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THE GRENADIAN VOICE



THE RIGHT ALONE IS RIGHT THE WRONG IS ALWAYS WRONG

S T. GEORGE'S: "We suspect that we have created newspaper history. Ours was, probably, the first newspaper ever to go out of existence after publishing only one issue... We are undoubtedly establishing a record for the length of time between two issues — nearly two and a half years."

In this manner, the editorial of *The Grenadian Voice* of November 20, 1983, begins, "celebrating the restoration of freedom of expression in a country which has writhed in agony under severe oppression and repression for far too long."

After a Guayana-trained commando overthrew Sir Eric Gairy's elected, but corrupt, regime in Grenada on March 13, 1979, Maurice Bishop, the leader of the New Jewel Movement took over the government. This was the first coup in the English-speaking Caribbean Commonwealth. Sir Eric Gairy, who for years insisted upon demanding that the United Nations investigate the UFO phenomenon (although nobody ever saw a flying saucer in Grenada), was at the time of the coup, out of the country and has since then lived in exile.

The Bishop regime didn't tolerate the slightest opposition and didn't respect freedom of the press. *Torchlight*, the only newspaper of the "Spice Island" was closed down and a brave journalist, Alister Hughes, the lonely editor of the *Grenadian Newsletter*, and a correspondent of AP, the *Sunday Times* of London, *Time* magazine and CANA (the Caribbean News Agency) was in and out of jail for years. While in jail, put there by the Revolutionary Military Council, he feared for his life.

Under these circumstances, two and a half years ago, 26 Grenadians decided to publish an independent newspaper. Each of them contributed 100 dollars and the first issue appeared on June 13, 1981. In the first editorial, reproduced now, two and a half years later *The Grenadian Voice* said:

"In its first editorial, every newspaper should do at least two things — give a reason for its establishment and set out clearly its policy and principle. We accept this responsibility.

"The Grenadian Voice has been born at the express wish of countless citizens, in every stratum of life in our community, for an independent newspaper as a symbol of freedom of expression, as a vehicle dealing with the issues of our time in a frank, free and unbiased way.

"The policy of this paper is to practice the highest standard of journalism, to encourage and promote freedom of expression in a free Grenada... to assist in

Building for the future

creating an informed public opinion; to support those policies and programs of government which, in our opinion, are beneficial to the nation and the people as a whole — but to be ready to counsel caution or offer constructive criticism when we differ from government.

"As declared by the leaders of government when it is to mean anything, then it is important that government shows that freedom is for all the people and not only for certain sections...

"We wish to state categorically that we have neither the wish nor the intent to sponsor, motivate or support counter-revolution in any form. We reject the perpetuation of the idea of the use of force as a means of changing government and look to the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) to keep its promise of 'early, free and fair elections.'

"...we hold firmly to the opinion that a country which does not boast a free press is fundamentally unstable.

"More than this, we believe that the PRG, in the absence of a parliamentary opposition, should welcome the advent of *The Grenadian Voice* as a vehicle through which the administration will have the benefit of a flow of independent ideas.

"It is in this context that we have proudly adopted and nailed to our masthead the memorable and inspiring motto which was created so many years ago by that great Grenadian, Theophilus Albert Marryshow, the acknowledged prince of West Indian journalism: 'The right alone is right, the wrong is always wrong!'"

While the second issue, proposed for June 30, 1981, was still not printed, the PRG of Maurice Bishop seized the material, closed the newspaper, arrested

THE Board of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association has approved a \$30,000 grant to buy a printing press for the Grenadian Voice.

Leslie Pierre, the editor in chief, who is of French Creole origin, and two shareholders, Lloyd Noel and Tillman Tomasa, a trio who gained freedom only two years and three months later, following the intervention of the American and East-Caribbean forces.

"We are an independent newspaper which will ask no quarter and give none in doing what we believe to be our duty" now wrote the editor in chief of *The Grenadian Voice*. "We will not sell or surrender our independence and we will defend to the fullest extent our right to exist so that never again in this land will freedom of the press be abrogated... We recognize that among the most important commodities which are now needed in our country are unity, cooperation and understanding, and we, for our part, pledge to provide this."

In several articles analyzing the tragic situation between October 11 and 25, 1983, it was reported that "Bishop is put under house arrest (on October 14), ostensibly for spreading rumors to the effect that Bernard Coard and his wife Phyllis Coard were plotting his death." According to a Free West Indian reporter, a former PRA officer (Peoples' Revolutionary Army) said that "Bishop was under house arrest because he had deviated from the principles of the Party and was attempting to establish and perpetuate 'one-manism'". After the killing of Maurice Bishop, "a group of military extremists, calling themselves the Revolutionary Military Council, seized power and had the entire nation under house arrest for four days."

The Grenadian Voice, in the building of the West India Printers, near the port of St. George's, now occupies the small rooms which were the offices of Prensa Latina, the Cuban News Agency's Eastern Caribbean Bureau. Grenada severed diplomatic relations with Cuba and the Cubans working for Prensa Latina have been expelled.

On November 26, 1983, the next issue of *The Grenadian Voice* appeared, and on December 3, 1983, the third one: A simple newspaper, 16 pages, tabloid form. But what an effort to give this small weekly newspaper to the Grenadian public! The editor has to send the material to Trinidad, another Caribbean island, where it is printed — and, in 35 bags, each containing 200 copies, are sent back by plane to St. George's.

This is a rare example of journalist solidarity: colleagues from Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica try to help *The Voice*, assisting Leslie Pierre with professional advice, material and newsprint.

Juan Fercsey