

GRENADA DISSECTED



Tony Thorndike

The latest debate was a three-day conclave, 17-19 October 1985, at the InterAmerican University, San German, Puerto Rico. The theme was "Democracy, Development and Collective Security in the Eastern Caribbean: The Lessons of Grenada". Sponsored by the Caribbean Institute and Study Centre for Latin America (CISCLA) under its able Director, Jorge Heine, a generous Ford Foundation grant enabled an impressive number of scholars, politicians and officials to attend from the region, North and South America and Britain.

Unusually for most conferences, the debate followed the theme. The first topic, democracy, was opened with an analysis of the People's Revolutionary Government's (PRG) concept of participatory democracy. This has been based on village and work-place assemblies following the indefinite suspension of the Westminster-style 1974 constitution. However, it was impossible to operate because of the self-imposed constraint of Marxist-Leninist theory. This the New Jewel Movement (NJM) adopted as its central philosophy in 1974 after it had outlined its version of 'Politics where you live and Politics where you work'. Leninist orthodoxy dictated that decision-making power had to be unambiguously centred upon the vanguard party. In any event, the attachment to Westminster model institutions, elections and constitutional change of government in the English-speaking Caribbean was remarkably firm. It was noted that, in sharp contrast there had been only one change of government following an election in black Africa since the era of independence. It was therefore essential that all those who work for redistributive policies must do so within that framework.

A related debate centred upon the applicability to the region of the Soviet-Cuban theory of non-capitalist development (or socialist orientation), which the NJM had enthusiastically adopted. It calls for an alliance between the national bourgeoisie (ie, the 'progressives', mainly intellectuals) and the working class. As

The Grenadian Revolution and its aftermath cannot be forgotten. Not surprisingly, perhaps, as its lessons will reverberate around the Caribbean for years to come. Tony Thorndike writes.

the working class, defined in Marxist terms, is so small in most Third World countries, not least in Grenada, the progressives have to lead until eventually a dictatorship of the proletariat emerges. But they have a heavy responsibility: not only to develop the class consciousness of the working class and (in theory) to step down from power at the appropriate moment but, in doing so, be sharply aware of the dangers of straying from the orthodox Leninist path towards forms of deviationism. Given their bourgeois background, this is an obvious risk.

The Grenadian revolution, it was concluded, imploded because of this tension. One group was anxious to follow the path mapped out by the theory while another appeared more ready to compromise as the problems of developing socialism in the unfavourable environment of Grenada loomed ever larger.

Clearly, the environment of small size and a strong landowning peasantry worked against the PRG's commitment to lessen Grenada's dependency upon international capitalist markets. This dependency dominated Grenada's pattern of development as it did other small islands; a comparative analysis of free-market and pro-US Antigua and revolutionary Grenada showed considerable similarity.

The PRG's readiness to develop links with the socialist world following its commitment to socialist orientation (and eventually socialist development according to the theory of non-capitalism) created a new form of dependency. The alliance with Cuba was a complete one, to the extent that it would be hard to see how the PRG regime would have survived without Cuban aid. This aid was massive given Grenada's size, dominated by the Point Salines airport project.

But, despite its anxiety to show the Soviet Union that it was a trustworthy communist regime, such as by casting its UN vote 92% in favour of the USSR and its signature of five arms agreements, Moscow did little. Its Ambassador knew little of the region and didn't speak English; its promises of trade and aid came to little. As for Libya, its Ambassador saw his role as preventing the PRG from becoming too pro-Soviet! But, of course, it was also useful in order to irritate the United States.

As for the United States, the PRG's penchant for picking a quarrel in the early days of the regime was badly mistimed considering the philosophy of the then newly-elected Reagan Administration. A case, it was concluded, of the heart being confused with the brain.

The third theme, Collective Security, followed naturally on from such considerations. The very limited development options available to small states were reflected in security problems. In the Caribbean's case, these were, in turn, complicated by geopolitical location. To some, the invasion of Grenada and the subsequent militarisation of the region by the US represented the obsolescence of sovereignty and a new American imperium. The absence of a genuine regionalism meant a ready acceptance of a US security umbrella directed at radical groups in each country rather than any external force.

But the presence of the US in the Caribbean was an inescapable fact: therefore, the need was to determine which security crises required external assistance (it was noted that Britain was a 'security consumer' within NATO) and which should be met by indigenous action. The absence of Trinidad & Tobago from regional security arrangements left not only the southern flank open but also boded ill for the future. Critically, the Grenada crisis occurred at a time of both severe economic crisis at the flanks (Jamaica, Guyana) and a lack of security arrangements following British withdrawal. It left the Eastern Caribbean exposed and in a security vacuum.

It was concluded, therefore, that much more emphasis should be put upon OECS/CARICOM regional security arrangements to avoid the region becoming as dependent in security as it is in political economy. Although the CARICOM Nassau Accord is under deep threat given the continued rise in protectionism and deepening economic distress of, in the main, the so-called More Developed Countries within the organisation, the answer was a combined attack on *both* security and development needs.

Only stable economies can construct and maintain security arrangements which address the particular vulnerability of the small states of the Caribbean and which respect their sovereignty. Perhaps then Caribbean nations will begin to construct their own philosophies of economic development, political organisation and security structures instead of being appendages to whatever external force happens to exert influence at the time. In short, stand up Caribbean!



Vaughan Lewis, OECS, St Lucia (left), Jorge Heine, Inter American University, PR (centre),

Francis Alexis, Minister of Local Government, Grenada

Two years after Ronald Reagan sent 7,000 troops to recapture the tiny island of Grenada for democracy, the Caribbean island's ousted Marxist 'baddies' are still stuck in a mountain-top jail, awaiting trial.

Down in the capital, St George's, jackets, collars and ties are back for sessions of parliament and the polite talk around the ailing conservative Prime Minister, 67-year-old Herbert Augustus Blaize, is often as if the four-year left-wing experiment under Maurice Bishop had never been.

Bernard Coard, Mr Bishop's deputy and by all accounts the source of most of the regime's energy, and his once-powerful wife Phyllis, have long ago lost their unofficial title to the island's fattest politicians thanks to the rigours of prison life.

The trial of the Coards and 17 other top figures for murdering Mr Bishop as the revolution collapsed on October 19, 1983, officially began a year ago.

But the prisoners, who all face the death penalty, refused to recognise the court and it took nine more months for the Government to find a team of lawyers, from Jamaica, for 17 of them and a further month for the Coards to find their own counsel, also from Jamaica. Grenadian lawyers have refused to touch the case.

The 30 or so hearings, so far, at which the accused rarely appear, have dealt only with technical points.

The judge, Grenada's aged Chief Justice, Sir Archibald Nedd, has agreed with the Government that despite the over-throw of the revolutionaries, their tough anti-subversion laws, and the supreme court they set up, are still in force.

Grenada murder trial drags on



Ironically, the defence wants the case to go to the Eastern Caribbean's regional court, which Mr Bishop opted out of for reasons of national independence. The defence says there is little hope of a fair hearing in Grenada because of 'massive, deliberate pre-trial publicity.' It is indeed hard to imagine finding a suitable jury, with so many Grenadians still deeply traumatised by the assassination of Mr Bishop. Not a few would physically have a go at the Coards if the two defendants were released into the streets, whatever the old regime's apologists might pretend.

The defence have protested about the behaviour of the hard-line prison governor, Lionel Maloney, a Barbadian, and have sought to have him jailed in his own workplace for preventing access and allowing occasional brutalising of the island's former rulers.

Upto \$1.5m of public money has been spent so far on just the trial preliminaries, according to a government source.

The case will now simply join the queue at the next Assizes. Sir Archibald is retiring. There are still more technical challenges to hear.

Some suggest that the Coards, General Hudson Austin (who ruled Grenada in name for a week between Mr Bishop's murder and the invasion) and the others hope the passage of

time will bore their accusers — and Grenadians generally — and draw them only light sentences.

Compared with these decorous bouts of courtroom sparring, Mr Blaize is no paragon of constitutionality or democracy. Even his own supporters complain about his autocratic style, favouritism and failure to call parliament.

The remnants of the left, which says it is the target of constant harassment, are trying to stop the extradition to the US of trade unionist Chester Humphrey to face charges of illegally shipping arms to the revolutionaries before they took power. Blaize has agreed to hand over Mr Humphreys who has been on hunger strike for nearly two months, despite the absence of an extradition treaty with Washington. Two top Government legal officials have been criticised for accepting \$5,000 each from the US Government for work on the case but Mr Blaize has said they have done nothing wrong.

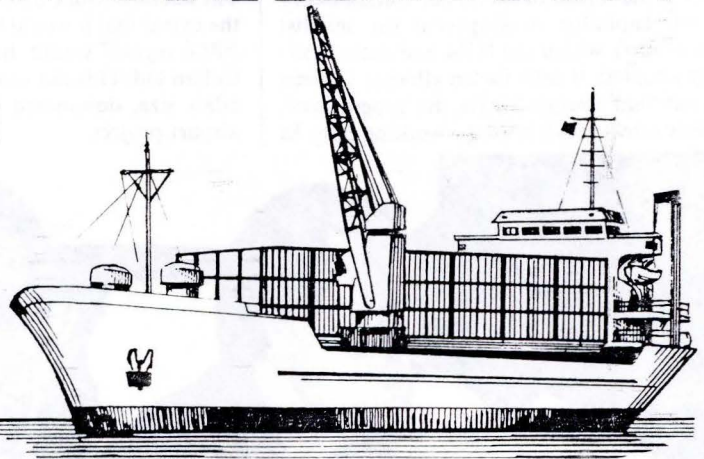
An attempt inside the ruling coalition to depose Mr Blaize failed last July, but another may soon be attempted. For the moment, though, all seems safe, despite the dilapidated economy and Mr Blaize's failure to draw the new investment 'promised' by Washington after the invasion.

The Government declared the invasion anniversary a public holiday. (LOS)

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