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The Dominican Republic And Santo Domingo In 1810

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William Walton



Synopsis

“The Dominican Republic and Santo Domingo in 1810” was written by William Walton, a British bureaucrat who was stationed in the city of Santo Domingo in the first decade of the 19th century. Today the Dominican Republic is probably best known as a popular Caribbean tourist destination for Europeans and North Americans, with all-inclusive resorts in Punta Cana and Puerto Plata. But the country, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, was a colony of Spain for centuries. Hispaniola was the first island where Christopher Columbus, acting on behalf of Spain, established a colony in 1493. Columbus’s first settlement, La Isabella on the Dominican Republic’s north coast, was soon abandoned. But Spain would continue to rule the island into the 19th century. The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), in French-ruled Saint-Domingue, and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, brought upheaval to what is now the Dominican Republic. When Spain was defeated by Revolutionary France in the War of the Pyrenees (1793-1795), it turned what is now the Dominican Republic to France in the 1795 Peace of Basel. But Revolutionary France was too occupied by wars with its various enemies, as well as internal conflicts, to effectively occupy the Spanish colony. In 1801, the black Republican French governor of Saint-Domingue, Toussaint Louverture, invaded and occupied the Dominican Republic. France’s new dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte, however, wanted to get rid of the independent-minded Louverture and the rest of the black military elite of the French colony, and restore slavery. In 1802, Bonaparte sent a large army to the Caribbean under his brother-in-law Charles Leclerc to overthrow Louverture. Leclerc’s army quickly seized control of what is now the Dominican Republic. On the French side, however, they faced stiff resistance from black guerrillas, and were eventually defeated by the end of 1803. The Dominican Republic remained under French control until 1808. At that time Napoleon’s invasion of Spain sparked a revolt there, and the Spanish colonists in the Dominican Republic launched their own rebellion against French rule. The Spanish rebels in the colony were aided by Napoleon’s British enemies, who sent an expeditionary force from Jamaica. With help from the British navy, the colonists defeated the French, in what was called the Reconquista, and the Dominican Republic reverted back to Spanish colonial rule. The author of this book, William Walton, was a member of the 1808 British expedition that helped to expel the French from the Dominican Republic. Here he describes the country that later became known as the Dominican Republic as it was around 1810.

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