

The man who led Trinidad and Tobago to Independence

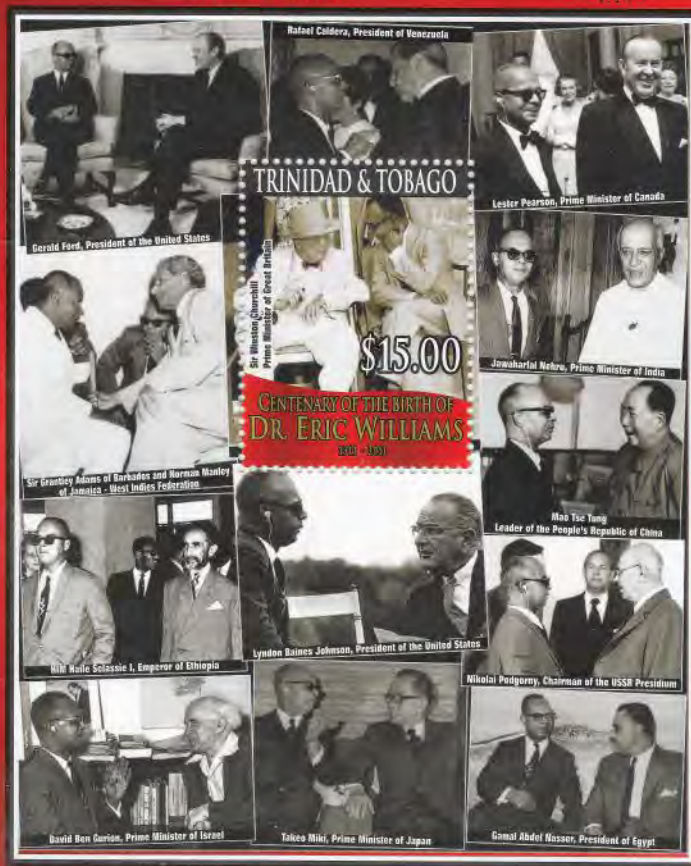
On 31 August 1962, following 464 years that spanned discovery by Columbus, occupation and slavery, indentured labour, the discovery of oil, two World Wars and more than 150 years as a part of the British Empire, Trinidad and Tobago finally became an independent nation.



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF DR. ERIC WILLIAMS 1911 - 2011



The Coat of Arms (below) was designed at the time of Independence. The Palm tree at the crest comes from Tobago's original Coat of Arms. The shield is black, red and white, the colours of the flag. The tree, gold ships represent Santa Maria, La Nina, and La Pinta - Columbus's ships. The humming birds reflect the country being the "Land of the Humming Bird". The scarlet Ibis and the Cocrico are the national birds. The three hills under the ibis are the Trinity Hills of Trinidad - the reason Columbus named it such. The island beneath the cocrico is Tobago. The National Motto is "Together we aspire, together we achieve"



The red, black and white colours of Trinidad and Tobago's flag (below) symbolise fire (the sun, representing courage), earth (representing dedication), and Water (representing purity and equality). The flag's design was selected by the independence committee. The words "Every creed and race find an equal place" are from the National Anthem composed by Patrick Castenaga:

"Forged from the love of liberty.
In the fires of hope and prayer,
With boundless faith in our destiny
We solemnly declare.
Side by side we stand
Islands of the blue Caribbean Sea,
This is our native land
We pledge our lives to thee.
Here every creed and race,
Find an equal place.
May God bless our nation.
Here every creed and race,
Find an equal place,
And may God bless our nation."



The Hon. Dr Eric Williams, founder of the People's National Movement, was the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago; a talented academic and a great statesman, Williams established the islands' position in the world - influencing Presidents, Prime Ministers and other World Leaders from across the globe (as marked on the centenary of his birth). He led Trinidad and Tobago into independence. Williams wrote "After August 31 1962 the people of Trinidad and Tobago will face the fiercest test in their history - whether they can invest with flesh and blood the bare skeleton of their National Anthem - "Here every creed and race finds an equal place".

