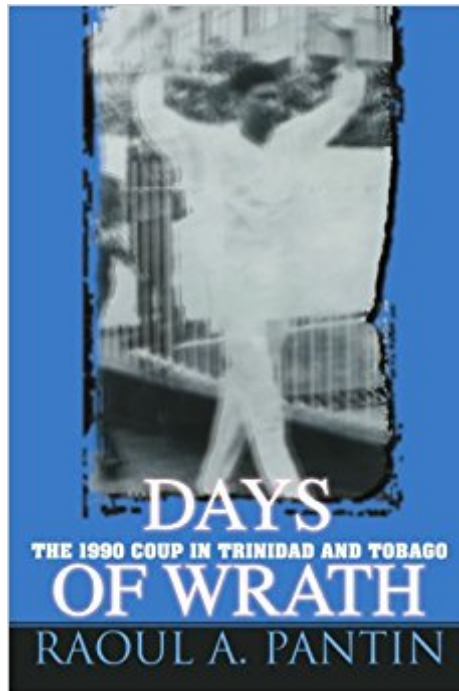




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# Days Of Wrath: The 1990 Coup In Trinidad And Tobago



## Synopsis

A full decade before the horrific attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, the small Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago came under its own terrorist assault from a small fundamentalist Muslim group known as the Jamaat al Muslimeen. For six days in 1990, the country, a former British colony that had achieved its independence in 1962, was virtually held for ransom as the terrorists launched an armed invasion of the sitting Parliament and the country's lone television station. *Days of Wrath* recounts the six days of terror wrought by a handful of Muslim terrorists. Told by a seasoned journalist who was one of the hostages in the Trinidad and Tobago Television building, this sensational account describes in vivid detail the scene that had the citizens of the nation wondering if they would now have to submit to another form of colonization.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Raoul Pantin, 63, is a former editor of The Trinidad Express Newspaper, and a former business, general and political reporter for radio, television and newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago. He retired from The Trinidad Express in 2005. A graduate of Fatima College in Trinidad, he is also the holder of a diploma in journalism from the Thomson Foundation in Cardiff, Wales. He has participated in a variety of journalism courses, including a seminar in journalism at the University of Chicago. He has lectured in colleges and universities in the United States, and parts of the Caribbean and South America. Raoul Pantin is a recipient of many awards for excellence in journalism and has been recognized as a short story writer, and stage and screen playwright. His 1974 screenplay, *Bim*, was produced and directed by the late American editor of *Midnight*

Cowboy, Hugh A. Robertson. 'Bim' has been hailed as one of the best films made in Trinidad and Tobago. Pantin is also the author of 'Journey,' a collection of poetry. In 2006, he was honored by British Petroleum (BP) Trinidad and Tobago, in conjunction with the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago (MATT) and the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters,(TTPBA), at the annual Luminaries of Journalism Award for outstanding journalism. Pantin is the author of BLACK POWER DAY and THE HISTORY OF THE TRINIDAD EXPRESS NEWSPAPER.

I was 9 when the coup d' etat took place in Trinidad and realized at my present 33 years - i am quite ignorant of what really happened when abu backr tried to take over my country. This book was an entertaining starter in educating myself on the topic. It is a first hand account from a person who was held hostage for 5 days inside TTT with Abu Backr. Previous to reading this book - I actually thought Abu was in the red house during the ordeal not inside TTT. At times i found it a bit repetitive and maybe a bit too opinionated (not enough clear facts), but either way its good reading and educational at the same time. I am still searching for more info on WHY he did what he did and HOW he did it. I do plan to read the commission of inquiry report once i get my hands on it, but feel i will still be asking the same questions after.njw

As an eye-witness to the events, Mr. Pantin's account and opinion cannot be diminished. Ten-plus years after the attempted coup, the society, the state, the people of Trinidad & Tobago, are yet to fully acknowledge or understand what took place and more importantly - why. If there is one criticism about the work it would be that it is long-winded. Too often the author would go off on a tangent to provided excessive information on a related topic. While this may be important, it does break the rhythm or the narrative. Despite that however, this book is an excellent read and should be added to the local secondary school Curriculum.

Powerful and emotional as I also lived through this as a soldier albeit a Volunteer. Excellent recollection.

Helped alot with my assignment

Having just complete this book I must say that I was absolutely engrossed from its beginning to its end. One of the things that fascinated me most was how two separate coups could have occurred literally twenty years apart from one another! Absolutely incredible! This obscure part of the history

of Trinidad & Tobago is fascinating. Lennox Phillips, aka Abu Bakr was a tough hood who played out a losing hand. Yet in the end he came out on top--barely. What other man could attempt high treason and escape with barely two years' imprisonment? Those Muslim Trinidadians were a tough and ruthless lot. Yet had Colonel Theodore had his way, all of the "revolutionaries" would have been slain. It was only the amnesty that was signed by the president that saved the lives of the rebels and subsequently the hostages in TTT. "Their only hope [The Gunmen] of staying alive was the amnesty." (Pantin, P108 Days Of Wrath). Yet even this part of the story had its own mirth when John Humphrey, opposition member of parliament said to those gunmen who were ironing out a deal with attorney general Richardson: "You all better make sure and get it in writing." I laughed hard at reading that. It was absolutely unbelievable! Perhaps treasonous, yet definitely hilarious! The gunmen themselves were a motley crew if ever there were any. "Once again it struck me. This was no ordinary group of wild-eyed thugs gone berserk. This was a trained, armed militia, a cadre skilled in the use and handling of weaponry." (Pantin, P91 Days Of Wrath). Despite this description, the rebels underestimated the resolve of the Trinidadian Army, to the point of making an epic blunder. Too, according to Mr. Pantin, there appears to have been a coup within a coup! This second coup may have been perpetrated by the military itself, with help from elements within the government. It was only the timely calls made to the foreign press that got the ball rolling on behalf of the prisoners in TTT. Mr. Pantin describes the perfidy of the rebels with an adroit precision; however, it is the atrocity on page 101 that shocks me. On that page Mr. Pantin relays how a boy who was captured with a shotgun by the army was then shot in his own knee by a sadistic soldier, who cackled evilly, saying: "That will teach you to shoot at the army!" Assuming the poor boy survived the trip to the hospital, his knee would be forever ruined. Yet the rebels shot down guards too. "Their first murder victim had been a police sentry standing outside Police HQ on Vincent Street. He probably never knew what hit him. The gunmen had simply driven up to the entrance, shot the sentry dead, driven into the compound at the back of the building and exploded a car bomb before fleeing." (Pantin, P 126 Days Of Wrath). Mr. Pantin makes the point of saying how the gun is the greatest equalizer. "With that gun in your hand you weren't just an illiterate, skillless, homeless, unemployed, and probably unemployable hungry, hustling little black piece of shit-which was how people made you feel all of the time. No, with that gun in your hand you could get some respect, some sense of dignity, twisted as it might appear to some, you could also get money to spend on nice things, because the fact that you were dirt poor didn't mean you or your girlfriend or wife or wives didn't like nice things too, just normal people everywhere." (Pantin, P120 Days Of Wrath). That paragraph (Condensed From Two Paragraphs) is poignant when it describes young men the

world over who feel disconnected from society. Lost in the narrative is the discussion whether America would have intervened in the conflict. Delta Force is reported to have flown in with the American ambassador. Were they there simply to protect him or to stop the coups? The answer is they were there to protect American interests. Eric Haney, in his book: Inside Delta Force, mentions how Delta Force protects American interests and Americans worldwide from terrorists. Had Americans been hostages in TTT, Delta Force would most certainly have been more actively involved; had that been the case, Jamaat al Muslimeem may very well have been slain to the last man. Delta Force men are the most ruthless killers in the world. Too, this occurred seven months after the US-led invasion of Panama and contemporaneously with the beginnings of Desert Shield. Saddam Hussein had just invaded Kuwait on August 1, 1990. I liked this book. Its pros far, far outweigh its cons. I liked the index in the rear of the book. This is a rarity with some self-published works, and gave the book an ease of reference for those armchair historians like myself. Too, the POV prose gave the manuscript an in depth realism that only someone who was there could pull off. Mr. Pantin's harrowing experience shows in his descriptions of the events as they unfolded from beginning to end. His sense of humor held until the very end as he cracked one last joke upon leading his fellows away from the clutches of their tormentors. "'Okay,' I said in a loud stentorian voice, 'I'm the captain of this ship. Women and children first!'" (Pantin, P143 Days Of Wrath). To which his colleagues and even some of the terrorists chuckled. My quibbles are small. The USS Guadalcanal (LPH-7) was not a battleship but an Iwo Jima-class amphibious assault ship. Whether it was actually in the region in late July/early August is unclear. The late actor Antonio Rodolfo Quinn Oaxaca (Anthony Quinn) was not a white Italian-American actor but a white Mexican-American actor. However, these quibbles do not damage the book overmuch. Mr. Pantin, a family friend of mine for five decades, has put together a very informative book. All in all I rate it as Four And A Half Stars. Buy this book and you won't be disappointed. A. Nathaniel Wallace, Jr.

A fearless, historical and, given a vicissitude of the inexpressible horror, almost witty account of the 1990 coup in Trinidad. Raoul Pantin is masterful and recreates the siege using a pen dipped in Trini ink and retold in such fashion, yet sparing no detail of what was, from the 1800s to the culmination of the terrorist act. A must read! Lyndon Baptiste Author of *90 Days of Violence* and *Oh My Testicles!*: A tale of entanglement

I enjoyed this book very much, it was a bit repetitive at times but still a good read, I finished it in one day! I was only five years old when this happened, and unfortunately, the history and the events

surrounding the coup was never on our curriculum in school (I attended school in Trinidad from elementary to high school. Anyone who wants a taste of Trinidadian history should buy this book.

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