

*The domestic and international problems of a government
trying to carry out the first socialist revolution based on tourism*

GRENADA BEFORE AND AFTER

BY MICHAEL MASSING

THREE MONTHS AFTER THE INVASION OF GRENADA, two things can be said for sure: the intervention was supported by the vast majority of Grenadians, and it was applauded by most Americans. Beyond that, however, not much is clear. Neither the United States government nor American news organizations did much to help us understand what was going on.

To some extent, the quality of the reporting reflected the U.S. government's determination to keep reporters off the island in the crucial first days of the invasion. Most news organizations were uncomfortably dependent on information handed them by the Pentagon, the State Department, and the White House. The overall effect of the coverage, then, was to reinforce President Reagan's assertions that Grenada was "a Soviet-Cuban colony being readied as a major military bastion," and that "we got there just in time."

So much attention was focused on the Cubans and the Soviets, in fact, that we learned little about Grenada itself. With Maurice Bishop, one of the region's great orators, fallen mute, many came forward to make claims on his behalf. Even the U.S. government seemed eager to portray Bishop as a "moderate" whose peace overtures to Washington had run afoul of the "hard-line Marxist" Bernard Coard and had ultimately caused Bishop's demise.

Who was Maurice Bishop? What was his revolution like? How did the United States treat his regime? And why did his government meet the end it did? Only after we have answered these questions can we understand the U.S. invasion and the ramifications it is likely to have.

I visited Grenada for two weeks last March and returned there shortly after the invasion. On my first trip, I found a gentle, overgrown island whose beauty was made all the more stunning by the Grenadians' own pleasure in it. Tucked away at the end of the Windward Islands chain, Grenada was a languid, unassuming place, without much sense of the outside world. The foreigners I encountered were a mixed lot, come to witness Grenada's experiment in Caribbean socialism: gee-whizzing members of solidarity groups from Canada and Western Europe; curious American leftists, old and new; a coterie of West German radicals, who had arrived after reading a glowing account of the revolution in a left-wing weekly; Jamaicans trying to

recover from Michael Manley's defeat; and Guyanese fleeing the paranoid politics of Forbes Burnham.

By November, Grenada had become a carnival, providing plenty of amusement—and lots of native black help—for the many whites who came after the shooting had stopped. The Grenadians, euphoric about the arrival of the Marines, had not realized that the troops would be followed by a second invasion—of Agency for International Development officials, diplomats, economic advisers, disaster-relief experts, and journalists. The journalists could be seen everywhere, lining up to interview innkeepers, clerks, schoolchildren, and fishmongers, all of whom obliged with unfailing courtesy. The Americans took over three of the island's best hotels, installed a psychological-operations team at the radio station, and converted the local university center into a press office. There was talk of naming the new airport after Ronald Reagan.

In an effort to make some sense of the events that had engulfed Grenada, I dropped in on a few of the people I'd met during my first visit. One was Richard Gray, owner of the Cinnamon Hill and Beach Club, a tier of plush cottages in the hills off the Grand Anse beach. Gray, a native of Britain who moved to Grenada more than a decade ago and is a prominent member of the Chamber of Commerce, had spent a leisurely afternoon with me last March sipping drinks and describing cooperative efforts between the government and businessmen to promote local investment.

In post-invasion Grenada, however, the Chamber had become an important power broker, and Gray's time was given over to endless meetings. I caught him as he was about to go talk with the governor general, and joined him for the ride. "I know where the government was going—over to the Russians," Gray told me. "Bernard Coard was a hard-line radical. He wished to establish a Marxist-Leninist state. Bishop had to sign agreements with the Russians or hand over power. He didn't, and paid for it with his life." Gray expressed relief that the country had rid itself of socialism and could now get down to business.

I received a totally different account from Lyden Ramdhanny, the minister of tourism and deputy finance minister under Bishop. To reach him, I took a taxi across the island to Grenville, the second largest town, and up into the surrounding hills, where Ramdhanny lives in a luxurious house overlooking the sea. One of two businessmen to serve in Bishop's cabinet, Ramdhanny had gone under-

ground for a week after the October 19 upheaval to escape being killed. He explained that the conflict between Bishop and Coard had been primarily a power struggle. "There was no question of ideology," he said. "It was simply a grab for power." He dismissed as nonsense claims about a Cuban takeover.

I was curious how he, an ardent Bishop supporter, regarded the invasion. "I recognize the majority of Grenadians are happy at being rescued," he said. "For the first time in our history, we had a military dictatorship. After the mass killing, the people wanted any way out, so the invasion was quite acceptable to them. And I like to be guided by what the people want."

The invasion, then, appeared to be a liberation—but for diverse reasons. For some, it was a liberation from socialist "slavery," as one man put it; for others, it was a liberation from the madmen who killed socialism when they killed Bishop. True to the way I remembered it, the island was full of contradictions.

UNDER MAURICE BISHOP, GRENADA CONSISTENTLY defied the stereotypes of revolution. While I was taking a bus back to town last March, after attending an impassioned government rally held to denounce U.S. imperialism, I overheard a group of young boys heat-

edly debating the Scriptures, particularly whether it is possible to see the Creator. On another occasion, I watched the army parade on a field in St. George's, the capital; no sooner had it finished than the grounds were taken over by students from the St. George's medical school, who started an impromptu softball game.

I attended a rally at the tiny headquarters of the national telephone company. Eighty or so workers gathered with members of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) to commemorate the opening of a new telephone exchange for the capital—the first part of a new system being installed by East Germany. The featured speaker was Bernard Coard, who praised the telephone workers for their role in the March, 1979, revolution. "With workers like you," he said, "no force can turn back the Grenadian revolution." He and the other notables adjourned to the second floor, where the cables and wires of the new exchange hung in coils. As Grenada's archdeacon prepared to give the benediction, Coard and his colleagues reverently bowed their heads. "Unless God blesses all we do," the archdeacon intoned, "it is worth nothing. We thank God for the new building and our new exchange." He concluded with the Lord's Prayer and sprinkled holy water on the East German circuitry. Coard cut the ribbon, a bottle of champagne was popped open, and everyone excitedly began inspecting the island's new, sanctified phone exchange.



ST. GEORGE'S

For Grenada's tourists, this Cuban-Soviet bastion was just another sun-drenched island in the Caribbean. One day last March, as a Cuban ship unloaded cement intended for the airport, a mammoth Cunard liner pulled into harbor and disgorged hundreds of Americans into the streets of St. George's. Nearby, a military band struck up "Capitalism Gone Mad," a calypso hit song by The Mighty Sparrow. Before long, in a scene common throughout the Caribbean, the tourists were haggling with young black children peddling trinkets and spice containers.

The PRG sought to carry out the first socialist revolution based on tourism. Initially, the government had displayed considerable hostility toward tourism, and in its first months angry armed soldiers had patrolled the beaches. Before long, however, the government faced the reality that, like most small Third World countries, Grenada has few resources. The island, which is overwhelmingly rural, depends on nutmeg, cocoa beans, and a few other primary crops. When the bottom drops out of the world market for one of these, as happened recently with nutmeg, the country's export earnings take a dive. Farming techniques are not much removed from those employed in the seventeenth century, and productivity is very low. Industrialization is nonexistent, save for some token production of furniture, garments, and processed foods.

On the other hand, Grenada's rugged, volcanic terrain abounds with mangoes, bananas, tamarinds, breadfruit, and spices. Verdant mountains descend to the sea, producing a dramatic coastline of coves, cliffs, and beaches. The mile-and-a-half-long Grand Anse must rank among the world's great beaches. St. George's itself, a hilly port with clusters of quaint, bright-roofed buildings, has been likened to the Italian seacoast resort of Portofino.

So the government decided to embrace tourism. To counter the unflattering coverage appearing in the U.S. press (a PRG survey in 1981 turned up 169 negative articles about Grenada in one month alone), the government hired a public-relations firm in New York and, in 1982, paid for forty travel writers to come down and look around. It also did away with tedious customs checks that had antagonized tourists in the first months of the revolution.

Such pragmatism characterized the socialist government's economic program as a whole. Its architect was Bernard Coard, who, as finance minister, introduced comprehensive economic planning to the island. The PRG set out to upgrade roads, water supplies, the power system, and other components of the country's infrastructure, and advertised its efforts on billboards throughout the island. (An example: "This Is Where Your Tax Money Goes. Project: Port Expansion. Cost: \$6,000,000.00.") In August of last year, Coard succeeded in obtaining a \$14 million loan from the International Monetary Fund, which was approved despite objections from the United States.

The PRG was committed to a mixed economy, and the private sector retained control of some two thirds of all economic activity. Although businessmen were wary of the



MAURICE BISHOP

ALEX WEBB/MAGNUM PHOTOS



BERNARD COARD

O. FRANKENSYGMA

government's intentions, the PRG's relations with the business community were relatively cordial. Richard Meneses, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, told me during my first visit that the "name-calling" had stopped. "I haven't heard one unkind word against us in the longest while," he said. He pointed to the government's new investment law offering incentives that had been worked out with the Chamber.

What struck me was the gap between this sober economic approach and the level of rhetoric and ideology I encountered. Political discourse in Grenada was swollen with the vocabulary of revolution. Agriculture was the



1980 RALLY COMMEMORATING RUPERT BISHOP

"main pillar" of the economy. The people were the "masses," and workers were in the "vanguard." Work was "struggle," actions were "decisive," and reality was always "concrete." Men were "comrades," women "sisters." All speeches ended with a recitation of the PRG's motto, "Forward Ever, Backward Never."

Nineteen eighty-three was the "year of political and academic education," and employees in many enterprises were required to attend "worker-education" classes in ideology. By the time of the coup, people were threatened with losing their jobs if they failed to show up. For many Grenadians, accustomed to an easygoing way of life, the classes were an unacceptable burden.

Even more disturbing to them were the government's tight political controls. Contrary to the often lurid reports reaching the United States, Grenada was not a police state. Unlike the governments in Chile, Haiti, or El Salvador, the Grenadian government did not kill people or make them disappear. Armed men were not a conspicuous presence, except when the militia was called into the streets.

But dissent was not tolerated. The government closed down three newspapers, including one, the *Grenadian Voice*, that in its first issue had declared itself loyal to but critical of the revolution; that was the only issue ever to come out. Furthermore, the PRG held a large number of

political prisoners. An exact total was hard to come by, since no lists were published, but at times it was probably on the order of 100, or about one in every thousand Grenadians. Few of these prisoners were charged with crimes, and even fewer tried. The Richmond Hill prison, perched on a bluff overlooking St. George's and visible throughout the capital, stood as a squat reminder of where loose lips could land you.

Then there was the question of elections. "Elections are not an issue in Grenada," I was told in March by Kenrick Radix, the minister of industrial development. "We had elections from 1951 on, and during that time a man's vote could be bought with rum and corned beef. People now see a lot of changes—roads being built, buses on the road, the airport, free education. Whenever the masses want elections, they'll get them. Don't take my word for it. Ask people in the street."

I did, frequently. Radix was partly right. People were pleased with the social improvements brought about by the revolution. Secondary education was provided free, a literacy campaign was under way, and the number of university scholarships had greatly increased. Medical care, too, was free, and health clinics had been opened in the countryside (thanks largely to the Cubans). Free milk and other foodstuffs were being distributed to the public, as

were materials for home improvement. Cultural and sports programs had been set up for young people.

Yet, to a majority of the Grenadians I talked with, these gains did not make up for the lack of elections and the restrictions on free expression. A typical comment came from the manager of a small spice company, who told me, "We're celebrating four years of revolution. Everyone sighed for relief when there was a change. But now there's a lot of dissatisfaction. I, for one, don't want to live in a country where you rule my life. You can take care of me, provide me with a job, education, housing. But I don't have the freedom to use my imagination and initiative to do things on my own."

Despite an unhappy experience with parliamentary democracy during its colonial days, Grenada, like the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean, is imbued with the political traditions left by the British. Moreover, Grenadians have long been pro-American and anti-communist. It is estimated that more of them live in the U.S. than on the island itself, the result of a historical migration in search of jobs. Even Radix, in the course of criticizing U.S. foreign policy, boasted to me that he had twenty cousins living in the United States. Thus the Bishop government's close ties with Cuba did not go down well. Rumors swirled about the Cubans on the island—they had stolen Grenadians' girlfriends, had gotten into fights with the locals, had even engaged in unnatural acts with animals.

Overall, I found that Bishop was perceived as a patriot working selflessly for the national good and that he was immensely popular among Grenadians of all ages; his government was not. Support for the PRG was concentrated among the young, and even there it was flagging. According to minutes of party meetings discovered after the invasion, Bishop's New Jewel Movement was on the verge of dissolution because of popular hostility. "The revolution now faces the greatest danger since 1979," the minutes state, owing to the "great dispiritiveness and dissatisfaction among the people." The unhappiness was having a serious effect on the economy: though the government claimed that the GNP grew by 5.5 percent in 1982, it is clear that by the time of the coup economic growth had come to a halt. Bishop evidently hoped that his appointment of a commission to draw up a constitution, thereby paving the way for elections, would help regain some of the revolution's lost credit.

How had the People's Revolutionary Government reached such a pass? The answer requires a brief look at the rise of the New Jewel Movement and the early history of the revolution.

LIKE ITS NEIGHBORS, GRENADA WAS ONCE A SUGAR-producing slave colony, first under France and then under Britain. But that experience left fewer scars on Grenada than it did on most other islands. Emancipation, declared in 1838, vitiated the plantation system as

newly freed slaves obtained their own plots and became small farmers. The old plantocracy slowly died out, and land became fairly evenly distributed; so did income. People in Grenada are very poor, but because the land and the sea are so bountiful, few of them go hungry, and other signs of severe poverty, such as shantytowns, are scarce. The country's population is homogeneous—predominantly black and Roman Catholic.

For all its comparative advantages, Grenada in its recent history had to contend with one unique burden: Eric Gairy. The frequent claims that the U.S. invasion sought to "restore democracy" betray unfamiliarity with this man, who from 1951 to 1979 (excepting a five-year gap) headed a ruthless dictatorship in the mold of "Papa Doc" Duvalier's, in Haiti. For Sir Eric, politics was an exercise in self-aggrandizement, and he amassed an impressive collection of hotels, nightclubs, restaurants, and mansions. He demanded commissions on business deals and forced women to provide sexual favors. He was obsessed with witchcraft and astral projection, which he claimed was proof of his divinity. He often left the island to attend UFO conventions, and he addressed the UN General Assembly on the need for funding "psychic research" on UFOs.

Elections during Gairy's regime were a sham; votes were brazenly bought and electoral lists doctored. To further cement his power, Gairy created paramilitary squads (one was called the "Mongoose Gang") which were used to intimidate the opposition. These failed, however, to stem the growth of left-wing groups on the island. The most important was the New Jewel Movement, founded in 1973 by Maurice Bishop and Unison Whiteman (who later became foreign minister). On the one hand, the NJM took inspiration from the tradition of Caribbean populism, which stressed social justice, nationalism, and grass-roots participation. On the other, it drew on the Black Power movement then sweeping the United States. This particularly influenced Bishop, who had just returned from studying law in England, where he had seen firsthand the oppression of West Indian blacks.

At the same time, a second group, the Organization for Revolutionary Education and Liberation, developed around Bernard Coard, who had studied economics at Brandeis and Sussex universities. OREL was rooted in another doctrine with a traditional, if somewhat rarefied, place in Caribbean politics—Marxism. OREL was not a political party: it served primarily as a study group, and through it Coard instructed his students in the teachings of Marx and in how they might be applied to a small, underdeveloped country like Grenada.

Gairy unleashed his repressive apparatus on the growing opposition. On November 18, 1973—"Bloody Sunday"—Bishop and five other NJM leaders were badly beaten and thrown into prison. Two months later, on "Bloody Monday," Gairy's police shot and killed Rupert Bishop, Maurice's father, during street demonstrations.

The thuggery only helped strengthen the NJM, which in

1976 decided to contest the national elections. Despite widespread fraud by Gairy supporters, an NJM-led alliance took 48 percent of the vote and six of the fifteen seats in parliament. Enraged by this challenge to his authority, Gairy cracked down harder and, to help bolster his regime, forged close ties with the Chilean government of Augusto Pinochet. In 1978, Grenadian dissidents began to disappear. The NJM developed a clandestine structure that penetrated the ranks of the army, the police, and trade unions.

On March 13, 1979, when Gairy was out of the country, the party struck. Forty armed men seized a key army barracks and the island's only radio station, where they began broadcasting appeals to the citizenry to rise up. Thousands did, descending on police stations with crude weapons. Within twelve hours, Gairy's regime had been routed. Only three people were killed in the takeover.

Speaking to the nation over the radio that day, Maurice Bishop said, "Let me assure the people of Grenada that all democratic freedoms, including freedom of elections, religion, and public opinion, will be fully restored to the people." He added that "this revolution is for work, for food, for decent housing and health services, and for a bright future for our children and great-grandchildren."

THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT brought together the populist nationalism of Bishop, who became prime minister, and the Marxism of Coard, his deputy. It pledged adherence to a mixed economy and named representatives of the private sector to the cabinet. Popular support for the new regime was overwhelming. When, a week after the takeover, Gairy officially announced his resignation, 20,000 Grenadians turned out at a rally and sang, "Freedom come, Gairy go, Gairy gone with UFO."

The new government faced two urgent problems. One was getting the country going again. Gairy's rule had brought about high unemployment, flagging production, substandard services, and a decaying infrastructure. Even more pressing, however, was a threat from Gairy, who issued calls for a counter-coup from his base in San Diego.

Bishop approached a number of countries for assistance, including the United States and Cuba. Cuba responded at once, sending small amounts of economic aid. This did not sit well with Washington. When Frank Ortiz, the U.S. ambassador to Barbados—who had responsibility for the eastern Caribbean, including Grenada—visited the island in early April of 1979, he got straight to the point. The United States, he warned Bishop, would not look with favor on any effort by Grenada to develop closer ties with Cuba. If the government persisted, Ortiz said, it might discover a lessening in the flow of American tourists to the island. The Grenadians took this as a threat. They were further provoked by what they reported to be Ortiz's offer of all of \$5,000 in assistance.

To the young government, eager to demonstrate its independence, Ortiz's lecture seemed to confirm suspicions about the American colossus. Ortiz "attempted to call the shots," says Lyden Ramdhanny, who was a cabinet member at the time. "We said we'd like to have relations with everybody, left-leaning and right-leaning; he said he saw difficulty in that." His offer of \$5,000 was "a slap in the face," Ramdhanny says. "Then the war of words began."

In a speech delivered three days after the meeting with Ortiz, Bishop said:

We have always striven to have and develop the closest and friendliest relations with the United States, as well as Canada, Britain, and all our Caribbean neighbors. . . . But no one must misunderstand our friendliness as an excuse for rudeness and meddling in our affairs, and no one, no matter how mighty and powerful they are, will be permitted to dictate to the government and people of Grenada who we can have friendly relations with and what kind of relations we must have with other countries. We are not in anybody's back yard.

Within days, the first arms from Cuba arrived, and the PRG quickly strengthened its ties with the socialist bloc. Its growing alignment with the East was apparent in its UN vote against condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At home, the government, citing counter-revolutionary threats, moved leftward. *The Torchlight*, a right-wing paper that had harshly attacked the link with Cuba, was shut down; the promise of elections began to fade; more people were thrown into jail. The government's fears seemed to be confirmed in June of 1980, when a bomb went off at a large government rally in St. George's, killing three young women and injuring close to a hundred other people.

The Carter Administration reacted strongly against the government's actions. The National Security Council considered a blockade of the island (but ultimately decided against it). The State Department barred Sally Shelton, Frank Ortiz's successor in Barbados, from visiting the island; not long after, it refused to accept the credentials of Dessima Williams, Bishop's designated envoy to Washington.

The tactics of the United States became more aggressive after the election of Ronald Reagan. The Republican Administration worked to deny Grenada loans from the IMF (unsuccessfully) and from the World Bank (successfully). It told the Caribbean Development Bank, a regional institution based in Barbados, that it would contribute \$4 million toward a "basic human needs" program—but only if Grenada was excluded. The demand outraged the bank's directors, who turned down the contribution rather than submit to pressure. Some State Department officials now look back on the episode as a critical blunder that succeeded only in pushing Grenada further away from the United States. Finally, in August of 1981, the United States began staging large naval maneuvers in the Caribbean. Among the exercises in "Ocean Venture '81" was a mock invasion

mock invasion of an island off Puerto Rico fictitiously named "Amber and the Amberdines," said to be "our enemy in the eastern Caribbean."

The PRG saw the operation as a warm-up for a possible invasion and began stepping up its military activities. It also turned up the volume on its rhetoric, as in this excerpt from a speech Bishop gave in November of 1981:

Today the assumption of power by a fascist clique in the U.S. and the failure of imperialism's attempt to destroy our process has brought our revolution face to face with the ugliest side of imperialism—naked military aggression. . . . But it is not only here in our Caribbean that the enemies of peace have been rattling their sabers. These neutron warmongers have been seeking military confrontation on several continents.

With U.S. coffers sealed, Grenada looked elsewhere for help. Venezuela donated school supplies, housing materials, and 10,000 barrels of fuel. East Germans came to install the new telephone system, and North Koreans to set up an irrigation system. Canada developed a program to revive the island's cocoa industry, laid low by plant disease. In 1982, according to government estimates, major donors to the island included the Common Market (30 percent), Canada (15 percent), the Middle East (15 percent), Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (15 percent), and Cuba (20 percent).

Cuba's presence was by far the most visible. Cuban teachers, doctors, and dentists could be seen throughout the island. Cuba provided technical assistance in transportation, agriculture, fishing, culture, and sports. It even supplied two magicians, who turned up regularly at social events, to the evident delight of Grenadian audiences. Cuba also began secretly shipping more arms to the island. One night in 1982, for instance, a Cuban ship pulled into harbor, St. George's suddenly went dark, and weapons were carried by trucks to hidden depots around the island.

THE CUBANS WERE MOST EVIDENT, OF COURSE, AT the new airport at Point Salines. In his "Star Wars" speech last March, President Reagan singled out the airport as a threat to Americans: "The Cubans, with Soviet financing and backing, are in the process of building an airfield with a 10,000-foot runway. Grenada doesn't even have an air force. Who is it intended for?" Clearly, he said, the airport was part of the "Soviet-Cuban militarization of Grenada. . . ." Most reporters described the airport in similar terms during the invasion. In fact it was immensely popular with Grenadians, who looked forward to the many tourists it would bring. "One project that's had unanimous support is the airport," Richard Menezes, of the Chamber of Commerce, made a point of telling me, in November. "Not many people outside Grenada know the extent to which Grenadians have put their money and

sweat into this." Many citizens bought bonds to support construction of the airport.

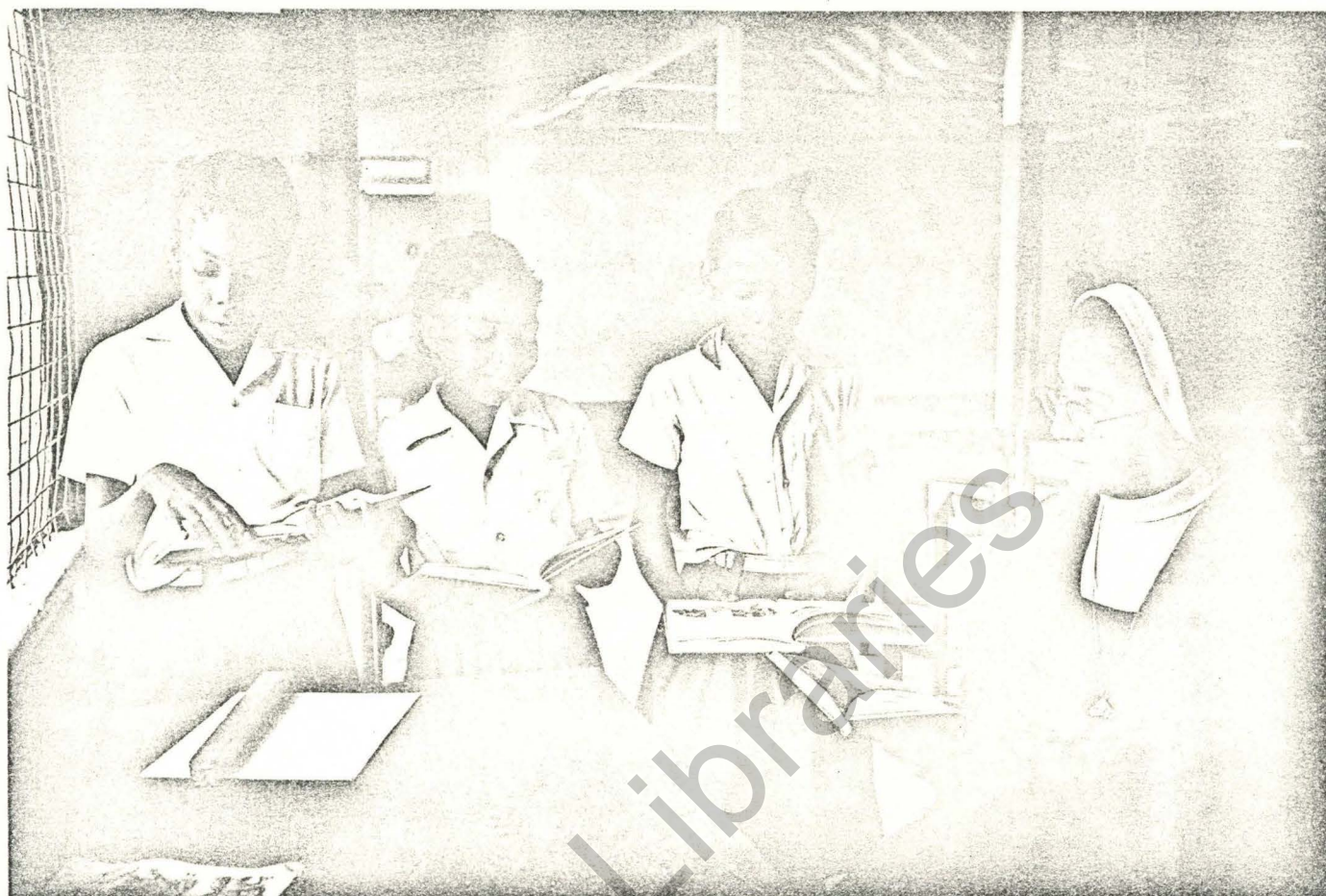
Newsmen traveling to Grenada to cover the invasion flew into Point Salines on C-130 transports. Had they arrived at the old airport, at Pearls, they might have seen why the facility under construction was so popular. Pearls's 5,300-foot runway, chiseled out of the mountains, can accommodate only small prop planes; tourists must first fly to Barbados and change planes there. And, because Pearls cannot be used at night, Grenada-bound visitors who arrive in Barbados late in the day must often spend the night there.

Point Salines, with its 9,000-foot runway, would accommodate wide-bodied jets, making the stop in Barbados unnecessary. According to the International Civil Aviation Organization, in Montreal, which sets standards for airports around the world, a 9,000-foot runway is short for an airport intended to service jumbo jets. Indeed, the airport at Barbados, whose intended use Reagan never questioned, boasts an 11,000-foot runway; so does the one in the Bahamas. Martinique's runway is 10,800 feet, and Guadeloupe's, 11,500 feet.

The case of St. Lucia shows what a new airport can do for an island in the Caribbean. In the early 1970s, when St. Lucia had a small airport, it received about the same number of tourists per year as Grenada—roughly 25,000. St. Lucia built a new airport with a 9,000-foot runway, and within three years the number of tourist arrivals almost tripled. The number in Grenada remained steady. The PRG projected an increase in arrivals to 40,000 in the first year after opening Point Salines.

The Bishop government first approached the United States, Britain, and Canada for funds to build the new airport. The United States refused, and persuaded the others to follow suit. Later, in 1981, when Grenada scheduled a conference in Brussels to seek loans, the United States pressured its European allies to stay away. Most did. Cuba was willing to pick up much of the slack, with help from the Common Market (which gives aid independent of its individual members), Libya, Algeria, Syria, Iraq, and Venezuela. A U.S. firm, Layne Dredging, of Miami, dredged the inlet across which the runway extends, and Plessey, a British company, was contracted to install navigation and communications systems.

Soon after the invasion, Plessey issued a statement denying that Point Salines could have been used as a military base, citing the absence of eleven facilities, such as radar and underground fuel tanks, that it said a base would require. The State Department claimed nonetheless that the airfield had posed a serious strategic threat, saying that it would provide Cuban planes with a refueling stop on their way to Angola and would enable Soviet-bloc planes to control the sea-lanes through which much U.S. oil passes. But the Cubans have been reaching Angola for eight years without Grenada; for a number of years they refueled in Barbados. As for the threat to oil tankers, the



© 1980 RICK SMOLAN/CONTACT

A GRAND ANSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

countries that should logically have felt most threatened are neighboring Venezuela and Trinidad, both oil producers. Venezuela was the only non-socialist country to maintain an embassy in Grenada, and it even contributed to the airport; Trinidad opposed the U.S. invasion. (After arms-laden Libyan planes headed for Nicaragua were intercepted in Brazil last year, the State Department added the "trans-shipment of arms" to the list of dangers it claimed the airport presented.)

Even within the State Department, I found considerable skepticism about U.S. opposition to the airport. On my way to Grenada last March, I talked with a well-placed official who said of the facility, "I confess to not being terribly worried." He added, "I never put much stress on the strategic importance of this whole region, much less Grenada." Another State Department official said he thought that moves by the United States to block the airport's construction had served to "push Bishop further to the left."

DURING MY VISIT IN MARCH, I WITNESSED A striking example of the contrast between the policies of the United States and Cuba toward the island. It occurred during celebrations commemorating the fourth anniversary of the March 13 revolution. In previous

years, the date had been marked by mass rallies; this time, the People's Revolutionary Government scheduled a series of modest ceremonies to inaugurate new public projects—a road, a spice-grinding facility, a livestock center. The government hoped to shore up its popularity by impressing Grenadians with the revolution's material progress.

But the tone of the planned events soon changed. *The Washington Post* revealed on February 27 that the CIA had proposed a plan to destabilize Grenada (it later backed off because of Senate opposition). Then the United States and its NATO allies began holding joint maneuvers off Puerto Rico, involving two aircraft carriers and thirty-four U.S. warships. Finally, on March 10, President Reagan denounced Grenada in a speech to the National Association of Manufacturers. "It is not nutmeg that is at stake in the Caribbean and Central America," he said in a now-famous remark. "It is the United States' national security."

The PRG took those remarks as a direct threat and, accordingly, urged people to turn out in force at a rally scheduled for March 12 to thank Cuba for a cement-block factory it had constructed. The plant, named after Augusto Sandino, the Nicaraguan revolutionary, was intended both to produce materials for the airport and to manufacture prefabricated housing units. The Grenadian and Cuban flags fluttered over the grounds of the plant, where about a

thousand people had gathered, including a hundred or so Cuban construction workers. A series of speakers, including a member of the Cuban Communist Party, praised the new plant as a monument to "internationalism" and Cuban-Grenadian friendship.

Then, as it grew dark, the time came for the keynote address. With Bishop out of the country, attending a summit of nonaligned nations in New Delhi, Deputy Prime Minister Coard took his place. The speech lasted forty-five minutes, and it was masterly, the tone alternately indignant, hurt, angry, and ironic. "If we are to believe certain madmen," railed Coard, who was flanked by bodyguards, "this tiny island of Grenada, with a hundred thousand people, twenty-one by twelve miles, is a superpower. We must be a superpower, because the U.S., the mightiest power on earth, is trembling at us."

In the context of the threats from the United States, the Sandino plant had "tremendous significance," Coard declared.

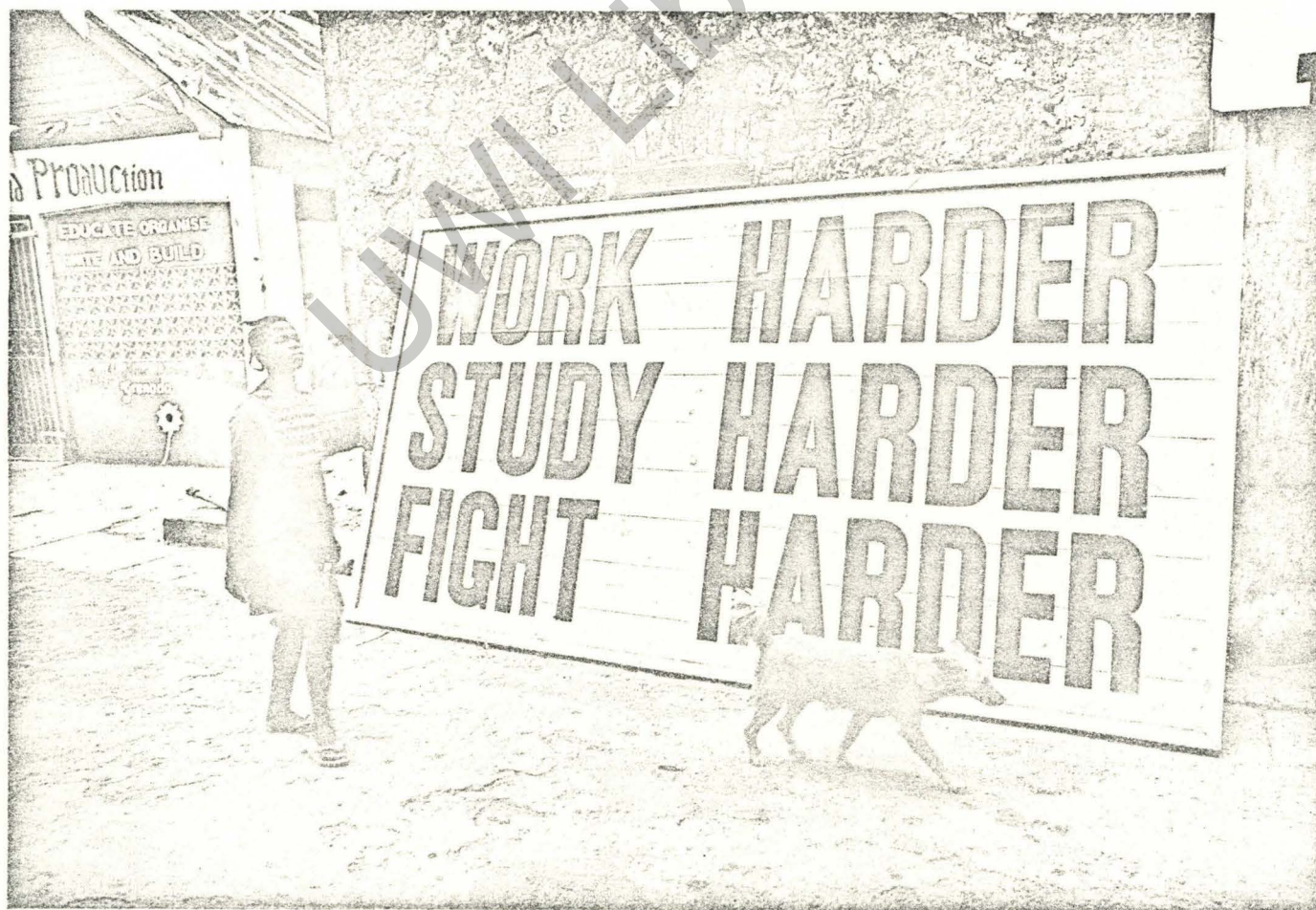
In a country with only twenty thousand families, a housing plant that can produce five hundred homes a year is a giant step forward. In a fairly short space of time, this country will be able to wipe out its housing problem. And for this we must thank the government and people of Cuba.

What Reagan and his cowboys really fear Cuba for is not their military aid but their economic assistance. They are frightened by twenty-five doctors training in Cuba. They are afraid the masses of English-speaking Caribbean society will ask, If Grenada could build five hundred housing units a year, why can't we? . . . They are afraid that Grenada is being held up as a model for the developing world.

Coard ended with a surprise announcement: Prime Minister Bishop had just touched down at Pearls on his return from New Delhi and would soon arrive at the rally. "Long live Maurice," he shouted.

Ten minutes later, horns began honking and the glare of headlights appeared. The crowd parted. A string of shiny cars pulled onto the grounds of the plant and rolled up to the speakers' platform. Bishop emerged from one of the cars and hopped up onto the dais, where he, Coard, and other members of the government joined hands and listened to the cheers of the crowd. Though visibly exhausted from his long trip, the Prime Minister moved to the microphone and launched into a twenty-minute denunciation of U.S. imperialism. "This latest threat from Ronald Reagan," he said,

means a throwing down of the gauntlet to our revolution. He is clearly signaling that they are getting ready for an



SLOGANS OF THE REVOLUTION, ST. GEORGE'S

all-out assault against our revolutionary process. . . . They are now sitting down and planning the final stages of armed attack against our revolution. But we are not going to be threatened or intimidated. They can drop a bomb and wipe our country off the face of the earth, but if they come to try and invade, when they land, they will discover the fighting will of the Grenadian people. We will never give up.

The climax did not come until the following day, the anniversary, when the government staged a military parade. For about half an hour, a few hundred soldiers, accompanied by heavy trucks, personnel carriers, and anti-aircraft guns, marched around a field in St. George's. The soldiers then jumped into vehicles and, with Bishop in the lead, set off on a motorcade around the island, intended to mobilize the citizenry against the threat from the United States. The procession returned to the capital by nightfall and gathered on the waterfront for yet another rally. Hundreds of militia members, their Russian AK-47 rifles on their shoulders, stood at the ready as their leaders urged national vigilance.

These events came to mind on my second visit to Grenada when I stopped by the warehouses of arms that had been discovered by the U.S. forces. The Reagan Administration claimed that the volume of weapons far exceeded the defensive needs of the island, and thus could only have been intended for aggressive purposes. But then the State Department released copies of Grenada's arms pacts with the Soviet Union, Cuba, and North Korea, and they contained little evidence to back up the claim. An equally plausible explanation was that Grenada's government, feeling beleaguered, was seeking to bolster its puny military. "We have never hidden the fact that we had arms, more arms than other Caribbean countries," Lyden Ramdhanny said in November. "These arms were brought in to defend the country. We were under the threat of external aggression." Ramdhanny added that the PRG had actually anticipated an attack not by the Marines but by bands of invaders similar to those working to overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

However justified the arms buildup might have seemed to the PRG, the militarization of the island proved to be a tragic miscalculation. The Grenadian people had little notion of how to use guns and even less desire to learn. As the secret arsenal grew, it became a destabilizing force in itself, serving finally not to defend the revolution but to undo it.

THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE BLOODBATH OF October 19 have been described in great detail: the demand by the Coard faction for joint leadership; the house arrest of Maurice Bishop, his liberation by a crowd, and the march on Fort Rupert; the shootings there that took the lives of Bishop and scores of others; the creation of General Hudson Austin's repressive military jun-

ta. News reports were in general agreement on the significance of the events: *Time*, for example, reported that after Bishop traveled to Washington, last June, seeking a dialogue with the United States, "Cuba encouraged the hard-line deputy, Coard, to push Bishop out."

Bishop and Fidel Castro in reality had had a deep personal friendship. Immediately after Bishop's death, Cuba condemned the executions, demanded punishment of those responsible, and declared a three-day period of mourning. Castro turned down a request from Austin for arms to defend against an expected invasion. Three days before the invasion, Cuba sent the State Department a communiqué asking to negotiate so as to avoid a resort to force. (It received a response only after the invasion had begun.)

As to the struggle between Bishop and Coard, it seemed to fit a classic pattern: the moderate, threatening to betray the revolution, is liquidated by the extremists. Much in the party's minutes seems to bear out this interpretation. According to one NJM account, the party had to choose between two options: the "petty-bourgeois route," attributed to Bishop, which would lead to the "deterioration of the party into a Social Democratic party and hence the degeneration of the revolution"; and the "communist route," championed by Coard, which was based on "Leninist standards." The document concludes that "the party must be put on a Leninist footing."

But the language used by government and party officials, such as references to "right opportunism," "economism," and "class struggle," was often drained of meaning. Those involved in the dispute between Bishop and Coard (who after the invasion remained silent in Richmond Hill prison) seem to agree that it was not a matter of right against left, moderate against extreme; in fact, they say, the rift didn't have much to do with policy. Rather, it was primarily personal. The Coard group simply "wanted to seize power for themselves, to use the revolution for their own purposes," says George Louison, the minister of agriculture under Bishop and one of his closest associates. Although Coard's rhetoric was "ultraleft," Louison says, his programs "would have been very similar to Bishop's" had he acceded to power. Such matters as the mixed economy and relations with the United States seem hardly to have been mentioned during central-committee discussions.

"There were differences in the approaches to implementing certain policies, differences in method and style," Don Rojas, Bishop's press secretary, said in a press conference soon after the invasion. "Maurice Bishop was more flexible, more understanding of the need to make tactical moves. Bernard Coard saw things in more clear-cut terms. On fundamental ideological issues, there were no major differences." Both, then, were committed Marxists, but the traditions from which they came—Bishop's nationalistic populism and Coard's ideological dogmatism—proved irreconcilable. Once Bishop was removed, the revolution lost its chief claim to legitimacy. Why the rupture took such a violent turn remains a mystery.



© 1980 RICK SMOLAN CONTACT

INSIDE A NUTMEG- AND MACE-PROCESSING PLANT

UNDERSTANDING THE SELF-IMMOLATION OF Grenada's socialist revolution requires a look at the international context in which it unfolded. Many officials at the State Department believe that Grenada was headed into the socialist bloc from the very start. Sally Shelton, the ambassador in Barbados from 1979 to 1981, says, "We went the extra mile to be accommodating. They clearly were not interested. I question whether Bishop was a moderate and wanted good relations. I'm tired of people blaming us." Still, Shelton concedes that U.S. policy was not all it could have been. "I'm one of those who urged that we should have had a more forthcoming policy," she says. The United States "should have tried longer" to improve relations. She says that it was a mistake to break off ambassadorial contacts in 1980, because doing so made dialogue impossible.

During my first stay in Grenada, I found almost unanimous agreement on the subject of U.S. policy. Even leading critics of the PRG were appalled by America's behavior. One such critic was Alister Hughes, the island's best-known journalist and a constant thorn in the side of the Bishop government. Later, he would praise the U.S. invasion, which probably saved his life—he was jailed after the October 19 killings. In March, however, he had said, "I have no faith that Ronald Reagan will allow this revolution

to prosper without taking steps against it. I believe the Americans have very conveniently opened the door for this government to turn toward Cuba. Frank Ortiz made some very stupid statements here. You don't tell an independent country whether it can have relations with Cuba."

Ortiz's performance is recalled bitterly by many in the State Department, who believe that, had he been more adept in dealing with the Grenadian government, the course of relations between the two countries could have been smoother. But such a view misses the point. Whatever Ortiz's skills as a diplomat, he did deliver the message the State Department had entrusted to him: if Grenada wanted U.S. assistance, it had to forgo its relations with Cuba.

The reasoning behind this approach, seemingly so counterproductive, became clear to me in the course of a long discussion in March with the same State Department official who had candidly dismissed Grenada's strategic importance. I pressed him to explain why he supported the government's policy of isolating the island. His answer was predictable: "We think they've been committed to a close association with Cuba from day one." But, I asked, why should ties with Cuba preclude relations with the United States? "Think of the precedent it would set," he replied, and mentioned potential instability in other eastern Carib-

bean islands such as St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Antigua. "Throughout the region, there are little-bitty leftist groups with power ambitions. If we improved relations with Grenada at no cost to the [pro-Cuban] government, imagine what it would say to other putative authorities in the eastern Caribbean. They would say, 'We can pull off a coup and then, after three or four years of a little trouble with Uncle Sam, he'll come around.'" The official concluded, "We obviously don't like being put in the position of the heavy. We want to act like a mature, responsible world power. But here's a little country saying insolent things, and we're forced to reply."

Leave aside the 9,000-foot runway, the arms caches, the documents, the reports of terrorist training camps and exportation of Marxism. Also leave aside the failure to call elections, the holding of political prisoners, the closing of newspapers. The real sticking point for the United States seems to have been that this tiny island, so close to the United States, insisted on its right to conduct an independent foreign policy, and proclaimed that right repeatedly and insistently. The United States could not tolerate such a challenge in its immediate sphere of influence. Seen in this light, the rapprochement seemingly promised by the meeting last June between Bishop and William Clark was a mirage. The U.S. was not interested in kind words and friendly overtures. It wanted one thing from Bishop—for him to kick out the Cubans. And that he could not do.

Was Bishop in Castro's pocket? Certainly, Grenada depended on Cuba for a great deal of economic and military aid. But a simplistic "pawn of Cuba" analysis represents a serious misreading of left-wing politics in the Caribbean and even in the Third World. It overlooks the fact that, in terms of political experiences, Bishop had a lot more in common with Fidel Castro than he had with, say, the current U.S. ambassador in Barbados, Milan Bish, a former Nebraska highway commissioner.

More important, Grenada's links with Havana and its estrangement from Washington reflect the island's history as a slave colony, its centuries of poverty and underdevelopment, and its suffering under Eric Gairy, whose repressive policies raised no protests from the United States. There is also the history of U.S. intervention in Latin America. The PRG, like other revolutionary governments, often invoked Nicaragua in the 1920s, Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1961, the Dominican Republic in 1965, Chile in 1973, Central America in the 1980s. In the future, Grenada in 1983 will probably be on the list—making it all the more difficult for the United States to work with other Maurice Bishops who might emerge.

As Grenada drew closer and closer to the socialist world, that world exercised a gravitational pull on the revolution that wrenched it from Grenadian reality. To prove its revo-

lutionary mettle, the PRG adopted an increasingly radical world view, stressing ideological purity, the primary role of the party, and the advanced consciousness of the workers. Such strict doctrine was incongruous on an out-of-the-way tropical island. Grenada was not like Nicaragua and Jamaica, countries characterized by deep social divisions and extremes of wealth, in which radical political philosophies might address a real need. One of the tragedies of Grenada's revolution is that its leaders felt compelled to stir up class antagonism in a society in which sharply defined classes do not exist.

When the "masses" (itself an incongruous term on an island of 110,000 people) did not respond, the party lost its way. As it began to disintegrate, Coard and his former students, who believed that the party and the revolution were synonymous, made a last, insane effort to salvage both. Their desperation is summed up in a communiqué issued by the Revolutionary Military Council after Bishop's death which proclaimed, "Long live the Grenada Revolution! Forward Ever! Backward Never! Socialism or Death!"

Now that Grenada has been removed from the socialist orbit, the United States will no doubt seek to make the island a model for the rest of the eastern Caribbean. The State Department will likely adapt its blueprint for Jamaica, providing large doses of assistance—more than \$30 million in economic and military aid was offered within a month of the invasion—in exchange for Grenada's establishing the private sector as the motor of development. In addition, the United States will probably encourage centrist, pro-capitalist parties. That means preventing the return of Eric Gairy, which would be a major embarrassment for the United States, or the resurrection of the New Jewel Movement, which would be even worse. The remaining traces of the NJM are already being eradicated. The United States may be portraying Maurice Bishop as a martyr, but it is doing its best to lay his political movement to rest.

Nonalignment is likely to remain as elusive as ever for Grenada. Chamber of Commerce president Richard Meneses told me that although he welcomed U.S. assistance, he didn't want Grenada to become "some offshore enclave." He said, "I don't want to have to completely give up our national interests as a result of liberation. The U.S. must recognize the pitfalls of our becoming overly aligned in one direction."

"It's sad," a former official in the Bishop government said wearily. "The majority of Grenadians never intended to become this bone of contention between East and West." But the Grenadians do not have much choice. In a world divided into competing blocs and dominated by superpowers, there is little place for small nations seeking to chart a middle course. □