

The Grenada Crisis

The following statements were issued by the Alliance of the Black Parents Movement, Black Youth Movement and the Race Today Collective as the Grenada crisis unfolded.

Wednesday, 19 October 1983 stands before us as perhaps one of the most barbaric moments in modern Caribbean history. On that day the Bernard Coard regime in Grenada liquidated Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, Foreign Minister Unison Whiteman, Housing Minister Norris Bain, Education Minister Jacqueline Creft, Trade Union leader Vincent Noel and political activist Fitzroy Bain. They are all dead, lined up against a wall and shot. Numbers of people injured are reported to be between 40 and 200. Nothing of this nature has ever been experienced in the English speaking Caribbean.

The drama began to unfold on Wednesday, October 12 when a new regime took power and placed Maurice Bishop under house-arrest. Unknown to Grenadians and even to members of the ruling party, the organisation which seized power is called the Organisation For Revolutionary Education and Liberation (OREL). This clandestine group was organised as far back as the mid-1970's by Bernard Coard and his wife, Jamaican born, Phyllis Coard. They gathered around them a small band of activists drawn from the New Jewel Movement (NJM). The aim of this group was the seizure of power from the Gairy regime and the organisation of a state based on the model of the Soviet Union.

This group, in conjunction with radical members of the NJM, carried out a revolutionary seizure of power from the corrupt and brutal Gairy regime in March 1979. The Peoples Revolutionary Government (PRG) was not therefore a homogeneous whole but has been, in fact, an uneasy alliance between the radicals of the NJM and the activists of OREL. In the course of establishing the new government, OREL activists were placed in key positions in the Peoples Revolutionary Army (PRA), the police and the militia.

As the revolutionary process develo-

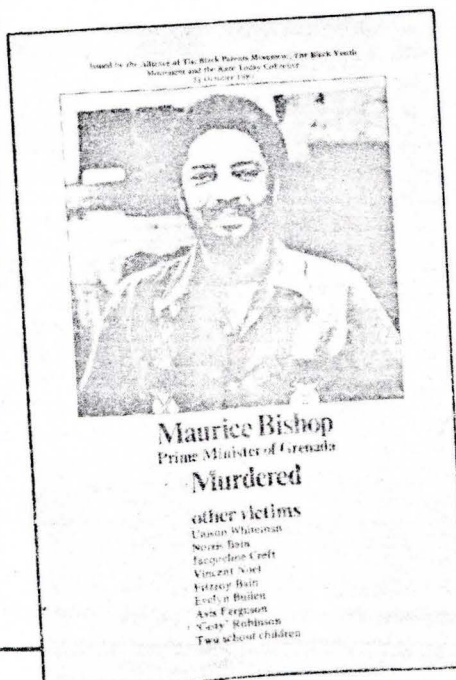
ped over the last 4½ years, the internal conflicts, between these two factions sharpened. On the one hand there were the NJM radicals — Maurice Bishop, Kendrick Radix and Unison Whiteman who had consistently taken the mass movement forward in battle against Gairy. These emerged as the popular leaders of the revolution. Then we had, on the other hand, the OREL activists, bent on implementing a Soviet model of govern-

ment on the Grenadian people. They had manipulated themselves into key areas of the state apparatus. It was clear, however, that OREL did not and still does not have the same mass support as the NJM radicals.

We are certain of one thing. It is that in the last year both groups in the government and the party had been fighting each other behind closed doors over the political approaches to several issues which arose in Grenadian society.

Come Wednesday, October 12 and the fight was out in the open. Coard's group, OREL, made its bid for power. The issue was who would lead the Grenadian revolution. OREL activists demanded that Coard be made ideological leader of the party and joint leader of the revolution. Bishop refused, certain that his refusal would have the approval of the masses of Grenadian people. It was at that point that Bishop was arrested and the OREL regime, led from the rear by Coard, took power. To date Bernard Coard has not spoken, but two members of OREL have taken the stage so far. First, a Major Cornwall, recently Ambassador to Cuba, and later General Hudson Austin head of the PRA and a member of the Political Bureau of the NJM.

It was against this regime, born in a palace coup, that the process of the



general insurrection of Grenadian people began. The insurrection aimed clearly at the overthrow of the OREL regime and its replacement by institutions of popular power and control.

On Saturday, October 15, Kenrick Radix, a resigned minister of the government led a demonstration of over 300 people through the streets of St George's, the capital, under the slogan 'NO WORK, NO SCHOOL' NO PLAY.' The demonstration was broken up and Radix was arrested. There followed on Tuesday, October 18 a march of 500 students from Grenville to Pearls Airport where the demonstrators disrupted flights having swarmed the airport. A similar demonstration took place on the west of the island.

Later that day the government crumbled and a revolutionary situation was on the agenda. Ministers Whiteman, Ramdhanny, Bain and Louison resigned. This was followed by a statement from Whiteman that Coard was running the government singlehandedly from his home; that Cornwall's and Austin's statements were a tissue of lies; that they had offered Coard a compromise which was that Bishop would remain head of government and a member of the political Bureau from which he had been expelled, while Coard would be appointed leader of the NJM. Coard, Whiteman tells us, put the phone down in mid-conversation.

On the following day, Wednesday October 19, Grenadian society witnessed the climax of the popular insurrection against the Coard/OREL regime. Grenadians went to work as usual that morning and at 9am downed tools. We are certain that workers at the new airport struck. So did teachers, pupils and other workers in St George's and its environs. They marched, 3,000 of them, at first to Bishop's home and freed him. The crowd placed Bishop at the head of the demonstration which grew to 8,000 according to reports. That was the revolution and the Grenadian masses were about to place their stamp and identity on a new stage in the Grenadian revolution.

At this point the counter-revolution struck. An OREL strike force, drawn from within the army, let fly with bullets. Our reports indicate that leading ministers were separated from the mass and summarily executed. Bishop was wounded at that stage, then taken away by soldiers and later executed.

A 24-hour martial law has been proclaimed and a curfew with it for a four day period. Anyone found on the streets was to be shot. The PRG has been disbanded and replaced by an 18 man Revolutionary Military Council. The counter-revolution had triumphed, at least for the

time being.

We, the Alliance of the Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement and the Race Today Collective soundly condemn the Stalinist barbarism of the regime led from the rear by Bernard Coard and his wife, Phyllis Coard.

We reaffirm our position of support for the revolutionary seizure of power which took place on March 13 1979.

We renew our call made in March 1979 for a state based on organs of the popular power of workers and peasants which was first outlined by Maurice Bishop in 1974. And we quote:

"... our position, in fact, based on Assemblies of the People, is that elections in the sense of the elections we now know would be replaced by Assemblies.

"This is based very broadly speaking on the Tanzanian system. We envisage a system which would have village assemblies and worker's assemblies.

"In other words, politics where you live and politics where you work. The village assemblies would in turn elect parish assemblies and the village assemblies would also elect representatives to a National Assembly.

"The National Assembly would be the government of the country. But the National Assembly would appoint or elect from its own members a National Assembly Council which would in effect be the present Cabinet you have."

This policy was never implemented and we suppose it was one of the areas of conflict between the two factions.

We unambiguously oppose any interference from the USA, Venezuela, France and Britain in Grenada.

We oppose any intervention from hostile neighbouring Caribbean states.

We oppose any internal interference from the Soviet and Cuban advisers presently in Grenada.

WE ADOPT THE FOLLOWING SLOGANS:

Bernard The Butcher Must Go

Phyllis The Hyena Must Go

Forward With The Grenadian Revolution

No US Attack On Grenada!

Stop British And US Attack On Grenada!

Black People In Britain Must Defend Grenada!

Forward With Workers And Peasants Power In The Caribbean

AN ATTEMPT TO SAVE BISHOP'S LIFE

The following telegrams were sent off to Bernard Coard and the Political Bureau as we sought to ensure the physical safety of Maurice Bishop.

We, of New Beacon Books, are concerned at the reports of the arrest and detention of Maurice Bishop, Prime Minister of the Peoples Revolutionary Government of Grenada. We request public guarantees that he will not suffer any physical harm and that he be allowed contact with friendly and independent contacts to verify his safety.

Sarah White 16.10.83.

We protested the murderous brutality by Gairy Government prior to the seizure of power by the NJM. Today appalled current news. Demand Maurice Bishop reinstated. No more Bishop's blood to be shed. Release him and others now.

Jessica Huntley 16.10.83.

Don't harm Maurice Bishop. Free Bishop and reinstate him. Workers and peasants must decide.

Black Parents Movement, UK 16.10.83

An issue of importance not only to Grenada but the whole of the Caribbean must be solved through the mass of the population, unions and the Party.

I welcome all the proposals of the Oil-fields Workers' Trade Union. Primarily is the safety of Bishop, for himself and for the respect of the people of Grenada and the general public.

CLR James 17.10.83

Please ensure physical safety of Maurice Bishop. Increasing alarm about his arrest and detention developing here in the UK.

Race Today Collective 17.10.83

Concerned for physical safety of Maurice Bishop. Verify that no harm will come to him. Vital that he be given independent contact with his friends and supporters.

Darcus Howe, Editor Race Today 17.10.83

Eyes of Britain on you. Guarantee safety and dignity of Maurice Bishop.

Yours for revolutionary civilisation.

Farrukh Dhondy 19.10.83

Shocked to hear about the detention of Maurice Bishop popular leader of the NJM. I implore you to use your power to guarantee his physical safety and freedom.

LK Johnson, Poet/recording artist 17.10.83

On receipt of our telegrams requiring Coard to ensure Bishop's safety an OREL

Protest

member went on the radio and condemned us as opportunists who never supported the revolution in the first place. That was not true and the proof rests in two messages sent to us by Coard and Bishop in March 1979.

The following are messages sent to the rally held by the Alliance on March 25, 1979, at the Keskidee Centre, from Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard, Minister of Finance, Trade, Industry and Planning. These were taken over the telephone by Jessica Huntley for the Alliance.

From: Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, Peoples Revolutionary Government of Grenada (received March 24, 1979 at 11.10pm, British time).

On behalf of the Revolutionary Government of Grenada, I wish to extend to the Black Parents Movement, Black Youth Movement, Race Today Collective and Bradford Black Collective and all our brothers and sisters, warmest greetings.

We appreciate the unstinting stand of the Alliance from the outset of our revolution.

Many collaborators have been arrested. There is a curfew in force. The army of the Revolution remains vigilant and on guard against all attempts at overthrowing the new Government.

Mass rallies are being held both in Grenada and other West Indian islands and we have been receiving messages of solidarity from all over the world including many West Indian islands.

We have been receiving support from the strongholds of Gairicism among the

agricultural workers.

Tomorrow, Sunday, we will announce the composition of the new government, which will comprise 23 persons and seven ministers.

The Revolutionary Government will rule by proclamation until such time as the Constituent Assembly is held.

Other measures of an economic nature will also be announced tomorrow, Sunday.

These measures will help to demonstrate that our revolution is irreversible. Any attempt made to overthrow the new Revolutionary Government will be rebuffed.

There is urgent need to change the economy so that the people who fight for the revolution will become the main beneficiaries.

Long live the people of Grenada. Long live the Revolutionary Government of Grenada.

From: Bernard Coard, Minister of Trade, Industry and Planning.

People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada (received March 24, 1979 at 11.10pm, British time).

Greetings to the working people of Britain and in particular the oppressed racial minorities — the black people of Britain — from the New Jewel Movement and the Peoples Revolutionary Government.

We wish to thank you for your strong statements of solidarity with the Revolutionary Government of Grenada.

The people of Grenada see themselves as part of the Caribbean nation and

other countries as fellow members of the Caribbean nation.

In this our moment of desperate need as a country plundered and ravaged by Gairicism over the last 28 years, we strongly appeal to West Indians and working people as a whole in Britain and other countries abroad to assist the Grenadian revolution in whatever way and to whatever extent possible.

In Grenada today there are no medicines, there are hardly any sheets and pillowcases in the hospitals. School buildings are in an indescribable condition. Roads, water, electricity and other services are in desperate need of repair; and the general financial state of the country is desperate after 28 years of Gairicism.

For all these reasons and more, we urgently appeal to you to provide us with material solidarity as we seek to reconstruct and build a new just and democratic society for the masses of Grenada.

All power to the working people of Britain and One Love.

Once Gairicism was overthrown in March 1979, we organised a picket of the Trinidad & Tobago High Commission in London demanding that they recognise the Peoples Revolutionary Government of Grenada. We handed in a statement to the High Commissioner's representative. We also called a public meeting at the Keskidee Centre, North London and passed a resolution.

We reprint both the resolutions and the letter which we handed in at the High Commission.



Picket organised by the Alliance held outside the Trinidad & Tobago High Commission on March 23, 1979.

Official recognition still has to come from the governments of the smaller island states and from Trinidad & Tobago, the only major Caribbean country which has not yet granted official recognition and which is also Grenada's close and most powerful neighbour.

What accounts for the hostility or indifference of the government of Trinidad & Tobago?

As people from the Caribbean and as black people in Britain, we demand that the government of Trinidad & Tobago grant diplomatic recognition to the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada, headed by Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, without any conditions whatsoever.

Yours sincerely,
John La Rose,
For The Alliance
and Grenada Overseas Association

We, the members of the Alliance of the Black Parents Movement, Black Youth Movement, Race Today Collective and the Bradford Black Collective together with the Grenada Overseas Association (Manchester) and others attending the rally on March 25, 1979 at the Keskidee Centre, North London, express our profound and complete support for the People's Revolutionary Government and the New Jewel Movement. Forward to the Constituent Assembly, Forward to Workers and Peasants Power, Long Live the Revolutionary Government of Grenada.

Passed Unanimously,
Sunday March 25, 1979.

The American Invasion

No amount of international publicity from the White House, orchestrated by President Reagan with the support of Dominica's Prime Minister Eugenia Charles; — no amount of news management or suppression of information by the White House and the Pentagon during the invasion of Grenada will ever be able to hide the fact that on Tuesday 25 October 1983 at least 5000 US marines under Admiral Joseph Metcalf invaded Grenada. No one can now doubt the main intention of Reagan's invasion of Grenada. It



American troops enforcing martial law.

was to wipe out all trace of what the revolutionary seizure of power in Grenada on March 13 1979 by the New Jewel Movement led by Maurice Bishop meant for the people of Grenada and the whole of the Caribbean.

One of the most absurd excuses for the invasion, made by such people as Reagan, Seaga, Eugenia Charles and Tom Adams, was that they were trying to 'restore democracy'. These same Caribbean politicians had happily accepted, without any invasion, Gairy's election rigging and murderous action against his opponents using the 'mongoose gang'. The US government shed no tears when it helped Seaga and his Jamaica Labour Party to power in Jamaica despite the killing of nearly 2000 Jamaican people and the open use of gunmen during the 1980 election campaign.

The US invasion, backed by some Caribbean states, is a violation of the treaty signed in 1981 establishing the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, despite what Eugenia Charles said afterwards, from Reagan's side, in the White House. The Treaty requires unanimity from all member states and Grenada, one of the member states, was not present when the decision to invade Grenada was taken.

The Heads of Government of the entire Caribbean Community (CARICOM) comprising the states of Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Guyana, Belize, the Bahamas and the other smaller states, who were members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), such as Antigua, St. Kitts, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica and Montserrat, met in Trinidad on Satur-

day and Sunday 22 and 23 October 1983. There they agreed to impose economic and political sanctions on the counter-revolutionary Revolutionary Military Council, led by Bernard Coard, which had taken power in Grenada. Some of the Caricom states rejected a plan to invade Grenada. These states were Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, Belize and the Bahamas.

People all over the world will note and remember that the Caribbean states of Jamaica under Prime Minister Edward Seaga, Barbados under Prime Minister Tom Adams, Dominica under Prime Minister Eugenia Charles, St. Lucia under Prime Minister John Compton, St. Vincent under Prime Minister Milton Cato and Antigua under Prime Minister Vere Bird, openly backed and joined in the US invasion of Grenada with their pathetic and insignificant military support.

The US invasion had been planned since 1981 when 'Operation Amber and the Amberdines' was staged on the island of Vieques, which is part of Puerto Rico. The Peoples Revolutionary Government of Grenada issued, at the time, an 8 point statement quoted in the September 1981 issue of *Caribbean Contact*, in which it said among other things:

"5. The reasons for the invasion of the islands code-named Amber and the Amberdines are similar to propaganda themes used consistently by the Reagan Administration against Grenada. These are:

- (a) to take power from the Amber Government which is described as "unfriendly";
- (b) to station troops in the island until

an election is called;

(c) to install a government favourable to Washington's brand of democracy."

The People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) of Grenada, led by Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, also "concluded", as quoted in the same September 1981 issue of *Caribbean Contact*, "that these fictitious islands 'Amber and the Amberdines' were Grenada and the Grenadines and that the military exercise was a 'practice run for the invasion of Grenada by US troops.'" In the same issue of *Caribbean Contact* Alexander Haig, who was then the US Secretary of State, revealed that Operation Amber was "designed to develop a quick reaction capability for a hypothetical hostage rescue mission".

The US invasion plans were clearly awaiting an opportune moment.

That moment came on October 12 1983. On that day Bernard Coard's regime took power in Grenada and arrested the popular leader of the revolution, Maurice Bishop. It had already disarmed the militia and sections of the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA). And finally on Wednesday October 19 1983, the Bernard Coard regime confronted the revolutionary will of the Grenadian masses, who had triumphantly freed Bishop from house arrest and were about to establish institutions of popular control.

Workers and school students had earlier staged strikes in support of the Bishop regime and on the 19 October 1983 came the General Strike and Insurrection.

The Coard regime responded by executing Maurice Bishop and several of his ministers. His special forces fired on the unarmed mass of Grenadian workers who were marching to put Bishop back in power. After this, Coard established the counter-revolutionary Revolutionary Military Council with Hudson Austin and Leon Cornwall as the front men. They put the whole country under house arrest and curfew for four days up to Monday 24 October 1983.

Bernard Coard and the counter-revolutionary Military Council not only paved the way for the US invasion on Tuesday October 25 1983 but also allowed the Americans to pose as saviours of the Grenadian people. Indeed the fact has to be faced, by supporters of the Grenadian revolution, that, for very large numbers of Grenadians, the American invasion did come as a relief after the trauma and repression they had suffered over the preceding fortnight.

The Americans, by their actions in Grenada, were also threatening the forward march to power of the workers and peasants movements in the whole of the

Caribbean, Central America and the South American region. If any country did not fall in line with US interests it would be attacked and smashed by massive military might.

Sir Paul Scoon, whether or not he represented HM the Queen as Governor General at the time, cannot confer legitimacy on any administration in Grenada behind the bullets of a US invasion.

The only legitimacy in Grenada comes from the mass struggle to end the brutal and corrupt regime of Eric Gairy, led at the time by Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement. This struggle had the support and approval of the Grenadian masses and finally led to the popular revolutionary seizure of power on March 13 1979.

This process was interrupted, for a week, by the Bernard Coard palace coup lasting from October 12 till October 19; and after October 19 till Monday October 24 1983.

Then, on October 19 1983, the mass of Grenadians reasserted their revolutionary will and were gunned down. It is this involvement and approval of the Grenadian masses which gives any political process in Grenada its legitimacy. Nothing and nobody else does.

The new puppet administration, under Scoon - Alister McIntyre seems to have jumped ship - is part of a Caribbean technocracy which has been on the move since the late 1950s. Some of its members come out of the 'New World' intellectual movement founded by Lloyd Best, now of the Tapia House Movement in Trinidad & Tobago. This technocracy, working with various Caribbean administrations, has not been able to solve the problems of people in Trinidad & Tobago under Eric Williams nor in Jamaica under Michael Manley, and it will not be able to do so now in Grenada either.

We in the Alliance of the Black Parents Movement (BPM), the Black Youth Movement (BYM), and Race Today Collective (RTC), condemn the United States invasion of Grenada backed by some Caribbean states, led by Edward Seaga, Tom Adams and Eugenia Charles.

We condemn the recolonisation of Grenada by the United States under Reagan.

We in the Alliance oppose the humiliation of Bernard Coard and Phyllis Coard and others by the US invaders, as seen on television screens and newspapers, and their current imprisonment in Grenada under the US invaders with their Caribbean collaborators.

Neither the US invaders nor their Caribbean stooges have any right to hold in prison or try Bernard Coard, Phyllis Coard, Hudson Austin and Leon Corn-

wall at this time and we demand their release.

It is only the Grenadian people who have the right and it will be for them to deal with the Coards, Austin, Cornwall and others at the appropriate moment.

The US invasion of Grenada brought relief to many Grenadians who could only see the road of more and more barbarism under the pro-Soviet regime of Bernard Coard. It also filled with uncertainty the lives of many others who were dedicated to building a better society in Grenada.

We condemn the 10ft by 10ft box prison cages at Point Salines airport, which are a grim reminder of the prisoner's cages in Vietnam and the brutal and ruthless exercise of US power against those whom they regard as their enemies.

The US invasion has been condemned by the Caribbean Conference of Churches (though it retracted part of the condemnation when the Grenada Council of Churches supported the invasion), political and trade union organisations in the Caribbean, by Fidel Castro and the Cuban regime in a funeral oration in Havana on November 14 1983, by African states at the November 1983 Commonwealth Conference in Delhi, by organisations, individuals and states around the world. Demonstrations and pickets outside US embassies have spoken loudly for the condemnation of the US invasion.

The political climate in the Caribbean has undergone a dramatic change. In the struggle to establish workers and peasants power it can now be seen clearly that we are not only up against Tom Adams, Edward Seaga, Eugenia Charles, John Compton, Milton Cato, but we are up against the gunboat diplomacy of the United States.

Any victory, like Grenada, is not consolidated unless the revolutionary process is guarded by workers and peasant power against internal as well as external enemies.

The Grenadian masses spoke last on October 19 1983. They will speak again when the moment arises.

We support the Revolutionary Seizure of Power on March 13 1979 and we support the General Strike and Insurrection of October 19 1983.

Forward with the Grenadian Revolution.

Forward with Workers and Peasants Power in the Caribbean.

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