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The Other Side Of Slave Revolts

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Without fail, whenever slave revolts erupted in the British West Indian colonies in the nineteenth century after the passing of the act which abolished the British Slave Trade in 1807, attacks against anti-slavery intensified. The series of preparatory steps which the abolitionists attempted to persuade parliament to adopt as a means of reforming the evils of the slavery system were identified as the source of those calamitous events that interrupted life in the colonial plantation societies. Charles Buxton observed that the anti-slavery campaigners were "... opposed by the West Indians, deserted by the government and deemed enthusiasts by the public."¹ Furthermore, with each fresh outbreak, the ranks of anti-slavery dwindled as "... their lukewarm partisans left them at once."²

In the initial attempt to resolve the dilemma created by the overwhelming blend of slavery reform, slave revolts and planter accusation, the abolitionists made it a priority to clear their names. They vehemently refused to take responsibility for sparking off the revolts and insisted that their approach to the slavery question was very gradual, thus safe. They emphasised that they had never supported forced, violent and immediate emancipation of the slaves. So powerfully irresistible and so appropriate were the experiences of the rebels to the anti-slavery argument, however, that the abolitionists found it impossible to brush them completely aside. The revolutionary activities of the slaves introduced a new and formidable challenge to the slavery question that the campaigners were forced to confront and resolve.

The dominant historiographical perspective on anti-slavery and slave revolts, nevertheless, is that slave revolts whipped the campaigners into silence. It has been asserted, for example, that "The slaves themselves were effectively ignored by Wilberforce and other humanitarians"³ and that "No one dared to defend in public the action of the slaves."⁴ In reference to the impact of the Barbados revolt on the anti-slavery campaign, Coupland comments that "... the slaves themselves made a present to their masters of a stick to beat their friends with."⁵

Contrary to the prevailing assessments regarding the use made by the nineteenth century British anti-slavery campaigners and the slave revolts in the British West Indian colonies which erupted in the same period, this paper aims to demonstrate that slave revolts were an important line of communication through which the voice of the slave moved the pens and the tongues of the abolitionists. The paper will focus on the manner in which the abolitionists realised that it was in their interest to defend, sympathise with and conceptualise the self liberating efforts of the slaves. Because they were intimidated by the uncomfortable position into which slave revolts had forced them and because a defence of the action of the slaves advantageously served the humanitarian reform programme, the substance of their speeches reveal neither a condemnation of the rebels nor an expression of sympathy for planters. In the main,

British anti-slavery was forced to come to terms with the rebel's perspective of a slave revolt.

The paper shall focus on the three major slave revolts of the nineteenth century; the Barbados revolt of 1816, the Demerara revolt of 1823 and the Jamaican revolt of 1831-1832. It shall consider how three leading abolitionists; Wilberforce, Brougham and Buxton, scrutinised and analysed these events taking place in the colonies and were led into telling what was effectively the rebel's side of the story.

A Logical Choice

When news of the Barbados revolt of April 14, 1816 reached the British public and parliament, it seemed that indeed the slaves' actions would backfire and that their anti-slavery friends could formulate no effective response that could keep them afloat in the anti-slavery struggle. *The London Times*, among other publications, had followed the events closely and by June 4, 1816 it produced its first article on the revolt. Approximately on six occasions within the month of June, coverage in the form of reports from the Barbados governor, Sir James Leith, extracts from letters, editorials and excerpts from the *Barbados Mercury and Barbados Gazette* provided details. Pro-planter items dominated the coverage. The abolitionists were daubed as "... men with diabolical motives."⁶

The Registry Bill, which Wilberforce introduced in 1815 to prevent the smuggling of slaves into the colonies and to ensure that improved treatment of the slaves followed the abolition of the trade, was viewed as the main culprit. One article in *The London Times* dated June 4, 1816 concluded that the Registry Bill threatened the "... peace and safety of the colonies" and was tantamount to an "... impolitic interference by the home government between the local legislatures and the slaves."⁷

Only one of the many articles in *The London Times*, represented comments on the revolt by the anti-slavery body. It was in the form of a House of Commons extract on a motion raised by William Wilberforce.⁸ He was quoted as saying, "He did not wish to agitate the subject or to enter fully into the state of the island."⁹ Wilberforce was also quoted as declaring in a most emphatically self-exculpatory manner that, "Whatever happened had no reference to himself or his friends, he had no share in creating the explosion that had been felt; he washed his hands clean of the blood that was spilt."¹⁰

The words of Wilberforce reflected a strenuous determination to disassociate the movement from the counter-productive activities of the slaves in Barbados. He wished all to be reminded that the radical, chaotic and destructive dimensions of revolt ran counter to the campaign's principles and methods. In his general description of the abolitionists, David Turley notes that they were the "... middle-class, religious, liberal segment of the bourgeois by the nineteenth century. They had a sense of appropriateness in balancing liberty and control, civilisation and barbarism within England and the wider world."¹¹ Anti-slavery's repudiation of the revolutionary method was a true reflection of the principles to which they were committed. By 1824, Brougham put the matter squarely when he referred to "... those fatal proceedings, which all of us, however we may differ as to the causes from which they originated, must unfeignedly deplore."¹²

Wilberforce was anxious to counter the virulent attacks of the pro-planter faction. He reminded the House that while he and his friends were accused of instigating the slaves to "...take free by force [since they were] actually made free, but their manumissions were improperly held from them,"¹³ at this stage of the campaign, emancipation of the slaves was not the avowed objective of the abolitionists.

He provided evidence of the cautious paths to slavery reform chosen by the abolitionists. He recalled that in 1792 when Mr Burke had called for bolder, more concrete legislature to safeguard the well being of the slaves, he himself had opposed the suggestion since "...the friends of abolition had been satisfied with the general measure of abolition, to which they looked as the grand object of their solicitude."¹⁴ The sum of the plan which the abolitionists had embraced by 1815, Wilberforce asserted, was "... the abolition of the slave trade with a view to produce the amelioration of the slaves; that we might see the West Indies

cultivated by a happy peasantry, instead of being cultivated by slaves."¹⁵

The motive in reiterating the conservative agenda of anti-slavery following the Barbados revolt of 1816 was undoubtedly self-defence. The abolitionists emphasised that they had always adhered to a policy of slave reform that would prevent the outbreak of slave revolts. That reiteration, however, was not a full manifestation of their reflections on an experience over which they had no control and which subjected anti-slavery to a position of great vulnerability.

The extract from *The London Times*, did not do justice to the full range of Wilberforce's attempt to come to terms with what the slaves had done in Barbados. It created a misleading impression. It seemed that the anti-slavery campaigners succeeded merely in exonerating themselves by denying the accusation that their reform measures stirred the slaves to revolutionary action. The report completely omitted the sympathetic light in which Wilberforce felt compelled to portray the rebels when he did directly refer to them. In its commentary, the *Times* also failed to recognise that in one section of his speech, Wilberforce strongly suggested that the rebels were not as senseless as the planters had imagined. When he took the turn of blaming the planters for setting off the rumour syndrome that both he and they agreed precipitated the insurrection, anti-slavery made its first steps in admitting that there was some measure of justice in the actions of the rebels.

Many racist conceptions about the African slave were generated during slavery. Prominent among these was the belief in the ignorance of the Negro. Even those who worked among the slaves were influenced by this notion. The rector of St Paul's Antigua was quoted as explaining the low attendance of the slaves at church through this logic. "Let it be remembered that the slaves are in a state of the grossest ignorance; that their minds are totally destitute of all cultivation."¹⁶ In his marathon speech of four hours in the House of Commons on June 1, 1824, Brougham ironically questioned the acceptance of the evidence of slaves by the very masters who usually regarded the slave as the "... poor, rude, untutored African."¹⁷ Buxton admitted the vicious circle in which even he as an abolitionist was forced to argue about the condition of the slave. He noted, "We make the man worthless, and, because he is worthless, we retain him as a slave. We make him a brute, and then allege his brutality, the valid reason for withholding his rights."¹⁸

Judging from the analysis of the argument that Wilberforce put forward accusing the planters of stimulating the spread of the rumour syndrome among the slaves, he strongly suggested that he believed that the planters were fooled by their belief in the ignorance of the Negroes. Wilberforce insisted that the Registry Bill of itself could not have caused the slaves to rebel for it mentioned nothing about freedom. He argued that the local newspaper reports and "... the violence with which the proprietors expressed themselves on the subject ..., even in the presence of their slaves, on the effects of the registry bill [created the Barbados catastrophe]."¹⁹ He produced evidence to demonstrate the extent of the carelessness of the planters and the degree to which they apparently took for granted the belief that the slaves would not or could not interpret in their own way the discussions bandied about in the air. The planters had printed in their papers, Wilberforce noted, that the abolitionists were "... going to make the slaves free and suggested the possibility of black risings."²⁰ As far as Wilberforce was concerned, the planters of Barbados were the cause of their own undoing. Their misrepresentations, exaggerations and predictions of the intentions of the abolitionists encouraged the slaves, who were not altogether senseless, to tally the score by their own calculations and to take the initiative of revolt.

In blaming the planters' unwise reaction to the Registry Bill for the cause of the revolt, Wilberforce had indirectly conceded that the abolitionists, who had sponsored the bill, were not entirely exempt from guilt. Barbados, as Wilberforce was aware, despite conspiracies and disorders, had only one major revolt. Finding a convincing argument to refute that which was proposed by the planters was very difficult. Wilberforce could not easily dismiss the taunting words of Mr Barham:

They will never be able to persuade one man besides themselves of a statement so glaringly untrue... They may gloss it over to themselves as they do to others; but there will be a moment

when that 'still small voice', which is an inhabitant of every bosom, will be heard, and will tell them; this has been your work.²¹

What is significant about the words of Mr Barham as far as the influence of revolts on anti-slavery is concerned is that the defiance of the abolitionists appeared unbelievable. Whereas it was expected that anti-slavery would wilt under the pressure of revolts, the campaigners engaged in arguments which seemed in violation of all conscience. To the incredulity of their opponents, the abolitionists credited the slaves with some degree of intelligence. Not only were the planters, rather than the abolitionists to be censured for the slaves' conduct in Barbados, they were also the ones at this time who manifested poverty of judgement. The committee of the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions substantiated this argument of Wilberforce in this manner:

Those very discussions, which, when they took place in this country, were denounced as sure to produce the most disastrous results in the West Indies, have been uniformly republished and circulated in the newspapers of the different colonies ... It is surely too much, then, for the West Indians, under such circumstances, to object to the public discussion of slavery in England, as pregnant with danger to the peace of the colonies.²²

Significantly, the abolitionists as well as the planters in this game of passing the blame, secured for the rebels the admission that the decision taken by the slaves of Barbados to resort to rebellion was an option suggested by logic. Through revolt, the message that the slaves were not as ignorant as had been conceived had been registered both in the colonies and in Britain.

Pressed but an Intolerable Weight

A still more direct and slave centred depiction of revolts emerged from Wilberforce's speech in 1816 than has been generally acknowledged. Perhaps not satisfied that the line of demarcation between anti-slavery and revolts was clearly established and apparently smarting under the cutting words of Mr Barham which he would have anticipated, he confessed that the revolt represented " ... a conduct which, though it was to be lamented, and could not be justified, nevertheless admitted of explanation."²³ In an attempt to exonerate his party of abolitionists from the recriminations of the planters, Wilberforce looked to the suffering of the slaves. Instead of washing his hands clean of the rebels and condemning their counterproductive actions, he furnished an explanation for their motives. In his view, the slaves of Barbados revolted because "... that degraded race[was] pressed with a weight which they felt intolerable."²⁴ They were pushed into an act of desperation by "... a class of people that did not so much consult the feelings or comforts of the slaves as in our other colonies."²⁵

This certainly fitted into the classic humanitarian argument of condemning examples of slavery's evil. It is ironic, nevertheless, that Wilberforce, in attempting to throw off the scourge of rebellion which incriminated the campaign that he directed, found refuge in rallying to the side of the very rebels whose actions embarrassed him and which he spurned. The rebels had taken the initiative in making the abolitionists their allies in rebellion, a move which the latter did not appreciate at all. By accident and almost unconsciously, however, the saints led by Wilberforce had returned the favour when they themselves were desperately searching for an ally against the attacks of the planters. Wilberforce reasoned, just like the rebel undoubtedly would if he could, that in slavery lay the evil which prompted the irresistible urge to rebellion.

Referring to the papers which were laid before the House reporting on the Barbadian incident, Wilberforce captured the desperation of the slaves.

They had no temptation to revolt from the peculiar nature of the country furnishing them with the means of concealment, nor could they have any sanguine hopes of success from the disproportion between themselves and the white inhabitants. There were no mountains, forest or great

inequalities of surface in the island, and there was a considerable military force.²⁶

Eliminating all odds, he came to the conclusion that "... impatience under suffering, rather than hopes from revolt, might be supposed to have stimulated the conduct they pursued."²⁷

Current historiography supports the perspective that anti-slavery was mute on the subject of revolts. The West India interest, however, vehemently asserted that Wilberforce's examination of the Barbados revolt of 1816 had the vexatious effect of softening the blow struck by the rebels. Mr Pallmer, speaking immediately after Wilberforce, charged that, "That speech had pathetically described all the evils, which had been ever supposed to belong to the colonial system, whilst it had lightly touched upon the ruined families, the desolated property and the lives lost in Barbados, and it had concluded with a jocularity which he (Mr Pallmer) thought was not very suited to either subject."²⁸

The planters pointed out what was conspicuously absent from the speeches of the abolitionists on the slave revolts of the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. Their voices were raised in defence of and empathy with rebels attempting to shake off the onerous chains of slavery. They failed, however, to highlight the onset of whites emigrating from the colonies, depreciation of plantation properties, checks to colonial investments, the suspension of trading transactions, the threat to the safety of the whites in the colonies and the expense incurred each time the militia was summoned to suppress the revolts.²⁹

Of course the planters challenged Wilberforce's suggestion that the slaves revolted because of the material deprivations under which they laboured. John Beckles, speaker of the Assembly of Barbados at the time of the insurrection, had declared, "... the slaves had comfortable homes, were well fed and clothed and were well taken care of both in sickness and in health and were not overworked."³⁰ The report of the committee appointed by the local assembly to investigate the causes of the revolt also dismissed Wilberforce's material deprivation thesis. It claimed that the harvest in crops in 1816 was abundant especially in St Phillip where the revolt began and that a liberal allowance of corn and other provisions were proffered to the negroes.³¹

Better treatment of slaves, however, was no guarantee against rebellion. As Craton has argued, "The most privileged slaves were the least contented with their socio-economic lot."³² This knowledge reinforces the view that a number of factors, both those identified by the planters and by the abolitionists, whose relative significance are not easily determined were responsible for the outbreak of those nineteenth century slave revolts.

Wilberforce had asserted that, "He did not wish to agitate the subject or to enter fully into the state of the island."³³ He ended, however, by confessing that "... he had even gone farther than he had intended when he entered the House."³⁴ It seemed almost that in spite of himself and his principles, and certainly beyond the wildest expectations of his opponents, he had acted as spokesman for the rebels.

One Remarkable Circumstance

Henry Brougham's marathon speech of four hours duration on the condemnation and trial of missionary John Smith in 1823 continued in the pattern established by Wilberforce. While the examination of that trial was for the stated purpose of declaring the innocence of Smith and denouncing the court-martial that sentenced him, Brougham focused significantly on the revolt itself. He acknowledged that the Demerara revolt of 1823 was "... distinguished [by] one remarkable circumstance."³⁵ That circumstance was the conduct of the slaves. To the planters who were now confident that they had finally cornered the abolitionists whose intervention between themselves and their slaves had created this inexcusable, unanswerable disaster, this declaration may have sounded like high treason. An editorial in *The London Times* on the Demerara revolt included an extract expressing the planters' opinion on the matter:

They have put the knives at our throats, and if the blow is not struck, we shall not be indebted for our escape to either their good will or forbearance... for the chance of obtaining a possible good, they are promoting an immediate and positive evil.³⁶

Anti-slavery was indeed in a vulnerable position; a position which seemed to fortify the view that "Slave revolts brought sympathy for planters not for emancipation."³⁷ The tumultuous clamour that was raised against the campaigners, however, did not feature in the studious considerations of Brougham on the Demerara revolt of 1823. He left the opposition to take care of themselves. Apart from the attention which John Smith occupied in the House of Commons debate of June 1 and 11, 1824, the rebels stole the spot-light in Brougham's speech.

Brougham observed that especially at the outset of the insurrection, the slaves behaved like men on strike, rather than chaotic rebels bent on destruction. They adopted a creed of non-violence and declared "We will take no life ... altogether only one person was killed by them."³⁸ In concert, they demanded their managers to go to the town so as to ascertain exactly what news concerning their freedom had arrived from England.³⁹

This was the picture of slave revolts which emanated from the speeches of anti-slavery. Brougham was in high commendation of the slaves and complimented their conduct in the following words " - a memorable peculiarity, to be found in no other passage of Negro warfare within the West Indian seas."⁴⁰ His compliment, however, was not motivated by pure admiration for the insurgents. He, like Wilberforce, was hoping to demonstrate how unfair it was to blame anti-slavery for the revolt when it was their agents, the missionaries working among the slaves, who influenced the conduct of the slaves in Demerara and perhaps were responsible for the spared lives of the whites in the colonies.

Anti-slavery, nevertheless, while looking after their own good name, acknowledged the ideological development that separated the slave revolts of the nineteenth century from those of the previous years. Outside of parliament, the Committee for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of slavery throughout the British Dominions reinforced Brougham's analysis of Demerara 1823. It observed, "In Demerara, a slight commotion was occasioned among the Negroes... and far more resembling a combination of European workmen to strike for wages, for time or other indulgence, than a rebellion of African slaves."⁴¹ By comparing slave revolts to the strike actions of European workers demanding solutions to specifically identified problems, anti-slavery gave esteem to the slaves' actions and at the same time suggested that the planters' fears were exaggerated. Henry Brougham put it to the House that the insurgents sought only their rights, not the blood of their oppressors.

By 1815, after the slaves of Barbados had got a word edge-wise into the speech of Wilberforce which expressed their sentiments, abuses to justify insurgent activity were readily available to the abolitionists. The self motive interest was not totally eradicated but in comparison to Wilberforce's earlier speech, it was considerably less obvious. Brougham quickly assimilated the factors which may have been in combination responsible for the slaves' actions. In a single sentence he noted that the slaves "... were inflamed by false hopes of freedom, agitated by rumours, and irritated by the suspense and ignorance in which they were kept, exasperated by ancient as well as by more recent wrongs (for a sale of fifty or sixty or more of them had been announced), and they were about to be violently separated and dispersed."⁴²

The impact of slave revolts occurring on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean were beginning to be more directly integrated into the British anti-slavery campaign. The abuses of slavery which led slaves to rebellious actions were more precisely identified and condemned. Even when the declared subject of the debate was the trial of a missionary, the abolitionists gravitated, not a little, to an examination of details which brought the revolutionaries to the fore. Slave revolts were not marginalised in their speeches. They were studiously deliberated and appropriated to the anti-slavery cause.

Respectable Billy

By the time Thomas Fowell Buxton, the successor of William Wilberforce in the leadership of the anti-slavery movement, had entered into the fray of the slavery question, the stage had already been set. Anti-slavery's trump card in reconciling the differences between itself and slave revolts was to demonstrate that slaves revolted because of plantocratic injustices. This line of argument begged the question about the justification of the uprisings. Buxton resorted to employing this tactic continually. After 1823, slave revolts provided many examples to augment anti-slavery's growing impatience with the recalcitrance of the colonial legislatures towards the implementation of amelioration proposals. They were also weary of the government's reluctance to abandon the policy of conciliating the planters in favour of the exercise of its transcendental powers to improve the daily living conditions of the slaves.

In 1824, Buxton rose in the Commons to oppose Canning's intention to relent on the promise of the government given the previous year. According to the 1823 proposals, slave laws were to be revised to include the abolition of the flogging of females, the abolition of the carrying of the whip in the field, the removal of obstacles in the way of slave manumission and the abolition of Sunday market among other revisions.⁴³ Canning was now stating that the unanimously accepted 1823 proposals would be only applied in the Crown Colony of Trinidad. The fervour and the angle from which Buxton attacked the government's decision to renege on its word, especially considering that Demerara was still fresh on the minds of all concerned, testifies to the fearless attitude that anti-slavery had developed to the dangerous slavery question. He chided, "A pledge was obtained. You were, therefore, in some sort, to be considered holder of that pledge... And then, fearful of a little unpopularity... you sat still, you held your peace, and were satisfied to see this pledge, in favour of a whole Archipelago, reduced to a single island."⁴⁴

Before he had opposed Canning on amelioration, in a private letter to Mrs Buxton dated February 9, 1824, Mr Buxton wrote "I am in excellent spirits, and hold my head very high in the matter, and mean to be very bold in my defence. I expect to see Canning tomorrow; he seems very cold to me, and the report is he will join the West Indians. If he does, we shall go to war with him in earnest."⁴⁵ Craton asserts that anti-slavery's radicalism by 1823 was in part due to their recognition of revolts' retrospective usefulness to the campaign. He explains his position in this way. "... in the early phase of British anti-slavery, slave resistance was intentionally resisted by humanitarians... in the latter phase, slave resistance and emancipation were clearly intertwined."⁴⁶ That anti-slavery did attempt to avoid the issue, is undeniable. Wilberforce plainly stated in 1816 that he did not wish to go there. What Craton does not consider, however, is whether or not the humanitarians before 1823 were successful in their attempt to intentionally resist the issue. They did not. Wilberforce admitted that he went farther than he had intended when he first entered the house and started a trend which the other campaigners followed whenever they averted to the subject of revolts. From 1816 till the Jamaican rebellion of 1831-1832, anti-slavery boldly depicted slave revolts growing more and more defiant on each occasion that the subject infiltrated their speeches.

In Buxton's opposition to the stand Canning's took on the amelioration proposals of 1823, he examined before the House the innocuous nature of each provision of the reforms. He paused at the provision providing for the abolition of the practice of dividing slave families when plantations were sold as a result of the debts of proprietors. It was at this point that he injected that it was mandatory that the government fulfil its pledge of slave reform in all the West Indian colonies. He declared, "The recent trials at Demerara have furnished me with an instance exactly in point."⁴⁷ He narrated the story of respectable Billy, a slave of Clonbrock Demerara. Billy lived with a woman as his wife for nineteen years and together they had thirteen living children. The family was separated when the owner divided his plantation property between his two sons; one received the wife and children and the other received the husband. They were debarred from seeing each other although their estates were contiguous. The new gang of slaves to which the husband now belonged was to be sold by August 26, 1823.⁴⁸

Buxton ended his expertly selected and narrated tale on a note of dramatic pathos. He won sympathy for Billy and succeeded in justifying the option he took against his master. He closed Billy's tale on the observation that "He was - **and is it to be wondered at?** - one of the insurgents, and was, when the last accounts left Demerara, hanging in Georgetown!"⁴⁹ Buxton used revolts to demonstrate the logic in his

anti-slavery argument that amelioration should not just be applied to the Crown Colony of Trinidad where there were only "... 3,000 slaves ... but withheld from the 350,000 in Jamaica and the 70,000 in Barbados."⁵⁰ The story was an expert example of the skill with which anti-slavery integrated slave revolts into its movement against slavery. It invested revolts with the touch that all humanity could not but have sympathy.

A War Against a People Struggling for their Freedom and their Rights

When Buxton again referred to the subject of slave revolts in 1832, the House was specifically examining the financial distress of the colonies. He was not, like Wilberforce was in 1815, burdened by the calumnies of planters who were charging him of instigating revolts in the colonies. The effect of his contribution, totally unexpected, was so acute that he incurred the wrath of both the planter interest and the government. Mr Burge enquired if such invectives should be permitted. Mr Peel, the government minister, "... deeply lamented the course that the honourable member for Weymouth had taken, and that he did not sooner make up his mind as to the nature of his motion."⁵¹ Their objections, however, were not to surpass the magnetism of Buxton's speech. This time, his words had the effect of elevating revolts to a status even higher than the compliment the anti-slavery committee had paid it by seeing within it a resemblance to the strike action of European workmen. He acknowledged that the attempts of the slaves to liberate themselves were infused with both spiritual and political dimensions. He argued:

War was to be lamented anywhere and under any circumstances: but a war against a people struggling for their freedom and their rights, would be the falsest position in which it was possible for England to be placed. The people of England would not support this loss of resources to crush the inalienable rights of mankind... in such a warfare, it was not possible to ask, nor could we dare to expect, the countenance of heaven. The Almighty had no attribute that would side with them in such a struggle.⁵²

This declaration out of the mouth of anti-slavery, eradicates completely the difficulty of determining whether the slave revolts of the nineteenth century ought to be studied within the context of the British anti-slavery campaign. It forcefully justifies the response of Genovese to his own "...deceptively simple question. ... What was a slave revolt?"⁵³ Thomas Fowell Buxton, anti-slavery leader by 1823, from a standpoint that a slave rebel would have taken, provided the "... one compelling answer ... a struggle for freedom."⁵⁴

Faced with the dilemma of slave revolts in their campaign against slavery, the abolitionists presented to the British parliament the other side of slave revolts; a side that decidedly ran counter to anti-slavery's own anti-revolutionary principles; a side that ignored the outcry of the planters; a side that reflected the frustrations, interpretations and aspirations of the rebels themselves.

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