**Extent to which Haitian Revolution was not a part of French Revolution**

The Haitian Revolution although it was triggered off by the actions of the free coloreds/mulattoes, was essentially the successful revolt of the slaves whose grievances and aspirations for freedom predated the French Revolution. In Haiti, the revolution was ignited by ‘race’ conflict that is the discrimination of the whites against the mulattoes, while the revolution in France was a response to a ‘class’ problem. Two classes in the French society enjoyed greater privileges than the largest section of the population that was the third class, made up of peasants and the bourgeoisie who demanded to be treated equally with the nobles and the clergy.

**Reasons Toussaint was regarded as leader of the major slave revolt in St. Domingue**

Toussaint was not involved in the slave revolt until one month after its outbreak but he was regarded as the leader because of a number of reasons including the following:

1. His name has been the one most associated with the revolution
2. It was he who impressed the slaves with his military ability to command the rebel troops
3. He trained the slaves in guerilla warfare and organized guerilla bands
4. He ensured that his army was well supplied with arms as he purchased 30,000 guns from the United States
5. From 1793, he successfully appointed assistants (Christophe and Dessalines) who bore the title of General and he delegated duties to theses and other men.
6. He was a skillful tactician who made and broke alliances with Europeans in the interest of the rebels. He was afraid to take his troops and switch his allegiance from the Spanish forces in 1794 when he thought that an alliance with Sonthonax could help to repel the British, who if allowed to take charge of the colony, would restore slavery.
7. France’s involvement in the revolutionary wars prevented supplies of goods from being sent to the colony. Toussaint arranged a secret convention with General Maitland by which goods should go to certain selected ports in British and American ships, to be paid for by St.Domingue produce. He had also made trading arrangements with the United States of America.
8. He was instrumental in the defeat of foreign troops in St. Domingue.
9. Toussaint was the one who declared himself general-in-chief of the armies of St.Domingue by 1795.
10. He was the one whom the government in France, in 1799, appointed a governor-general of the colony.
11. In 1801, he decided to regularize his own position and put an end to internal troubles for the future by giving St. Domingue a constitution
12. He led the slaves of Haiti to freedom and into immediate post emancipation period. He recognized that the ‘ultimate guarantee of freedom was the prosperity of agriculture’ and so battled with the colossal task of transforming a slave population into a community of free laborers. He confined the blacks to the plantations under rigid penalties and he saw to it that they were paid a quarter of the produce. The result was that in a year and a half, he had restored cultivation to two-thirds of what it had been in the most flourishing days of the old regime.
13. He was the one who re-organized the administration of St. Domingue with boldness and skill, dividing the island into departments, establishing courts of law, giving the gourde, the local unit of money, a uniform value for the whole island. He invited whites to return, since their knowledge and expertise would be useful in helping to rebuild the agricultural sector and in government. He appointed whites to government posts and his personal advisors were all white men.

**Henri Christophe**

* Was born a slave in St.Kitts but he saved enough money to buy his freedom
* Grew up as a free black and worked as a waiter in a public hotel at Cap Francais
* Could neither read or write, but learned to speak French with remarkable fluency
* Gained military experience when he went to help the American colonists in the American Revolution from 1776 to 1783.

After the outbreak of the slave revolt, Christophe left the hotel to seek Toussaint’s band in the mountains.

1. He fought in the campaigns against the coloreds, Spanish, British and French
2. Was promoted to the position of Brigadier general and governor of the northern region in 1801.
3. After Toussaint was captured, he joined with Dessalines with whom he worked as his deputy and fought to expel the French.

**Jean Jacques Dessalines**

* Was an African-born slave
* As soon as the rebellion gave him opportunity in 1791, he murdered his master, seized his property, assumed his name and joined the revolt.
* At this time he was about 40 years old and unable to read or write.
* He played a significant role in the slave revolt up to 104 for example:

1. He became one of Toussaint’s fearless lieutenants who fought against the French army in 1793 and later on in the campaign against the Spanish in Santo Domingo from 1794 – 1795
2. Appointed general in 1796 and became the most famous of black generals
3. Fought in the campaign against the British from 1795 – 1798 when they finally evacuated the island
4. After the british withdrawal, Toussaint turned his attention to the coloureds who wanted to set up their own republic in the south. Dessalines and Christophe were sent to crush this move to divide St. Domingue. Dessalines’ black forces mutilated and murdered over ten thousand coloreds in 1799 and 1800.
5. He held the position of military governor (1798 – 1802) of the area around St. Marc near Port au Prince. He governed the department with a rod of iron
6. He emerged as Toussaint’s successor after Toussaint was kidnapped and forcibly taken to France
7. He fought against and defeated General Rochambeau who succeeded Le Clerc in late 1802.
8. He declared the independence of St. Domingue in November 1803 and on January 1, 1804, he renounced all connection with France and re0named St. Domingue, Haiti
9. He tore the white out of the Tricolor – the French flag and replaced the letters ‘R.F.” (Republique Francais) with the words ‘Liberty or Death” and in October 1804, he had himself crowned Emperor of Haiti.

**Reasons Dessalines thought Toussaint had been avenged**

* He had defeated the forces that had betrayed, captured and taken Toussaint to France where he died.
* Toussaint had fought for independence and Haiti was now independent.
* When Toussaint was captured he said “in overthrowing me, you have cut down in San Domingo, only the trunk of the tree of liberty. It will spring up again by the roots, for they are numerous and deep”. Dessalines proved that this statement was true.

**Reasons Dessalines changed the name of the country to Haiti**

The name St. Domingue was changed to Haiti, the Taino derived name meaning ‘land of high mountains’ in order to a) emphasize the break with the French and b)mark the end of French domination and their complete expulsion.

**Ways in which Dessalines’ actions differed from Toussaint’s during the revolution.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Dessalines*** | ***Toussaint*** |
| **Killed his master and took his estate** | **Stayed and protected his master and his master’s family for a while, then he sent his mistress off to safety before joining the revolt.** |
| **Declared Haiti’s independence and himself Emperor Jacques 1** | **Remained within French empire, assuming the title of Governor general.** |
| **Was against all foreign forces** | **Fought initially for the Spanish and he acted kindly towards the French** |
| **Sought to exterminate the whites and in early 1805 many of the whites in Haiti were massacred by orders of Dessalines** | **Offered amnesty to the Haitian whites that had fled to other countries during the slave revolt and he encouraged them to return to their estates.** |

**Reasons slaves succeeded in overthrowing slavery in St. Domingue**

The slave revolt which started in August 1791 lasted for 12 years, during which time the slaves were able to defeat the local whites and the soldiers of the French monarchy, the Spanish troops, a British expedition of about sixty thousand men and a French expedition under general Victor Le Clerc. The defeat of this final expedition in 1803 resulted in the establishment of independent Haiti. The success of the slaves in overthrowing the system of slavery has to be attributed to the following:

1. Leadership and work of Toussaint L’ Ouverture
2. Unity of the slaves under Toussaint’s leadership especially through their religion and African customs (they believed in the power of voodoo/ vodun to make them invulnerable).
3. The timing of the revolt – they revolted at a time when the mulattoes and whites were embroiled in a conflict that created a split in their military forces and the whites were distracted by events of the French revolution then taking place in a France
4. The slaves’ determination to bring an end to slavery and thereby free themselves. Therefore, they never gave up even when the repression was great. After Sonthonax issued his abolition decree in 1793, they were determined that no power was going to re-impose slavery.
5. The work of Toussaint’s lieutenants, Dessalines and Christophe, who were able to lead the slaves and continue the struggle after Toussaint was removed. After his capture, they took determined action to prevent the re-introduction of slavery.
6. Toussaint’s skill as a tactician and an opportunist who knew how to make and break alliances when he thought these were to his advantage. At different times he joined up with the Spanish in Santo Domingo and with the French revolutionary leaders.
7. The slaves defeat of a) the French imperial allies b) the pro-slavery free coloureds c) the British troops who engaged them in battle
8. The slaves’ superior knowledge of the territory because of their maroon experience and their ability to use guerilla warfare successfully
9. The destruction of the economic base of the whites by the slaves therby undermining the power of the whites to resist them.
10. The slaves’ devastation of the land which made it difficult for the troops to survive without supplies from external sources.
11. Diseases, particularly yellow fever, which decimated the French troops. The slaves had a greater resistance to yellow fever.
12. The revolution that was raging in France causing much confusion there and reducing the military capacity of the government to suppress the revolt
13. Some mulattoes joining with the blacks to keep Haiti free and independent.

**Positive and Negative effects of the revolt on Haiti**

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| --- | --- |
| Positive | Negative |
| The slaves defeated all forces with whom they fought | There was a tremendous loss of lives as thousands of people, whites, coloreds and blacks died in the fighting, were murdered or were victims of disease ( yellow fever) |
| The slaves won their freedom and the disabilities against the coloreds were removed. Haiti became the first free black state in the Caribbean | Many people fled to other territories so the size of the population was drastically reduced as a result of death and migration |
| This victory ended centuries of white oppression of blacks and it showed that blacks could unite for freedom. | The country was totally devastated. Plantations were destroyed, estate homes of the wealthy whites were looted and burned, and ports and towns were repeatedly sacked and razed by marauding armies. |
| The revolt led to the emergence of leaders from among the slaves | The economy was destroyed. The plantations were divided into peasant small-holdings for subsistence living. The products of small-holdings on ravaged land never equaled the pre-1791 wealth as well as the economy never again returned. |
| After the victory of the slaves, blacks had greater access to land. | The major countries of the world Spain, Britain, United States and France placed an embargo on Haiti and refused to trade with her, |
|  | There was much political instability after independence. Racial animosity continued and there was rivalry between mulattoes and the blacks. |

**Effects of the revolt on other Caribbean territories**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Social** | **Economic** | **Political** |
| It aroused hopes among slaves in the rest of the Caribbean that freedom was possible | The collapse of St. Domingue’s sugar industry boosted sugar production elsewhere. Her removal from the sugar market led to an increase in the price of sugar | The revolution led to the spread of the 18th century struggle in the Caribbean btw Britain and France. Britain captured Trinidad from Spain, British Guiana from Holland, Martinique, Tobago and St. Lucia from France |
| It showed slaves elsewhere that the whites were not unbeatable | The price of cotton and coffee increased. Jamaica benefitted, temporarily, from all these increases; however, it was Cuba that became the successor to St. Domingue as the world’s leading the sugar producer. | British troops invaded St. Domingue in the hope of protecting the planters and of capturing the territory. |
| In territories like St. Kitts and Antigua, there was a greater fear of slave revolts that led to suspicion and fear of émigrés from St. Domingue | Cuba’s sugar industry benefitted from the arrival of French planters and technicians who were instrumental in introducing new refining technology. | Slave control was tightened in other Caribbean territories. The plantocracy became more repressive, there was firmer resistance to privileges for coloreds or an easier life for slaves. |
| Several territories in the Caribbean including Jamaica, Cuba, Trinidad, Puerto Rico and Venezuela received an influx of refugees mainly whites from St. Domingue. | The planters from St. Domingue took their cash and their coffee planting to Jamaica | The revolution inspired slave resistance elsewhere for example Martinique, Guadeloupe and Grenada |
| Emigration led to an increased French Creole population in these territories | Émigrés helped to expand the cocoa industry in territories like Trinidad | It caused increased slave unrest in Jamaica and contributed to the outbreak of the Second Maroon War |
| Émigrés contributed to the development of mixed cultures in some territories for e.g. they helped to expand Roman Catholicism in Jamaica | Haitian slaves took their skills in basket making and straw work to other territories. | Slavery was abolished in Guadeloupe by Sonthonax’s proclamation but was restored Napoleon Bonaparte. |
|  |  | French émigrés spread stories of the atrocities in St. Domingue. The spread of these stories strengthened the argument for abolition and made planters more cautious and watchful |