

The British Colonial Agenda for the Neo Colonial State of
Trinidad and Tobago (1953-1962)

Understanding the Survival and Evolution of the Colonial Plantation
Social Order After Independence (1962)

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The Agenda for Trinidad 1953-1962 of the British colonial overlord

From August 1962 to the present we have failed miserably to interrogate the British colonial agenda from 1953-to independence in 1962 to expose how this agenda has impacted post-independence Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). We have then given the British colonial master a blameless, exemplary record as massa as we tear apart each other via the politics of racist hegemony. One side insists that the PNM released a tsunami of racial oppression upon them as the largest race minority of the period whilst the other insists that it was a case of nation building premised on massa day done. Both sides in their discourse must refuse up to today to delve into the British colonial agenda for independence and how this agenda impacted the very political leaders of both sides especially how it influenced their actions which amounted to compliance with the British colonial agenda. The discourse of racist hegemony of T&T relentlessly seeks to mask the historical reality of 1953-62 which places in the realm of suppressed knowledge the reality of what transpired for it reveals the nature of power and power relations in T&T post 1962 and it points to an explanation of the reality that with independence a social order premised on the hierarchy of a colonial plantation has not been demolished. In 2017 the African population of T&T is still not present in the private sector as owners of enterprises of power as the two conglomerates owned and controlled by ethnic minorities. In spite of political domination of the political state for extended periods after 1962 there is no erosion of the hierarchy established under the colonial order as is the case with Barbados and Jamaica. The move to liquidate C L Financial will then erase the last vestige of African ability to erect a globalised conglomerate confirming the examples of Barbados and Jamaica as the norm and CLICO and C L Financial in T&T as being the exception to the Caribbean rule. In a complex reality it is necessary to deconstruct the wall of discourse layer by layer.

In my book “The East Indian Problem in Trinidad and Tobago 1953-1962 Terror and Race War in Guyana 1961-1964” in the section on T&T I studied de-classified British colonial files for the period 1953-62 to unearth the British discourse of T&T for the period. The discourse consists of the following planks: T&T as part of the British West Indian Federation (BWIF), the intention to grant internal self-government, the rejected politicians of T&T, the threat posed to British interests by the rejected politicians, the need for a politician that the British can work with:

the accepted politician and the agenda with this politician. The files show that prior to 1953 the prime threat to the British as visualised by the British was Tubal Uriah Butler and his Butler Party and Butler paid a very high price for this both personally and politically and the members of his movement paid the highest price. When you were a leader of Butler's movement you simply lost your job and became non employable. In 1953 a new plank and target for action was added to the discourse. This was the "East Indian problem" which was the Hindu political movement founded by and under the leadership of Bhadase Sagan Maharaj expressed via the PDP and the Maha Sabha. The British viewed the Hindu political awakening with grave alarm especially the threat posed by an alliance between Maharaj and Butler for the 1955 general elections presenting for the British the totally unacceptable option of granting internal self-government to a Maharaj and Butler political alliance. To have Maharaj and Butler serving as Ministers was already unacceptable but having them serve under internal self-government as a government was unimaginable, unacceptable and impossible to accept. The British viewed the Hindu political movement as dangerous enemies of the BWIF worsened by an East Indian alliance against the BWIF between Maharaj and Cheddi Jagan of British Guyana. The British intelligence structure of T&T set about the task of creating personas for the frontline leaders of the PDP that painted them as sub-human barbarians and criminals who posed a grave threat to all non-Hindus of the colony. The British intelligence apparatus in response to this threat stepped up the race war in the colony to defeat this threat that drove them paranoid and when combined with Butler they simply went stir crazy. The British set out to defeat this clear and present danger by any means necessary. The 1955 general elections were postponed to a date to be announced whilst the granting of full internal self-government was moved off the table. The PNM was formed in January 1956, the general elections were called in September 1956 and Maharaj and Butler personally set about to destroy all the groundwork laid for an electoral compromise in the run up to the 1956 general elections. Maharaj and Butler fielded candidates in each other's core seats splitting the vote and working to the benefit of the PNM. Butler divided his own party by dumping electoral favourites fielding unknowns and opening the way for the PNM. The British gave Butler an all-expenses paid trip to England before the 1956 elections he returned from England much too late to seriously and strategically campaign and proceeded to destroy the alliance and his party. Maharaj chose in the run up to the 1956

elections to purge those he considered his enemies from the party fracturing the party and destroyed whatever cross race appeal it had when he proceeded to attack Butler ending any hope of an alliance. Without the alliance there would be no victory. Was it political stupidity or the actions of maximum leaders massaged by the skilled hand of the British colonial overlord? Remember they knew all your most secret desires! Most importantly the power to draw electoral boundaries was firmly in the hands of the British until the 1961 general elections and they used this power to over represent the urban areas and underrepresent the rural areas in the legislative council. In the independence era the British model would live on until the demographic growth of the rural population demanded a modified model.

In the run up to the 1956 elections the British dismissed with contempt Albert Gomes and his POPPG as a viable alternative to Williams and the PNM whilst the other individuals and parties were all berated and dismissed. The files contain no assault on Williams and the PNM as reserved for Butler and Maharaj and certainly no contempt as applied to Gomes. But Williams in the files is an uncertain entity and the British want certainty. Let the games begin! The results of the 1956 elections indicated that T&T was not yet PNM country this would come with the 1961 general elections. Williams then was in need of favours from the colonial massa in order to solidify his hold on the limited power he was bestowed by the massa. In a unicameral legislature Williams insisted that he wanted a certain number of members who were appointed by the governor chosen by him and loyal to him. The governor led an assault on Williams at every chance he got but the massa in London gave Williams every favour he asked for and eventually moved the hostile governor. In the aftermath of the speech Williams made after the defeat of the PNM in the federal elections of 1958 the governor led an assault on Williams to the London colonial massa insisting that Williams was a racist intent on destroying the colony through race war between the Africans and the East Indians. The London massa wrote back insisting that everything Williams said about the East Indians was in fact correct. Commencing with the 1958 speech Williams led an onslaught on the Indo Trinbagonian population utilising a discourse of demonisation with the full support of the colonial massa until the elections of 1961. In this time the new governor replaced the then governor noted for his anti-Williams position. Why this sudden change in Williams' politics

which he never repeated in post 1962 politics? From the files it was revealed that the massa gave Williams an ultimatum and a deal. Which was: without a clear and crushing defeat of the Hindu political movement in the 1961 general elections there will be no independence for T&T! A general elections before independence in which the Hindu political movement is devastated, consigned to the benches of futile and sterile opposition politics is mandatory for independence. The result demanded will be won by any means necessary and the colonial massa and his governor are the playmakers, the offensive and defensive coaches and the quarter back coach. In the run-up to the 1961 general elections incidents of inter-racial violence broke out and a limited state of emergency was called in specific areas where the population was dominated by Indo Trinbagonians on the grounds of the threat of armed organised violence but nothing was found and no persons charged and prosecuted thereby confirming the reality of the threat. In this strategy massa's governor was the play maker and the quarter back coach. The legislative council was expanded to 30 seats for the 1961 elections with the PNM winning 20 and the DLP 10 mission accomplished independence was now a given and as early as possible Williams demanded.

The games played by the Indo Trinbagonian politicians from 1956 to 1961 are also potently indicative of the hand of massa. The discourse of black oppression of the East Indian minority exonerated the agenda of massa to consign them to the futility of opposition politics. Whilst the African was fingered as the villain of the piece heightening the race divide and energising the politics of race across generations these Indo politicians were absolutely servile to massa's agenda. They made it a political art to publicly appeal to massa for deliverance from the oppression of the African to the point of rejecting independence for it would entrench black oppression of the East Indian. They cobbled together a discourse of the East Indian victim at the hands of the African rawan whilst sucking up to the architect and playmaker of the strategy to consign their race to the political wilderness: massa. They ensured the success of massa's strategy by preaching a discourse of racist hegemony which excluded political alliances with all persons opposed to the PNM insisting that they will eventually win political power with the demographically dominant Indian vote. Until such time they will labour in the wasteland until their deliverance from African oppression comes. The leader of the DLP under whom this discourse was unleashed was Rudranath Capildeo in the

period 1956-1961 but Rudranath's ties to massa are clearly illustrated by the agenda he pursued with his rise to power in the DLP following the departure of Maharaj and the bending of the rules to allow him in the period 1961-1966 to be leader of the opposition whilst resident in England pursuing an academic career. Ensuring that he was unable to attend the stipulated number of sessions of the House of Representatives in T&T yet his seat in the House never being declared vacant. R. Capildeo therefore in the period collected the salary of an MP and leader of the opposition in spite of never being present to execute effectively the duties of both posts. Under R. Capildeo's leadership massa's discourse of the DLP now spoke of a new DLP where all the threats to the British from the PDP are purged and new leadership emerges with local whites overrepresented among them but not Africans. R. Capildeo then set to the task of purging the DLP and in doing so finished its evolution into a narrow race based and religion defined party devoid of any chance of defeating the PNM at the 1961 polls comprising individuals beholdng, subservient and suppliant to R. Capildeo and his agenda. The final blow was delivered in his reaction to race based heckling during the campaign and his call to arms which confirmed the discourse of race unleashed that the minority Indians were now willing to seize power via armed violence seen in the need for the instrument of the limited state of emergency. Racist hegemony has then been used for decades to mask the actions of a compliant, lackey elite to the dictates of massa.

The structure of the neo colonial state of T&T was laid in this period as the political elites of T&T were all beholdng to massa for favours rendered and massa held the files of secrets. By 1969 the revolt against the continuation of the plantation order was expressed in the streets via the discourse of Black Power which picked up momentum in 1970 culminating in the army mutiny. By 1970 the neo colonial order was in tatters and the services of massa were in demand and necessary in the period 1969-1970 to preserve the neo colonial order but on this occasion the enemy was the African population in the streets the base of the PNM was on the move and Williams was playing catch up. In this period 1969 and thereafter as is the case for the period 1956-1969 massa never deserted Williams but the heavy dose of state suppression could not change the plantation social order and its new variant the neo colonial plantation order. The rise in oil prices from 1973 onwards allowed Williams to purchase a truce with the African masses

on the move and to tinker with the plantation order by creating visible blacks in the state sector, a workers' bank and a national commercial bank. But the structures that ensured the entitlement of minorities continued and went into overdrive with the revenues derived from the oil windfall combined with the political discourse of development adhered to by all sides of the political divide. Whilst the energy resources of T&T particularly the shallow water offshore acreage was the plum that was picked cheaply to the benefit of a small player from the US.

The politics of race driven by the discourse of racist hegemony drives the electoral politics of this neo colonial state rendering the politicians arrogant but the politics of race is irrelevant to the power relations between the neo colonial state and the massa. The most recent development is the rise of race minorities who are insisting that the politicians must be subservient to them rather than massa. That is the politics of delusional local minority elites for massa must and will answer this challenge and they have your files also!

For greater detail read the book.

For an analysis of the discourse of racist hegemony in T&T see "The Politics of Racist Hegemony" by Daurius Figueira

See my book "Tubal Uriah Butler of Trinidad and Tobago and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana the Road to Independence 6 March 1957 31 August 1962"