

First edition of this important speech by Brissot who fights for extending human and citizen rights to free colored men.

The decree in favor of free colored men would be abolished twelve days later.

From the Friends of the Constitution Society that counts
Brissot, Barnave, Mirabeau and Robespierre.

BRISSOT, Jacques-Pierre. DISCOURS SUR LA NECESSITE DE MAINTENIR LE DECRET RENDU LE 15 MAI 1791, EN FAVEUR DES HOMMES DE COULEURS LIBRES, prononcé le 12 septembre 1791, à la séance de la Société des Amis de la Constitution, séante aux Jacobins.
Imprimé par ordre de la Société.

12mo of 28 pp., unbound copy, stamp and library mark on the title and Library of the Society of Friends of the Constitution, with stamp with the motto "To live free or to die".
170 x 112 mm.

FIRST EDITION OF THIS IMPORTANT SPEECH BY BRISSOT WHO FIGHTS FOR EXPENDING THE HUMAN AND CITIZEN RIGHTS TO FREE COLORED MEN.

Bulletin du bibliophile, 634 ; *Catalogue de l'histoire de France*, J. A. Schmit, II, 631 ; W. Eames, II, 9078.

In 1788, the Société des Amis des Noirs was created in Paris at the initiative of the Geneva banker Clavière, who entrusted its management to his secretary Brissot.

The convening of the Estates General did not provide for representation of the colonies. The settlers demanded their participation in the Estates General. On June 20, 1789, the day of the Jeu de Paume Oath, the representation of the colonists was admitted. Mirabeau pointed out that if one wanted a representation of the colonies, one had to free the slaves and restore their rights to the free of colour.

"The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen was passed on 26 August 1789. It was then that people of colour who were in Paris organized themselves into a Society of Colored Citizens to obtain representation in the Constituent Assembly. The revolutionary situation seemed to favour their claim, legitimized by the Bill of Rights.

Three major problems were raised: that of the legitimacy or not of owning colonies, that of maintaining or not maintaining slavery, that of registering or not the prejudice of colour in French constitutional law.

Unlike Brissot, Robespierre was not in favour of the immediate liberation of slaves. He wanted to gradually achieve the abolition of slavery, the first step being the recognition of the rights of the Citizen to men of color already free.

On 14 and 15 May, the assembly discussed the rights of free people of colour and adopted a measure according to which only those born of free father and mother would obtain equal rights.

Barnave took advantage of the panic caused by the news from Santo Domingo to demand the abolition of the decree of 15 May. What he obtained on September 24, 1791 » (F. Gauthier).

In this speech Brissot criticizes Barnave.

"It was not up to the Friends of the Blacks or the white settlers to suppress the immense and inevitable impact of the Revolution. Through the revolt of the blacks, the question of slavery emerged from the dark background, where, by a kind of universal consent, it had been relegated.

Brissot intervened on December 1 and made a masterly analysis of the various interests, social and political forces in struggle at Santo Domingo, "The cause of men of colour is therefore the cause of the patriots, of the former Third State, of the people, at last oppressed for so long" (Jean Jaurès, Histoire socialiste).

Source: Bibliothèque de la Ville de Paris, with stamp and side of the library on the title and Bibliothèque de la Société des Amis de la Constitution, with stamp on the title bearing the motto «living free or dying».

On April 30th, 1789, the deputies to the Estates General from Brittany founded a club at Versailles which was reconstituted under the name of «Society of Friends of the Constitution» and settled in the convent of the Jacobins.



DISCOURS

*Sur la nécessité de maintenir le décret rendu
le 15 mai 1791, en faveur des hommes de
couleur libres, prononcé le 12 septembre 1791,
à la séance de la Société des Amis de la
Constitution, séante aux Jacobins.*

PAR J.-P. BRISSOT.

Imprimé par ordre de la Société.

MESSIEURS,
501308

QUEL est donc cet acharnement à solliciter
la révocation du décret rendu le 15 mai. en
faveur des hommes libres de couleur? Est-ce

A

The purpose of the club was to prepare the sessions in the Assembly, by discussing in advance the texts that would be debated there and to work for the establishment and the strengthening of the Constitution. There were all the heads of the Patriote party: Mirabeau, Robespierre, La Fayette, Barnave and Brissot.

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