

Hoogenheim's headquarters at Dageraad. (vi) Cuffy sought to ensure the preservation of the plantation-based economy and plantation grounds even during the revolt, by putting groups of Africans to work in the fields. (vii) Both slaves and whites regarded Cuffy as the mastermind behind the revolt. (viii) Cuffy sent other slaves on missions to spread the revolt throughout British Guiana in 1763. (ix) No other slave was acknowledged as leader during the revolt. Other ringleaders like Akara were simply called 'deputies'. (x) It was Cuffy's leadership that was challenged by one of his 'deputies', in the end.

The Haitian Revolution, 1791-1804

In 1695, the Treaty of Ryswick between France and Spain gave the French a legal right to the western part of Hispaniola, which was called Saint Domingue.

In 1734, the colonists began to cultivate coffee. By 1788, there were 3,000 coffee plantations, 800 sugar plantations, nearly 800 cotton, and 2,950 indigo plantations. The colony supplied half of Europe with tropical produce. It was the world's premier sugar producer. The French, like every other government in those days, saw the colonies as existing exclusively for the profit of the metropolis (mother country). The government introduced a system called the 'Exclusive'. Under this system, whatever manufactured goods the colonists needed, they were compelled to buy from France. The goods were to be transported only in French ships. The raw sugar produced in the colonies was to be refined in France, and the French imposed heavy duties on refined sugar from the colonies.

Prior to 1789, Saint Domingue was made up of different classes. They included the following: (i) The first class included (a) the planters, (b) the top royal officials, that is, civil and military officers. These were the '*grand blancs*'. (ii) The next group consisted of the merchants and profession-

Economic features of Saint Domingue before 1789

Social features before 1789

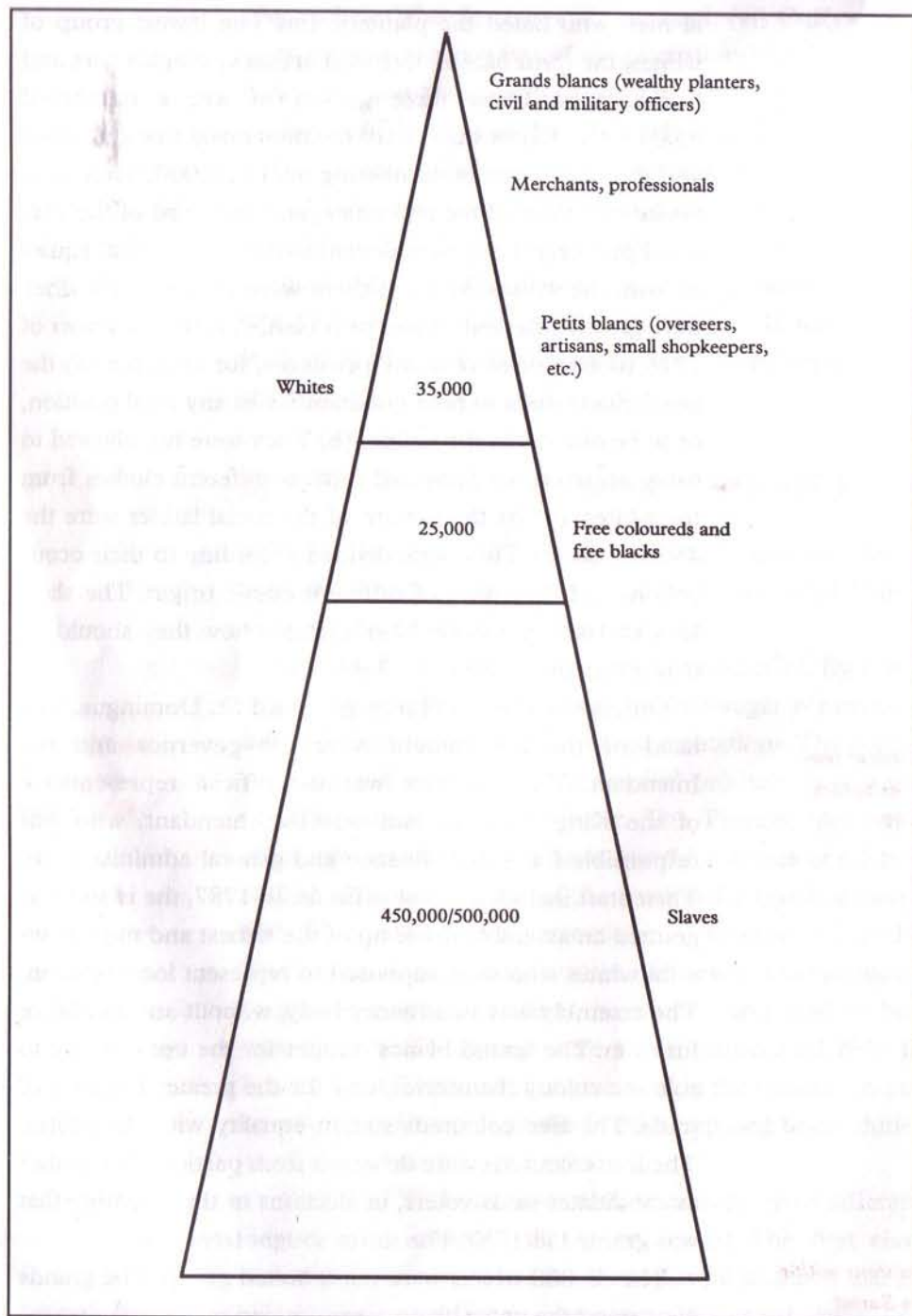
al men who hated the planters. (iii) The lowest group of whites, the '*petit blancs*', included artisans, shopkeepers and bookkeepers. These three groups of whites numbered 35,000. (iv) Below them were the mulattoes/ free coloureds and the free Negroes numbering about 28,000. They possessed one third of the real estate, and one third of the personal property. They were denied social and political equality with the whites. Many of them were educated, and they were greatly resented by the '*petit blancs*'. Restrictive laws of 1776 robbed them of many privileges, for example (a) the law forbade them to hold public office or any legal position, or to be officers in the militia. (b) They were not allowed to carry firearms. (c) They had to wear different clothes from the whites. (v) At the bottom of the social ladder were the 450,000 slaves. They were divided according to their occupation, and they were of different ethnic origin. The slave laws of 1685, the Code Noir, dictated how they should be controlled and treated.

Officials sent from France governed St. Domingue. The head of the government were the governor and the Intendant. The governor was the official representative of the King. Next to him was the Intendant, who was responsible for justice, finance and general administration. Their staff included senior officials. In 1787, the island was granted an assembly made up of the richest and most powerful whites who were supposed to represent local opinion. The assembly was an advisory body, without any legislative function. The '*grand blancs*' sought for the opportunity to rule the colony themselves, and for the greater freedom of trade. The free coloureds sought equality with the whites. The free coloureds were debarred from participating, either as candidates or as voters, in elections to the assembly that was granted in 1787. The slaves sought freedom.

The 35,000 whites were not a united group. The *grands blancs* and the *petits blancs* were divided by the fact that the *grands blancs* had property and education and controlled

Political features before 1789

Divisions within the Social groups (I) Whites



Social groups in St. Domingue in 1789

the colonial assembly, while the petits blancs were poorer, had very little education and no political power.

(2) Blacks

The free blacks and the slaves were of the same colour but the former had freedom and sometimes owned property. The slaves were robbed of their freedom and they owned no property.

(3) Coloureds

The free coloureds/ mulattoes were of mixed blood and, frequently, the more fortunate ones were wealthy and had a good education. However, there were some mulattoes/ coloureds who were enslaved. These were the ones who were not fortunate enough to have their freedom purchased for them.

Nature of the discontent in St. Domingue before 1789

St. Domingue was characterized by discontent among the main social groups. Among the whites, those who were born in the colony (the Creoles) resented those from the 'Mother Country', who occupied all the important offices of government. The grands blancs wanted a greater measure of autonomy (self government). They were dissatisfied with the high taxation and the denial of equal political rights, and they wanted greater freedom of trade than that which was granted to them in the revised 'exclusive' of 1784. The petits blancs resented the greater wealth of the planters. Both groups of whites disliked and were suspicious of the free coloureds.

When those free coloureds/mulattoes who were educated in Paris during the Seven Years War (1756-1763) returned home, their education and accomplishments filled the whites with hatred, envy and fear. They felt that the coloured minority might one day join with the black majority, perhaps even lead a slave uprising against the whites. These negative feelings towards them were expressed in fierce legislation designed to preserve social differences between whites and free coloureds/mulattoes and to keep the coloureds disarmed and without political power. The free coloureds/mulattoes resented the discrimination against them and the denial of equality with the whites.

The condition and treatment of slaves in St. Domingue was worse than in any other West Indian island. Slaves were worked excessively hard and were poorly fed. Consequently, they harboured a deep hatred for their masters.

The whites were of the same colour, and were at the top of the social ladder, but there was conflict among them because of the following reasons: (i) The Creoles hated the French government officials and, in turn, were despised by them. They hated the officials' absolute power (e.g. they could arrest without warrant, they could force the members of the local advisory councils to resign, and they could increase taxes.) The Creoles thought the government officials were wasteful and extravagant, and they treated the local whites with a great deal of arrogance. (ii) Socially, the grands blancs were above the others. They did not mix with the groups below them because they considered them to be inferior. (iii) The petits blancs, at the bottom of the white society, (particularly the labourers and vagabonds who, sometimes mixed with the slaves and mulattoes) were despised by the other whites. Sometimes petits blancs married mulattoes. The grands blancs saw the petits blancs as rabble who filled no important function in the economy of the colony. They felt that the petits blancs had no real meaningful role in the society and they could not live as whites should. The petits blancs, on the other hand, envied and hated the grands blancs for the privileges which they enjoyed.

The mulattoes (free coloureds) were numerous; totalling about twenty-five thousand. There were increasing conflicts between themselves and the whites because of the following reasons: (i) The whites resented their wealth; the poorer and less important whites in particular, were jealous of the coloureds. (ii) The whites were fearful of the challenge that the coloureds/mulattoes posed to their dominance. (iii) The whites in the colonial legislature had passed laws to limit the opportunities and the influence of the coloureds/mulattoes.

Causes of the conflict among whites

Reasons for conflict between whites and mulattoes

They restricted and harassed them with malicious legislation, and they threw as much as possible of the burdens of the country upon them. (iv) The coloureds/mulattoes were barred from participating in the political life of the colony. (v) Even after the French Revolution broke out in France, the whites in St. Domingue refused to lift the restrictions placed on the free coloured/mulattoes. (vi) After the revolution began, the National Assembly in France declared in May 1791, that free coloureds should be given the right to vote, but the colonial assembly, composed of whites, refused to grant this right, and so fighting began between the free coloureds and the whites.

(i) The free coloureds /mulattoes were not allowed to (a) join the colonial militia (b) wear European dress (c) play European games (d) meet together for feasts or wedding celebrations (e) use the title of Monsieur and Madame (f) sit in certain seats in church (g) marry whites (h) reside in France or assume the name of their white fathers. (ii) They were compelled to join a police organization for (a) arresting fugitive Negroes (b) protecting travellers on the high road (c) capturing dangerous Negroes (d) fighting against the Maroons; all the difficult and dangerous tasks that the local whites might assign. (iii) They had to join the local militia, provide their own arms and ammunition and, without pay or allowance of any kind, serve at the discretion of the white commanding officer. (iv) They were responsible for the forced upkeep of the roads. (The corvée, a French law, required that mulattoes provide free labour for a number of days each year for the upkeep of roads.)

Free coloureds/Mulattoes were discriminated against because of the following reasons: (i) They were not white. Racial prejudice was very strong and so they were discriminated against because of the colour of their skin. (ii) Many of them began to amass wealth as master artisans and then proprietors. Many of them were also educated. As they began to establish themselves, the jealousy and envy of the

Discriminatory laws against the mulattoes

Reasons for discrimination against free coloureds /Mulattoes

white colonists were transformed into ferocious envy and fear. (iii) They lived on the local vegetables; they drank no wine, confining themselves to the local liquors brewed from the sugar cane, thus their personal consumption contributed nothing to the important trade with France. They were envied and discriminated against for their sober ways of living, and their small expenditure which enabled them to put away most of their income, thus accumulating immense capital. (iv) They bid for all properties on sale in the various districts, and raised prices to such fantastic heights that the whites who were not wealthy could not buy without ruining themselves by attempting to keep pace with the free coloureds / mulattoes. (v) They were trying to get high command in the militia, and in the judiciary, and they wanted to share in the local government.

The French Revolution and its Impact on the Haitian Revolution

Reasons people of France revolted

The people of France, in 1789, were divided into three 'Estates'/classes. The clergy and the nobility made up the First and Second 'Estates', and all others, from lawyers down to peasants, formed the Third Estate. A revolution broke out in the country in 1789 because of the following reasons: (i) The people wanted liberty and freedom of expression. The educated section of the Third Estate, especially the lawyers and the doctors, resented their inability to offer open criticism of the system of government of the day. They resented the lack of religious freedom; if a protestant service was discovered, the pastor might be hanged and the congregation sent to the galleys. (ii) They wanted equality before the law and they also wanted security of property. They resented the wealth and privileges of the nobles and the clergy, and the extraordinary burden borne by the peasants. The nobles and the clergy were exempted from nearly

all taxation while the peasants were taxed more and more heavily as the expenses of the French government mounted in the 18th century. They resented the liability of the Third Estate to suffer torture, breaking on the wheel and forms of mutilation that were spared nobles and clergy. (iii) There was no trace of popular or middle class influence in the government. The people felt that they were unfairly excluded from all share in government, as all power was concentrated in the hands of the king and his personal advisors, so they wanted some power. (iv) The people fought for fraternity, the right to come together to look after their own chosen interests. (v) The people wanted it to be generally accepted that there were certain rights that they had which should not be infringed, that is, liberty, equality and fraternity.

Improvements in condition which white plantocracy in Haiti wanted in 1789

The white plantocracy in 1789, believed that they could capitalize on upheavals in France to press for independence, or at least a large measure of autonomy. They wanted the following: (i) They wanted the assemblies that were set up in 1787 to be granted the power to make laws like those in the British Islands. (ii) They wanted equality with the French whites. (iii) They wanted an end to the trading restrictions imposed from Paris. (iv) They wanted to rid themselves of the royalist bureaucracy.

Improvements wanted by free coloureds and slaves

The free coloureds saw in the French Revolution the principles which justified their claims for redress of grievances and for civil rights. (i) They wanted equality with the whites politically and socially. (ii) They wanted the discrimination against them to be removed. (iii) The slaves wanted personal freedom.

Attempts by free coloureds to improve their position up to 1790

The Code Noir sought to prevent concubinage between white men and slave women but this failed, and so mulatto children multiplied in St. Domingue. By 1755, they began to fill the colony. Since the amount of property they could hold was not restricted, by dint of hard work, and by administering their enterprises themselves, (i) many were able to acquire wealth as proprietors. As their wealth increased, their resentment against their humiliation sharpened. (ii)

Some of them sent their children to France to be educated. (iii) In January 1790, following the outbreak of the French Revolution in France, the free coloureds, sponsored by the Friends of the Negroes (the Amis des Noirs), petitioned the National Assembly for political rights for the mulattoes. Vincent Ogé, a young coloured living in Paris, petitioned members of the National Assembly, (the new governing body in France following the overthrow of the French government) asking them to grant free coloureds the right to be represented in the colonial assembly.

Free coloureds encouraged by the National Assembly

Encouraged by the Amis des Noirs, in March 1790, the National Assembly sent a decree to St. Domingue (i) giving the vote to all free persons over twenty-five years old who possessed certain income qualifications. This appealed to the free coloureds, many of whom were qualified. (ii) Full citizenship should also be granted to children born of free parents. The whites objected to these concessions. Humiliated, the free coloureds organized a revolt. If not at the instigation of the Amis des Noirs, Friends of the Negroes, at least with their consent, Vincent Ogé left Paris to lead the insurrection in St. Domingue. Ogé went secretly to London where he was met by Thomas Clarkson, the abolitionist. There he got money and letters of credit to purchase arms and ammunition in the United States. He landed in St. Domingue on October 21, 1790 and, accompanied by his brother and Marc Chavannes, a mulatto friend, he started the revolt.

Reasons revolt led by Ogé failed

Ogé was defeated because of the following reasons: (i) Only a few of the free coloureds were prepared to fight for their rights. (ii) The whites were better trained and armed, and they were better organized than the free coloureds. (iii) The free coloureds had no external support, for example, from the neighbouring Santo Domingo, and so when Ogé and a few of his companions fled across the border into Spanish territory, they were captured and returned, and brutally executed.

News of the execution of Ogé and his friends diminished support for the planters in France. In May 1791, the National Assembly agreed to a law allowing persons of colour, born of free parents, to have the right to vote for members of the colonial assembly. The planter-controlled assemblies refused to put the law into effect. In response, coloureds and planters began to form their own militias and arm their own slaves. They soon began to fight.

How conflict between whites and coloureds provided slaves with opportunity to fight for freedom

The ensuing conflict gave the slaves a great opportunity to fight for their freedom because of the following reasons: (i) The whites and the coloureds were so engrossed in their struggle that they neglected the slaves, and so the supervision of the slaves broke down. When the powers of control broke down, the slaves were left fairly free to plan their revolt. This gave them a good chance of revolting successfully. (ii) The conflict was so intense that there was no immediate possibility of uniting to fight against the slaves. Formerly, this unity had led to the defeat of slave uprisings. (iii) They left their properties unprotected and vulnerable to attacks by the slaves. (iv) This confrontation between the whites and the coloureds provided an excellent timing for the start of the slave revolt. (v) The planters' refusal to accommodate the coloureds robbed them of the support of the revolutionary leaders in France and helped to create the right climate for the slaves to make a bid for their freedom.

Reasons slaves in Saint Domingue revolted in 1791

The dispute over the May, 1791 decree had absorbed the attention of both whites and coloureds so completely that they were taken by surprise when, in August 1791, the slaves in the Northern plain rose in revolt. They set fire to cane fields and houses, and they murdered the white inhabitants. They revolted at this time because of the following reasons: (i) The tension and civil strife among the free groups in Haiti, that is between the grands blancs and the petits blancs, and between the free coloureds and the whites had diverted attention from the slaves, and so the whites had relaxed their vigilance. This lack of vigilance gave the slaves

a great opportunity to plan their revolt. (ii) The turmoil in France had also distracted the attention of the whites, resulting in fragmented control of the slaves. (iii) Both slaves and mulattoes embraced the slogan of the revolution in France, that is, liberty, equality and fraternity. The slaves wanted these rights for themselves, but more immediately, they wanted to be free. (iv) They wanted to be able to practise their culture unimpeded. (v) They did not wish to continue to endure the harsh conditions to which they had been subjected: the rape of the women, the hunger, beatings and splitting up of families. (vi) They resented the fact that they were being robbed of their dignity. (vii) They were still angry about the treatment meted out to rebels like François Mackandal who, in 1757, had devised a plan to destroy the whites by poisoning their water supply. The human torch made of him when he was chained and burnt alive in response to the premature betrayal of his plans made the slaves hungry for revenge. (viii) The slaves had vastly outnumbered the whites, and so they were more confident of success than they had been previously. (ix) Since no other form of resistance that had been used had won for them their freedom, the slaves felt that they could take the whites by surprise and, thereby, free themselves.

The slaves rebelled against the whites as well as against the free coloureds because of the following reasons: (i) Many free coloureds, like the whites, owned slaves whose greatest desire was to be free. They were prepared to rebel against all those who robbed them of their freedom. (ii) The free coloureds had slave mothers, and they had other relatives who were slaves, yet because the advantages of being white were so obvious, they were prejudiced against the slaves and refused to identify with them. They treated the slaves with disdain and so the slaves retaliated by rebelling against them when the opportunity arose. (iii) The free coloureds had to join the local militia where they could be called upon to put down slave rebellion, or to capture run-

Reasons slaves rebelled against free coloureds and whites

away slaves. They were identified with the white property owners who abused the slaves, who hated them in return.

Boukman

The revolt started under the leadership of Boukman, a Papaloi or high priest of the Voodoo cult, and headman of one of the plantations. The plan was to exterminate the whites and take the colony for themselves. The night on which the revolt started, 22nd August 1791, a tropical storm raged with lightning and gusts of wind, and heavy showers of rain. Slaves on the Gallifet plantation led the way. Each slave gang murdered its masters and burnt the plantation to the ground. Within a few days, half of the Northern plain had been destroyed.

Toussaint L'Ouverture

A month after the revolt had started, Toussaint Breda, a 45-year-old slave, joined it. His name was later changed to L'Ouverture because he opened (ouvert) the door of victory for the slaves. At the start of the revolt, his master, Bayou de Libertas, left his wife in Toussaint's care while he, with a camp of planters, stood guard against the rebel slaves. As the insurrection grew, Toussaint became worn out by the strain of defending his master, his master's property and his mistress, and learning that his life was in danger, he packed his

mistress and some valuables in a carriage and sent her to Le Cap. He sent his own wife and family to a safe place in Spanish Santo Domingo, and then made his way to the camp of the revolting slaves where he was appointed Physician to the Armies of the King because of his knowledge of herbs. Subsequently, he dropped this post and started to train an army.

In 1792, France declared war on Spain and Toussaint joined the Spanish forces as a mercenary to help to drive out the French Republicans. He trained and led a force of some four thousand irregular but very effective Negro troops. The National Assembly in France had passed another law in April 1792, giving the vote to free blacks and free coloureds.



Toussaint L'Ouverture

Sonthonax sent to St. Domingue

In September, an army of six thousand under the leadership of Leger Felicite Sonthonax was sent to St. Domingue to make sure that the law was enforced. In August 1793, Sonthonax granted emancipation to the slaves. This was made legal by the French government in 1794. Sonthonax's action united the whites and the coloureds against him. The royalist planters (supporters of the King, Louis xvi, who was executed) invited Britain to take St. Domingue. Consequently, British troops were landed in 1794. Toussaint, alarmed by the progress of the British troops and the restoration of slavery which a British victory might entail, deserted with his troops from the Spanish army, murdered the Spanish officers who opposed his defection and offered his services to Sonthonax's forces. Toussaint soon became the real leader of the French forces.

Toussaint's support of Sonthonax

Meanwhile, the Spanish and the French governments in Europe made peace in the Treaty of Basle in 1795. Toussaint therefore directed his energies against the English invaders and their allies, the French planters in St. Domingue. He waged a long war against the British force led by General Thomas Maitland, and he ordered Sonthonax and his soldiers, in 1797, to leave St. Domingue when he began to suspect that the French government was weakening in its support for the cause of freeing the slaves. By 1798, his guerilla tactics had so worn down the English invaders that General Maitland was glad to withdraw his depleted forces ravaged by epidemics, in return for a promise from Toussaint to (a) protect the French inhabitants (b) refrain from attacking British trade and (c) refrain from trying to spread revolution to Jamaica.

Massacre of coloureds

After the English were expelled, Toussaint turned against the coloureds who were threatening to take control of the south and west of the colony. There followed a systematic round up, mutilation, and murder of about ten thousand coloureds: men, women and children. The coloured commanders André Rigaud and Alexandre Pétion, fled to

France. After 1800, Toussaint put a stop to the indiscriminate slaughters and ordered his mobs of ex-slaves back to work. He also induced some of the whites who had fled from the colony to return to their estates. In 1799, the Directorate (the government in France) had formally appointed Toussaint as governor-general. Subsequently, he invaded and conquered the once Spanish Santo Domingo which had been ceded to France in an agreement of 1795 but which the French had failed to occupy. In 1801, he drew up a constitution that was submitted to the French government for confirmation. In it Toussaint proclaimed that his own tenure of office was to be for life.

Plans to restore slavery in St. Domingue

Napoleon Bonaparte, the ruler of France, was unwilling to accept the constitution and so he sent his brother-in-law, Victor Le Clerc, to remove Toussaint who had made it clear to the government in France in 1799, that he would resist slavery to the last drop of his blood. Slavery would never be re-introduced. Napoleon's plans however, had included a re-introduction of slavery; therefore Toussaint would have to be removed for his plans to be implemented.

How Toussaint succeeded in liberating the slaves

(i) During the early months of 1792, Toussaint began to organize out of the thousands of ignorant and untrained blacks, an army capable of fighting against European troops. He began with a few hundred picked men whom he trained in the art of warfare and who worked with him from the beginning as they fought side by side against the French troops and the colonists. (ii) Toussaint and his men developed a method of attack based on their overwhelming numerical superiority and the use of guerilla tactics. He joined the Spanish forces in Santo Domingo to help to drive out the French troops when France declared war on Spain in 1792, because he thought that the French would preserve slavery. (iii) He switched sides in 1794, after the French Government confirmed the emancipation of the slaves. He also joined the French forces when he learnt of a British and Spanish plan to invade St. Domingue and bring back

slavery. His passion was for freedom for everyone and so he was prepared to fight all those who stood in the path of freedom. (iv) He was able to defeat the British, with the assistance of yellow fever and able generals like Henri Christophe and Jean Jacques Dessalines. He forced them to withdraw in 1798. (v) He defeated the free coloureds/mulattoes under Rigaud who fled to France, but who returned with Le Clerc's army to overthrow Toussaint in 1801. (vi) The slaves' hunger for freedom gave them the zeal to fight and to support Toussaint, thus they were able to deliver crushing defeats on all those with whom they fought.

(vii) France, the Mother Country, had been going through a period of political upheavals and changes since 1789. These included: (a) a civil war in which King Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette, were executed, and (b) the emergence of a republic. The government's capacity to restore 'order' in the colony was therefore weakened, which was to the advantage of Toussaint and his rebel band.

The newly-won liberty of the slaves evoked a feeling of hostility in the minds of some people who wanted to see an end to the revolt and who wanted to rob the slaves of their freedom. For these purposes various measures were employed, for example: (i) Sonthonax arrived in St. Domingue in 1793 intending initially, to bring to an end the quarrel between the slave owners and to suppress the slave revolt. (ii) When Spain and Britain became involved in a war with France in 1793, both governments sent expeditions to rescue the white colonists and suppress the revolt. (iii) After Toussaint sent a copy of the new constitution to Napoleon, Napoleon sent Victor Le Clerc to St. Domingue to remove Toussaint and re-introduce slavery. (iv) Toussaint was tricked and taken away to France where he died. Le Clerc died shortly afterwards, a victim of yellow fever. General Rochambeau who had similar orders to restore slavery replaced him. A determined black army fought to prevent these orders from being carried out.

Measures taken to suppress the revolt and take away slaves' liberty

How Le Clerc got rid of Toussaint

General Le Clerc came with a plan to: (i) exploit the rivalries among the leaders and the tensions between blacks and mulattoes, (ii) disarm and deport Toussaint and the black leaders. He was able to win over several generals including Henri Christophe and Jean Jacques Dessalines whom Toussaint eventually persuaded to submit. (It is unlikely that Dessalines would have submitted if Christophe and Toussaint had not persuaded him to do so.) These black leaders came over into French service with their band of followers. Toussaint and several others were suspicious of Le Clerc's intentions so they offered resistance and fought a guerilla campaign against him, but as successive leaders surrendered to the French, the struggle became hopeless. In May 1802, Toussaint sent to Le Clerc three of his aides-de-camp and his secretary, and after a conference lasting several hours, his submission to the orders of the French government was arranged on three conditions. These were: (i) indisputable liberty for all in St. Domingue, (ii) Maintenance in their grades and functions of all the native officers and (iii) Toussaint to keep his staff and retire where he wished in the territory of the colony. Toussaint gave up the fight and retired to his estate.

Dessalines who had formerly worshipped Toussaint, was now determined to get him out of the way for his pro-French leanings. He pretended to be absolutely devoted to Le Clerc and suggested to him that the colony would never be at peace unless Toussaint was sent out of it. Christophe told Le Clerc the same thing. They were sincere. However, the peace that Dessalines planned was the destruction of Le Clerc and the expulsion of everything French from the colony. He knew Toussaint well enough to doubt his capacity to take these steps. The following month Le Clerc invited Toussaint to a meeting in Cap Français. Although warned by friends that Le Clerc intended to arrest him, Toussaint chose to attend the meeting, confident that it was unlikely that Le Clerc would arrest him while Dessalines and the oth-

ers still had command of their troops. He was wrong. After he arrived for the meeting, Toussaint conversed with one of his generals who, subsequently begged to be excused for a moment. As soon as the general had left, some grenadiers with fixed bayonets entered the house, bound Toussaint like a common criminal and put him aboard a warship. He was taken to France where he died in prison on April 27, 1803.

Le Clerc prevented from restoring slavery by blacks

In July 1802, news reached St. Domingue that Napoleon's general, Richepanse, had restored slavery in Guadeloupe. Thousands of excited, resentful Negroes took up arms once more, believing that it was only a matter of time before slavery would be re-introduced in St. Domingue. Dessalines and Christophe's troops were irresistible. Yellow fever rose to their defence. Included among the victims of yellow fever was General Le Clerc. His successor, General Rochambeau, never got the reinforcements he had been promised. War between Britain and France resumed in 1803 and Napoleon abandoned the St. Domingue affair. At the end of the year, with the fever-stricken remnant of his army, Rochambeau surrendered to the British in Jamaica.

On January 1, 1804, Dessalines declared the colony independent of France, took its Taino (Indian) name of Haiti and struck out from its flag the white of the French tricolour, symbolically purging Haiti of its white oppressors.

Although Toussaint was not involved in the slave revolt until one month after its outbreak, he has been regarded as the leader because of a number of reasons including the following: (i) His name has been the one most associated with the revolution. (ii) It was he who impressed the slaves with his military ability to command the rebel troops. He drilled and trained them assiduously and whenever a supreme effort was required, he charged at the head of his men. (iii) He was the one who trained the slaves in guerilla warfare and organized guerilla bands. (iv) He ensured that his army was well supplied with arms. He purchased 30,000 guns from the United States. At his reviews he would snatch a

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

**Reasons
Toussaint was regarded as leader of the major slave revolt in St. Domingue (cont'd)**

gun, wave it, and shout, "Here is your liberty!" He hid stocks of ammunition and supplies in secret places in the interior. He called up the able-bodied for military training and drilled the regular army. (v) From about 1793, he successfully appointed assistants. Other important names associated with the revolution included Christophe and Dessalines who bore the title of General. He delegated duties to these and other men. (vi) Toussaint was a skillful tactician who made and broke alliances with Europeans in the interest of the rebels. He was not 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. (vii) 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, and a United States trade representative to St. Domingue had been appointed by the American government. (viii) He was very instrumental in the defeat of the foreign troops in St. Domingue. He was the one who, using his guerilla bands, drove the British troops from the right bank of the Artibonite River, and threatened their stronghold of St. Marc to the south. Ultimately, his attacks against them helped to force them to come to terms with him. He was the one with whom General Maitland made an armistice. He was also responsible for expelling Sonthonax whom he claimed had advocated the massacre of all the colony's whites and declaring independence. (ix) Toussaint was the one who declared himself general-in-chief of the armies of St. Domingue by 1795. (x) He was the one whom the government in France, in 1799, appointed a governor-general of the colony. (xi) The Spaniards in Santo Domingo, the

Spanish section of the island, were said to be stealing Negroes from the French part of the island and selling them as slaves. Toussaint expanded the revolt to that part of the island by marching on Santo Domingo. The Spanish troops were routed, and on January 21, 1800, the Spanish governor formally handed over the colony. Toussaint was then complete master of the whole island. (xii) After many victories, 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. (xiii) He was the one who led the slaves of Haiti to freedom and into the immediate post-emancipation period. He recognized that the "ultimate guarantee of freedom was the prosperity of agriculture", and so he battled with the colossal task of transforming a slave population into a community of free labourers. 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. (xiv) 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 the 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

He was born a slave in St. Kitts, but he saved enough money to buy his freedom. He grew up as a free black, and he worked as a waiter in a public hotel at Cap Français. He could neither read nor write, but he learned to speak French with remarkable fluency. He gained military experience when he went to help the American colonists in the American Revolution from 1776 to 1783.



Henri Christophe

Jean Jacques Dessalines



Jean Jacques Dessalines

After the outbreak of the slave revolt, Christophe left the hotel to seek Toussaint's band in the mountains. (i) He fought in the campaigns against the coloureds, the Spanish, British, and French. (ii) He was promoted to the position of Brigadier General and governor of the northern region in 1801. Victor Le Clerc arrived in St. Domingue with instructions from Napoleon to restore slavery and bring the island back under French rule. He landed at Cap Français in the north of St. Domingue. When he demanded the surrender of Cap Français, (iii) Christophe, the governor, called on the inhabitants to evacuate the town, then his scouts set fire to it rather than submit to slavery. He and his soldiers, guarding the population, retired to the mountains. (iv) After Toussaint was captured, Christophe joined with Dessalines with whom he worked as his deputy, and fought to expel the French.

Jean Jacques Dessalines was an African-born slave. At the outbreak of the revolt, he was a slave on the plantation of a free Negro. As soon as the rebellion gave him the opportunity in 1791, he murdered his master, seized his property, assumed his name, and joined the revolt. At that time, he was about forty years old and unable to read or write.

He played a significant role in the slave revolt up to 1804, for example: (i) 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 to 1795. (ii) He was appointed general in 1796, and he became the most famous of the black generals. (iii) He fought in the campaign against the British from 1795 to 1798 when they finally evacuated the island. (iv) After the British withdrawal, Toussaint turned his attention to the

**His role,
1791-1804**

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 coloureds in 1799 and 1800. (v) 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. (vi) He emerged as Toussaint's successor after Toussaint was kidnapped and forcibly taken to France. He, along with Christophe and other black generals were so shocked at Toussaint's betrayal by the French that they escaped from French service and began fighting again. (vii) He fought against, and defeated, General Rochambeau who succeeded Le Clerc in late 1802. (viii) He declared the independence of St. Domingue in November 1803, and on January 1, 1804, he renounced all connection with France, and re-named St. Domingue, Haiti. (ix) He tore the white out of the Tricolour - the French flag, and replaced the letters 'R. F.' (Republique Française) with the words 'Liberty or Death', and in October 1804, he had himself crowned Emperor of Haiti.

**Reasons
Dessalines
thought
Toussaint had
been avenged**

Dessalines believed Toussaint had been avenged because of the following reasons: (i) He had defeated the forces that had betrayed, captured and taken Toussaint to France where he died. (ii) Toussaint had fought for independence and Haiti was now independent. (iii) 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 (Arawak) 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.

Two of the heroes of the revolution, Dessalines and Toussaint, used different methods in their struggle for

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

freedom. Their actions differed in the following ways: (i) Dessalines killed his master and took his estate, while Toussaint 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. (ii) Dessalines declared Haiti's independence, and himself Emperor Jacques 1, while Toussaint remained within the French empire, assuming the title of governor general. (iii) Dessalines, when he was in control, was against all foreign forces. Toussaint fought initially for the Spanish, and he acted kindly towards the French. (iv) Dessalines sought to exterminate the whites. Early in 1805, many of the whites in Haiti were massacred by orders of Dessalines. On the other hand, Toussaint 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.

**Role played by
free Coloureds
/ Mulattoes in
St. Domingue
Revolution,
1791 - 1804**

(i) The free coloureds/mulattoes were the first to take up arms in St. Domingue in 1791, when the white inhabitants refused to obey the decree of May 15, 1791, granting the right to vote to those who met some specific qualifications. (ii) The free coloureds' uprising encouraged the slaves to seek their freedom, and it gave them the opportunity to take the whites by surprise. (iii) The division between the coloureds and the whites also helped to ensure victory for the slaves. (iv) In the south, while the slaves were in revolt, free coloureds/mulattoes took up arms, and the planters armed their slaves to fight the coloured forces. There was also confrontation between the whites and the coloureds in the west. (v) In September 1791, the whites and coloureds/mulattoes united against the slaves. The whites agreed to allow free-born mulattoes into the assembly, but when the National Assembly reversed its earlier decree and disqualified the mulattoes, they considered that they had been betrayed and they joined the slaves in a war to exterminate the whites. (vi) The mulattoes provided important leaders during the revolution, for example, André Rigaud, an edu-

cated mulatto and a trained soldier who fought in the American War of Independence. He successfully led the mulattoes in the west in their fight against the whites. There was also Alexandre Pétion, another educated mulatto. He allied himself with Dessalines in 1802, and he ruled Southern Haiti from 1807 to his death in 1818. (vii) They joined the side of Sonthonax and the newly emancipated slaves to prevent a British take over of St. Domingue, fearing that such a victory would lead to the introduction of laws that would restrict their freedom.

By 1804, (i) all the restrictions that had been placed on the mulattoes were removed. (ii) They had the right to vote and to participate in the government of Haiti.

The Haitian Revolution, although it was triggered off by the actions of the free coloureds/mulattoes, was essentially the successful revolt of the slaves whose grievances and aspirations for freedom predated the French revolution, and were independent of that 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.

The effects of the French Revolution on the Haitian Revolution were as follows: (i) The element of ideological confrontation for the Haitian Revolution as it introduced the powerful ideas of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' to which all sections of St. Domingue population warmed. (ii) Three commissioners, agents of the revolutionary government in France, headed by Sonthonax, were sent to St. Domingue to ensure the observance of the laws passed by the National Assembly, granting equality to the mulattoes. When the planters in St. Domingue turned against the commissioners, Sonthonax emancipated the slaves. (iii) King Louis XVI was

**What
Mulattoes
gained from
the Revolution
by 1804**

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

**Effects of the
French
Revolution on
the course of
the Haitian
Revolution**

executed as the French Revolution progressed. Alarmed at the execution of the King, and fearful about the spread of black freedom movement across the Caribbean, England went to war with France in February 1793. Spain also became involved in the war. Large numbers of slaves, including Toussaint L'Ouverture, joined the Spanish army, determined to exert pressure on the commissioners in order to drive them out. Hemmed in by white counter-revolutionaries and the threat of foreign invasion, Sonthonax declared the abolition of slavery in August, 1793. (iv) British forces were landed in St. Domingue in 1794. This marked the beginning of four years of wasting war characterized by loss of hundreds of thousands of British troops as the rebel slaves skillfully employed their guerilla tactics in a determined bid to remain free. (v) The entry of the British into the conflict, and the threat of re-imposed slavery if they were victorious, brought Toussaint over to the side of the Republican army against the Spanish and the British counter-revolutionaries. The confirmation by the revolutionary Convention in Paris on February 4, 1794, of Sonthonax's provisional decree of August 1793, convinced Toussaint that his future lay with the French. (vi) By 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte had emerged from France's post revolutionary struggles as the new ruler with the title of Consul. His attitude was hostile to black self-determination, and he was intent on re-establishing the old colonial system in St. Domingue. To this end, he sent Victor Le Clerc to the colony. His treacherous treatment of Toussaint not only resulted in the rebel slaves' success in destroying slavery, but also in St. Domingue's independence.

The slave revolt which started in August, 1791, lasted for twelve 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

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

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: (i) The leadership and work of Toussaint L'Ouverture, a remarkable and greatly gifted Negro. (ii) The 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. (iii) 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 France. (iv) 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. (v) Toussaint's expertise in training his troops and securing arms for them. (vi) 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. (vii) 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 French revolutionary leaders. (viii) The slaves' defeat of (a) the French imperial allies (b) the pro-slavery free coloureds (c) The British troops who had engaged them in battle. (ix) The slaves' superior knowledge of the territory because of their maroon experience, and their ability to use guerilla warfare successfully. (x) The destruction of the economic base of the whites by the slaves thereby undermining the power of the whites to resist them. (xi) The slaves' devastation of the land which made it difficult for the troops to survive without supplies from external sources. (xii) Diseases, particularly yellow fever, which dec-

imated the French troops. The slaves had a greater resistance to yellow fever. (xiii) The Revolution that was raging in France causing much confusion there and reducing the military capacity of the government to suppress the revolt. (xiv) Some mulattoes joining with the blacks to keep Haiti free and independent.

Positive effects of the revolt on Haiti

The twelve years of fighting by the rebel slaves affected Haiti positively and negatively. The positive effects were a cause for great rejoicing for the slaves. They included the following: (i) The slaves defeated all forces with whom they fought. (ii) The slaves won their freedom and the disabilities against the coloureds were removed. Haiti became the first free black state in the Caribbean. (iii) This victory ended centuries of white oppression of blacks, and it showed that blacks could unite for freedom. (iv) The revolt led to the emergence of leaders from among the slaves. (v) After the victory of the slaves, blacks had greater access to land.

Negative effects of the revolt on Haiti

The revolution brought death and destruction in its wake, and it was a cause of much pain in Haiti. Its negative effects on the territory were as follows: (i) There was a tremendous loss of lives as thousands of people, whites, coloureds and blacks died in the fighting, were murdered or were victims of diseases, for example yellow fever. (ii) Many people fled to other territories, so the size of the population was drastically reduced as a result of death and migration. (iii) 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. (iv) The economy was destroyed. The plantations were divided into peasant small-holdings for subsistence living. The products of smallholdings on ravaged land never equalled the pre-1791 wealth. The economy never again returned to the pre-1791 prosperity. (v) The major countries of the world, Spain, Britain, United States and France, placed an embargo on Haiti and refused to trade with her. (vi) There was much political instability after

independence. Racial animosity continued, and there was rivalry between the mulattoes and the blacks.

The violence in Haiti affected other Caribbean territories in the following ways: (i) It aroused hopes among slaves in the rest of the Caribbean that freedom was possible. (ii) It showed slaves elsewhere that the whites were not unbeatable. (iii) 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. (iv) Several territories in the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Cuba, Trinidad, Puerto Rico and Venezuela, received an influx of refugees, mainly white, from St. Domingue. (v) Emigration led to an increased French Creole population in these territories. (vi) Émigrés contributed to the development of mixed cultures in some territories, for example, they helped to expand Roman Catholicism in Jamaica.

The revolt in Haiti resulted in the following economic changes: (i) The collapse of St. Domingue's sugar industry boosted sugar production elsewhere. St. Domingue's removal from the sugar market led to an increase in the price of sugar. (ii) 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 sugar producer. (iii) Cuba's sugar industry benefitted from the arrival of French planters and technicians who were instrumental in introducing new refining technology. (iv) The planters from St. Domingue took their cash and their coffee planting to Jamaica. (v) Émigrés helped to expand the cocoa industry in territories like Trinidad. (vi) Haitian slaves took their skills in basket making and straw work to other territories.

The Haitian Revolution also made an impact on the politics of the region. (i) The revolution led to the spread of the eighteenth century struggle in the Caribbean between Britain and France. Britain captured Trinidad from Spain, British Guiana from Holland, Martinique, Tobago and St.

Effects of the revolt on other Caribbean territories
(A) Social

(B) Economic

(C) Political

Lucia from France. (ii) British troops invaded St. Domingue in the hope of protecting the planters (of St. Domingue and the Caribbean) and of capturing the territory. (iii) Slave control was tightened in other Caribbean territories. The plantocracy became more repressive; there was firmer resistance to privileges for coloureds, or an easier life for slaves. (iv) The revolution inspired slave resistance elsewhere, for example in Martinique, Guadeloupe and Grenada. (v) It caused increased slave unrest in Jamaica and contributed to the outbreak of the Second Maroon War. (vi) Slavery was abolished in Guadeloupe by Sonthonax's proclamation, but was restored by Napoleon Bonaparte. (vii) 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.

Caribbean Response to the Haitian Revolution

In spite of the destruction caused by the action of the slaves, some groups found reasons for which they could be happy for the revolution. These groups included the following: (i) The slaves who were given hope and inspiration by the action of their colleagues in St. Domingue. They were happy for their success. (ii) Revolutionaries, especially in Martinique and Guadeloupe, who were happy for the success of liberty. (iii) Planters, especially those in Cuba and Jamaica, who were happy because of the increase of coffee and sugar exports in the wake of the collapse of Haitian production.

Planters in the Caribbean were fearful of the impact that this first example of a successful revolt could have on their slaves. (i) They feared that this revolution could provide inspiration for their slaves who might choose to emulate the Haitian rebels. The Jamaican planters feared that the Maroons would be instigated and supported from Haiti

Reasons for which some groups in the Caribbean welcomed the Haitian Revolution

Reasons Haitian Revolution caused fear in the Caribbean

while (ii) in Trinidad, planters feared competition from the exiles. (iii) Planters also feared that the French free coloureds could influence the local free coloureds to demand equality with the whites. Those who were sympathetic to the plight of the slaves, and who wanted to see slavery at an end, for example the missionaries, were fearful that the Haitian Revolution would set back the abolition movement.

In order to deal with their fears, planters adopted a number of measures including the following: (i) Planters sought to limit contact between local slaves and French exiles. (ii) French refugees and their slaves were deported from some territories, for example St. Kitts. (iii) In some territories, for example, Antigua, refugees were imprisoned to isolate them, and therefore, limit their contact with the slaves. (iv) In all territories, planters kept a close watch on refugees. (v) In some cases, they restricted the immigration of whites with their slaves. (vi) Everywhere, slaves were monitored more closely. (vii) Arms and ammunition were guarded more closely. (viii) In Jamaica, the size of the militia was increased. (ix) The whites became very hostile to the Maroons and, in response, the Maroons fought against them in the Second Maroon War.

There was some measure of justification for the fear which the planters had, for example: (i) The fear of the French free coloureds inciting the local free coloureds was somewhat justified in Jamaica because coloureds were poorly treated there; however, the Jamaican coloureds were not as many or as bold as those in Haiti. (ii) The whites' fear of the impact of the revolutionary ideas was justified especially in Martinique and Guadeloupe, colonies that shared 'Mother Country' with Haiti. The slaves could imitate the response of their French 'brothers'. (iii) Fear of competition was justified in Trinidad as exiles went there with skills and cash, and soon became involved in agriculture.

On the other hand, there was no justification for the planters' fear for the following reasons: (i) Coloured exiles

Measures taken by whites in Caribbean territories other than Haiti, in response to their fears

Justification for planters' fear

were most concerned about protecting themselves, and therefore had no intention to incite any trouble. (ii) Whites who came to territories like Jamaica collaborated with the resident whites; (iii) they brought in new skills which they shared with sugar planters in Cuba. (iv) They were in search of a place of refuge, and so they would do nothing, deliberately, that would lead to revolt.

■ Further Slave Unrest

Reasons for Increase in Slave Rebellions in the British Caribbean in the 1800's

Reasons for increase in slave rebellions in the British Caribbean in the 1800s

The abolition of the British slave trade in 1808 did not result in the improvement of slave conditions generally; neither did it force slavery to collapse as some of the abolitionists had hoped. In many instances, the condition of the slaves grew worse. The 1800's, therefore, witnessed an increase in slave rebellions for several reasons including the following: (i) The treatment of slaves continued to be severe, for example, slaves were overworked as it became more difficult to acquire new slaves to increase the labour force. (ii) Many privileged slaves were no longer able to enjoy some of the privileges that they enjoyed previously. (iii) Planters often punished slaves more severely to discourage acts of insubordination, and to intimidate those who might have been inspired by the actions of the rebel slaves in Haiti. (iv) News of the abolition movement in Britain contributed to slave uprisings in some territories, for example, in Barbados in 1816. Slaves misunderstood what was happening; they believed that their freedom had been granted by the British Parliament but was being withheld by the planters, and so they revolted to force the planters to give them their freedom. (v) The work of missionaries among the slaves, for example the Baptists, provided opportunities for a few slaves to become literate and to assume leadership roles in their church. These privileges helped to contribute to some