

Toussaint L'Ouverture - II

Lead: Drawn into the battle for Haitian independence in 1791, Toussaint L'Ouverture leveraged his military successes into national leadership.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: An instinctive leader, Toussaint combined clever military tactics with a politically moderate disposition. This was in contrast to most of the native leaders who were more interested in exacting revenge on the colonial French than building a

new society. By 1793 the French were on the ropes. Success by his guerrilla armies along with attacks by the Spanish who controlled two-thirds of the island and intervention by the British raised the prospect that the French might be thrown off the island.

Yet, in 1794, Toussaint reached an agreement with the French. His reasons? First, the French National Convention had recently ended slavery in France and its possessions, something the British would not do for another generation and Spain would delay even longer. Also, he understood that Saint-Domingue, which would not adopt the native Awawak name Haiti until 1804, was not prepared to go its own way. To develop, the natives

would need the expertise of whites and Europeanized mulattos.

He was made Lieutenant Governor, but by 1801 he and his associates, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe, had expelled the British and Spanish, taken over the entire island and installed Toussaint with vast powers as Governor-general for life. Napoleon, however, then undisputed Emperor of France, wanted the colony back. In 1802 he sent an invasion force which gradually crushed Toussaint and his allies. The black general was betrayed and died the following year in a French alpine prison. Yet, despite some occasional rather spectacular lapses, the generally moderate leadership of Toussaint

**L'Ouverture laid the foundation for
Haiti's eventual independence.**

**At the University of Richmond, this
is Dan Roberts.**

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Resources

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