
IMPERIAL *French Decree, abolishing the Slave Trade.*
29th March, 1815.

Napoléon, Empereur des Français. Nos Ministres d'Etat entendus, nous avons décrété et décrétons ce qui suit :

I. A dater de la publication du présent Décret, la Traite des Noirs est abolie.

Il ne sera accordé aucune expédition pour ce commerce, ni dans les ports de France, ni dans ceux de nos colonies.

II. Il ne pourra être introduit, pour être vendu dans nos colonies, aucun Noir provenant de la Traite, soit Française, soit étrangère.

III. La contravention au présent Décret sera punie de la confiscation du bâtiment et de la cargaison, laquelle sera prononcée par nos cours et tribunaux.

IV. Néanmoins, les armateurs qui auraient fait partir, avant la publication du présent Décret, des expéditions pour la Traite, pourront en vendre le produit dans nos colonies.

V. Nos Ministres sont chargés de l'exécution du présent Décret.

Au Palais des Tuileries, le 29 Mars, 1815.

NAPOLÉON.

Par l'Empereur, le Ministre Secrétaire d'Etat.

LE DUC DE BASSANO.

(Translation.)

Napoleon, Emperor of the French. Our Ministers of State having been heard, we have decreed, and do decree as follows :

I. From the date of the publication of the present Decree, the trade in Negroes is abolished.

No vessel shall be permitted to fit out for this trade, either in the ports of France, or in those of our colonies.

II. There shall not be introduced, to be sold in our colonies, any Negro from this trade, whether it be French or foreign.

III. Any infraction of this Decree shall be punished by the confiscation of the ship and cargo, which shall be pronounced by our courts and tribunals.

IV. The ship-owners, however, who, before the publication of the present Decree, shall have fitted out expeditions for the trade, may sell the produce in our colonies.

V. Our Ministers are charged with the execution of the present Decree.

At the Palace of the Tuileries, 29th March, 1815.

NAPOLEON.

By the Emperor, the Minister Secretary of State.

THE DUKE OF BASSANO.

PROTOCOLE of the 15th Conference, between the Ministers of the Allied Powers of Austria, Great Britain, Prussia, and Russia, relative to the Slave Trade carried on by French Subjects. Paris, 26th July, 1815. (Extract.)

M. le Principal Secrétaire d'Etat de Sa Majesté Britannique, Vicomte de Castlereagh, par suite de la communication qu'il a fait à la Conférence, de l'Ordre adressé à l'Amirauté de suspendre les hostilités contre les côtes de la France, observe qu'il y a lieu de prévoir que des armateurs Français pourraient se livrer à entreprendre de nouveau la Traite des Nègres, dans la croyance que l'abolition absolue et totale décrétée par Napoléon Bonaparte vient à cesser avec son pouvoir; que cependant de grandes et fortes considérations prises dans les motifs d'humanité et dans l'intérêt même de l'autorité du Roi, invitent à ne pas différer de maintenir en France l'abolition entière et immédiate du Commerce des Noirs; que, si, à l'époque du Traité de Paris, le Ministère du Roi a pu désirer que la cessation de ce commerce ne fut amenée que graduellement dans un intervalle de 5 ans, pour donner au Roi l'avantage d'avoir ménagé les intérêts de la classe de Français, propriétaires dans les colonies, maintenant que la défense absolue a été établie, la question se présente tout différemment,

que, si le Roi revoquoit cette défense il se donnerait le desavantage d'autoriser dans l'intérieur de la France le reproche qui plus d'une fois a été fait à son ancien Gouvernement, de favoriser les réactions et d'autoriser en même temps au dehors, et nommément en Angleterre, l'opinion d'une opposition systématique aux idées libérales: qu'ainsi le moment parait venu où les Alliés ne doivent pas hésiter à donner en France un appui formel à l'interdiction immédiate et entière du Commerce des Noirs, interdiction dont la nécessité a été reconnue en principe dans les transactions du Congrès de Vienne*.

Les autres Membres de la Conférence partagent entièrement l'opinion de M. le Vicomte de Castlereagh, et pour en amener la décision de la manière la plus avantageuse au profit de l'autorité et de la considération du Roi, on est convenu qu'il serait préférable de faire les observations qui précèdent, l'objet d'une communication verbale au Roi et à son Ministère, afin de porter Sa Majesté à faire cette disposition de son propre mouvement, et lui laisser l'avantage d'une initiative qui écartera au dedans du Royaume l'idée d'une tendance à la réaction, et conciliera au Roi dans les pays étrangers, les suffrages des partisans des idées libérales.

Il sera fait, en conséquence, une insinuation confidentielle au Roi.

NESSELRODE.
METTERNICH.

HUMBOLDT.
CASTLEREAGH.

(Translation.)

Viscount Castlereagh, His Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State, in reference to the communication he has made to the Conference, of the order addressed to the Admiralty, to suspend all hostilities against the coasts of France, observes, that there is reason to foresee that French ship-owners might be induced to renew the Slave Trade, under the supposition that the absolute and total abolition decreed by Napoleon Bonaparte, had ceased with his power; that, nevertheless, great and powerful considerations, arising from motives of

* See Vol. I. Page 2.

humanity, and even of regard for the King's authority, require that no time should be lost to ensure in France, the entire and immediate abolition of the traffic in Slaves; that if, at the time of the Treaty of Paris, the King's administration wished that a final but gradual stop should be put to this trade, in the space of 5 years, for the purpose of affording the King the gratification of having consulted, as much as possible, the interests of the French proprietors in the colonies, now that the absolute prohibition has been ordained, the question assumes an entirely different shape, for, if the King were to revoke the said prohibition, he would give himself the disadvantage of authorising, in the interior of France, the reproach which, more than once, has been thrown out against his former Government, of countenancing re-actions, and, at the same time, justifying, out of France, and particularly in England, the belief of a systematic opposition to liberal ideas; that, accordingly, the time seems to have arrived when the Allies cannot hesitate to give their decided support in France to the immediate and entire prohibition of the Slave Trade, a prohibition, the necessity of which has been acknowledged in principle, in the transactions of the Congress at Vienna*.

The other Members of the Conference entirely coincide in opinion with Viscount Castlereagh, and, in order to attain this end in the manner the most advantageous to the authority and consideration of the King, it is agreed that it would be advisable to make the preceding observations the subject of a verbal communication to the King and to his administration, in order that His Majesty may be induced voluntarily to make the arrangement in question, and thus reap the advantage of a step, which will remove the idea in the interior of the kingdom of a tendency towards re-action, and will conciliate to the King, in foreign countries, the suffrages of the partisans of liberal ideas.

A confidential representation is to be made to the King accordingly.

NESSELRODE.
HUMBOLDT.

METTERNICH.
CASTLEREAGH.

* See Vol. I. Page 9.

NOTES CONSEQUENT UPON THE PRECEDING CONFERENCE.

(1.) *Viscount Castlereagh to Prince Talleyrand.*

MON PRINCE,

Paris, July 27, 1815.

The Official Order to the Admiralty, which I had the honour of transmitting to your Highness on the 25th, having suspended hostilities against the coast of France, and against French ships carrying the White Flag, I have been directed by my Court, without delay, to call your attention to the necessity of guarding, under these circumstances, against any possible revival of the Slave Trade.

The British Government conceive that under the operation of the Law of France, as it now stands, it is strictly prohibited to French subjects to carry on a traffic in Slaves; and that nothing but a specific Ordinance could again revive that commerce: but, whether this be the true construction or not of the state of the law in a technical sense, they feel persuaded that His Most Christian Majesty will never lend his authority to revive a system of this nature, which has been, *de facto*, abolished.

I have desired Sir Charles Stuart to communicate to your Highness what passed on this subject at Ghent: the assurance the King was at that time pleased to give to the British Ambassador, entirely tranquillized the Prince Regent's Ministers on this subject; but, now that His Majesty has been happily restored to his throne, they are most anxious to be enabled at once to relieve the solicitude of the British nation, by declaring, that the King, relieved by the state in which this measure now stands, from those considerations of reserve which before influenced his conduct, does not hesitate to consider that question as now for ever closed, in conformity with those benevolent principles which are at all times congenial with the natural feelings of His Majesty's breast.

I have the honour to be, &c.

His Excellency Prince Talleyrand.

CASTLEREAGH.

(2.) *Prince Talleyrand to Viscount Castlereagh.*

MILORD,

Paris, le 30 Juillet, 1815.

J'ai l'honneur d'annoncer à Votre Excellence, que le Roi, en suite de la conversation qu'il a eu avec Sir Charles Stuart,

et de la lettre qu'elle m'a fait l'honneur de m'écrire le 27 de ce mois, a donné des ordres pour que, de la part de la France, le trafic des Esclaves cesse dès à présent, partout et pour toujours.

Ce qui avait été fait à cet égard par l'Usurpateur était d'abord nul, comme tous ses Actes, et de plus lui avait été visiblement dicté par des motifs d'intérêt tout personnel, et par des espérances que cet homme n'aurait point conçues s'il eut été capable d'apprécier le Gouvernement et le Peuple Britannique. Cela n'était par conséquent, et ne pouvait être, d'aucun poids pour Sa Majesté.

Mais c'était à regret que, l'an dernier, elle avait stipulé la continuation de la Traite pendant quelques Années. Elle ne l'avait fait que parceque d'un côté, elle savait qu'il y avait sur ce point en France des préjugés qu'il était alors utile de ménager, et que, de l'autre, on ne pouvait pas assigner avec précision quel tems suffirait pour les détruire.

Depuis ils ont été combattus dans plusieurs ouvrages, et avec assez de succès, pour que Sa Majesté ait aujourd'hui la satisfaction de pouvoir suivre librement son propre penchant, surtout après que des recherches, faites avec le plus grand soin, ont prouvé que la prospérité des colonies Françaises n'étant point compromise par l'abolition immédiate de la Traite, cette abolition n'était point contraire aux intérêts de ses sujets, intérêts qu'elle doit avant tout consulter. Cette satisfaction est accrue par l'idée qu'elle fait en même tems une chose agréable au Gouvernement et au Peuple Anglais.

Agréez, Milord, l'assurance, &c.

LE PRINCE DE TALLEYRAND.

Son Excellence Le Vicomte Castlereagh, &c.

(Translation.)

MY LORD,

Paris, July 30, 1815.

I have the honour to acquaint your Excellency, that the King, in consequence of the conversation which he had with Sir Charles Stuart, and of the letter which your Excellency did me the honour to write to me on the 27th instant, has issued directions, in order that, on the part of France, the traffic in slaves may cease from the present time, everywhere and for ever.

What had been done in this respect by the Usurper, was in the first place null and void, as were all his Acts, and moreover had been evidently dictated to him by personal motives of interest, and by hopes, which he could never have conceived, had he been capable of appreciating the British Government and people. It had not, therefore, and could not have, any weight with His Majesty.

It was with regret, that, last year, His Majesty stipulated for the continuance of the traffic for a few years. He did so, only because, on the one hand, he was aware that on this point there existed prejudices in France, which it was at that time advisable to soothe; and that, on the other hand, it was not possible to ascertain with precision, what length of time it would require to remove them.

Since that period these prejudices have been combated in several publications, and with such effect as to afford His Majesty, this day, the satisfaction of following, without reserve, the dictates of his inclination, the more so, since it has been proved, by inquiries made with the greatest care, that, the prosperity of the French Colonies not being compromised by the immediate abolition of the trade, the said abolition is not contrary to the interests of his subjects, interests which, above all, His Majesty feels himself bound to consult. This satisfaction is increased by the idea, that His Majesty, at the same time, does what is agreeable to the English Government and people.

Accept, My Lord, the assurance, &c.

THE PRINCE DE TALLEYRAND.

His Excellency Viscount Castlereagh, &c.
