

At our Editorial Office

Grenada — an eye-witness account

October 25th marks the first anniversary of the brutal US invasion of Grenada which resulted in a great many casualties and considerable material destruction in one of the smallest countries in the world. According to US President Reagan, the sunny state of Grenada and its 120,000 inhabitants "threatened the security interests of his country" and, therefore, had to be occupied.

Policarpo Corvalán had come to Grenada in 1981 where, under the guidance of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, he worked on economic development projects. He also possessed a wealth of pedagogic experience following many years as a primary school teacher. Later on he specialized in engineering economics (animal genetics) and took his doctor's degree in this subject.

Policarpo Corvalán, who today works for the Anti-fascist Chile Committee in Bulgaria, became well acquainted and closely linked to Grenada during several years residence there. He was also an eye-witness during the first days of the US incursion. During a visit to the FISE he recalled his experiences in a discussion with Hans Aschenbrenner, Chief Editor of "Teachers of the World".

"It is impossible to imagine that Grenada could ever constitute a 'danger' to the United States. The Reagan administration was mainly intent on thwarting a process which might act as an example to other suppressed and exploited Caribbean peoples," Policarpo Corvalán then underlines. Grenada could have attained the same significance for the

English-speaking Caribbean territories as Cuba was and remains for Latin America. For this reason the aim, right from the outset was to nip in the bud developments in Grenada in particular by destabilizing its national economy. Moreover, this proved not terribly difficult for the island country was dependent in many spheres on foreign assistance."

The medical faculty in St. George's

The United States' methods in handling, infiltrating into and controlling so-called insubordinate countries repeatedly centres on activities in the cultural and educational sectors. This is corroborated by Policarpo Corvalán based on his observations in Grenada. He explains: "For some ten years a medical faculty had existed in St. George's where US students received three years training after which they continued their studies in St. Vincent. There were 650 students, all of them American citizens, enrolled at the faculty as the invasion set in. In fact, throughout its existence only one Grenadian citizen graduated from the faculty. After the New Jewel Movement took power in March 1979 officials in Washington began wondering whether the faculty should be maintained or not. The issue was finally decided favourably for one obviously did not wish to sacrifice such an opportunity of closely observing revolutionary events and developments in Grenada.

There were, moreover, no restrictions whatsoever imposed on movement within the country of US citizens studying at the faculty. North Americans themselves would have been in a position, in their own country, to give the lie to the outrageous charge that Cuban building workers were about to establish a military airport in St. George's. Some 600 Cubans did, in fact, construct an airport, but it was a civilian one and immeasurably more up-to-date than the one in Havana. They laboured day and night along with 600 unskilled Grenadian workers who, in this manner, were to be trained as Grenada's future bricklayers and technical designers. The American students could walk along the newly built runway and were in a position to observe the construction work underway at any time of the day and night. It emerged subsequently that the CIA

had installed a number of its staff in this faculty. Thus, my wife who lectured as a doctor at the faculty was quite surprised that just one day following the invasion several students were already operating on behalf of the US Central Intelligence Agency."

As the situation began to destabilize in the country specific methods of propaganda and sowing discord were employed thereby meticulously taking into account the concrete state of affairs. Thus specialists organized a deliberate whispering campaign and there was no doubt that its originators were in the medical faculty from where they skilfully instigated their intrigues. As Policarpo Corvalán points out: "One sensed that they fully perceived the people's mentality, existing problems and difficulties, knew the country and its leadership in detail, including personal matters; they were equally in the picture as regards shortcomings and contradictions, even paying attention to romantic-emotional factors. Indeed, rumours were spread above all at critical moments in order to create problems and confuse the New Jewel Movement whilst undermining popular trust in its approach—in other words: to gobble up the revolution from inside."

Policarpo Corvalán draws attention to the fact that one also spoke of a "revolution of laughter" because of the bloodless manner in which the New Jewel Movement had taken power—and how this movement, adopting a clever strategy, worked hard and effectively to overcome the heritage of the corrupt dictator Gairy. One perceived clearly that it was necessary, in furthering the revolution, not to change fundamentally and completely all the hitherto existing patterns of life. Moreover, it became obvious that imperialism had its finger well inside the pie even given internal difficulties of the leadership of the Jewel Movement and was meddling in the country's internal affairs. Initially one had not clearly felt oneself a victim of US secret service and monopoly machinations. Moreover, the divergencies within the New Jewel leadership were exclusively subjective differences of opinion regarding how such a young state could best develop. As the deadly shots were directed against Maurice Bishop, other government members and leading trade unionists the CIA already possessed essential information about national development.