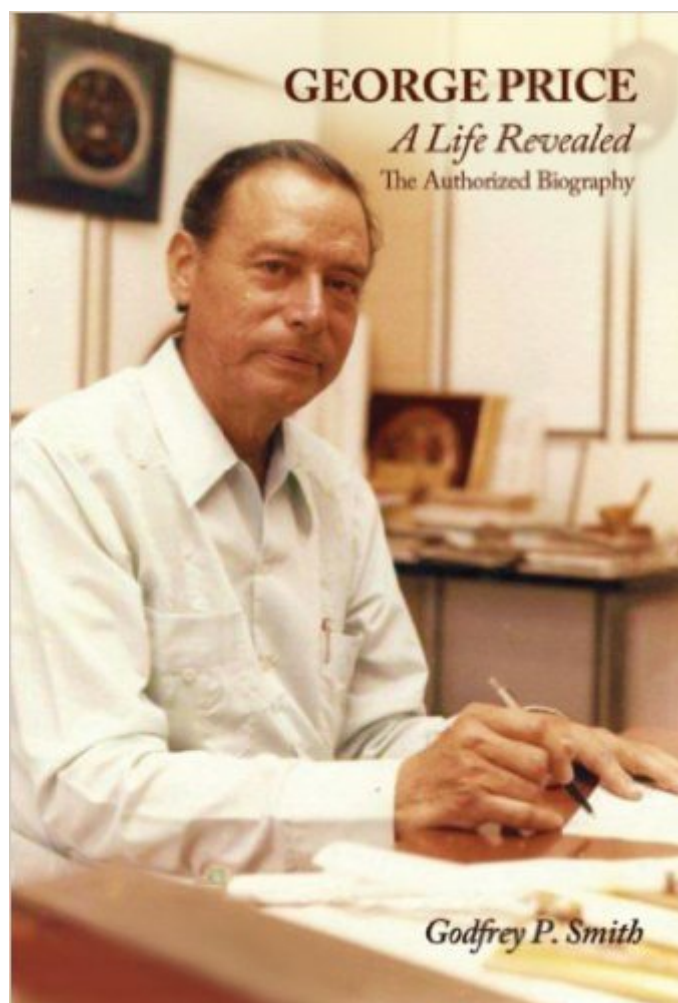


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George Price: A Life Revealed - The Authorized Biography



Synopsis

An ascetic and failed priest, a stoic, father of the nation, prime minister and first national hero of the Central American nation of Belize, George Price remains one of the most enigmatic leaders of the 20th century. Nothing in the early years of Price's life gave any indication that he would become the most uncompromising adversary of the British government in the struggle, first for self-government and later for Belizean independence, and in the process dominate Belizean politics for over 40 years. An indifferent scholastic career, failure to complete studies for the priesthood followed by a decade as the right-hand man for one of the colony's most astute businessmen, were less than impressive a track record for a future national leader and political firebrand. Yet for close to 50 years, the story of George Price was inseparable from the story of the modern political development of Belize, involving the birth of nationalist politics; the formation of political parties; the struggle for independence and the national objective of maintaining the territorial integrity of Belize against claims by Guatemala. Here is the story of a man who never married or raised a family, who never had a romantic liaison with a woman and who up to the time of his death at the age of 92 had remained celibate all his life. Price's first and only lifelong love, his sweetheart, wife and family were Belize and its people. In this even-handed and revealing authorized biography, Godfrey Smith does not attempt to canonize Price or denigrate his rivals and detractors. Rather, he exposes the contradictions that were a feature of Price's life and career. On the one hand the reader is shown Price as the ardent nationalist and a man of uncommon discipline and tenacity who pursued his vision of an independent Belize with clear-minded focus, courage and determination, yet who by his own admission, had secret relations with Guatemala whom most Belizeans regarded as the enemy. On a personal level, Smith paints a picture of Price as one who beneath his pious exterior could often be found to be petty, secretive and vindictive, and a man who did not suffer slights lightly. Few political leaders from the region have recorded their memoirs or, like Price, given access by way of interviews or opened their personal papers to researchers or biographers. As one whose political career spanned both the colonial and post independence eras, the information, experiences and insights Price has freely given to his biographer will make this work an important contribution to the study of the political personality, the development of political parties and party politics in the Caribbean at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, the book sheds new light on Price's adversarial relationship with local British governors and officials of the Colonial Office in London, and on the central role that the Guatemalan claim on Belize and Price's controversial affiliations with Guatemala played in both the negotiation and timing of Belizean independence. The value of Godfrey Smith's work as the biographer of George Price lies in the fact that it is at once the

revealing story of an important and controversial political leader, and at the same time, a history of the anti-colonial struggle and the modern political development of Belize.

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Customer Reviews

George Price was elected and re-elected as leader of Belize for almost 40 years from colonial times when the British governor could and did override the unanimous vote of an elected legislature, through a long period of internal self government and finally through independence in 1981. There are a couple of other biographies of Mr. Price in print but this is better for several reasons. First, it is "authorized", written with the co-operation of the notoriously secretive Mr. Price who opened up a little to Mr. Smith in the year before his death in 2011. Second, about 25 years have passed since Mr. Price left power and it is a little easier to see what he might have done right or wrong. Third, the author is a now retired politician of the same party who both saw Mr. Price in action in cabinet and shows a politician's understanding of issues Mr. Price faced. As someone who arrived in Belize after Mr. Price left power, this book helped me understand how his life experience molded his views and the environment he faced while in power. Mr. Price was a contemporary of dozens of leaders who took their countries from colonies to independence in the second half of the 20th century. Like most of them, he made many what now look like poor decisions - especially in economic management. But unlike most of them he didn't die in office and wasn't toppled in a coup - he left office and peacefully transferred power when he lost a fair election. That alone makes Belize a better place to live today than many former colonies. Mr. Price also has to take credit for things that are not so good. As the book makes clear, he tolerated corruption by other people in his governments and

used government entities and funds for political purposes.

This is a well researched and well written biography. The author presents a fair, objective perspective, being neither infatuated with nor unduly critical of the founding father of Belize. The information is based on interviews with Price and his associates, as well as on historical archives. Price's political career is tantamount to the history of how British Honduras, a territory of Great Britain, became the independent nation of Belize. The record shows Price to have been a savvy, effective politician who brooked no dissent from his ironclad control of party politics. His power lay in his shrewd ability to connect with people on the streets and glean from them gossip that informed his strategies and tactics. Price began as an opposition populist, idealistically decrying the abuses of British rule, but by the end of his career he had become a seasoned statesman, well aware of the difficult realities of ruling a nation whose people were not well educated and whose economy had little on which to stand. Price was a friend of leftists and Communists in the region, but he defied stereotypes by being consistently pro-business and free-trade and nurturing economic relations with the United States as a foundation of his foreign policy. Price weathered long lived accusations that he secretly intended to yield British Honduras to annexation to Guatemala; the intrigue surrounding his relations with Guatemalan leaders, both friendly and antagonistic, constitutes a fascinating arc of Price's career, partly because the full extent of those relations are not yet known to history. I knew nothing about Belize's political history before picking up this book.

With *George Price, A Life Revealed*, Godfrey Smith has made a tremendous contribution to the study of the history of Belize. This is the first full-length and detailed biography of the Rt. Hon. George Cadle Price, architect of Belizean independence and the dominant force in Belize politics for more than 50 years of the 20th century. While the biography - it's listed as the "authorized biography," but it appears to pull few punches - has shortcomings and weaknesses, it's so much better than anything on Price that existed before that it will certainly go down as a milestone in the short list of political histories of British Honduras and Belize. Born in 1919 of a fairly well-to-do Belize City Creole family - his father was of Scots heritage and on his mother's side was from a Maya and Mestizo background -- Price lived through, and played an important role in, the transformation of the tiny, impoverished colonial colony of British Honduras into the modern but troubled state of Belize. He died September 19, 2011, just two days shy of the 30th anniversary of Belize independence and shortly before his biography was published. Price, it must be admitted, was an odd bird by any standard. Before falling into politics, he took preparatory training - in a racially segregated seminary

in Mississippi and in Guatemala - to become a Catholic priest. He himself said he was celibate all his life, not smoking and only in his last years taking an occasional drink of cognac. Though formally educated only through high school, he became a great reader, impressing novelist Graham Greene with his knowledge of Thomas Mann, and he was fluent in both Spanish and English, with enough knowledge of Latin to take his courses in that language at the Guatemalan seminary.

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