique origin of the American Indians against the Spanish colonizers, with Sepúlveda arguing that, on the contrary, the Indians had a different genealogy.

This is the broader intellectual scenario in which the actors of Latin American independence will move, especially the two selected for the analysis that follows.

II. SIMÓN BOLÍVAR AND SLAVERY IN INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLES

Any approach to the thought of Simón Bolívar must take as a starting point the observation that the formulations of the “Libertador” were reflected and conceived in the course of the wars of independence. Although he was a scholar, Bolívar did not formulate his thinking in an environment of quiet reflection, but on the battlefield. This condition accentuates a tension - latent in his projects - between the ideal and the possible, the “utopian” and the “realist”, which led Haya de la Torre (1884, 102-103) to one day call him, with all the inherent contradiction, “a Realist Quixote”. The same happened in his actions and reflections on slavery.

The draft Constitutions formulated by Bolívar, notably those of Angostura (1819) and Bolivia (1826), have elements of republican radicalism (affirmation of equality and freedom, abolition of the privileges of colonial social orders, end of slavery, among others) coexisting with institutions closer to what could be considered political⁵ conservatism, such as the Hereditary Senate, the Moral Power and, in the Bolivian project, the presidency for life, which led his opponents to accuse him of wanting a monarchy disguised in republican garb⁶.

In any case, Bolívar's abolitionism did not have only one meaning throughout his political career and, even when defended as a natural right, it will obey the needs of each stage of a war that has gone through many advances and setbacks. Notably, there is a clear moment of change regarding the emphasis on the abolition of slavery as a political program of the Revolution: the support given to Bolívar by the Republic of Haiti, after the resounding defeat of the so-called Second Republic of Venezuela. It was the height of the reaction of the supporters of the Empire: the north of the South American continent suffered the landing of the largest military expedition that had ever been sent to the Americas⁷, a force that was added to the Americans loyal to the Crown. The government of Emperor Ferdinand VII, which had been given back the throne after the defeat of Napoleon and the successes of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, felt safe both in crushing

⁵ For example: Roberto Gargarella (2013); and Elias Pino Iturría (2016).

⁶ In this space, it is not the case to address this issue in depth to demonstrate that such a “contradiction” between revolutionary radicalism and political conservatism is only a semantic field. Or rather, the social issue is more present in Bolívar than in other “liberals”, his opponents. On this topic Figueiredo (2017).

⁷ From 10 to 15 thousand veteran soldiers of the European wars were sent by Spain, in 42 vessels escorted by five combat ships, according to John Lynch (2008, 204).

peninsular constitutionalism, which would limit its powers and in unquestionably restoring the Madrid's authority over America.

When that expedition, commanded by Pablo Morillo, devastated the patriotic bases of the continent, the supporters of independence who managed to survive went into exile in the Caribbean islands. In 1815, Bolívar was in Jamaica and sought support from the British, without success. He had already begun to reflect on the causes of defeat and understood that, in order to win, the Revolution would also need to be social and not just political. At the end of that year and the beginning of the next, he was welcomed in Haiti, where he assembled the basis of what would become the Patriot Army that will return to the continent and, finally, defeat the imperial forces years after years of fighting. His thinking on the causes of the defeat was joined by the support given to him by the Haitian president, Alexandre Pétion, determining the course of abolitionism that he would defend as inherent to the project of the independentists.

Apart from the tension mentioned above between the conviction and the limits imposed by the economic and social terrain where the Revolution moved, it is precisely in abolitionism that the distance between Bolívar (and his group within the Patriot Army) and other projects conceived during the wars for independence. In particular, the modern conception of states based on societies founded on the principle of equality points to a radically transformed America. Here, as in Bonifácio (in another way), it is understood that the permanence of slavery is a human, economic and political delay.

a) Bolívar before Haiti

Bolívar's first contact with abolitionism itself, in addition to classical and modern political literature, took place in London, when he represented the Government Board of Caracas on a diplomatic mission, in 1810. In the British capital, he conferred with Francisco de Miranda, who in turn introduced him to the circle of British abolitionist William Wilberforce (Uzcátegui 2015). At this stage, Bolívar's opinion on this issue is unknown, but it is known that, in 1809, a year before his trip to London, in a letter addressed to Juan de Casas, he directed the division of his own assets. among his slaves. Then, years later, in 1814, he freed all the slaves on his property, inheritance of a family fortune that was among the largest in America⁸. However, at that stage this was more of a personal position than a political program, a "paternalistic" anti-slavery, it was probably a "manorial virtue" and not a political position (Roig, 31).

In any case, intellectual contact with abolitionism was already established when Bolívar saw

the two experiences of an independent republic in Venezuela founder. The so-called First Venezuelan Republic (1811-1812), under the prominence of Francisco de Miranda, had collapsed in the face of the uprising of interior provinces opposed to obedience to the autonomous government established in Caracas. In turn, the Second Republic (1813-1814), already founded and ruled by Bolívar, had been defeated before Spanish troops landed in Venezuela. Studying the local forces that defeated him, Bolívar understood the weakness of the patriots' project: it was the poor free men (the so-called "pardos" in the nomenclature of the time) and the slaves who fought in the name of the king, against the Republic - a regime that, strictly speaking, was composed of the colonial oligarchy and for which the demands of the marginalized were not relevant. The Venezuelan elite wanted a political revolution, but the key to victory lay in the incorporation of sectors that demanded a social revolution (Damas, 2003).

Embittering his exile, having spied on his trail with the task of assassinating him, when he wrote the Letter from Jamaica (or Prophetic Letter) in 1815, a mature Bolívar would come to understand abolition as a necessity also of a strategic and military nature. The explicit condemnation of slavery, the privileges of the nobility, and the distinctions of "caste" became the axis of his program, the core of his opposition to the imperial government and local supporters. The Liberation Army itself and its transformed social composition would, in itself, be an overcoming of the traditional colonial order.

In the letter, he speaks openly about what he considers the harmful effects of slavery. Describing the situation in Peru, he would say: "*Peru, on the other hand, has two elements that are inimical to any regime of fair and liberal government: gold and slaves. The first corrupts everything; the second is corrupted by itself*" (Bolívar, 2009, 83). Slavery: a corrupt institution in itself, not an institution that purges the corrupt, as was the old Catholic view. Against it, Bolívar announces a republican America supported by the principle of equality of its citizens, including the slaves who would leave this condition. Facing the racist basis of colonial stratification, Bolívar writes that "*we are a small human race*", stressing that, in America, in an unprecedented way in history, populations from all over the world met, forming a unique people, characterized by its composition. diverse and united precisely by this diversity.

When he left Kingston for Los Cayos, Haiti, Bolívar was no longer a *Criollo* aristocrat fighting for political autonomy. He already held the view that independence would only come if it also brought about the transformation of the foundations of colonial society.

b) Bolívar after Haiti

While still in Jamaica, Bolívar wrote Alexandre Pétion, president of the Republic of Haiti, a letter dated

⁸ According to Gil Fortoul's testimony, Bolívar owned 1,000 slaves at the beginning of the Revolution, as recorded in J. L. Busaniche (1986, 310.)

12/19/1815, informing him that he was heading to the Port of Los Cayos where he would meet with other patriots who were supported by the Pétion government. In that document, Bolívar defines the republic founded on the gigantic slave rebellion as “the asylum of all republicans in this part of the world” (Bolívar, 2016. 15). Pétion, in a new letter of January 1816, he will call the father of true republicans. This is a time when the hope of reorganizing a patriotic army was in expectation of receiving support from the Haitian government, but it is indicative of the political context that this was not the first option. Before turning to Pétion, Bolívar preferred to look for the British in Jamaica, aware of the impact that such a direct association with Haiti would have on the American elite. In a letter addressed to Luis Brión, dated July 1815, Bolívar recounts his situation and expresses the fear of the political damage he imagined he would have if he went to Los Cayos himself:

“As for me, I am willing to do anything for my country; for the same reason, I seek help from this government and hope that it will be given if not today, tomorrow or another day. Meanwhile, I'm living in uncertainty and misery. I myself don't go to that island because I don't want to lose the trust these gentlemen place in me because, like Your Excellency. You know, aristocratic customs are terrible”.⁹

Bolívar's path towards a firmly anti-slavery position was also traced by political necessity: without success with the British, she changes her mind and, six months after that letter to Brión, lands in “the asylum of all republicans in this part of the world”. In fact, it wasn't just Bolívar who feared the repercussions of his association with Haiti. For his part, Pétion also feared being taken as a supporter of the rebels. Evidently, given the isolation in which his Republic found itself, he was interested in promoting the patriots of the continent and weakening the power of the Spanish Empire. However, he knew the risk he was running if he accepted being “the father of true republicans”: Pablo Morillo had crushed the independent governments in the north of the subcontinent and could turn his weapons against Haiti at a time when France was still thinking about reconquering the island. The line of balance, for both sides, was tenuous and the risks immense. Therefore, after offering asylum, ships, weapons, and soldiers, Pétion asked Bolívar not to publicly mention Haiti's or his own support for the cause¹⁰.

⁹ Simón Bolívar, *Carta a Luis Brión* (www.archivodellibertador.gob.ve/escritos/buscador/spip.php?article1156), (free translation by the authors). “En cuanto a mí, yo me hallo dispuesto a hacer todo por mi país; por la misma razón estoy procurando obtener socorros de este gobierno, que espero me serán prestados, si no hoy, será mañana u otro día. Mientras tanto, estoy viviendo en la incertidumbre y en la miseria. Yo mismo no voy a esa isla porque no quiero perder la confianza que hacen de mí estos señores, pues, como V. sabe, las manías aristocráticas son terribles”.

¹⁰ On February 18, 1816, Pétion wrote to Bolívar asking that Haiti or his support for the cause not be mentioned in the abolition decrees to

In addition to political-conjunctural considerations, it is necessary to emphasize that, more than a republic of ex-slaves, Haiti was a republic led by Jacobins, the Black Jacobins, to use the expression of the famous classic by C.L.R James (2000). As we have seen, the Haitian revolution established a republic without property rights on the list of natural rights. Thus, while equality and freedom (currency of the Republic) was unquestionably the rights of all, granted by “nature” and, therefore, inherent to the human being, the property was a civil right. In other words, among the republicanisms of the time, it was the most radical that laid the foundations of the first country in America to become independent. Legally, this character was necessary both to condemn the existence of slavery and to legitimize the non-payment of any compensation to the owners. Bolívar had contact with the constitutions of Haiti and its legal theses, which will be, until the end, present in his references.¹¹

For the support offered, Pétion asked Bolívar for only one counterpart: that he promote the abolition of slavery wherever the Liberation Army passed.¹² In making this commitment, the evolution of Liberator thought has completed its cycle. When the expedition under his command left Los Cayos, in May 1816, to resume the war for independence, Bolívar was already a leader incensed by the Republic that had caused the continent's landowning elites the most tremors.

c) *The Legislative Path of Bolívar's Abolitionism*

The first decree for the abolition of slavery drawn up by Bolívar was signed in Carupano, on June 2, 1816, in Venezuela, following the landing of the expedition. It was a release conditioned to the admission of the slaves to the Patriot Army. All were free, as long as they fought... a condition that has been accused of being abolitionism of convenience, without sincerity, built only a posteriori as firmness of purpose (Iturrieta, 2016). However, in Bolívar's mind, manumission would make no sense without the freedmen joining the cause (not least because, at that moment, although Bolívar maintained the title of “Supreme Chief of the Republic”, the new state was only the promise of a small expedition who had arrived on a beach in Venezuela). The text of the decree both defended the existence of freedom as a natural right and went down to the reality of war to impose, in harsh terms, the enlistment (Bolívar, 2016, 21-22).

A month later, in Ocumare da la Costa, Bolívar mentions the previous decree and announces his

come. Certainly, he feared Monteverde, which was already threatening Haiti.

¹¹ In addition to the abolitionist legacy, the Haitian experience would also have marked Bolívar's constitutionalism, since he took several of the articles of the Haitian constitutions of 1806 and 1816 for his projects (Arciniegas, 1985).

¹² On the encounter between Bolívar and Pétion, the classic work is Paul Verna (1969).

willingness to re-establish a republican government in which everyone will be citizens, without the status distinctions that were in force at the time:

“That wretched part of our brothers that groans subjected to the miseries of slavery is now free. Nature, justice and politics demand the emancipation of slaves: henceforth, there will be only one class of men in Venezuela and all will be citizens”.¹³

In terms similar to those of Carúpano, the abolition will be reiterated in the following moments of the Patriot Army's march. There are also decrees to that effect signed in Villa de Cura (March 11, 1818), La Victoria (March 13, 1818), and El Consejo (March 14, 1818).

At other times, before these last decrees, Bolívar announced in his public texts the abolition as one of the flags and conquests of the patriots. In other words, although the forced incorporation into the ranks of the army opportunely responded to the military need, it was also a program and a banner that was unreservedly displayed. A timely example is a call that Bolívar addressed to the soldiers after ordering the execution of the patriotic general Manuel Piar, who had defied the Liberator's command, in October 1817. It was a critical moment in which Bolívar chose to list achievements that would be understood as the source of legitimacy for its leadership. The nature of this political program and its acceptance by the soldiers (otherwise Bolívar would not have mentioned it) evidences the Patriot Army's adherence to abolitionism:

“Soldiers! You know it. Equality, liberty and independence are our motto. Was it not through our laws that humanity regained its rights? Was it not our weapons that destroyed the slaves' chains? Has not the odious inequality of class and color been destroyed forever?”¹⁴

The first proposal for a Constitution that would enshrine both the abolition and the guarantee of citizenship for former slaves dates from 1819. This is the project presented in Angostura, in the Venezuelan Amazon, where Bolívar took his forces to establish a secure base while defining the program and establishing alliances to face the Spaniards. The victory was still uncertain, the forces fighting for independence were minority and isolated, but it was understood that it was necessary to establish the foundations of the State

¹³ Simón Bolívar, *Proclamas del Libertador Simón Bolívar* (Caracas: Imprenta de “El Venezolano” por M J Rivas, 1842), p. 15-16 (free translation by the authors). “Esa porción desgraciada de nuestros hermanos que ha gemido bajo las miserias de la esclavitud, ya es libre. La naturaleza, la justicia y la política piden la emancipación de los esclavos: de aquí en adelante sólo habrá en Venezuela una clase de hombres, todos serán ciudadanos”.

¹⁴ Simón Bolívar, *Proclamas del Libertador Simón Bolívar*, p. 16-17 (free translation by the authors). “Soldados! Vosotros lo sabeis. La igualdad, la libertad y la independencia son nuestra divisa. ¿La humanidad no ha recobrado sus derechos por nuestras leyes? Nuestras armas no han roto las cadenas de los esclavos? La odiosa diferencia de clases y colores no ha sido abatida para siempre”.

that would emerge after the defeat of the Empire to conform to a clear program¹⁵. For that, a Constituent Congress was organized composed of the revolutionaries. The approved Constitution would, given the context, not be a fully enforced norm, but a compromise. The speech made by Bolívar to present his proposal is one of the most important documents for understanding his thinking. In it, the abolition of slavery is listed as one of the pillars that support a republican government:

“A republican government was, is and must be that of Venezuela; its bases must be the sovereignty of the People, the separation of powers, civil liberty, the outlawing of slavery, the abolition of monarchy and privileges”.¹⁶

Justifying this position, he announced the incorporation of former slaves into the same homeland, that is, he saw in abolition the necessary step for the consolidation of the new State and the new political regime, the Republic. In addition, he constructed a heroic narrative to also justify that condition of incorporation of the freedmen into the Liberation Army:

“Atrocious and impious slavery covered the land of Venezuela with its dark mantle. Our sky was loaded with storm clouds that threatened a deluge of fire. I begged for the protection of the God of humanity and redemption quickly dissipated the storms. Slavery broke its shackles and Venezuela found itself surrounded by new sons, grateful sons who converted the instruments of captivity into weapons of freedom. Yes, those who were once slaves are now free; those who were enemies of a stepmother are now defenders of a homeland”.¹⁷

Aware of the resistance that the end of slavery encountered among the landowners (many of whom adhered to the cause of independence), he addressed a personal appeal to the deputies for the confirmation of abolition, even if they altered any other points of his project and of his legislative activity:

“You cannot be both free and slave at the same time, unless you completely violate natural laws, political laws, and civil laws. I surrender to your sovereign decision the reform or revocation of all my Statutes and Decrees; but I beg for

¹⁵ The Republic of Colombia, at that moment, is the state that tradition called Gran Colombia, formed by the present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama and Ecuador.

¹⁶ Simón Bolívar, *Doctrina del Libertador*, p. 131 (free translation by the authors). “Un gobierno republicano ha sido, es y debe ser el de Venezuela; sus bases deben ser la soberanía del Pueblo, la división de los poderes, la libertad civil, la proscripción de la esclavitud, la abolición de la monarquía y de los privilegios”.

¹⁷ Simón Bolívar, *Doctrina del Libertador*, p. 143-144 (free translation by the authors). “La atroz e impía esclavitud cubría con su negro manto la tierra de Venezuela, y nuestro cielo se hallaba recargado de tempestuosas nubes, que amenazaban un diluvio de fuego. Yo imploré la protección del Dios de la humanidad, y luego la redención disipó las tempestades. La esclavitud rompió sus grillos, y Venezuela se ha visto rodeada de nuevos hijos, de hijos agradecidos que han convertido los instrumentos de su cautiverio en armas de libertad. Sí, los que antes eran esclavos ya son libres; los que antes eran enemigos de una madrastra, ya son defensores de una patria”.

confirmation of the absolute freedom of slaves, as I would beg for my life and the life of the Republic”¹⁸

The force of slavery was present and Bolívar suffered a political defeat: the Congress of Angostura issued its own decree of abolition on January 11, 1820, but, contrary to immediate freedom, it opted for gradualness and freed only the children of slaves who were born since that date (a solution that would also be the Brazilian one, in the *Lei do Ventre Livre*, of 1871).

Later, in 1821, a new constituent congress meeting in Cúcuta, with the patriotic victory in the north of the subcontinent practically consolidated, enacted a Law of Manumission in the same terms as the Angostura decision. Although there was a consensus among the deputies on the need to abolish slavery, there were differences as to the timing. Even those born after 1821, under the new regulation, were tied to the owner until they were 18 years old.

Commenting on the impression this law made on Bolívar, General Daniel O’Leary, who accompanied him throughout the process, wrote in his memoirs: There were no sights of interest or ideas of convenience that could be reconciled with a system of such palpable injustice” (1920, 102-103). Even a Bolívar riding the glory of victory did not have the political strength to defeat the local elites, who resisted as long as they could to the real end of slavery (Lombardi, 2003).

After the founding of the Republic of Colombia, although he held the position of president of that new country, Bolívar dedicated himself to the conclusion of the emancipation by marching south to defeat the forces loyal to Spain in the last bastion they had left: the Viceroyalty of Peru. It was only on December 9, 1824, at the Battle of Ayacucho, that the cause of independence definitely won.

As one of the consequences of the Patriot Army’s actions, the region then known as Alto Peru ignored the government of Lima, the former colonial capital, and founded a new country, the Bolívar Republic – later, Bolivia. Invited to write a draft constitution for the State that honored him, the Liberator once again insisted on the abolition of slavery as the foundation of a de facto free and republican regime, this time in more forceful terms.

In the message that he addressed to the Congress of Bolivia, in May 1826, he made direct mention of Haiti – “the most democratic republic of the world” (2009, p. 280) – to justify the institutional arrangement he proposed (and which was accused of anti-liberalism by the opposition). Liberal or not,

¹⁸ Simón Bolívar, *Doctrina del Libertador*, p. 144 (free translation by the authors). “No se puede ser libre y esclavo a la vez, sino violando a la vez las leyes naturales, las leyes políticas y las leyes civiles. Yo abandono a vuestra soberana decisión la reforma o la revocación de todos mis Estatutos y Decretos; pero yo imploro la confirmación de la libertad absoluta de los esclavos, como imploraría mi vida y la vida de la República”.

remembering the Haitian republic still scared the landowning class. And, in fact, echoing that experience, Bolívar defined the right to property as a matter of civil legislation and not as a natural right. In addition, he defended the principle of equality as fundamental:

“The most perfect guarantees were established: civil liberty is true liberty; the others are only nominal or of little influence to the citizens. Personal security was guaranteed, which is the purpose of society and from which all others emanate. As for property, it depends on the Civil Code that your wisdom must compose for the happiness of your fellow citizens. I kept intact the law of laws – equality: without it, all guarantees, all rights perish. To her we must make sacrifices. At your feet I placed, covered in humiliation, the infamous slavery.”¹⁹

And he continues with the most forceful condemnation he made, in public texts, of slavery:

“Lawgivers, the infraction of all laws is slavery. A law that preserves it would be the most sacrilegious. What right can be claimed for its conservation? Analyzing this crime from all possible aspects, I am not persuaded that there is a single Bolivian so depraved that he intends to legitimize the most infamous violation of human dignity. A man possessed by another man! A man owned! (...) Transmitting, extending, perpetuating this crime mixed with torture is the most shocking outrage. To found a principle of possession on the most ferocious delinquency is not something that can be conceived without upsetting all the elements of law and without the most absolute perversion of notions of duty. No one can break the holy dogma of equality. And will there be slavery where equality reigns? Such contradictions would form the reproach of our reason rather than that of our justice: we would be more reputed for demented than for usurpers”.²⁰

¹⁹ Simón Bolívar, *Doctrina del Libertador*, p. 285 (free translation by the authors). “Se han establecido las garantías más perfectas: *la libertad civil* es la verdadera libertad; las demás son nominales, o de poca influencia com respecto a los ciudadanos. Se ha garantizado la *seguridad* personal, que es el fin de la sociedad, y de la cual emanan las demás. En cuanto a la *propiedad*, ella depende del código civil que vuestra sabiduría debiera componer luego, para la dicha de vuestros conciudadanos. He conservado intacta la ley de las leyes –*la igualdad*: sin ella perecen todas las garantías, todos los derechos. A ella debemos hacer los sacrificios. A sus pies he puesto, cubierta de humillación, a la infame esclavitud”.

²⁰ Simón Bolívar, *Doctrina del Libertador*, p. 285 (free translation by the authors). “Legisladores, la infracción de todas las leyes es la esclavitud. la ley que la conservara sería la más sacrílega. ¿Qué derecho se alegraría para su conservación? Mírese este delito por todos aspectos, y no me persuado que haya un solo boliviano tan depravado que pretenda legitimar la más insigne violación de la dignidad humana. ¡Un hombre poseído por otro! ¡Un hombre propiedad! ¡Una imagen de Dios puesta al yugo como el bruto! Dígasenos ¿dónde están los títulos de los usurpadores del hombre? (...) Transmitir, prorrogar, eternizar este crimen mezclado de suplicios, es el ultraje más chocante. Fundar un principio de posesión sobre la más feroz delincuencia no podría concebirse sin el trastorno de los elementos del derecho y sin la perversión más absoluta de las nociones del deber. Nadie puede romper el santo dogma de la *igualdad*. y ¿habrá esclavitud donde reina la igualdad? Tales contradicciones formarían más bien el vituperio de nuestra razón que el de nuestra justicia: seríamos reputados por más dementes que usurpadores”.

This Constitution gains more relevance in the analysis because it is a project conceived to be accepted as the basis for a legislative unification of all the new republics, and not just for Bolivia. It was, therefore, an American program presented by the political force that was supported by the arms of the Liberation Army, which affirmed the universalization of citizenship, including former slaves. The text proposed by Bolívar made citizens *“all who have hitherto been slaves; and therefore will, in fact, be free in the act of publishing this Constitution”*.

In the end, Bolívar saw his abolitionism suffer another defeat: Congress did not accept the proposed wording and amended it to include in the text the determination that former slaves *“will not be able to leave the house of their former masters, except in the form of a special law that determines it”*²¹. In other words, they would remain captive until the legislators, one day, think about the issue again.

III. JOSÉ BONIFÁCIO AND THE CRITIQUE OF SLAVERY IN INDEPENDENT BRAZIL

José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva also played an outstanding role in the creation of a new state in Latin America, Brazil. However, Brazilian independence, although it also had some episodes of armed confrontation, was different from the experience of the rest of the continent. Bonifácio, in turn, was not, like Bolívar, a military leader in the deadly fields of the wars for emancipation. Its struggle, like much of the Brazilian independence process, took place in the political field, as the main articulator of the separation with Portugal, and in the legislative, with proposals for the construction of both the State and an effective Brazilian nation. The abolition of slavery, present in his thinking from a very early age, was seen by him as a necessary condition for both.

He was born in Santos, in 1763, into a wealthy family linked to commerce and the exercise of important and profitable public positions. Like many other sons of the Brazilian elite, at the age of 20 he was sent to study in Coimbra²². The University, which had been renovated during the Pombaline period, was going through a certain setback with the end of the Marquis' government. There was a clash between an enlightened understanding of science and philosophy, the offspring of the reforms, and a certain Catholic reactionism. José Bonifácio made his choices at this moment and joined the new paths. Even though he continued to

delve into the study of classical authors and the law, he also studied mathematics and delved into enlightened philosophy (with a certain religious irreverence, typical of Enlightenment thinkers). From that time, there is a prominent text of his approaching whaling from a liberal perspective and reading Adam Smith (Caldeira, 2002, p. 51-56). According to Emilia Viotti da Costa:

*“José Bonifácio would not be satisfied with what was taught at the University. His notes scattered today in various archives and in his poetry are, as well as his letters, full of references to Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Locke, Pope Virgilio, Horacio, Camões, denoting a broad humanistic training and familiarity with the authors of the Enlightenment, which will later explain his political theories. Although he continued to verse, scientific concerns came to the fore...”*²³

It was through mineralogy that Bonifácio became a prominent scientist and defined his paths through Portugal and Europe in the years after his university education. A polyglot, he spent a decade traveling around Europe on a scholarship granted by the Portuguese government. Among his achievements is his contribution to the discovery of lithium. His concerns with history, philosophy and law did not, however, fail to be present in his studies and notes.

He got to know Paris in the 1790s and closely followed the paths of the French Revolution. His notes and letters make it clear that he “keeps a painful impression of the revolutionary movements and the agitation of the masses. Among the authors of the illustration, he would align himself better with Voltaire and Montesquieu than with Rousseau (...). He would be a liberal, but never a democrat” (Costa, 2015, 34). It can thus be seen, even before Bonifácio's independence discussions, that he tends to move away from more republican and Jacobin positions, keeping conservative enlightenment.

Back in Portugal, in 1800, he continued his academic work as a professor of Metallurgy at the University of Coimbra, but he also rose to positions in the public administration of the Portuguese kingdom and, consequently, in kingdom politics. A prestigious man, he became a member of the Royal Academy of Science of Portugal and its secretary in 1812. He remained in Portugal during the French invasion and the withdrawal of the Court to Brazil in 1808. There, he was a distinguished administrator, having occupied several important positions in the bureaucracy, such as general intendant of mines and metals and director of the Casa da Moeda, in addition to teaching in Coimbra and

²¹ *Constitución Política de 1826* (www.lexivox.org/norms/BO-CPE-18261119-1.xhtml)

²² Bonifácio has a classic biography, until today the main reference: the one written by Octavio Tarquínio de Sousa, in 1945, reedited by the Federal Senate: *José Bonifácio – 1763-1838* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2015). For biographical details, we use this work and also the most recent contribution by Dolnikof (2012).

²³ Costa (2015, 3) (free traduction by the authors). “José Bonifácio não se contentaria com o que era ensinado na Universidade. Suas notas dispersas hoje em vários arquivos e em suas poesias estão, assim como suas cartas, cheias de referencias a Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Locke, Pope Virgilio, Horacio, Camões, denotando uma formação humanística ampla e familiaridade com os autores da Ilustração, o que irá explicar mais tarde suas teorias políticas. Embora continuasse a versar, as preocupações científicas passaram ao primeiro plano...”

member of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences. He even took part in the fight against Napoleon's invading army, which had already taken the Crown of Spain... In any case, Bonifacio was an academic called to public service: the clash between the two universes inevitably happened. He was a scientist, a thinker trained in the Enlightenment, dealing with the constraints of the administrative machinery of an essentially conservative state. There were two results of this experience: the first, a disappointment and the desire to return to Brazil; the second was an important change in his views, with which liberalism was toned down so that Bonifacio came to believe that a centralized state, led by wise men, would be necessary to direct the economy.

Only in 1818 did he obtain authorization to return to Brazil. In the years that he spent in Portugal, he accompanied the growing dissatisfaction of the kingdoms with the freedoms that were given to the former Brazilian colonists and their resistance when trying to withdraw these freedoms and the (re)imposition of mercantilist and colonial rules on Brazilians by the Portuguese metropolitans.

Back in his homeland after more than 30 years of living in Europe, Bonifácio did not retreat to his lands and studies. He saw, from another perspective, that conflict between the kingdoms and Brazilians took wider proportions with the Spanish liberal revolution and, later, with the Porto Revolution, in 1820, demanding the constitutionalization of the monarchy and the immediate return of Dom João VI to Portugal. The effects of this process reached São Paulo in March 1821, when instructions were received for the election of both a local government for the province and delegates to the Cortes who would meet in Lisbon to write the Constitution. At that moment, the liberal intent was more pronounced than the movement for the withdrawal of autonomy rights from the Kingdom of Brazil, which would come later.

Bonifácio actively participated in the organization of the government of the province and was led to the position of vice-president of the Governor's Board of São Paulo, in July 1821. He was the government's ideologue and put in writing in an official document idea that he kept only in his private notes: "Lembranças e Apontamentos do Governo Provisório da província de São Paulo para os seus deputados" (Memories and Notes of the Provisional Government of the province of São Paulo for its deputies) (Bonifácio, 2002) was signed by the entire government, but it is authored by Bonifácio. These were instructions to the representatives of the province in the Cortes. Among other aspects, it is one of the first writings where there is the most complete civilizational conception for a nation without slaves. In addition, according to Costa, he defended the equality of political and civil rights of Brazilian and Portuguese citizens and went further:

"Far from revealing separatist intentions, it accepted the principle of the integrity and indissolubility of the United Kingdom [of Brazil, Portugal and Algarve], ensuring the representation of the general and ordinary courts. It tried to safeguard liberal principles, seeking to preserve the advantages conquered by Brazil since 1808, in particular administrative autonomy. It recommended the creation of a university, the multiplication of schools, the foundation within a city to be the seat of government, with the aim of stimulating the development of the sertão. He also made suggestions for the development of mining, the civilization of the Indians, colonization, the emancipation of slaves"²⁴.

In other words, already acting as a political leader in Brazil, Bonifácio sees in the liberal revolution the opportunity to publicize the slave emancipation project. In *Apontamentos*, he requires, along with a gradual emancipation, changes in the master-slave relationship in order to guarantee better treatment of captives and avoid rebellions and other forms of resistance. We also emphasize the idea of demanding the return of unused land from the old sesmarias to government control and its use in colonization projects that involved precisely freedmen and immigrants.

a) *Brazilian Independence and Bonifácio's Representation Against Slavery*

The articulations within the Cortes did not proceed as the São Paulo - and Brazilian, in general - representation would like. The Cortes revealed the recolonizing project, in which Brazil lost its status and autonomy. The order for the immediate return of D. João VI was evidence that the project of an Atlantic empire based in Rio de Janeiro was not incorporated by the kingdoms.

In view of this, the independence of Brazil starts to be discussed. The axis for a rupture with Portugal allied to the continuity of the State that had been transferred to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 was the presence of D. Pedro, heir to the Crown, still in Brazil in the position of Prince Regent. Bonifacio chose this path. In this space, it is not a matter of delving into the intense political articulation that led to independence in 1822, with Bonifácio as its key political figure. For now, suffice it to say that he became Minister of State while still in the Regency and later became the most important figure at the beginning of the First Empire. However, his time in the government was as intense as it was fleeting: consumed by his reform agenda and by countless

²⁴ Emília V. da Costa (p. 41) (free traduction of the authors). "Longe de revelar intenções separatistas, aceitava o princípio da integridade e indissolubilidade do Reino Unido, assegurada, a representação das cortes gerais e ordinárias. Tratava de ressaltar princípios liberais, procurando preservar as vantagens conquistadas pelo Brasil desde 1808, em particular a autonomia administrativa. Recomendava a criação de uma universidade, a multiplicação das escolas, a fundação no interior de uma cidade para ser sede do governo, com o fito de estimular o desenvolvimento do sertão. Fazia ainda sugestões para o desenvolvimento da mineração, a civilização dos índios, a colonização, a emancipação dos escravos".

setbacks and confrontations with the Emperor and a good part of the Brazilian elite, who ended up being arrested and deported in 1823, when, already out of the government, he was a deputy in the Constituent Assembly. Not three years had passed since his election to the São Paulo Board.

Before exile, from which he would only return with the deposition of D. Pedro I, Bonifácio made his main contribution to Brazilian abolitionism with the delivery of the *Representação à Assembleia Geral Constituinte e Legislativa do Império do Brasil sobre a Escravatura* (Representation to the Constituent and Legislative General Assembly of the Empire of Brazil on Slavery), in 1823²⁵. Another text, *Regimento sobre a escravatura* (Rules of Slavery), apparently written shortly before independence, comprises the main writings specifically on slavery, the problems it caused, the reasons and the way in which it should be suppressed.

Such contributions, as well as "Memories and Notes", are part of an intellectual and political project that has two complementary axes: the configuration of an independent State and a Brazilian nation. The first, Bonifácio believes, should be based on the consolidation of the unity of the territory and the centralization of power in a constitutional monarchy. The second, more difficult than the first, raised the need both to amalgamate this new nation from the different populations that inhabited the territory under the Empire's jurisdiction, and to civilize them, in an Enlightenment perspective. The issue of homogenization takes on great importance in José Bonifácio's view. For him, Brazil is a country with strong racial heterogeneity, aggravated by internal enmities (against indigenous people, against slaves), which undermines the very idea of nationality. Proposals such as the valorization of miscegenation, the end of slavery and indigenous integration would be fundamental to the objective of building a Brazilian nation.

In his *Representation to the Constituent Assembly*, Bonifácio makes an explicit request to imagine a nation without slavery, even if this is achieved gradually and with care. For him, it had been the interest of the old metropolis to keep Brazil disunited and unprotected, when it was a colony. Slavery was one of the elements that led to a potentially conflictive internal situation, in addition to preventing a possible union of the Brazilian population. Now, with independence, it would be necessary to overcome this fragility and build a homogeneous nation, which would allow the country to maintain itself and its progress.²⁶ The conflict would open the door to foreign questioning and internal

uprisings that would put the nation at risk. On the other hand, the persistence of situations of internal and external vulnerability would hamper progress. These are the main arguments to support the ideas that "without the end of trafficking and slavery, Brazil will never establish its national independence" and/or "slavery is the cancer that gnaws at the bowels of Brazil and is the poison that makes unfeasible nationality" (Bonifácio, 1825), found in the aforementioned representation and according to Carvalho (1999).

The classic anti-slavery arguments are presented throughout the text of the "Representation" like those associated with natural law or the question of not having, in principle, differences between peoples that justify slavery. In it, we find the famous Bonifacian phrase: "But what justice has a man to steal the freedom of another man and, what is worse, of the children of that man, and of the children of these children?" In Bonifácio's own answer to the question, he takes a stand on the issue of property rights. According to him, they would be natural rights. However, what cannot be admitted is that the property was given to another human being. The defenders of slavery, according to Bonifácio, "it is not, therefore, the right of property that they want to defend, it is the right of force since man cannot be a thing, he cannot be an object of property".

In addition to the idea of equality in principle that condemns the idea of one man's property over another, the Christian inversion that slavery is the source of immorality and vices can also be found in "Representation". It is worth mentioning the concept that slavery not only inoculates moral vices, of conscience but also throws the manorial class into idleness, stagnation, and immobility. (Barros, 2008). In this sense, Bonifácio says that "luxury and corruption are born among us before civilization and industry. And what will be the main cause of such an amazing phenomenon? Slavery, masters, slavery, for the man who counts on the newspapers of his slaves lives in indolence, and indolence brings all vices after it".

The economic perception of the difficulties, waste, and high costs of slavery, especially with aspects such as control and security, hindering the country's economic progress, is also presented, as well as the possible advantage of replacing slave labor with free labor due to these costs and the lack of stimuli from the slave system is highlighted. The introduction of machines and artifacts in farming, in addition to immigration, are presented as alternatives to the problem of lack of hands that could arise from the end of slavery.

Furthermore, there would be the prospect that these freedmen - gradually emancipated - would become more stimulated producers, which would mitigate eventual problems in production. The fear that these new producers could compete with the already

²⁵ This Representation was published in France, in 1825, and in England, in 1826. It was later reproduced in different places in Brazil. Here we use the French publication of 1825.

²⁶ Bonifácio try to leave the blame for slavery and its ills to Portugal. According to him, "no nation, perhaps, has sinned more against humanity than the Portuguese".

established farms is allayed by Bonifácio. He argues that these former slaves would hardly have been able to establish properties with comparable productivity. He also claims that they could be incorporated either as free workers or as smallholders in agricultural colonies producing non-competing goods. Here, an important side of Bonifácio's sometimes dubious position: the transformation of freedmen into citizens. However, these would end up having a secondary position in society, even if efforts were undertaken by the government to prevent these inequalities from being too high. In any case, the main issue for Bonifácio was to eliminate from the future perspective the reasons that could lead to large-scale social upheavals. Again, the end of slavery was important to increase the homogeneity of the nation.

Slavery impeded national formation for three reasons: because it introduced an internal enemy and jeopardized internal security; for making the formation of an army unfeasible and, thus, threatening external security; for being incompatible with individual liberty and liberal government. In the latter case, the existence of non-free elements among the nationals is highlighted, as well as the existence of a power relationship between the free and the non-free, which reduced society's ability to control its members. In other words, slavery meant that the power of the State was reduced both over slaves, who were private property, and over the free, especially masters, who had, in practice, jurisdiction over lands and people.

The transformation of slaves into citizens would also allow Bonifácio to transform into allies those who were, at the time, internal enemies. Even though natural law theses are present, it is Haitianism, the risk of slavery or the fear of living with opponents who may definitively rebel, that drives the idea of the impossibility of building a nation on such bases. The same fear of an internal war based on "racial" differences we saw in Bolívar.

However, moving away from Bolívar, the form taken by the proposal to eradicate slavery brings José Bonifácio closer to the emancipators or moderate abolitionists and, at times, he is even confused with the reformers. Bonifácio defends a gradual eradication:

"I say again that I do not want slavery to be abolished suddenly, such an event would bring great harm. In order to emancipate slaves without prejudice to society, we must first make them worthy of freedom, we must be forced by reason and law to gradually convert them from vile slaves into free and active men"²⁷.

²⁷ Bonifácio (1825) (free traduction of the authors). "Torno a dizer que não desejo que seja abolida de repente a escravidão, tal acontecimento traria consigo grandes males. Para emancipar escravos sem prejuízo da sociedade cumpre faze-los primeiramente dignos de liberdade, cumpre que sejamos forçados pela razão e pela lei a convertê-los gradativamente de vis escravos em homens livres e ativos".

An absolute, one-time eradication is seen as harmful. Obviously, he agrees that this would destabilize the national productive system, and it would be necessary to allow time for it to prepare for the new conditions. On the other hand, it was also necessary to prepare the ground for the transformation of slaves into freedmen and citizens. In this case, it would be necessary to undertake changes in other institutions in the country and in a preparation made directly on the slaves themselves, in addition to that carried out on the masters who would no longer have this condition.

Thus, in Bonifácio's strategy, at first, it would be necessary to review the "master-slave" relations to reduce the power of the former over the latter. Such relationships should be regulated by the state. By withdrawing prerogatives from the masters, the State would be able to reduce arbitrariness, limit exploitation and submit disputes and the slave himself to its own jurisdiction. In this way, abolition is also a condition for the construction of the centralized State, reducing the very powers of the great Brazilian landowners. On the other hand, the decrease in discretion tended to decrease slave resistance and, from this point of view, would prevent internal rebellions and revolts.

Even though careful and progressive - aimed at constituent deputies who were slave owners and traffickers - the proposal for the abolition of slavery in Brazil made by José Bonifácio did not have legal tender. It was abandoned with the closing of the constituent itself by the loyal military and D. Pedro I in that same year of 1823. It will take decades for even abolitionist gradualism to be resumed in Brazil. In Bonifácio's period, provisions against trafficking were taken, but they became a dead letter²⁸. His arguments (and his own image), however, were taken up by abolitionists and were present in campaigns in this direction throughout the 19th century.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As we have seen, the abolitionisms of Bolívar and Bonifácio have a more political and humanitarian character. Bolívar was a leader convinced of the evils of slavery and, when he acted in the wars for independence, he promoted abolition without gradualism, although he conditioned the liberation to the incorporation of the former slave in the ranks of the Liberation Army. This condition was not, in Bolívar's thinking, the result of a restrictive view of abolition, but a military imperative. For Bonifácio, on the other hand, the issue of slavery was an obstacle to the constitution of a nation and a difficulty in terms of internal and external security, as well as a problem in terms of progress and the realization of a homogeneous power in society.

²⁸ The eradication of the international slave trade occurs in Brazil in fact only in the 1850s.

There is a turning point in Bolivarian reflection on slavery, in which what was a political conviction became an elementary part of his program for independence and of his conception of society that would emerge in America after the victory against the Empire: his passage through Haiti, in 1816. When he returned to the continent, Bolívar placed the end of slavery as a central element of his legislative and political work. In his view, republicanism, of which he was an adherent, was not compatible with the existence of slaves. Isonomy was a flag with which, in an America of Spanish colonization stratified in "caste", one could not compromise (Salcedo-Bastardo, 1977, 113).

Haiti, in particular Haitianism, is a landmark in Bonifacio's thought, but this is due to fear, and the difficulty that slave resistance can cause to the construction and maintenance of a nation. Bonifacio's abolitionism is quite moderate, and gradual and is eminently concerned with eradicating the sources of tension in the development of the new nation.

However, the abolitionism of Bolívar and his political group was as radical as it was ineffective. On the other hand, gradualism and Bonifacio's care did not have a better impact. Bolívar issued several abolition decrees and proposed constitutions in the same sense, going further: former slaves would also be citizens. But the strength of the big landowners prevailed. The same happens in Brazil and the destiny of the "Representação" presented by Bonifácio to the Constituent Assembly of 1823 is to become a reference for the later debates. The determinations of Bonifácio and Bolívar were either simply ignored, outside the law, or they were mitigated by the deputies of the new republics.

In other words, abolitionism was a banner of the Liberation Army and a part of the intellectuals of the new continent, fighting other local interests, and not unanimity among all the sectors that inherited America after the wars of emancipation. To a large extent, Bolívar's distrust of the Congresses that would meet and his insistence on institutionalizing the power of the force that brought about independence (which earned him the accusation of anti-liberalism) was due to the perception that the heart of the Army's project Liberator would not be implemented. Bonifácio was also accused of "despotism", even though he believed more than Bolívar that he could convince the legislators toward abolition.

Both of them, both trained in the Enlightenment, were convinced of the unsuitability of that institution and sought, based on their means and historical contexts, to abolish it. The strength of the three hundred years of slavery in America, engendering strong interests, is demonstrated in the face of the refusal and violence of those who finally inherited power in the new States, against the two leaders of independence.

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