George Price: A Life Revealed. The Authorized Biography. Godfrey P. Smith. Kingston: Ian Randle, 2011. xii + 323 pp. (Paper US\$ 25.00)

The first full-length biography of the late George Price is an engaging and readable book by a Belizean lawyer and former government minister who knew him well. With access to private papers as well as public records, and making use of interviews with Price, Godfrey Smith provides much detail that was previously unknown.

The outlines of Price's life are clear, from his birth in 1919 to his death in 2011, just before Smith's biography went to press. Educated by Jesuits in Belize City, Price spent four years in a seminary in Mississippi, graduating in 1940. He then spent a year studying and traveling in Guatemala. In the summer of 1942 he began a thirteen-year period as the personal secretary of Robert Turton, a Belizean millionaire who had extensive business connections with the United States and was an elected member of the Legislative Council from 1936. Turton persuaded Price to run in the Belize city council elections in 1944. He lost, but then won in 1947 and until 1984 he won every election he contested. One of the founders of the People's United Party (PUP) in 1950, Price soon became its leader. The PUP won the city council elections in 1950, the first general election under universal adult suffrage in 1954, and every subsequent national election until 1984.

Constitutional decolonization followed a pattern in Belize that was similar to other British colonies, and Price became first minister in a system of internal self-government in 1964. Independence was delayed because of irredentist claims by Guatemala, however, and it was only after a prolonged international campaign that independence was achieved in 1981 (Shoman 2010). Price led his country through independence and again after the PUP regained power in 1989. When a snap election in 1993 resulted in the PUP's defeat, Price's dominance declined and he resigned as party leader in 1996. He won his last election campaign in 1998, and announced in 2000 that he would not contest the election in 2003. The undisputed "founding father" of Belize, Price was one of the most durable and experienced of Caribbean politicians. His austere, hard-working lifestyle was unchanged throughout his life and his integrity is legendary.

This biography reveals much of Price's life, but much else remains obscure. He was an intensely private man and seems to have been reticent to the last. We learn little of the inner life of the man, or of what shaped

his values and priorities. Smith refers to Price's family and education, and his traumatic experience in the 1931 hurricane, but reveals only an outline of the influences on his philosophy and politics, which included his Jesuit background and the papal encyclicals, as well as his political "apprenticeship" with Turton. Price, a light-skinned, middle-class creole-mestizo from multiracial Belize, lived in segregated Mississippi, where he was defined with all the other students as "black," while all the priests were "white." We are told that this experience "didn't make any difference to him" (p. 36), but it is hard to believe that it did not develop his sense of social justice. Little is said about his relations with early labor leaders, such as Antonio Soberanis, Henry Middleton, and Clifford Betson, although these were major figures in the 1940s and the PUP initially relied on the organization of the General Workers' Union.

Until the Guatemalan government was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup in 1954, the option of support and closer relations with Central America made more sense to Price than being forced into a West Indian federation with more distant Caribbean islands. Like many other nationalist leaders, Price was characterized in the United Kingdom as a radical troublemaker and even, absurdly, as a communist, but Smith does not adequately explore the Cold War context. In 1957, soon after the PUP swept the national elections, Price was condemned by the British for talking with the Guatemalan minister during constitutional negotiations in London. As Smith says, "The British had excoriated Price for listening to a proposal from the Guatemalans for some form of association with Guatemala, an option they had been actively considering themselves" (p. 140). By 1964, however, Price had become "respectable" enough to the British to be accepted as first minister.

Price's politics and the history of his struggle against colonialism need to be understood not only in relation to Guatemala, but also in the context of the other British Caribbean colonies. Smith does not compare Price to other leaders among his peers in this book (though he compares him to Michael Manley, Forbes Burnham, Eric Williams, and Errol Barrow in a 2012 seminar paper) or examine Belize's history of decolonization in relation to that of other British colonies. It was in the 1950s that Norman Manley purged his party of its left wing in Jamaica and Britain overthrew the elected government of British Guiana, led by Cheddi Jagan. Price appears to have had little

contact with these other nationalist leaders, whose orientation was more “West Indian” than his, but their struggles were nevertheless related.

Despite some gaps and missed opportunities, this is a useful biography of an important and under-estimated Caribbean politician, so it should be welcomed and widely read.

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