

The Haitian Revolution of 1791-1803



The shortest account which one typically hears of the Haitian Revolution is that the slaves rose up in 1791 and by 1803 had driven the whites out of Saint-Domingue, (the colonial name of Haiti) declaring the independent Republic of Haiti.

Part One

Actually there were several revolutions going on simultaneously, all deeply influenced by the French Revolution which commenced in Paris in 1789. In this first of four essays on The Haitian Revolution, I will do two things:

1. Analyze the antecedents of the revolution and clarify some of the complex and shifting positions of the various interest groups which participated in it.

2. Follow the earliest days of three revolutionary movements:
 1. The planters' move toward independence.
 2. The people of color's revolution for full citizenship.
 3. The slave uprising of 1791.

Prelude to the Revolution: 1760 to 1789

The colony of Saint-Domingue, geographically roughly the same land mass that is today Haiti, was the richest colony in the West Indies and probably the richest colony in the history of the world. Driven by slave labor and enabled by fertile soil and ideal climate, Saint-Domingue produced sugar, coffee, cocoa, indigo, tobacco, cotton, sisal as well as some fruits and vegetables for the motherland, France.

When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, there were four distinct sets of interest groups in Saint-Domingue, with distinct sets of interests and even some important distinctions within these many categories:

- The whites
- The free people of color
- The black slaves
- The maroons

The Whites

There were approximately 20,000 whites, mainly French, in Saint-Domingue. They were divided into two main groups:

The Planters

These were wealthy whites who owned plantations and many slaves. Since their wealth and position rested entirely on the slave economy they were united in support of slavery. They were, by 1770, extremely disenchanted with France. Their complaint was almost identical with the complaints that led the North American British to rebel against King George in 1776 and declare their independence. That is, the metropole (France), imposed strict laws on the colony prohibiting any trading with any partner except France. Further, the colonists had no formal representation with the French government.

Virtually all the planters violated the laws of France and carried on an illegal trade especially with the fledgling nation, the United States of America. Most of the planters leaned strongly toward independence for Saint-Domingue along the same lines as the U.S., that is, a slave nation governed by white males.

It is important to note at the outset that this group was revolutionary, independence-minded and defiant of the laws of France.

Petit Blancs

The second group of whites were less powerful than the planters. They were artisans, shop keepers, merchants, teachers and various middle and underclass whites. They often had a few slaves, but were not wealthy like the planters.

They tended to be less independence-minded and more loyal to France.

However, they were committed to slavery and were especially anti-black, seeing free persons of color as serious economic and social competitors.

The Free Persons of Color

There were approximately 30,000 free persons of color in 1789. About half of them were mulattoes, children of white Frenchmen and slave women. These mulattoes were often freed by their father-masters in some sort of paternal guilt or concern. These mulatto children were usually feared by the slaves since the masters often displayed unpredictable behavior toward them, at times recognizing them as their children and demanding special treatment, at other times wishing to deny their existence. Thus the slaves wanted nothing to do with the mulattoes if possible.

The other half of the free persons of color were black slaves who had purchased their own freedom or been given freedom by their masters for various reasons.

The free people of color were often quite wealthy, certainly usually more wealthy than the petit blancs (thus accounting for the distinct hatred of the free persons of color on the part of the petit blancs), and often even more wealthy than the planters.

The free persons of color could own plantations and owned a large portion of the slaves. They often treated their slaves poorly and almost always wanted to draw distinct lines between themselves and the slaves. Free people of color were usually strongly pro-slavery.

There were special laws which limited the behavior of the free people of color and they did not have rights as citizens of France. Like the planters, they tended to lean toward independence and to wish for a free Saint-Domingue which would be a slave nation in which they could be free and independent citizens. As a class they certainly regarded the slaves as much more their enemies than they did the whites.

Culturally the free people of color strove to be more white than the whites. They denied everything about their African and black roots. They dressed as French and European as the law would allow, they were well educated in the French manner, spoke French and denigrated the Creole language of the slaves. They were scrupulous Catholics and denounced the Voodoo religion of Africa. While the whites treated them badly and scorned their color, they nonetheless strove to imitate every thing white, seeing this a way of separating themselves from the status of the slaves whom they despised.

The Black Slaves

There were some 500,000 slaves on the eve of the French Revolution. This means the slaves

outnumbered the free people by about 10-1. In general the slave system in Saint-Domingue was especially cruel. In the pecking order of slavery one of the most frightening threats to recalcitrant slaves in the rest of the Americas was to threaten to sell them to Saint-Domingue. Nonetheless, there was an important division among the slaves which will account for some divided behavior of the slaves in the early years of the revolution.

Domestic Slaves

About 100,000 of the slaves were domestics who worked as cooks, personal servants and various artisans around the plantation manor, or in the towns. These slaves were generally better treated than the common field hands and tended to identify more fully with their white and mulatto masters. As a class they were longer in coming into the anti-slave revolution, and often, in the early years, remained loyal to their owners.

Field Hands

The 400,000 field hands were the slaves who had the harshest and most hopeless lives. They worked from sun up to sun down in the difficult climate of Saint-Domingue. They were inadequately fed, with virtually no medical care, not allowed to learn to read or write and in general were treated much worse than the work animals on the plantation. Despite French philosophical positions which admitted the human status of slaves (something which the Spanish, United States and British systems did NOT do at this time), the French slave owners found it much easier to replace slaves by purchasing new ones than in worrying much to preserve the lives of existing slaves.

The Maroons

There was a large group of run-away slaves who retreated deep into the mountains of Saint-Domingue. They lived in small villages where they did subsistence farming and kept alive African ways, developing African architecture, social relations, religion and customs. They were bitterly anti-slavery, but alone, were not willing to fight the fight for freedom. They did supplement their subsistence farming with occasional raids on local plantations, and maintained defense systems to resist planter forays to capture and re-enslave them.

It is hard to estimate their numbers, but most scholars believe there were tens of thousands of them prior to the Revolution of 1791. Actually two of the leading generals of the early slave revolution were maroons.

Pre-Revolutionary Moments and Complex Alliances

The French Revolution of 1789 In France was the spark which lit The Haitian Revolution of 1791. But, prior to that spark there was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the Metropolitan France and that dissatisfaction created some very strange alliances and movements.

The Independence Movement

France enforced a system called the "exclusif" on Saint-Domingue. This required that Saint-Domingue sold 100% of her exports to France alone, and purchased 100% of her imports from France alone. The French merchants and crown set the prices for both imports and exports, and the prices were extraordinarily favorable to France and in no way competitive with world markets. It was virtually the same system as that which England had forced on its North American colonies and which finally sparked the independence movement in these colonies.

Like the North Americans, the Saint-Dominguans did not abide strictly by the law. A contraband trade grew up with the British in Jamaica and especially with British North America, and after its successful revolution, the United States. The Americans wanted molasses from Saint-Domingue for their burgeoning rum distilleries, and Saint-Domingue imported huge quantities of low quality dried fish to feed to the slaves.

Nonetheless, the planters (both white and free people of color) chafed under the oppression of France's exclusif. There was a growing independence movement, and in this movement the white planters were united with the free people of color. It was a curious alliance, since the whites continued to oppress the free people of color in their social life, but formed a coalition with them on the political and economic front.

The petit blancs remained mainly outside this coalition, primarily because they were not willing to form any sort of alliance with any people of color, free or not. The petit blancs were avowed racists and were especially offended and threaten by the elevated economic status of most of the free people of color.

It is important to note that this independence movement did not include the slaves in any way whatsoever. Those who were a party to the movement were avowed slave owners and their vision of a free Saint-Domingue was like the United States, a slave owning nation.

Slave Rebellions

Simultaneously there were constant slave rebellions. The slaves never willingly submitted to their status and never quit fighting it. The slave owners, both white and people of color, feared the slaves and knew that the incredible concentration of slaves (the slaves outnumbered the free people 10-1) required exceptional control. This, in part, accounts for the special harshness and cruelty of slavery in Saint-Domingue. The owners tried to keep slaves of the same tribes apart; they forbade any meetings of slaves at all; they tied slaves rigorously to their own plantations, brutally punished the slightest manifestation of non-cooperation and employed huge teams of harsh overseers.

Nonetheless the slaves fought back in whatever way they could. One of the few weapons the masters could not control were poisons, which grew wild in Saint-Domingue, the knowledge of which the slaves brought with them from Africa. The history of slavery in Saint-Domingue, like that of slavery everywhere, is a history of constant rebellion and resistance. One of the most famous and successful revolutions prior to 1791 was the Mackandal rebellion of 1759. The slave Mackandal, a houngan knowledgeable of poisons, organized a widespread plot to poison the masters, their water supplies and animals. The movement spread great terror among the slave owners and killed hundreds before the secret of Mackandal was tortured from a slave. The rebellion was crushed and Mackandal brutally put

to death. But, it reflects the constant fear in which the slave owners lived, and explains the brutality of their system of control.

The slave rebellions were without allies among either the whites or free people of color. They were not even fully united among themselves, and the domestic slaves especially tended to be more loyal to their masters.

The maroons, in the meantime, were in contact with rebellious slaves, but they had few firm alliances. Nonetheless, their hatred of slavery, their fear of being re-enslaved and their desire to be free and safe in their own country, made them ready allies were a serious slave revolution to begin.

The Earliest Period of the Revolution: 1789-1791

The Revolution in France, 1789 ...

It is necessary to remind the readers briefly of what was going on in France at this time. Prior to the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, France was ruled by a king. King Louis XVI and his queen Marie Antoinette were only two in a long line of greedy monarchs who cared little about their people. Nonetheless, a movement for a general concept of human rights, universal citizenship and participation in government had developed among the intellectuals and was taking root among the common people. This movement finally broke into full revolution in 1789 and ordinary citizens, for the first time in France's history, had the rights of citizenship.

People in France were divided into two camps, the red cockades, those in favor of the revolution and the white cockades, those loyal to the system of monarchy. (This had to do with the color of the hats they wore.) This whole social upheaval had a necessary impact on Saint-Domingue, and people had to begin to choose up sides.

In France the tendency was to be a revolutionary or a monarchist, and to remain fairly strongly within that camp. In Saint-Domingue, however, things were much more fluid. Not only were all the issues which plagued France being played out, but the additional issues of the independence movement, the movement toward rights for free people of color and the question of slavery. This caused Saint-Dominguans to shift from the side of the revolution to the side of monarchy and vice versa with blinding suddenness, and makes following the line-up of whose on whose side very difficult. It always depends on **when** in the revolution you are speaking.

The Free Persons of Color

The revolution progressed quickly in France, and on August 26, 1789 the newly convened Estates General (a general parliament of the people) passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. This declaration immediately raised the question of slavery.

The Amis des Noirs (Friend of the Blacks).

In 1787 an anti-slavery society was founded in France. it was modeled after the anti-slavery society of

England and influenced by Thomas Clarkson. They also had strong contacts with American abolitionists. They wanted the gradual elimination of slavery, yet they wanted the retention of France's prosperous West Indian colonies. After the declaration of rights, they were forced to make important decisions on where they stood. Rather than address the question of slavery, they decided to follow their gradualist position and to address the question of free persons of color.

There was a strong case to make for this group. The slaves were propertyless and thus the question of their humanity could be put on the back burner. Human Rights were something for white French males, not for blacks or propertyless French men or any women. However, the free persons of color were a different matter all together. Not only were they not propertyless, but were themselves property owners and tax payers. The Amis des Noirs decided that this would be the place to begin their battle, not with the question of the abolition of slavery itself.

On March 28, 1790 the General Assembly in Paris passed an ambiguous piece of legislation. While the various colonies were given a relatively free hand in local government, an amendment required that "all the proprietors... ought to be active citizens. The amendment was both too much and not enough. It seemed to possibly exclude the petit blancs, thus increasing their anger against the free persons of color, and, on the other hand, it seemed to argue for citizenship for free persons of color who were property owners -- which was most of them.

Back in Saint-Domingue there were two separate issues, each demanding different and contradictory alliances. It was these conflicting demands on peoples' loyalties which caused much of the shifting about in these early years. On the one hand the petit blancs and the white planters formed an uneasy union against the French bureaucrats. The issue was independence and local control. The bureaucrats were seen as strongly pro-French. Thus the battle lines were drawn on the basis of loyalty to the new revolution in France. All the whites of Saint-Domingue began to sport the red cockade of the revolution, and the French bureaucrats were painted with the white cockade of French monarchy.

However, this was an uneasy alliance. The white planters were not revolutionaries in the French sense at all. Nor did they want full rights for the petit blancs. It was a doomed alliance and didn't last long.

On the other hand, the natural allies of the white planter's were the free people of color. Both were from the wealthy class, both supported independence and slavery and neither wanted to change the traditional control of society by wealthy propertied people. The change would have been to allow the wealthy free persons of color their share in power, wealth and social prestige in this union. This was extremely difficult for the white planters to do until it was too late.

Some saw this necessity, but couldn't convince the others. One white planter argued: "Win over the gens de couleur class to your cause. They surely could not ask for more than conforming their interests with yours, and of employing themselves with the zeal for common security. It is therefore only a question of being just to them and of treating them better and better." But, of course, this advice went unheeded and the coalitions all broke down in due course.

The immediate result of the General Assembly meeting was for Saint-Domingue to bring the white population to the brink of a three-sided civil war. The petit blancs formed a Colonial Assembly at St. Marc for home rule. The white planters saw this was totally against their interests, thus they withdrew

and formed their own assembly at Cape Francois (today Cape Haitien). At the same time this split between the two colonial white groups gave strength to the French government officials who had lost effective control of the colony. Each of the three forces were poised to strike against the other. Yet, in the crazy contradictions of this whole situation, the petit blancs and white planters each carried on their own private war of terror against the free people of color.

Rich Saint-Domingue mulatto, Vincent Oge had been in Paris during the debates of March, 1790. He had tried to be seated as a delegate from Saint-Domingue and was rebuffed. He and other Saint-Dominguan men of color had tried to get the General Assembly to specify that the provision for citizenship included the free persons of color. Having failed in all of that, Oge resolved to return to Saint-Domingue and one way or the other, by power of persuasion or power of arms, to force the issue of citizenship for free persons of color.

Oge visited the famous anti-slavery advocate Thomas Clarkson in England, then went to the United States to meet with leading abolitionists and to purchase arms and munitions. He returned to Saint-Domingue and began to pursue his cause. Upon seeing that there was no hope to persuade the whites to allow their citizenship, Oge formed a military band with Jean-Baptist Chavannes. They set up headquarters in Grand Riviere, just east of Cape Francois and prepared to march on the stronghold of the colonists. It is important to note that Oge consciously rejected the help of black slaves. He wanted no part of any alliance with the slaves, and regarded them in the same way the whites did -- a property.

The Deaths of Oge and Chavannes

In early November Oge and Chavannes' forces were badly beaten, many of their tiny band of 300 captured while Oge and Chavannes escaped into Santo Domingo, the Spanish part of the island. The Spanish happily arrested the two and turned them over to the whites in Cape Francois. On March 9, 1791 the captured soldiers were hanged and Oge and Chavannes tortured to death in the public square, being put on the rack and their bodies split apart. The whites intended to send a strong message to any people of color who would dare to fight back.

Thus ended the first mini-war in the Haitian Revolution. It had nothing to do with freeing the slaves and didn't involve the slaves in any way at all. Yet the divisions among slave owners, the divisions among the whites, the divisions among colonial French and metropolitan French, the divisions among whites and free persons of color, all set the stage to make possible a more successful slave rebellion than had previously been possible.

The Slave Rebellion of August 21, 1791

Typically historians date the beginnings of the Haitian Revolution with the uprising of the slaves on the night of August 21st. While I've given reasons above to suspect that the revolution was already under way, the entry of the slaves into the struggle is certainly an historic event. And the event is so colorful that not even Hollywood would have to improve upon history.

Boukman and the Voodoo Service

For several years the slaves had been deserting their plantations with increasing frequency. The numbers of maroons had swollen dramatically and all that was needed was some spark to ignite the pent up frustration, hatred and impulse toward independence.

This event was a Petwo Voodoo service. On the evening of August 14th Dutty Boukman, a houngan and practitioner of the Petwo Voodoo cult, held a service at Bois Caiman. A woman at the service was possessed by Ogoun, the Voodoo warrior spirit. She sacrificed a black pig, and speaking the voice of the spirit, named those who were to lead the slaves and maroons to revolt and seek a stark justice from their white oppressors. (Ironically, it was the whites and not the people of color who were the targets of the revolution, even though the people of color were often very harsh slave owners.)

The woman named Boukman, Jean-Francois, Biassou and Jeannot as the leaders of the uprising. It was some time later before Toussaint, Henry Christophe, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Andre Rigaud took their places as the leading generals who brought The Haitian Revolution to its final triumph.

Word spread rapidly of this historic and prophetic religious service and the maroons and slaves readied themselves for a major assault on the whites. This uprising which would not ever be turned back, began on the evening of August 21st. The whole northern plain surrounding Cape Francois was in flames. Plantation owners were murdered, their women raped and killed, children slaughtered and their bodies mounted on poles to lead the slaves. It was an incredibly savage outburst, yet it still fell short of the treatment the slaves had received, and would still continue to receive, from the white planters.

The once rich colony was in smoldering ruins. More than a thousand whites had been killed. Slaves and maroons across the land were hurrying to the banner of the revolution. The masses of northern slaves laid siege to Cape Francois itself.

In the south and west the rebellion took on a different flavor. In Mirebalais there was a union of people of color and slaves, and they were menacing the whole region. A contingent of white soldiers marched out of Port-au-Prince, but were soundly defeated. Then the revolutionaries marched on Port-au-Prince. However, the free people of color did not want to defeat the whites, they wanted to join them. And, more importantly, they didn't want to see the slaves succeed and push for emancipation. Consequently, they offered a deal to the whites and joined forces with them, turning treacherously on their black comrades in arms.

This was a signal to the whites in Cape Francois of how to handle their difficult and deteriorating situation. On September 20, 1791 the Colonial Assembly recognized the Paris decree of May, and they even took it a step further. They recognized the citizenship of all free people of color, regardless of their property and birth status. Thus the battle lines were drawn with all the free people, regardless of color, on the one side, and the black slaves and maroons on the other.

Meanwhile, in France word of the uprising caused the General Assembly to re-think its position. The Assembly thought it had gone too far with the May Decree and had endangered the colonial status of Saint-Domingue. Consequently on September 23rd the May Decree was revoked. Then the Assembly named three commissioners to go to Saint-Domingue with 18,000 soldiers and restore order, slavery and French control.

When the commissioners arrived in December, 1791, their position was considerably weaker than the General Assembly had suggested. Instead of 18,000 troops they had 6,000. In the meantime the whites in the south and west had attempted to revoke the rights of free people of color, and broken the alliance. Not only did the free people of color break with the whites and set up their own struggle centered in Croix-des-Bouquets, but many whites, particularly the planters, joined them. Thus the south and west were divided into three factions, and the whites in Port-au-Prince were in a most weakened position.

In Cape Francois the Colonial Assembly did not move against the free people of color, but the slaves intensified their struggle and the whites were virtual prisoners in the town of Cape Francois. Most of the northern plain was in ruins.

Back in France it became apparent that the First Civil Commission with its 6,000 troops could not bring peace back to Saint-Domingue. When the authorities in France debated the issue it was clear to them that the problem was to bring unity between the free people of color and the whites against the rebelling slaves. Thus once again Paris reversed itself and with the historic and landmark Decree of April, 4, 1792, the free people of color were finally given full citizenship with the whites.

The Assembly in Paris prepared a Second Civil Commission to go to Saint-Domingue and enforce the April 4th decree. This commission contained Felicite Leger Sonthonax, a man who was to figure importantly in the future of The Haitian Revolution.

Part Two

Sonthonax Arrives In Saint-Domingue

The French National Assembly was deeply worried by the independence movement among the white planters and free men of color. There are even those historians who believe the French government itself engineered the initial slave uprising of 1791 in order to drive the land owners back into the arms of France's protection. If so, the Assembly unleashed a Pandora's box of ills for France!

By early 1792 the slaves controlled most of the rich northern plain, and Cap Francois (modern Cap-Haitien) was under constant siege. Hundreds of whites had been killed, the plantations were in ruins and the slaves were learning their military skills. Yet it was not the slaves whom the Assembly feared. It was the struggle between free persons of color and the white planters. Many of the planters openly favored independence. They were carrying on an illegal and profitable trade with the newly formed United States. Not only were they profiting economically, but the U.S.'s recent revolution against Britain was a model which the planters studied well.

On the other hand, the free persons of color looked to France as their sole hope. Britain, France, Spain and the United States did not allow citizenship to blacks. The French had at least declared the universal Rights of Man, and this ambiguous principle seemed to offer free men of color the right of citizenship.

This position was further clarified and emphasized with the king's signing of the decree of April 4, 1792 providing citizenship for property owning free men of color.

It was the belief of the Assembly that if the struggle between the white and black property owners (and slave owners) could end, and their loyalty be won back to France, then the "slave question" would be a simple issue. The rebellion would be quickly broken and the slaves returned to their plantations. There had been rebellions in the past, there would be rebellions in the future. But, reasoned the Assembly, slaves could be managed in the long run.

But a decree announcing this citizenship was one thing; to enforce it another. On June 2, 1792 the French National Assembly appointed a three man Civil Commission to go to Saint-Domingue and insure the enforcement of the April 4th decree.

One of those commissioners was **Leger Felicite Sonthonax**. He arrived in Saint-Domingue on September 18, 1792. He immediately approached the free men of color and began to form an alliance, promising them that he was the king's representative who would insure their citizenship. In record time Sonthonax won over the free men of color, who united with loyal French troops to fight a dual battle: struggling to defeat the radical independence-minded whites, and to pacify the slaves. Within four months Sonthonax had achieved his three major goals:

- He had pacified, or at least contained, the slave rebellion.
- He had defeated the primary white resistance.
- He had held the colony for France.

It seemed as if Sonthonax had achieved his mission and could soon return home to France in glory. Then came the devastating month of February, 1793. First, France declared war on Britain. This war radically changed Sonthonax' situation. Not only did the superior British navy cut off Sonthonax' supply line to France, but the British soon invaded Saint-Domingue, completely unraveling Sonthonax' three short-lived "achievements." Secondly, in that same month, Louis XVI was guillotined and France became a republic without a king. One immediate affect of this assassination was to provide a new grounds for resistance among some of the white planters. Many remained supporters of independence, and they welcomed the British invasion, but others, believing that the problem was the Revolution in France, became royalists, believing that if only a strong king could be put back in place, then everything could return to the old patterns and they would regain their positions of power and privilege in Saint-Domingue. It is interesting to note that this was exactly the aim of Napoleon when he invaded ten years later.

Toussaint Louverture and the Slave Rebellion

The primary black generals in the earliest days of the slave rebellion were Jean-Francois, Biassou and Jeannot. Jeannot was soon put to death by Jean-Francois and Biassou for excessive cruelty. Shortly after the 1791 uprising, Toussaint Louverture, a former slave who was over forty years old, joined the camp of the rebels as a medical officer. Toussaint practiced herbal and African healing, but unlike most such healers, he was not a Voodoo houngan. However, Toussaint did not remain a medical officer for long. His ability to organize, train and lead men became immediately apparent. Toussaint rose from his position of aide-de-camp to become a general, first fighting under Biassou, and then a

general of his own troops.

By January, 1793 Sonthonax had contained the slave revolt. Negotiations were going on to end the rebellion and for the officers to force their troops to return to their respective plantations. The deal was that some 300 officers would receive freedom and a pardon for their war crimes. The negotiations drug on, but seemed near completion when the execution of Louis XVI became known. After that event the slave officers, especially Toussaint, did not trust the French. They turned to the eastern portion of the island and made an alliance with Spain, who was also at war with France. As Toussaint told Sonthonax, "We cannot conform to the will of the Nation because from the beginning of the world we have executed the will of a King. We have lost the King of France, but we are esteemed by the King of Spain, who bestows rewards upon us and ceases not to give us succor. Consequently we are unable to acknowledge you, the Commissioners, before you have found a King."

February, 1793 was an extremely bad month for Sonthonax! From having seemingly defeated the independence-minded colonists and not only contained the slaves, but nearly arriving at an understanding which would have ended the rebellion completely, he suddenly had a much graver situation facing him.

- The colonists, split into independence and royalist factions, now had foreign support, and re-opened their struggle against the April decree, and against Revolutionary France's jurisdiction.
- The slaves had gone over to the Spanish and were being armed and supplied so that they could attack the French in Saint-Domingue.
- Sonthonax was faced with invasion from British forces out of Jamaica and had to prepare the defense of the colony.
- Yet, given the gravity of the situation facing France in Europe, and given the power of the British navy in the Caribbean, he could not count on any reinforcements or supplies from France.

Truly, Sonthonax' world had come crashing down.

Sonthonax Frees All Slaves

The Preliminary

Sonthonax and the other commissioners realized the British would probably attack Saint-Domingue, as would the Spanish and their Saint-Domingue slave army. They began to prepare their defenses as best they could. However, they were immediately betrayed from within. General Galbaud, a Frenchman, had been left in charge of Cap Francois while Sonthonax joined the other commissioners to prepare the defenses of Port-au-Prince. Galbaud, himself a land owner, conspired with the planters to deport the commissioners and to work with the British to return the ancient regime, negating the citizenship of free men of color. Sonthonax learned of this and returned to Le Cap with a large force of free men of color. They surprised Galbaud and he seemingly agreed to return to France. However, he convinced 3000 sailors and French troops to fight with him and the battle was joined on June 20, 1793.

It looked as though Galbaud's forces would triumph. Sonthonax took the ultimate plunge -- he offered

freedom and the rights of French citizenship to 15,000 slaves, part of the slave army encamped just outside Le Cap, if they would fight for France and the commissioners. They accepted and Galbaud was quickly defeated.

Sonthonax, now faced with 15,000 new citizens, had a problem. Most of these men had wives and children who were still slaves. Thus, in short order he also freed the entire families of the new French soldiers.

AUGUST 23, 1793: Sonthonnax' Emancipation

The engines of emancipation had been set in motion. Sonthonax had long protested that he came to Saint-Domingue to defend the free persons of color. He had explicitly stated that he DID NOT intend to free the slaves. However, the Galbaud affair had forced him to free 30,000 to 40,000 people to protect his position.

Now he was in a major bind. The white planters and petit blancs were totally outraged. Even his allies, the free persons of color, were appalled. They were mainly slave holding property owners. They did not want any more slaves freed. Yet Sonthonax knew his time was running short. The British were preparing to invade, the Spanish were training, arming and supplying a large slave army in Santo Domingo.

Sonthonax' position was difficult. There was no hope of reinforcements or even supplies from France. The European war precluded that. How could he possibly save the colony for France? The slaves seemed his only hope. There were 500,000 of them. Toussaint, Jean-Francois and Biassou had a well-armed, well-trained army in Santo Domingo. Other slaves were not armed or trained, but their sheer numbers might provide some defense. Would they fight to defend France? Certainly not. Would they fight to defend their freedom? It was a gamble Sonthonax felt he had to take.

On August 29, 1793 Sonthonax unilaterally decreed the emancipation of slavery in Saint-Domingue. Robert Stein, Sonthonax' biographer, calls this "...the most radical step of the Haitian Revolution and perhaps even of the French Revolution." But, would the slaves respond? Would the gamble pay off? Sonthonax could only wait and see.

The British Campaign Begins

Sonthonax was right to expect the British to invade. Saint-Domingue had been the richest colony in the Caribbean. Since the British navy controlled access to the Caribbean, Saint-Domingue seemed easy pickings. British General Cuyler assured British officials in London that he had "no apprehension of our successes in the West Indies." On September 19, 1793 the British landed at Jeremie. They were welcomed by the white property owners, who had already signed a secret accommodation with Britain. In exchange for their support, Saint-Domingue would become a British colony. Slavery would be reinstated, people of color would be stripped of citizenship, and the conditions of Britain's economic policies would favor the colonists more than did France's exclusif.

By June 4, 1794 the British had captured Port-au-Prince and held most of the port towns from St.

Nicholas in the north to Jeremie at the southern tip. It looked as though the French forces, with little support from Saint-Domingue land owners, could not hold out against the Spanish supported British onslaught.

The Volte-Face of Toussaint Louverture

Like Stein, one may well regard Sonthonax' freeing of the slaves as the most significant event of this period, nonetheless, the volte-face, the changing sides, of Toussaint Louverture, had the most immediate practical effect. Republican France's position in Saint-Domingue was pushed to the wall. The British held many port towns and the white planters were mainly in the British camp. The bulk of the slaves under arms were with the Spanish. However, France's enemies were not without their own problems. France was prohibited from supplying Sonthonax and the commissioners by the British fleet and the press of the war in Europe. But, that same war left the British without supplies and reinforcements too. The British army, suffering desperately from yellow fever, and seemingly ignored by London, was quickly being depleted and suffered from extremely poor morale. The Spanish were in grave difficulty in the European war, and were declining as a force to be reckoned with. Finally, the free persons of color, despising Sonthonax' freeing of the slaves, were nonetheless becoming convinced that neither the British nor Spanish were any real hope for them. More and more of the people of color were returning to the French banner.

The war in Saint-Domingue was going badly for the French, but, despite the British gains in the south, the situation was improving, though it was grave and dangerous.

Clearly the turning point in this war and in all Haitian history was the return to the French side of Toussaint Louverture and eventually all his black and mulatto forces. But when and why did Toussaint return? This is a very difficult question and scholars are not in agreement. I find myself persuaded by the arguments of David Geggus who fixes the date of the volte-face at around May 6, 1794. The reasons for the turn are not quite certain, but Geggus argues it was a collage of several factors:

- Toussaint was sincerely fighting for general emancipation of slavery, and Sonthonax' emancipation weighed on him. By May 6th it is unlikely that Toussaint knew that the French National Assembly had already ratified Sonthonax' move on Feb. 4th. However, Toussaint had a close relationship with the French General Laveaux, and seems to have already been negotiating with him to come over to the French side. Laveaux may well have convinced him that France was sincere in the emancipation.
- Toussaint was having serious problems with the Spanish. They did not trust him, perhaps knowing of his discussions with Laveaux.
- Toussaint knew that the Spanish position in Europe was not strong and perhaps sensed that he was fighting for a losing side.
- Toussaint was having serious problems with both Jean-Francois and Biassou and wanted not only to break with them, but to become superior to them.

Whatever the full complement of reasons, Toussaint made his change and that made all the difference. His army fought a guerrilla war and he was known for his lightning attacks, covering territory at seemingly impossible speeds. He attacked both Jean-Francois and Biassou, his former associates and defeated them. He harassed the British, though he could not dislodge them from the coastal towns they

held. One chronicler says: "He disappears--he has flown--as if by magic. Now he reappears again where he is least expected. He seems to be ubiquitous. One never knows where his army is, what it subsists on, how he manages his supplies and his treasury. He, on the other hand, seems perfectly informed concerning everything that goes on in the enemy camp."

The Spanish soon ended their war. The French in defeated them Europe and signed a peace treaty on July 22, 1795. A significant part of the treaty was that Spain ceded Santo Domingo to the French, though it was some time before Toussaint's army actually took over the eastern part of the island. The Spanish black armies were disbanded, though many came over to Toussaint. Jean-Francois retired to Spain and Biassou went to Florida. By this time Toussaint had become an important part of the French forces and was promoted to brigadier general.

Toussaint's Rise to Power and the End of Foreign Occupation

With the turn of Toussaint Louverture and many former slaves, and the withdraw of the Spanish, the war took on lesser proportions. Britain, too, had developed grave difficulties of maintaining morale and troop strength. Then, when a serious rebellion broke out in Jamaica, the British ceased fighting an offensive war and settled in to trying to hold the main strongholds of it's coastal towns.

This left time for an internal power struggle to begin. Toussaint shared the same rank as did Andre Rigaud, mulatto general of the south and Villatte, another mulatto who was at Cap Francois. The two mulattos were suspicious of Toussaint and dreaded his rise to power. They plotted against both the French and Toussaint planning to consolidate their own positions. Their first move came against General Laveaux, head of the French forces and governor of the colony. The plan was for Villatte to capture and depose Laveaux. Then Rigaud would become governor general and Villatte would be his chief aide.

On March 20, 1796 Laveaux was taken at Le Cap by Villatte. Toussaint immediately moved from Gonaives and marched on Cap Francois with 10,000 men. The mulatto forces capitulated and released Laveaux on March 22. Villatte fled into exile. Laveaux rewarded Toussaint on April 1st by making him lieutenant governor, giving him much greater freedom within the military, and pledging he would do nothing without consulting Toussaint. This declaration was tantamount to making Toussaint the effective governor and commander in chief. Toussaint responded, "After God, Laveaux." The mulattos had suffered a terrible defeat.

The triumph over the mulattos was only days old when Sonthonax returned to Haiti as head of the third Civil Commission. Toussaint recognized that both Sonthonax and his friend Laveaux stood in his way. He began a clever political campaign which left him the key power in Saint-Domingue. Toussaint managed to engineer an election in which both Sonthonax and Laveaux were "elected" to return to France to represent Saint-Domingue to the National Assembly. Laveaux recognized that Toussaint was now dominate and he quietly returned to France on October 13, 1796. It was nearly another year before Toussaint could maneuver Sonthonax out of Saint-Domingue.

Sonthonax was his own worst enemy during this struggle. Having thrown in his lot with the blacks and against both the whites and free persons of color, he decided to put Rigaud down. He sent a force against Rigaud, which was defeated. However, Toussaint was then assured that Rigaud would not

oppose his move against Sonthonax. Sonthonax further damaged his own case by allowing French privateers to operate against American shipping. This even hurt black commerce, and most people were sympathetic to Toussaint's pro-American trade stance. After trying several times to force Sonthonax out by power of persuasion, Toussaint finally used armed force and on August 27, 1797 Sonthonax sailed for France, never to return.

This left Toussaint governor general and commander in chief of Saint- Domingue with only the British and Rigaud standing in the way of his absolute dominance.

During 1796 and 1797 the British had once more opened their offensive campaign in Saint-Domingue. However, the increasing death toll in the war, particularly from yellow fever, the increasing cost, opposition in London and the constant nagging guerrilla war against them, brought the British to a standstill. While Parliament refused to recall them all together, the British army was left to fend for itself. However, it still held most of the seacoast from Jeremie to St. Nicholas, including Port-au-Prince.

In early 1798 Toussaint began a massive campaign against the British. On March 21st General Thomas Maitland arrived to oversee the British forces. At almost the same time Theodore Hedouville, a French special agent, arrived in Santo Domingo. What followed is worthy of an espionage novel by Robert Ludlum! Hedouville was there to gently ease Toussaint out of power. The French National Assembly had become worried by the extent of his power and what seemed to be his tendencies toward independence from France. This was underlined by Toussaint's willingness to reopen trade with the Americans and to prohibit French privateering against them from Saint Domingan waters. Hedouville hoped to use Andre Rigaud and, building on the existing distrust and enmity between the two, drive them into open conflict.

Maitland, on his part, saw a way to use this situation to his advantage. It was clear that the British were finished in Saint-Domingue. But, by posing as an ally of Toussaint, Maitland could get the best conditions for withdrawal and perhaps even arrange a secret convention of trade relations with Toussaint, whom he was convinced would prevail. At the same time he sought Toussaint's guarantee that he would not invade Jamaica. Maitland further promised aid of the British navy if Toussaint wanted to declare independence.

Maitland's strategy was to drive a wedge between Hedouville and Toussaint, insuring the weakening of French authority, and increasing the likelihood of British gain.

Toussaint wasn't ready to declare independence from France, but he did know what Hedouville was up to. As soon as the British had left Saint- Domingue for ever in October, 1798, Toussaint began his move against Hedouville. He was able to convince the masses that Hedouville was actually there to unseat Toussaint and to reinstall slavery, which actually may well have been the case. At any rate, a mob stormed the city of Cap Francois and Hedouville and his forces embarked for France.

Toussaint had been the primary force for four years, May, 1794 to October, 1798. In that time he had driven the British out of Saint- Domingue, overseen the retreat of the Spanish, ousted all genuine French authority and become commander in chief and governor general of the Saint- Domingue. As he

saw it there were only three challenges left to his supreme authority.

- the belief of the National Assembly that he was not loyal to France.
- Andre Rigaud and the mulatto forces.
- the existence of Spanish Santo Domingo next door. Toussaint took up the challenge of these three threats.

Part Three

Part III Toussaint and Independence

Thomas Hedouville fled Haiti on Oct. 22, 1798. Toussaint was the leading figure in the colony and playing both ends of his spectrum -- apparent loyalty to France; apparent sympathy to the United States' pushing Saint- Domingue toward independence. Not only was the U.S., herself a newly free nation, a model that Toussaint might follow, but Secretary of State Timothy Pickering was presenting a very friendly and supportive position. Finally, Toussaint felt much more comfortable with the small, fledgling United States than with either Britain or France. The primary interest which Toussaint felt toward the United States was the better deal Saint- Domingue could get in trade. France imposed the "exclusif" on Saint- Domingue. Under this law of colony to metropole, Saint-Domingue could only trade with France, who then had the power to set the prices. Further, manufacturing of finished goods from the raw farm products was forbidden by France. All manufacturing of Saint-Domingan goods was reserved for France. The United States, on the other hand, paid a more competitive price for Saint-Domingan goods and placed no restrictions on their form. Even the landowners supported trade with the United States. At first it would seem that this was not in their economic interests. Sonthonax had freed the slaves and Toussaint would certainly uphold this emancipation. This meant that the former slaves became paid field hands, and the landowners would lose approximately 50% of their income to the government and to farm labor. Nonetheless, the 50% that they could earn on the free market was more than 100% of what France was willing to pay under the exclusif.

Nonetheless, Toussaint kept up the appearance of loyalty to France and appointed Philippe Roume, French agent in Santo Domingo, to replace Hedouville as France's representative in Saint-Domingue. Toussaint's loyalty to France was not all posturing. There was a very strong call of culture from France. This was especially true among the affranchais, the blacks and mulattos freed before the general emancipation. They wanted to separate themselves from the slaves. They had adopted French culture and customs as their identity, scorning anything African. They spoke French, dressed in European fashion, practiced the Catholic religion and, in general, idealized France and French culture. Even Toussaint was pulled in this direction and had a strong bond to France.

Roume, Toussaint and Rigaud

Roume continued the work of Hedouville, fostering the growing conflict between Toussaint and Rigaud. Rigaud, an extreme mulatto chauvinist, worried France because of his readiness to kill the whites and blacks. Toussaint's independence tendencies frightened the French too, so they sought the safety of keeping either Rigaud or Toussaint from having complete power. However, by pushing Rigaud and Toussaint into civil war, France assured itself that one or the other was likely to emerge a

stronger person from his victory.

In January, 1799 the formal break came in a dispute over who ruled Petit and Grand Goave. Roume had included the towns in Toussaint's authority, but Rigaud walked out of the meeting and civil war was inevitable. By June, Toussaint pressured Roume into declaring Rigaud in rebellion.

The War of Knives

On June 16, 1799 Rigaud attacked Petit Goave, putting many people to death with the sword. It was from Rigaud's violence with the sword that this civil war got its name -- The War of Knives.

The first five months of war were characterized by gruesome excesses on both sides. Finally, by mid-November, the war centered on Rigaud's stronghold at Jacmel, defended by Alexander Petion. Jean-Jacques Dessalines was the besieging general for Toussaint. Dessalines was to become the first president, then emperor of free Haiti in 1804, and Petion was to become the president of The Republic of Haiti in 1807. On March 11, 1800 Jacmel fell, virtually ending Rigaud's resistance. Nonetheless, he hung on until July, finally fleeing to France until he returned as part of Napoleon's invasion force in 1802.

Toussaint had a reputation for clemency and avoiding unnecessary bloodshed. But, he appointed the blood thirsty and violent Dessalines as pacifier of the south. Dessalines butchered many mulattos (the estimates range from 200 to 10,000!). When Toussaint finally halted the massacre he reportedly said: "I did not want this! I told him to prune the tree, not to uproot it."

The Conquest of Santo Domingo

By August, 1800 Toussaint was ruler of all Saint-Domingue and no foreign power was on Saint-Domingue soil. He was governor general of the whole colony. However, Santo Domingo, present day Dominican Republic, was an intolerable situation to him. The Spanish had ceded Santo Domingo to the French in the Treaty of Bale on July 22, 1795. Nonetheless, the Spanish never turned the colony over to the French, and the French, unsure of Toussaint's loyalties, never pressed the issue. Spain's presence in Santo Domingo was in France's interest. They could keep an eye on Toussaint. But he now set out to claim France's (and his own) authority over the entire island of Hispaniola.

After initial resistance on the part of Roume, who, recall, had been the French agent in Santo Domingo before Toussaint appointed him to the Saint-Domingue post, Roume was pressured into approving the unification movement. However, Spanish Captain-General Don Joaquin Garcia y Moreno was unwilling to turn over command to black Haitians. He prepared to resist, and his resistance gave Roume the courage to rescind his order. This gave Toussaint a pretext to charge Roume with disloyalty to France -- after all, France owned Santo Domingo by treaty -- and Roume was held prisoner for nearly a year. Meanwhile Toussaint massed his troops for the invasion of Santo Domingo. He encountered only tentative resistance and entered the capital, Santo Domingo City on Jan. 26, 1801. He quickly consolidated his power and emerged as the governor-general of Hispaniola.

Toussaint's Constitution: The Document that Tweaked Napoleon

On July 26, 1801 Toussaint published and promulgated a new constitution for Saint-Domingue which abolished slavery, but did allow the importation of free blacks to work the plantations. The constitution recognized the centrality of sugar plantations to the Saint-Domingue economy, and accepted Roman Catholicism as the state religion. Perhaps two of the most significant items were that Toussaint was governor-general for life and that all men from 14 to 55 years of age were in the state militia. Nonetheless, the constitution professed loyalty and subservience to France. The most galling thing for Napoleon was that Toussaint published and proclaimed the constitution without prior approval from France and the First Consul.

Thus by July of 1801 Toussaint had emerged as the leading figure in Saint-Domingue, and seemed headed toward declaring an independent republic. He had defeated the Spanish and British, maneuvered the French Commissioners out of the colony, defeated Andre Rigaud in a Civil War, taken possession of the eastern portion of the island, eradicated slavery on the entire island and promulgated a constitution in which he was declared governor general for life.

Both Britain and the United States treated with Toussaint as though he were the head of an independent state, though Toussaint's constitution and public demeanor claimed that he was a loyal French citizen who had saved the colony for France.

Virtually no one believed Toussaint's claims of loyalty to France. Britain and the United States wanted to deal with Toussaint to ensure an end of French privateering from Saint-Dominguan waters. Both nations hoped to contain the slave rebellion to Saint-Domingue alone. Both nations strove to out do one another in establishing trade relations with Toussaint's government, in defiance of France's regulations for the colony. Thus Napoleon might well be excused if he took with a healthy dose of salt Toussaint's claims of being a loyal son and protector of French rights in Saint-Domingue.

For Napoleon, the die was cast. "This gilded African," as he called Toussaint, would have to go. Bonaparte chafed at the power of the black first consul, but there was little he could do while France was at war with Britain. However, on Oct. 1, 1801 France and Britain signed a peace treaty and Napoleon's hands were free to deal with Toussaint.

It is important to note that Bonaparte's personal detestation of Toussaint was only one factor in his decision to retake Saint-Domingue to more trustworthy French rule. The French Directory, before Napoleon's coup d'etat of Nov. 9, 1799, had already set a West Indian policy in which Saint-Domingue was the center piece. Napoleon inherited this foreign policy and inherited the constant political pressure of the French planters who had been disenfranchised by the liberation of the slaves. Bonaparte needed the wealth of Saint-Domingue and there seemed a grave danger that Toussaint would lead the colony toward independence. All of these issues, and others, weighed in Bonaparte's decision to launch an invasion against his own governor-general of Saint-Domingue.

The Leclerc Invasion

Once committed, Napoleon sent a well-outfitted troop of 12,000 soldiers under the leadership of his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc. In Leclerc's invasion force Toussaint was going to have to deal with many old enemies including Alexander Petion and Andre Rigaud.

Napoleon gave Leclerc a set of secret instructions which demanded Leclerc give his word of honor about many things and then violate it. The general plan was to first promise the black leadership places of authority in a French-dominated government. Then, once having established control, to move to the second stage of arresting and deporting any black leaders who seemed troublesome, especially Toussaint Louverture. The third and final stage was not only to disarm all the blacks, but to return the colony to slavery and the pre-Revolutionary colonial state. Virtually no one in Saint-Domingue was fooled by Leclerc's protestations of benevolent purpose.

On Feb. 2, 1802 Leclerc arrived in the bay of Cap Francois, the city governed and defended by Henri Christophe, one of Toussaint's most important generals, and later on Haiti's second president and first and only king. Christophe would not allow the French to disembark, and prepared to burn the city to the ground if they tried. Leclerc pressed the issue and, true to his word, Christophe torched this Paris of the Americas. The black armies retreated to the interior to fight a guerilla war and Leclerc took over a huge pile of ashes. The final stage of the Haitian Revolution had begun.

The Leclerc Campaign

Phase 1: Crete-a-Pierrot

Leclerc's forces quickly took most of the coastal towns, though Haitians burned many of them before they retreated. Eventually a decisive moment came as Dessalines and his second in command, Lamartiniere, were asked to hold the small former British fort, Crete-a-Pierrot, an arsenal of the Haitians.

Both sides claimed victory. It sort of depends on what measure one uses. The French ended up with the fort, but they lost twice as many men as the Haitians, and were shocked to discover how well the blacks could fight in a pitched battle. The Haitians took great solace in their ability to hold off the French for so long. For the rest of the war they used Crete-a-Pierrot as a rallying cry. After abandoning the fort, the Haitians retreated into the Cahos mountains and fought a guerrilla war from then on.

Phase 2: Surrender

By April 26 Christophe and his troops surrendered to Leclerc. Toussaint followed on May 1st. Even though things had not gone as Napoleon planned, within two months Leclerc had achieved Napoleon's first goal--pacification of the leaders. Now Leclerc was free to implement phase 2 -- the arrest and deportation of "trouble makers."

The Arrest and Deportation of Toussaint Louverture

After Toussaint's surrendered, he ostensibly retired to his plantation at Enery to live out his days. However, there is a good deal of historical controversy about this. Some argue that Toussaint immediately began to plot anew against the French. I really don't know which way the factual evidence leans, but the logic of the situation leads me to suspect that these charges against Toussaint were true. First of all it is not like Toussaint to simply walk away and abandon the struggle of the past 10 years.

Further, he had to have suspected that the French would reinstate slavery and the old colonial system. Again, it's not like Toussaint to quietly acquiesce in such a turnabout. Finally, he must have known how weakened the French were becoming from the ravages of yellow fever. How long and how seriously could the French fight with only a fraction of their men?

But all of this is mere logical speculation, not factual knowledge. What we do know are the details of Leclerc's dishonorable subterfuge to arrest and deport Toussaint. On June 7 Toussaint received a message from French General Brunet to meet with him at a plantation near Gonaives. Brunet assured Toussaint that he'd be perfectly safe with the French, who were, after all, gentlemen!

Shortly after arriving at the plantation he was arrested and shipped off to prison in France. Toussaint was taken to Fort de Joux, a cold, damp prison near the Swiss border. Toussaint soon withered away and died on April, 7, 1803. So much for French honor!

The Final Up-Rising and French Defeat

The dishonorable treatment of the aging Toussaint was not only a moral outrage, but a practical error of irreversible scope. The Haitians were so incensed, and recognized that if Toussaint could be so treated, so could anyone else. The masses realized the French must be defeated once and for all.

Leclerc made a second tactical blunder upon the heels of Toussaint's arrest. He immediately began a disarmament campaign, planning to disarm all the blacks. The net effect was to open the eyes of many and drive thousands back under the banner of the revolution. From June to October, 1802 Leclerc's soldiers carried on this mainly unsuccessful campaign.

During this period both Dessalines and Christophe were working with the French. Dessalines was a particularly vicious warrior against the rebels. However, there is a strong case to be made that he was more interested in his own position of power than anything else.

Working with the French he could have it both ways. On the one hand, if the French prevailed he was becoming increasingly indispensable to whatever order prevailed, thus assuring his position there. On the other hand, he was capturing and killing rebel leaders. Thus if the revolution were to once again catch fire, he was in a position to bolt the French and take up leadership of the rebels, which is exactly what he did. Haitian independence and black rule seem to have been honestly desired by Dessalines. But, first and foremost he wanted Jean-Jacques Dessalines to be an important power in whatever government prevailed in Saint-Domingue.

As the situation deteriorated for the French, Dessalines, Christophe, Petion and Clairveaux all conspired with rebel leaders. On Oct. 13, 1802, Petion and Clairveaux deserted to the rebels. Christophe and Dessalines followed and within days only Cap Francois, Port-au-Prince and Le Cayes were fully in French hands. The final battle had begun.

The Arcahaye Conference and the Death of Leclerc

Nov. 2, 1802 the rebel leaders met at Arcahaye, a small village south of St. Marc. The leaders elected

Dessalines as rebel commander-in-chief and chose the red and blue flag as their banner. The story is that Dessalines took the tricolor French flag -- a band each of red, blue and white, and tore out the white, announcing to the cheering assembled mass that Haiti, too, would drive out the whites. Certainly such a dramatic symbol, if it actually occurred, would have been an inspiring and motivating gesture.

On the same day as the Arcahaye conference, Leclerc died of yellow fever. General Rochambeau took command. He was an able and fearless commander, and reinforced by another 10,000 troops in mid-November, carried on the French defense for another year.

By the time of the Arcahaye conference most of the maroons had also come to see that the French were the true enemy. Prior to this the maroons had been separated and vacillating, not really joining the revolution, but fighting an independent war of self-interest wherever and whenever it served their purposes. But now they joined in unified fashion with the rest of the Haitians to drive the French from the island for once and for all, and to preserve the nation as a free, non-slave entity.

Dessalines and Rochambeau

Each side was under the leadership of a capable and ruthless leader. Each side traded atrocity with atrocity, the particular description of which are sickening and defy credulity of even those used to human inhumanity to humans. Torture, rape, brutal murders, mass murders of non-combatants, mutilation, forcing families to watch the torture, rape and death of loved ones and on and on. The last year of the Haitian Revolution was as savage as any conflict one can read of in human history. Thomas Ott says this had become a war of racial extermination on both sides.

Despite the ravages of yellow fever and the increasing numbers of Haitians joining the revolution, Rochambeau's forces made considerable gains in early 1803. Napoleon, heartened by the return of slavery to Guadeloupe, sent a further reinforcement of 15,000 troops. Rochambeau seized the moment to launch a vigorous attack on the rebels.

A New European War Helps Shift the Balance

On May 18, 1803 Europe was again plunged into war, and Britain declared war on France. Dessalines was now a welcomed ally of Britain who provided arms and naval support. At the same time this European war announced the end of reinforcements and supplies for the French. The conditions were set for a reversal of the fortunes of the revolutionaries.

By the end of October the French were reduced to holding only Le Cap and were besieged and in danger of starvation. Finally on November 19, 1803 Rochambeau begged for a 10 day truce to allow the evacuation of Le Cap, thus giving Haiti to the Haitians.

Independence Day, January 1, 1804

After 13 years of revolutionary activity France was formally removed from the island and Haitian independence declared, only the second republic in the Americas. The country was in ruins, the masses

mainly uneducated and struggling for survival. The western world's large and interested nations, the United States, Britain, Spain and, of course, France, were all skeptical and nervous about an all-black republic. After all, the large nations were all slave-owning states.

Born in dire straights and struggling, nonetheless the nation came to be through the efforts of the revolutionaries.

Part Four

Napoleon's West Indian Policy and the Haitian "Gift" To The United States

It is general folk knowledge in Haiti that Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian revolutionaries saved the United States from being invaded by Napoleonic forces in 1803. This popular lore surfaces often in discussions with Haitians, particularly when the speakers are complaining about later U.S. policy and treatment of Haiti. The general suggestion is that the United States was indeed saved almost single handedly by the Haitians, and that the U.S. is extremely ungrateful for the service rendered it. Further, I've often heard this point raised to underline the ignorance that Americans typically have of the relative importance each nation held on the stage of world politics in 1802-03.

Certainly the French colony, Saint-Domingue, and the early Republic of Haiti, played a much more important role in Caribbean and world politics than does present day Haiti. The major powers of the region, France, Britain, Spain and the United States, were slave owning, slave trading nations. They faced serious threats from a non-slave nation, particularly one whose citizens were former slaves who had risen up and defeated the major powers in a revolutionary struggle.

The French, of course, regretted the loss of an enormously rich colony. The British feared the impact of the Haitian Revolution on Jamaica and her other slave colonies. The U.S. worried about the impact of the servile revolution on the south of its own nation. Spain had lost her colony of Santo Domingo, next door to Saint-Domingue, and feared the spread of her influence to Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Yet the major powers had their own problems with one another. While Saint- Domingue/Haiti (1) loomed far larger in international significance than present day Haiti, nonetheless, there was no uniform resistance among the four major powers. They each had various problems with one another, often in relationship to Haiti, and thus could not come to exert a unitary resistance. The Haitian Revolution became a tool to be manipulated by the major powers in their own struggles with one another, while, at the same time, each tried to gain its own advantages vis-a-vis the new republic.

In its strongest form the popular Haitian version of this story is that Napoleon Bonaparte had a secret plot to take the United States. On this view General Leclerc and his troops would first stop off briefly at Saint- Domingue to put down Toussaint Louverture and his upstart revolutionaries, then move on to French Louisiana, which would serve as a base from which to harry the southern parts of the United States. Thus the successful Haitian resistance is seen as having saved the United States. I will refer to this theory as the linear plot, since it moves right along in a line from France, to Saint-Domingue, to

New Orleans to Washington. (2)

A seemingly weaker version of this plot theory is that Napoleon wished to establish a strong hold in the West Indies for France and that recovering control over Saint-Domingue, its richest colonial holding, was crucial for this program. Then near-by French Louisiana could be a source of food supply for the more productive and economically more attractive Saint-Domingue, ensuring a strong contribution to France from its West Indian holdings. I will call this view the Saint-Domingue-center view, since the colony of Saint-Domingue is the core of the policy and New Orleans is merely a supply outpost.

My own view leans toward a version of the Saint-Domingue-center theory. I believe that Napoleon wanted to re-establish control over Saint-Domingue and believed that French Louisiana was essential to that plan. Further, the United States was certainly a beneficiary of the successful Haitian Revolution. Since Saint-Domingue, and not Louisiana nor the United States was the center piece of Napoleon's West Indian strategy, once Saint-Domingue was lost to France, Louisiana became an uninteresting and untenable piece of real estate. On this view the United States is indirectly indebted to Haiti for one of the best real estate buys in history--the Louisiana Purchase, but the U.S. was not really "saved" from Napoleonic domination or invasion by the Haitians' successful revolution.

General Strategy for My Argument

If one follows the documents available, and accepts at face value the various statements of the principals, especially Napoleon himself, then there is no case at all to make for the linear plot theory. The puzzle is that the linear plot theory survives today as the dominate belief in Haitian folk history, and has even persuaded some important historians of its truth. (3)

One might account for its longevity by the tendency of any people to glorify its own history and to accept attractive historical myths as truths. Americans, for example, cling to the romantic George Washington stories of the cherry tree and of his sailing a silver dollar across the Potomac. On the other hand it may be that the story just needs to be clarified and investigated to remind us what was going on in 1802-03. This is the primary aim of my paper.

I try to accomplish four things:

1. Straighten out what exactly Napoleon's West Indian policy was.
2. Attempt to account for the origin of the linear plot theory.
3. Show that the Saint-Domingue-center theory was indeed Napoleon's plan.
4. And lastly, to argue that this seemingly weaker policy in no way lessens the service the Haitian Revolution played to the United States, but actually is a more glorious story than the false one it replaces. The Setting Leading to the Leclerc Expedition

The Haitian Revolution began in 1791. Influenced by the French Revolution's recognition of the Rights of Man, driven by the excessive cruelty of French slavery, the slaves rose up in August of 1791. (4) Toussaint Louverture, over 40 when the revolution broke out, rose in power and by 1793 was a leading general of the revolution, along with Jean-Francois and Biassou. The three

had sided with the Spanish against the French and were sheltered in the Spanish part of the island (the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo). The Spanish also supplied weapons and other material support to the rebels.

However, Toussaint returned to the French side when he became convinced that there was a better chance for emancipation with them. French Commissioner Sonthonax had emancipated the slaves and the Directory in Paris recognized this emancipation in Feb. 1794. By April of that year, shortly after word arrived back from France of the Directory's emancipation, Toussaint switched sides and began to war against both the Spanish and British, and to war for France.

By July of 1801 Toussaint had emerged as the leading figure in Saint-Domingue, and seemed headed toward declaring an independent republic. He had defeated the Spanish and British, maneuvered the French Commissioners out of the colony, defeated Andre Rigaud in a Civil War, taken possession of the eastern portion of the island which had recently been ceded to France by Spain, eradicated slavery on the entire island and promulgated a constitution in which he was declared governor general for life.

Both Britain and the United States treated with Toussaint as though he were the head of an independent state, though Toussaint's constitution and public demeanor was to claim that he was a loyal French citizen who had saved the colony for France.

Virtually no one believed Toussaint's claims of loyalty to France. Britain and the United States wanted to deal with Toussaint to ensure an end of French privateering from Saint-Dominguan waters. Both nations hoped to contain the slave rebellion to Saint-Domingue alone. Both nations strove to out do one another in establishing trade relations with Toussaint's government, in defiance of France's regulations for the colony. Thus Napoleon might well be excused if he took with a healthy dose of salt Toussaint's claims of being a loyal son and protector of French rights in Saint-Domingue. (5)

The Origins of Napoleon's West Indian Polity Preceded Him

Nonetheless, the general policy which Napoleon followed was not created by him, but by the Directory before Napoleon became First Consul. Napoleon's own coup d'etat in France took place on Nov. 9, 1799. But the essence of what would soon become Napoleon's West Indian policy was already in place.

In 1795 the Directory acquired Santo Domingo, though they never sought to take possession. Also they began to seek retrocession of Louisiana. They recognized that Saint-Domingue was the golden goose of their West Indian possessions, but that it could not be reliably supplied from France because the British fleet controlled the Caribbean. New Orleans was recognized as the necessary supply center from which needed food stuffs could be more easily shipped to Saint-Domingue than from France.

The Directory, as Napoleon later on, perceived Toussaint to be a threat to the continued colonial

status of Saint-Domingue. Just as the Directory tried to rid itself of Napoleon himself by sending him off to Egypt, so it sought to rid itself of Toussaint by involving him in disastrous foreign adventures. On May 23, 1799 Edward Stevens, Consul General of the U.S. to Saint-Domingue, wrote to General Maitland, formerly the head of the British forces: "The Agency of San-Domingo had received positive orders from the Executive Directory to invade both the Southern States of America and the island of Jamaica. Gen. Toussaint Louverture was consulted on the best mode of making the attack. (Korngold, p. ix.)

Stevens, writing to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, saw that this was a double edged order--if it succeeded, France would win a great prize in Jamaica, but, if it didn't it would be rid of Toussaint:

"Success would forever separate from Great Britain one of her most valuable colonies and diminish her resources. Should they [Toussaint and his army] fail, they will fall victims to their rashness and presumption or like Bonaparte and his army cease to be objects of dread and jealousy to the Government of France. The old system might then be restored in St. Domingo and slavery reestablished. (Korngold, p. 164)

Toussaint wisely refused this order. However, it has always seemed to me that this direct plot, insincere as it may have been on the Directory's part, is not an unlikely source of the beginnings of the linear plot theory which I described above. The mistake of this interpretation would be putting the plot into Napoleon's mouth, and believing it a sincere plot to invade the United States, rather than an attempt to rid France of Toussaint. (6)

The Linear Plot Theory and the American Federalists

Napoleon may have inherited the essence of his West Indian policy, but he immediately turned up the heat. Having taken over in November of 1799, by August the following year he had already begun negotiations with Spain for the retrocession of Louisiana. France receive the Territory in a secret treaty on October 1, 1800, less than one year after Napoleon's ascension to power in France. However, it never actually took control from the Spanish.

At the same time Napoleon was working to put his West Indian policy into effect. On September 30, 1800, the day before the retrocession treaty with Spain, the French and Americans signed a treaty ending their two year old quasi-war. This left the British, with whom France was at war, as the major stumbling block to Napoleon's plans. It was another whole year before Napoleon managed a peace treaty with Britain, freeing him from the dangers of the British navy in the Caribbean. Just six days after their treaty was signed Napoleon began the plans for an invasion force to be sent to Saint-Domingue.

The British and American attitudes toward Saint-Domingue had been mixed. The British invaded Saint-Domingue in September of 1793, thinking they could achieve an easy victory in concert with the Spanish and pick up a valuable colony. However, after Toussaint and yellow fever (7) soundly defeated them by 1798, the British sought special trade relations with Toussaint, and were prepared to help him against the French, encouraging his independence

movement. The only fear the British had, which was shared by the Americans, was that an independent Haiti would spread the concept of a servile revolution. Such a revolution was extremely dangerous to the slave colonies of the British West Indies.

The American position was more complex. First the Adams, then Jefferson administrations had to walk a tight rope of conflicting interests. On the one hand the New England area desperately wanted and needed trade with San Domingue. They traded salted fish, clothing, manufactured goods, weapons and arms for molasses and sugar cane, mainly for the important rum distilleries of the American Northeast.

On the other hand, the U.S. was extremely worried about the impact of a free Haiti on the Southern states and the political implications for the administration which would support such relationships. On March 12, 1799 Secretary of State Pickering wrote to Rufus King, American minister to Great Britain: "A Saint Domingue under France was more dangerous. Blacks would stick to agriculture and not go to sea. But 'France with an army of those black troops might conquer all the British Isles and put in jeopardy our Southern States.'" (Logan, p. 84.)

There are several noteworthy things about this memo. First of all, it was written prior to Napoleon's coup d'etat, again underlining that the linear plot theory preceded Napoleon. Secondly, it is important to note the belief that as long as Haiti had no sea power, (8) it could not effectively spread its revolution. Finally, there are suggestions in the literature that the whole concept of a French plot to attack the U.S. may have been an American invention.

The leading proponent of this view is Ludwell Montague who argues that the Federalists were vehemently opposed to Revolutionary France. Both Thomas Pickering, Secretary of State under John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton were convinced that it would be possible to keep an independent Haiti from becoming a maritime nation, thus reducing any real threat it might pose to other slave nations. At the same time an independent Haiti, on their view, could be induced to halt piracy from La Tortue and to allow lucrative trade with the American Northeast. The problem was, how to convince the Southern states to support such a policy. The belief in a French plot to use San Domingue as a jumping off place to invade the U.S. through Louisiana was a convenient fiction to float their anti-French policy. What made the plot particularly workable for the Federalist was the claim that Toussaint himself had refused to obey the Directory's order for a foreign adventure against the United States. Thus he was seen as the lesser of two evils. (Montague, p. 39 ff)

I believe there is a strong case to say that the linear plot theory was itself an American Federalist concoction to justify its anti-French policy without seeming pro-black or pro-Haitian. (9) Rather, Haiti could be seen as the first line of defense against an imperialist France. The primary support for this claim is that the story fits the Federalists' purposes, and that there is virtually no textual evidence at all that supports the linear plot, and much which shows it is sheer non-sense.

There are a couple of diplomatic memos which suggest that two of Jefferson's minions did believe the plot. Minister to Paris, Edward Livingston wrote to King on December 30, 1801: "I know that the armament destined in the first instance for Hispaniola is to proceed to Louisiana

provided Toussaint makes no opposition." (Montague. p. 43)

In another letter Tobias Lear, the new American consul in Cape Francois claimed to have "...obtained positive information that some of Leclerc's regiments were destined for Louisiana, but at the same time he was able to observe that no troops could be spared from Saint Domingue for an indefinite period." (Montague, p. 43)

However, even if Livingstone and Lear were sincere and correct in their intelligence, (10) this does not support the linear plot theory. The French had not yet taken possession of Louisiana from the Spanish. This area was constantly beset with problems from hostile Indians as well as disgruntled settlers. It is reasonable to expect that they would need some protection of their interests once they repossessed Louisiana. Also, Napoleon was quite aware of Jefferson's opposition to the French in Louisiana. But we cannot forget that Louisiana was a French possession, and legally re-taking it from the Spanish is not an invasion of the United States, however much Jefferson might have disliked it. Again, fearing a French presence in Louisiana is one thing, believing that the French were on their way to Washington is totally another.

NAPOLEON'S WEST INDIAN POLICY, THE LACLERC SECRET INSTRUCTIONS AND THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

I have tried to establish that the French West Indian policy was not an invention of Napoleon's, but something he inherited from the Directorate. Perhaps the clearest evidence that Napoleon's strategy called for the San Domingue-center plan, and not the linear plot, comes from his secret instructions to Laclerc. (11) The primary aim of the instructions is to tell Laclerc how Napoleon wants Toussaint subdued, slowly, with flattery to lower his guard, and then with ruthlessness. This is exactly what Laclerc seems to have achieved. Napoleon's primary mistake was to think that the elimination of Toussaint was the immediate end of the revolution.

But, more to the point of this story is that the secret instructions make clear that Napoleon was out to re-establish Saint-Domingue in all her prior glory. This he recognized required the reintroduction of slavery and the complete return of the old regime.

He tells Leclerc:

"The Spaniards, the British and the Americans are equally worried to see a Black Republic. The admiral and the major general will write memorandums to the neighboring establishments in order to let them know the goal of the government, the common advantage for the Europeans to destroy the Black Rebellion and the hope to be seconded." (Roloff, p. 249)

Later on he is more specific:

"Commerce must, during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd periods be accessible to Americans, but after the 3rd period, Frenchmen only will be admitted and the ancient rules from before the Revolution will be put back into force." (Roloff, p.

252-253)

In order for France to recapture the grandeur that was Saint-Domingue, Napoleon needed to put down the black rebellion, reestablish slavery, and equally importantly, refuse all trade with Britain and the United States. When Saint-Domingue was producing her fabulous wealth for France it was because the *exclusif* was in effect, that is, Saint-Domingue was required to trade exclusively with France, both for her imports and exports.

Certainly Louisiana played an important role in Napoleon's policy. As Henry Adams says:

"St. Domingo, like all the West Indies, suffered as a colony under a serious disadvantage, being dependent for its supplies on the United States--a dangerous neighbor both by its political example and its commercial and maritime rivalry with the mother country. The First Consul hoped to correct this evil by substituting Louisiana for the United States as a source of supplies for St. Domingo." (Adams, "Napoleon," p. 124)

Napoleon's vision is a Saint-Domingue-centered vision. She was to be the great producer of wealth, reverting to her slave status. Louisiana was important to the plan, but Louisiana was relegated to the role of an agricultural supplier for the hungry slaves of Saint-Domingue, and as a front-line protector from allowing the United States a trade foot in the door. Nonetheless, Napoleon's West Indian policy looks first and foremost to Saint-Domingue.

Perhaps one of the strongest arguments against the linear plot and for the Saint-Domingue-center plot is the Louisiana Purchase. Napoleon was soundly defeated in Saint-Domingue and Haiti was born of the ashes of that battle. But, if Louisiana had been the actual target, then Napoleon could have extricated himself earlier and by-passed Saint-Domingue to continue on toward his main target. He would have reasoned that it was not Toussaint who defeated him, but yellow fever, which was a favorite explanation of many white racists. (see note # 7 again). He would have given up on Saint-Domingue as unfit for Frenchmen, and moved on to Louisiana. What he did in fact, however, was to sell Louisiana as soon as it became clear that he was not going to retake Saint-Domingue. What's the point in an excellent supply depot if there's nothing to supply.

Henry Adams gives evidence that Napoleon was considering selling Louisiana as early as April, 1803, seven months before the French finally surrendered in Haiti. (Adams HISTORY, p. 329) Adams sums up the situation succinctly:

"Without that island the system had hands, feet, and even a head, but no body. Of what use was Louisiana, when France had clearly lost the main colony which Louisiana was meant to feed and fortify?... Not only had the island of St. Domingo been ruined by the war, its plantations destroyed, its labor paralyzed, and its population reduced to barbarism...but...the army dreaded service in St. Domingo, where certain death awaited every soldier; the expense was frightful; a year of war had consumed fifty thousand men and money in vast amounts, with no other result than to prove that at least as many men and as much money would

be still needed before any return could be expected for so lavish an expenditure. In Europe war could be made to support war; in St. Domingo peace alone could but slowly repair some part of this frightful waste." (Adams, HISTORY, P. 311-312).

The deal to sell the Louisiana Territory was well underway in the last days of the Leclerc expedition, and was actually concluded before the French left Saint-Domingue, though the official sale, like the official birth of Haiti, is in 1804.

Haiti's Contribution to the United States

The interesting and ironic part of this story is that what at first seems to be the weaker and less glorious of the plots is actually the stronger and more glorious position for Haiti. On the linear plot theory, Napoleon was headed for the United States through Louisiana with a quick stop over in Saint-Domingue. Then, Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian masses stopped the French dead in their tracks. The French, beaten and discouraged, spared the United States and returned home.

But notice that what makes this story interesting is the assumption that the most important entity is the United States and not Haiti. What is glorious is that the tiny, insignificant nation of Haiti saved the important great giant with its unlikely victory over the French forces.

However, on the Saint-Domingue-center theory, Haiti is the key and center of Napoleon's whole West Indian strategy. Louisiana, which recall is not the United States, but a French colony, is an important supply depot, but secondary to the whole plot. The United States is a competitive nation, trying to cut into France's trade relations with its richest colony.

Certainly the United States feared France's presence in Louisiana, especially with the imperialist Napoleon Bonaparte on the throne. But it was the lost trade with Saint-Domingue that most frightened the U.S.

Jefferson recognized this. He was himself a Republican and not a Federalist, and was president during Napoleon's attack on Saint-Domingue. He seems not to have feared that Napoleon had designs the United States. Nonetheless he had a clear idea of the interrelation between Louisiana, Saint-Domingue, France and the U.S. On April 18, 1802 he wrote Edward Livingstone, American Minister in Paris, that New Orleans "...is the one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy...The day that France takes possession of New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low water mark...From that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation." (Logan, P.134)

Jefferson was confident that the French would not succeed in Saint-Domingue, and supplied Toussaint with arms, munitions and food, regarding him, as the Federalist linear plot did too, as the first line of defense against Napoleonic aggression. But the aggression Jefferson feared was not a direct threat to United States territorial integrity, but an undesired and untenable French

presence in Louisiana. He believed that Toussaint would put up considerable resistance, and he counted on pressing affairs in Europe to turn Napoleon from his West Indian policy.

Thus on the Saint-Domingue-center theory Haiti becomes much more important than it would otherwise. It is recognized by Napoleon, and the French Directorate before him, as the most important factor of its West Indian's policy, and more important than Louisiana. At the same time, the heroic fighting of the Haitians presents Louisiana to the United States on a silver platter. Consequently, the part of the story which the Haitians so love to acknowledge -- their contribution to the well being of the United States -- is well preserved.

Finally, this view emphasizes that in the relative importance of nations, there was a time when Haiti was not important for what she did or didn't do for the big brother across the gulf stream, but extremely important in her own right, sought after by Napoleon himself. The seemingly "lesser" view becomes the more significant when viewed from this perspective.

FOOTNOTES

1. At times when technically referring to the colony of San Domingue, I will use the name Haiti. I am quite aware that Haiti was officially born on Jan. 1, 1804. However, she was effectively independent from 1798, except for the brief period after Toussaint's so-called retirement. At times in my story where the text calls for the emphasis that the action was one taken by the independent forces, I will use the name Haiti or Haitians, even before the legal date arrives.
2. Whether the plot was to move from New Orleans to Philadelphia or to Washington depends in which administration one locates the plot. For most of John Adams' presidency the capital was Philadelphia. Washington became the seat of government in July, 1800, just before Thomas Jefferson became president.
3. Some of the historians who seem to lean strongly toward the linear plot theory are: Robert and Nancy Heintz, Carl Lokke, Wenda Parkinson and Charles Tansill.
4. When the slaves first rebelled in August of 1791 they were not asking for emancipation, but only an additional day each week to cultivate their garden plots. (Korngold, p. 29)
5. Napoleon had already decided upon his West Indian strategy, which was, in this sense, much more important than the person of Toussaint Louverture. However, just a few days after Napoleon had ordered the mounting of the expedition against San Domingue, General Stevens arrived in Paris with Toussaint's printed constitution, naming him Governor General for life and virtually making San Domingue a free nation with only the loosest ties to France. This constitution, and particularly the fact that it had already been printed and distributed, was too much for Napoleon, who could brook no threat to his own dominance. He wanted the head of this man whom he called "the gilded African."
6. It is interesting to note, however, that in 1799 Commissioner Roume did in fact send agents to Jamaica to stir up the slaves. One agent, Sasportas, died a heroic death in Jamaica and, ironically, the British became frightened of Toussaint! (Korngold, p. 177-178)
7. Perhaps one of the most difficult and interesting scholarly questions concerning the Haitian Revolution is what was the relative impact of Toussaint's leadership and the Haitian fighters

and what was the impact of yellow fever? This is a problem which has not been adequately settled in the literature.

8. The British secret convention with Toussaint also includes this prohibition against a Haitian navy. (Montague, p. 38) Also, when Jefferson proposed independence under 3 powers early in 1802, the French Minister of Marine, Pichon, quotes Jefferson as saying: "Provided that the Negroes are not permitted to possess a navy, we can allow them without danger to exist and we can moreover continue with them very lucrative commercial relations." (Logan, p. 126). However, Logan seems to think the Haitian Revolution was more of a threat than did either Britain or the United States. As long as Haiti could have no navy they seemed to believe her servile revolution could be contained. Logan, waxing eloquent about the impact of the revolution, places it much higher on the historical scale of importance: "It would perhaps not be too much to say that the specter of a free Negro Republic that owed its independence to a successful slave revolt frightened slave holding countries as much as the shadow of Bolshevist Russia alarmed capitalistic countries in 1917." (Logan, p. 72)
9. Montague's description is the best I have read of this alleged "discovery." "How, indeed, had the Federalists hoped to hold the South in line while they negotiated with the 'First of the Blacks?' They 'discovered' that France had ordered an invasion of the Southern States from Saint Domingue, to carry thither the tide of black revolt, that Toussaint had refused to obey, and that Rigaud had undertaken the task. Considering the actual situation in Saint Domingue, the idea was fantastic. Even Stevens, who had it from a source probably inspired by Toussaint himself, could take it seriously only by supposing that the Directory planned to make South Carolina a second Egypt, to rid itself of Toussaint as it had rid itself of Bonapart. Nevertheless, the South was asked to believe that Louverture was a true ally, Rigaud a dangerous enemy." (Montague, p. 39.) [Note that Steven's remark about the 'second Egypt' was made before Napoleon returned to France and staged his coup d'etat.]
10. Lear was not a Federalist and had replaced Edward Stevens in Cape Francois on April 28, 1801. The new Secretary of State, James Madison, had replaced Stevens to lessen the Federalist influence in San Dominguan policy. (Logan, p. 14)
11. These secret instructions were, for a long time unknown or lost. Finally a German historian, Gustave Roloff, turned them up and presented them as an appendix to his book DIE KOLONIALPOLITIK NAPOLEONS I. The translations which I use in the two selections in the body of the paper were made by Jacques C. Chicoineau, retired professor of French at Webster University.

Bob Corbett
September 1991

Emperor Soulouque

Emperor Soulouque and his court were the butt of caricaturists, mainly Daumier and Cham. It is interesting to note that Cham was the grand son of Comte de Noé, the former owner of Toussaint Louverture in the days of slavery in Saint Domingue. Besides the numerous caricatures of Soulouque by Cham and Daumier, the site shows the derision of the Haitian army (Haiti: Infanterie Légère) in a

color lithograph by Draner.

Pierre Toussaint

Pierre Toussaint was born into slavery on the French colony of Saint Domingue. His master, Jean Berard, encouraged the young Pierre to learn to read and write. In 1787, Berard moved his new wife and several slaves, including Pierre and his younger sister Rosalie, to New York City.

As Pierre was establishing a good reputation among New York's elite as a hairdresser, an increasing number of Haitian refugees in the American city brought reports of murder and devastation from the island. With the money he had received from the women whose hair he cut, Pierre bought his sister's freedom. He selflessly decided to remain a slave, however, thinking he could better care for the recently widowed Madame Berard, in that capacity.

Eventually, Madame Berard's health gave way. Then, on her deathbed she granted Pierre his freedom. At the age of forty-one, Pierre was a free man. It was as a free man that he married the woman he loved, Juliette Noel, whose freedom he had purchased. Like Pierre Toussaint, Juliette had begun her life in the "New World" as a slave in Haiti. Together, they continued charitable work Pierre had begun informally, helping refugees find jobs and caring for orphans. Next, the couple opened a school to teach black children a trade. When the plague struck New York, Pierre personally cared for the victims. When Pierre's sister, Rosalie, died leaving an orphaned young daughter, Euphemia, Pierre and Juliette welcomed her into their home.

In 1851, Pierre who was eighty-five, suffered the last and greatest sorrow of his life when his beloved Juliette died. He died two years later on June 30, 1853, and was buried in a New York cemetery next to Juliette and Euphemia.

In 1968, the long process to canonize Pierre Toussaint as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church began. In 1990, his body was moved to a crypt under the main altar of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. In view of his lifelong commitment to helping others, Pierre Toussaint is credited as a founder of Catholic charitable works in the United States.

Haiti and the United States:

Haiti and the United States: two countries that emerged from European colonialism to become the first independent nations in the modern Western Hemisphere. Joined by history and geography, Haiti and the United States have much in common – and they are quite different.

One was colonized by France; the other by Great Britain. The independence of one led to freedom

from slavery; the independence of the other did not, at least not for more than 70 years. One became a weakened, isolated pariah state following its independence; the other became stronger and was ultimately welcomed by its European allies into the community of the great powers of the 19th century. And on, and on...

Yet, despite divergent paths and U.S. efforts to distance itself from its neighbor, the two nations remained linked – sometimes positively, other times negatively. This section of our web site explores historical connections between Haiti and the United States over roughly a 100 year period – from the U.S. War for Independence to Haiti's eventual diplomatic recognition by the United States and the subsequent journey of the former slave and abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglass, to Haiti as one of its first U.S. Ambassadors.

Over the long road of history that leads us to today certain events can sometimes be forgotten, overlooked, or set aside. In this regard, our approach to exploring the links between Haiti and the United States accents positive relationships between the two nations, with a particular emphasis on Haiti's positive influence on the U.S.

A Note on Geography and Terminology

Geography: Sometimes, even in the most highly regarded publications of today, Haiti is identified as an island. This is simply not true. Haiti occupies roughly the western one-third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic. Only during the 1822 – 1844 occupation by Haiti of the Dominican Republic, when the government of Haiti controlled all of Hispaniola, was Haiti actually an island.

Terminology: Just as times change, terminology changes, also. During its French colonial period, Haiti was known as the colony of Saint Domingue. The Spanish colony to the east was known as Santo Domingo. Mixing Spanish with French, some authors referred to the French colony as San Domingue. Then, following its independence, Haiti was referred to by some as Hayti, with the residents of the independent country being “Haytians.”

In this website, we have used Saint Domingue to refer to the French colony on the island of Hispaniola, and Haiti to refer to the independent nation that emerged in 1804.

At times, the narrative text refers to ‘people of color.’ In both Saint Domingue and Haiti, people of color – les gens de couleur – are those whose ancestries include both African and European descendants. In both Saint Domingue and Haiti, this distinction of a middle group between black and white is of great importance.

Haitian involvement in American revolution

Long before the Haitian Revolution would see its first uprising in the city of Cap, men from the French colony of Saint Domingue were fighting elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. This included participation in the U.S. fight for independence.

Troops from the French Colony recruited for Savannah

In 1779, coming off a glorious victory off the coast of the Caribbean Island of Grenada, French Admiral Count Charles-Henri d'Estaing organized a volunteer corps of free men of color to travel to the rebelling British colony of Georgia. Their objective was to lay siege to the important southern port town of Savannah, held by British troops. Rebellious South Carolina Governor John Rutledge and General Benjamin Lincoln had invited Comte d'Estaing, believing French involvement in Georgia was the only way to save the colony from falling completely into British hands.

On his way from Grenada to Georgia, Count d'Estaing, stopped at the French colony of Saint Domingue on the island of Hispaniola to raise his corps of soldiers. He left the colony after he added approximately 500-800 free men to his army of 4,000 men. Upon arriving in the English colonies on September 9, 1779, Count d'Estaing initially tried to get the British to surrender before the American troops have arrived. The British forces, sensing a window of opportunity, sent for reinforcements and began strengthening the fortifications around the city. When the American troops arrived on September 23rd, the French and American-led troops numbered 7,000 while the British numbered only 2,500. From October 5th through the 9th, the French and American troops shelled the city, but with minimal success.

The Volunteers from Saint Domingue take Bold Action

On October 10th, the French and American forces begin their assault on the British positions. Unknown to them, however, a defector from the American troops had informed the British that the main thrust of the assault would come from a location called Spring Hill. When the American General Lincoln and Count d'Estaing led their troops to Spring Hill, the British were ready for them and routed them, inflicting many casualties. Lincoln and d'Estaing called for a retreat amid continued fire from the British. It was at this point that the French reserves, comprised mainly of the volunteers from Saint Domingue, rode into battle and cut off the British prohibiting them from leaving the city and annihilating Lincoln and d'Estaing's men.

In a short hour, the Battle of Savannah had yielded more than 1,000 casualties, placing it alongside the Battle of Bunker Hill as one of the two bloodiest battles of the American Revolutionary War. The Volunteers of St. Domingue, exhibiting the excellent fighting skills and indomitable courage that would lead them to their own independence a quarter century later, were responsible for limiting the rout.

Some historians note that a young 12-year old drummer boy by the name of Henri Christophe, was wounded during the battle. If indeed he was present (and no irrefutable historical proof has yet been put forth to confirm this claim), it is certain that this battle had a great impact on the boy who would later fight alongside Toussaint Louverture for Haitian independence and subsequently become the first king of Haiti.

U.S. and Toussaint Louverture

Throughout the 1790s, the new nation of the United States of America took a keen interest in developments in Saint Domingue. It developed not only strong economic ties, but also discreet political ties, with the French colony to its south.

By 1791, the Haitian Revolution had begun. By 1798, Toussaint Louverture, the former slave-turned-general, had amassed a great deal of influence in the colony, serving as its governor-general. Some regions of the colony, however, were still out of his control. One was the south, where a mulatto leader named Andre Rigaud held powers. Rigaud became the only rival to Louverture's hold over the entire colony of St. Domingue.

Afraid of Louverture's growing power, Hédouville, a French envoy to the embattled colony, spurred on the rivalry between the two men. Eventually a civil war broke out. Toussaint Louverture's forces won the war by taking the southern city of Jacmel. Louverture was aided by the American Frigate General Greene, under the command of Captain Raymond Perry, which blockaded the port of Jacmel.

The American rationale for intervening on behalf of Toussaint was to prevent Rigaud's plan of exporting the slave revolt to Jamaica and other Caribbean colonies. Toussaint later acknowledged the valuable assistance rendered him by Captain Raymond Perry.

Tobias Lear and Toussaint Louverture

Portrait of Tobias Lear

An American Consul to Haiti

Two years after graduating from Harvard, a young man named Tobias Lear was hired as personal secretary for George Washington. He held this position from 1786 until Washington's death in 1799, becoming a well-known personality. He also became a member of Washington's extended family, marrying one of his nieces. Unfortunately, Lear also accumulated a considerable personal debt.

In 1801, President Thomas Jefferson provided Tobias Lear an opportunity not only to rectify his personal situation, but also to fill an unprecedented and significant governmental role. Jefferson named Lear as the American consul to Saint Domingue!

At this time, the embattled French colony was an important port-of-call for American merchant ships. Those ships brought an increasing variety of manufactured goods in return for rum, molasses and other valuable tropical products. By sending someone with Lear's connections to be the American consul to Saint Domingue, Jefferson also sent a clear signal regarding the colony's strategic importance to the United States.

Lear spent a year in St. Domingue. While there, he reportedly enjoyed the amenities of the city of Cap, where he and his wife - found excellent dance and music teachers for his children. Also, he established direct contact with revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture, meeting him and exchanging diplomatic correspondence.

In 1802, Napoleon sent troops under the command of General Leclerc to re-assert French power over the colony. When the French expedition arrived, Lear tried to negotiate its landing with revolutionary leader Henri Christophe, who had become commander of the city of Cap. Lear's efforts, however, were ultimately unsuccessful. He was forced to leave Saint Domingue when Christophe burned the city of Cap as Leclerc and his soldiers sat offshore.

Letter Written by Toussaint to Lear:

Le Cap, 4th Primary of the year ten of the French Republic, one and indivisible (November 25, 1801) *

(From) TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE ,
Governor of Saint-Domingue **

To Mr. Tobias Lear (?), General Agent of the United States Trade in St. Domingue.

Dear Sir:

In answer to the repeated inquiries which you have sent me regarding your letters dated November 23 and 24, . . . (illegible), I give my ... (illegible) for the grazing (?) of the . . . (illegible) Arnaud.

I am grateful for the translation of a letter written to you by the person you have put in charge of finding me a good horse, and I thank you for being kind enough to forward this translation to me. I value all good horses, whatever their color might be. Therefore, the color of the horse which your friend has found will be quite pleasing to me as long as the horse is swift.

Please, accept my thanks for all the help you are willing to extend to me regarding this transaction. I am honored to be, dear Sir, your very humble and very much obliged servant.

Toussaint Louverture

Black Revolution White Fear

Governor Pinckney Offers Help

When the rebellion of the slaves broke out among the sugarcane plantations in the northern plains of St. Domingue in 1791, great fear arose among the white population of the United States. That fear was particularly strong in the country's southern, plantation areas. In states running from Georgia to Maryland, plantation owners, slaveholders, leaders, and their supporters responded to the revolt on Saint Domingue with great alarm, fearing the possibility that it could spread north onto the United States' mainland.

Governor Pinckney of South Carolina was one such leader frightened by the prospect of the French colony's violence migrating northward. He led efforts among plantation owners and slaveholders in his state to respond to what they viewed as a great and impending threat. As a result, food, arms and ammunitions were mobilized quickly and sent from citizens of South Carolina to the white inhabitants of the city of Cap with the objective of helping them to confront the slave revolt.

Frightened Residents of St. Domingue flee to the U.S.

Whites and people of color escaping the revolutionary upheaval in Saint Domingue, and the slaves they brought with them, contributed enormously to the development of Louisiana in the early 18th Century. The tide of migration to the French settlements along the Mississippi and its tributaries from the troubled Caribbean colony continued throughout the revolutionary period, punctuated by three main waves. The first came in 1791 following the beginning of the slave revolt in the north, the second was in 1793 after the burning of the city of Cap and the final, largest wave came in 1803-4 after the defeat of the French.

The Rise of Louisiana's Sugarcane Sector

In 1796, a French Creole planter named De Bore successfully harvested and processed a sugarcane crop in less than eight months on his Mississippi riverbank plantation six miles north of New Orleans, in the French colony of Louisiana. Before De Bore's accomplishment sugarcane cultivation was not considered economically viable in Louisiana because of the cold blasts that occasionally swept down the Mississippi Valley every winter, bringing a hard frost that blackened and ruined the crop.

Until De Bore's success, Louisiana's plantation economy was a mere shadow to that of Saint Domingue, the richest colony of the Caribbean where cane could be planted and harvested year 'round. Now, with techniques that could challenge the constraints of Louisiana's abbreviated growing season, the race was on to expand sugarcane cultivation along the Mississippi and the bayous of the region.

“Planters from San Domingue,” writes Donald Meinig in his *Shaping of America*, Vol. 1 (1986), “brought new varieties of sugarcane and applied their expertise to the marginal conditions in frost-endangered Louisiana; within a few years sugar had replaced indigo as the principal export from bayou plantations.” (p. 337)

Indeed, between 1796 and 1804, the number of sugarcane plantations in Louisiana increased from a handful of struggling enterprises to at least 81 thriving operations.

A Growing Demand for Slaves

As the plantations grew in number, so did the demand for slaves to work the fields. Between 1799 and 1804, the number of bonded Africans in Louisiana increased from around 17,000 to 70,000. These slaves, if not born in the colony, generally entered it via San Domingue or the French colonies of Martinique or Guadeloupe. Many of the colonists fleeing conditions in St. Domingue brought slaves with them, engaging their human property in Louisiana’s rapidly expanding plantation zone along the rivers and bayous. Along the Bayou Teche, for example, several former Saint Domingue colonists quickly established plantations in the area of St. Martinville, a small French settlement serving as the area’s administrative capital and also known as Le Petit Paris.

At least 10,000 migrants entered Louisiana either directly from St. Domingue or indirectly via Cuba in the last decade of the 1700’s and the first decade of the 1800’s. Ulrich Phillips, in his volume *American Negro Slavery* (1918), reported “the volume of the St. Domingue influx from first to last was great enough to double the French-speaking population” (165). Phillips notes that the immigrants from the Caribbean were divided roughly equally among whites, people of color, and slaves.

French Imperial Initiatives

As the migrants from St. Domingue settled into Louisiana, surely some of them, particularly the former colonists, kept an eye on the situation in the embattled colony. Vowing to secure St. Domingue from the “gilded Africans” who had risen in revolt, Napoleon, in 1801, sent a powerful expeditionary force, led by his brother-in-law, Emmanuel Leclerc, “to annihilate the government of the blacks of Saint Domingue” and re-establish unchallenged French control of the colony. In spite of their new ventures in Louisiana, some of the exiles must have thought that once Napoleon achieved this goal, their return to that richest of the French colonies might be in order

The American Minister in Paris, Edward Livingston, however, was watching from a different perspective. In late 1801 he wrote his counterpart in London, Rufus King, stating, “The expedition, which has as its first objective Hispaniola, will proceed against Louisiana if Toussaint does not oppose it.” Later, American diplomat Henry Adams would add, “If Toussaint and his blacks should succumb easily to their fate, the wave of French empire would roll on to Louisiana and sweep far up the Mississippi.”

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Haiti and Louisiana - History Echoes in Louisiana Today

As outlined above, the direct contact between Haiti and Louisiana has been mostly historical. History, however, is certain to leave a mark on the present. In Louisiana today, some 200 years following its purchase from the French, if one travels beyond the tourist haunts of the New Orleans French Quarter to the bayou country and the areas where immigrants from Saint Domingue established plantations, that enduring mark can be seen.

Go to the plantation villages along the bayou where people - both black and white – speak a language – called ‘neg’ or ‘courri-vini’ in Louisiana that is remarkably similar to the Creole or Kreyol of Haiti. Go to a wake for a member of a rural African-American Creole community and feel as if you could be in rural Haiti as well. Sit with the men in a small town and hear the stories of how *traiteurs*, or healers, helped cure asthma and other maladies, and how magic powder and other “voodoo” practices helped the home team win an important baseball game.

While many would stand in Louisiana and look toward Quebec or France for its historical heritage, it is equally possible to stand in Louisiana and look south - toward Haiti - for the historical ties that bind.

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