The Revolution of July 22\textsuperscript{nd} and 23\textsuperscript{rd} 1919

“We tiad a dis oppression, tiad a be treated like we less than a white man, tiad a no got nuttn fu eat”

Leaders of the revolt:
In July 1919, 339 members of the contingent returned to the colony. It appears that the leaders of the Ex-Servicemen who emerged after the putsch, primarily Samuel Haynes and an officer by the name of HFE MacDonald, decided to restore a new form of law and order in the capital.

The organized revolution:
At approximately 8:30pm of Tuesday, July 22\textsuperscript{nd} 1919 two units of contingent members marched through the centre of Belize City methodically smashing the plate glad windows of the major merchant houses.

Led by sergeant H.H Vernon, in military order and with actions coordinated by whistle signals, they came up Albert and Regent Street, crossed the bridge and then divided, one unit going up Queen street and the other turning into North Front Street. The glass in the windows of Harleys, Linds, Perdomos, Caribllos, Morlans, Cuthberts, Krugs, Brodies, Biddles, and the Belizean stories was ritually smashed.

They were soon joined by 3,000 Belize Town residents, who rioted and looted through the night and into the next morning.

8:50pm the light went out when the generator at the Electric Plant failed and the mob took advantage of the darkness to loot the largely unprotected stores.

For the next three hours the crowd rampaged through the city center plundering goods they could not afford to buy and settling old scores with merchant’s who vainly attempted to defend their property, with unpopular colonial officials, and with any other unfortunate member of the white-creole elite who happened to be on the street. (verbal abuse, bombarded with missiles, beatings)

At 10pm the police had sided with the rioters. The white community was hiding in the Drill hall on Queen Street.

The Governor, whites and creole elite called the BTF to join forces but only 35 men joined by 1pm out of 300 men.

The riot act was read at 1pm. But when Captain JJ Franco tried to arrest a looter the crowd forced him to release the looter. Franco was chased to Drill hall. A shot was fired in the air to calm the crowd.

Pacifying the “bembe” crowd:
By this time the mob was being pacified by the contingent itself. FHE McDonald and Lance Corporal Samuel Haynes were touring North Front Street and Queen street chasing looters from stores, dispatching rioters to their homes and setting up patrols in the central streets.

Private Rufus Hall reminded, one of the most vociferous of the original demonstrators, reminded them that this was “not Mesopotamia.. this is Belize.” But McDonald’s rank, his natural ability to demand respect, the organisation of Haynes and the support of some 50 loyal contingent members allowed the senior Non-Commissioned Officer to clear Biddle’s store and North Front Street by midnight.

1:30pm order was restored and Mcdonald’s forces patrolled maintaining order on the 23\textsuperscript{rd}. The governor agreed that “it was humiliating to realise their (contingent) influence and power.

HMS Constance steamed towards Belize from Jamaica. Captain Kennedy’s forces- 100 marines and a machine gun crew landed at 7am on the 24\textsuperscript{th} and marched, insulted but unopposed, to the Drill Hall. Two orders given: 1. Arms and ammunitions from the Drill Hall be transported to the Constance; 2. BTF members had to hand in their arms and ammunitions.

The governor met with a contingent committee (formed the 23\textsuperscript{rd}) and listened to the grievances. A. demands for investigation into the functioning of the Welfare Committee; B. land grants, price fixing, and separation of allowances and the future role of the loyal contingent members.
Suppression July 24th 1919 to January 1920
“A new Haiti undermined: Middle-class creole demands prevail”

Relative instability:

25th the Governor could inform his superiors in Whitehall that the situation was relatively calm and “the open inclination to be insulting towards Europeans in the street” had passed.

Hutson wanted to arrest “ringleaders in the recent riot and of certain other persons in the community who were involved by means of their incitement to resist authority.”

The governor Hutson ordered the arrest of Claude Smith while he was at a meeting in the CU’s theatre that evening. The arrest led to violence, the crowd in the theatre attacked the police and the naval patrol in attendance used their bayonets and fired on the gathering injuring two.

In the 26th the governor received a message requesting military aid from Stann Creek, he sent the PATRICIA with 40 members of the BTF and quickly convened a meeting of the law officers and military to create strong measures “so as to enable Europeans to go on to the streets.”

Hutson ultimately declared Martial Law.

Arrests:
Kennedy was instructed to make 13 arrests done on the 26th and 27th.

Mcdonald was rewarded (for his loyalty to the crown) by being made the Superintendent of Police to replace Wyatt (the Superintendent, who was ridiculed by the riot)

By September 29th everything had more or less went back to normality: stores opened, arrests rose to 33

G.O D Walton was replaced because of his ridiculous behaviour which led him to lose status amongst Europeans and negroes. Frederick Maxwell was appointed. He was west Indian and being negrophile would undoubtedly show sympathy for the rioter’s behaviour.

Sentencing:
And Police Sgt. Major Blades reported that the crowd “was composed of men, women, and boys and a few Contingent men.” Another witness testified that the crowd of about 300-400 outside Brodies, a major store, “seemed to be against the merchants, and against late European arrivals. I heard the remark several times ‘white son of a ____.’ Most of the time it was coming from boys and women.”

31 of the 40 arrested persons because of the riot were convicted in the session which began on November 10th and finished January 22nd 1920.

Sentences ranged from 6 years with hard labor given to Rufus Hall for assaulting PC Francis and 5 years hard labor for assaulting Percy George to six months for the less serious breaches.

The governor was happy.

Evaluating the riot:
Political implications
The revolution was successful and took control of Belize City. However, Samuel Hayne’s goal was in-line with the Creole Middle class’ goal of simply gaining legislative representation. This logic did not serve the interests of the lower classes and continued the usage of the battle of St. George’s Caye to promote the loyalty to the crown.
Samuel Haynes: “If the truth were told, it was I whose appeal to sobriety and reason saved the handful of Europeans in Belize from a savage massacre when the returned soldiers rioted in an orgy of rum in the summer of 1919 . . . I rose to the occasion and silenced the radicals.”

Evan X: “The thing about this uprising which strikes me is that the insurgents did not know where they were going with their uprising. It was a case of their becoming so angry at the socio-economic conditions they were experiencing that they embarked on a violent and nihilistic endeavor. “When you ain’t got nothing, you ain’t got nothing to lose.” When the colonial power structure collapsed in front of them, caved in really, the rebels didn’t know what to do.” Did they not know what to do? Or they had achieved what they wanted?

**The radical aims:**
The radicals were interested in a complete take-over of the settlement, as a smaller version of the Haitian Revolution.

Annie Flowers: “The black man have no pluck. The women have to be behind them all the time or else they do nothing; but if they were all like me I would take their [the white men’s] wives and daughters and bloody well live with them: that would teach them that this country belongs to the blacks. The next night there is a row my strong arms will shove hat pins in the eyes of the bloody white men, for they have to get out of this town now, and there’s one of them standing there.”

**We do have a revolution in Belize:**
The movement was a carefully planned reaction to the social, political, economic and racial conditions in Belize.

**Re-evaluating the battle of St. Georges Caye’s message:**
Does it serve the interests of Belizean natives?
Should we be proud of the Baymen?