

November 5, 1983

Outwrite : issue 20

**HANDS OFF GRENADA!** At the national demonstration, in London on 5 November.

# WHY GRENADA?

For 100,000 Black women and men to determine their own future, to plan their economy without any American 'help', to educate themselves without American 'instructors' and to arm themselves without American guns, constitutes a dangerous precedent in the area and a threat to U.S. imperialism both domestically and abroad.

*The determined attempts by Reagan to terrorise the people of the Caribbean and Central America continue with the invasion of Grenada, bombings in Nicaragua, military 'exercises' in Guatemala and Honduras, and the attempt to punish Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago for failing to take part in the killing of hundreds of women and men in Grenada.*

In the run-up to a presidential election, Reagan needs votes, needs to show his strength, even if the Grenadians become substitute targets instead of Lebanese guerillas. Grenada is small and the U.S. government wanted an easy show of strength, nothing too costly in body bags for 'back home'.

CAROL DAVIS, a senior worker in the Grenadian Ministry of Education, left Grenada a week before the U.S. invasion, on a speaking tour for *War on Want* on literacy and health.

In a discussion with Liliane from *Outwrite* she explains the achievements of the Grenadian Revolution, of which little was said recently in the press, in the hope that the practical gains that the Grenadian people achieved will not be forgotten.

Turn to page 2.

## continued from page one...

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*Outwrite: What was the practical effect of the Revolution on people's lives?*

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Carol Davis: The Revolution took place on 13 March 1979. From that day, people were proud to be Grenadians again. Believe me when I say that up until then, people were ashamed to show their passports or say they were Grenadian. Gairy had turned Grenada into the 'dustbin country' of the world.

I should explain that Grenada has no mineral resources and is mainly an agricultural country. Up to 1979 we had no industry and relied on our production of cocoa, bananas and nutmeg, as well as on tourism. But after 1979, we were able to achieve a beginning of industrialisation, by setting up agro-industrial plants, such as tinning, canning, making our own coffee and pickles...

Within four years, we registered a fantastic economic growth of 5.5% last year, the highest in the Caribbeans if not in the world, especially in view of the economic recession...

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*What did your work in the Ministry of Education involve?*

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Illiteracy is the result of poverty and colonialism. Real democracy has no sense if people can't make rational decisions. People need to be really free, so this is where we put our emphasis.

The first stage of our Adult Education Programme was to eradicate illiteracy amongst adults. so we set up centres for popular education throughout the island. But then we realised it wasn't so easy to get people to come out and admit they could not read and write, although the Trade Unions, the National Women's Organisation and the Youth Organisation encouraged their members to join the programme.

So it was decided literacy would take place on a one to one basis whereby people would be taught in their homes. After this, when people regained their confidence, it became easier for them to join the centres.

We also abolished school fees in secondary schools, developed teachers' training programmes, and as we have no university, managed to obtain 300 scholarships for our students to study abroad.

*You've mentioned the National Women's Organisation. What sort of an organisation was it?*

The NWO was a mass organisation of women with a membership of over 7000 women. It is based in community groups in different areas. Each village has its own NWO branch.

Women evolved training programmes to develop their power to speak for themselves, and to penetrate non-traditional areas of employment for women. So apprentice schemes were developed, and women became dock workers, heavy machine operators, tractor drivers and also fisherwomen...

Don't forget that before the Revolution the rate of male unemployment was 50% and that of female unemployment was 70%. Not only have we been able to bring it down to 14%, which is a phenomenal achievement, but we also promulgated a law of equal pay for equal work. We obtained three months maternity leave for women with our jobs guaranteed.

*Many things have been said about the Cuban presence in Grenada and their role. One of Reagan's many excuses for invading was that Grenada was 'a Soviet-Cuban colony being readied ... to export terror and undermine democracy'. But it appeared in both the British and American media that the 750 Cubans on the island were not soldiers but technicians. Can you enlighten us?*

ALL the Cubans who were in Grenada were there as Co-operation Workers — technicians helping us build our airport, teachers, doctors and health workers ...

Cuba helped us set up our health service from scratch.

Before the Revolution, there was only one hospital in Grenada and very, very few doctors, most of whom had their private practices. Cuba sent us 12 doctors who worked in different parts of the island and helped train Grenadian health workers. Some of these doctors were specialists so that at last, the Grenadian people were able to enjoy different kinds of health care in their own country instead of having to travel to other Caribbean islands.

*Another of Reagan's excuses to invade was that Grenada's new airport was geared to future military use by Cuba and the Soviet Union. What's your response to Reagan's justifications?*

The invasion was totally unjustified, illegal and unlawful. What has not been stressed anywhere is the distress, the harm, the destruction it caused to the people of Grenada.

The 100,000 people of Grenada had never experienced war before. The results of this invasion was more than a thousand people killed and around 10,000 people displaced. A thousand people is one per cent of the population, which is, proportion-wise equal to 2 million Americans, or double the amount of British casualties during the second world war.

**WHY?**

Reagan's first excuse was that the lives of US citizens were in jeopardy. This excuse is not even used any more as the American Head of the American Faculty of Medicine in Grenada denied it immediately.

Then Reagan gave us his 'just in time' speech. Had the Americans not invaded Grenada, we were told, the US would have been in danger of combined Grenadian-Cuban-Soviet invasion. This is ludicrous! How could that be when Grenada is much further from the US than Cuba is?

Then they claimed our new airport was an undercover military airport. This has been denied by none other than the respectable British Plessey Company which was working on the airport project together with Cuban technicians. You see this airport was very popular with our people and generated a lot of excitement. As Grenada is very hilly, we had to fill in bits of the sea and shave off the mountains to be able to build the runway, and people would watch the progress of the works with anticipation. But I can tell you that ANY airport can be used for military purposes, and those who used Grenada's airport militarily and will continue doing so have been the Americans!

*What does the future hold for Grenada?*

In my view, US troops will remain in Grenada, establish the airport as their base and station their troops there. We have just heard that there will not be any elections for two years, and we were expecting this. The US went into Grenada to stamp out a process they did not like - they claimed the people welcomed them. How could that have been with the number of Grenadian casualties that resulted? For more than ten days, the tiniest country in the world defended itself against the mightiest! They made a big thing out of the guns they found. How could a country not have guns? Don't THEY have guns? Ever since the first day of the Revolution, they tried to block the revolutionary process.

If the US are so worried about preserving democracy, would they invade South Africa if neighbouring African countries ask them to?

Instead, they're torturing New Jewel Movement militants by locking them in boxes and leaving them under the sun. Democracy has a very hollow ring...

*If you want a speaker for your meeting, or if you want to contribute to the Emergency Fund, contact the NJM Support Group, 4 Windus Walk, London N16.*



L. Silva

20 June 1980. March in St George's, Grenada one day after attempted assassination of Maurice Bishop.

from the day of the revolution, people were proud to be grenadians again.....

