

Grenada after CHOGM: 'reconstruction not recrimination'

Early in January, Commonwealth Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal visited Grenada at the invitation of the Interim Administration. The purpose of his visit was to hold discussions with the administration in the context of its hopes and aspirations for the future and the Commonwealth conclusions as contained in the New Delhi communiqué.

In Grenada Mr Ramphal had consultations with Nicholas Brathwaite, the Chairman, and other members of the Interim Administration. While in the region, Mr Ramphal also had talks with Caribbean leaders in Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago.

In his two meetings with the Advisory Council, Mr Ramphal exchanged ideas on the possibility of Commonwealth assistance at the request of Grenada, particularly in the areas of elections and security. The discussions covered the principal elements of the framework of Commonwealth assistance established by the New Delhi communiqué and other situations pertaining to the maintenance of law and order in Grenada and the holding of free and fair elections which are the concern of the Interim Administration.

In New Delhi, Commonwealth leaders had welcomed the establishment of the Interim Administration, and 'looked forward to its functioning free of external interference, pressure, or the presence of foreign military forces'. They also noted its intention to hold free and fair elections as soon as possible.

On this basis, and given the readiness of countries of the Caribbean community to help maintain law and order in Grenada if so requested by the Interim Administration, Commonwealth leaders expressed their readiness to give sympathetic consideration to requests for assistance from Grenada.

As well as reaffirming their commitment to the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and calling for their strict observance, Heads of Government agreed that 'the emphasis should now be on reconstruction, not recrimination'. They stressed the importance of an early return to fraternity and co-operation in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

In a wider context, mindful of the special needs of small states not just in the economic field but also in areas such as national security, and recalling the particular dangers small Commonwealth countries had faced in the past, Heads of Govern-

ment requested the Secretary-General to undertake a study of the special needs of such states 'consonant with the right to sovereignty and territorial integrity that they shared with all nations', drawing as necessary on the resources and experience of Commonwealth governments.

Before the New Delhi meeting, the Commonwealth had already shown its willingness to assist fellow-member Grenada. In early November, two Commonwealth experts were provided through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) at the request of Sir Paul Scoon, Grenada's Governor-General, to help the Interim Administration prepare the way for a return to normality.

In the context of the Interim Administration taking full responsibility for law and order in Grenada, the discussions which the Commonwealth Secretary-General had with the Interim Administration in January established the value of continuing consultations, with awareness on all sides of the importance of early decisions. The Interim Administration will give close consideration in the weeks ahead to its programme of action in the light of the discussions with the Commonwealth Secretary-General and other appropriate consultation.

Grenada Blaizes

Herbert Blaize and the New National Party coalition swept all but one of the 15 seats at the Grenada elections on 3 December. The remaining seat went to the Grenada United Labour Party of former Prime Minister Sir Eric Gairy. There was an 85 per cent turnout. At the request of the Interim Administration chaired by Nicholas Brathwaite — the Grenadian head of the CYP Caribbean Centre seconded to service in Grenada — Britain, Canada and the Organisation of American States sent observers, who found the elections free and fair.

Mr Blaize, 66 and a lawyer, comes from the small Grenadian island of Carriacou. He began his working life in the oilfields of Aruba, but in his twenties was disabled by a cycling accident. He learned to walk again, though stiffly, and is now afflicted with arthritis. Both he and former Prime Minister Eric Gairy came to politics through the labour movement in the early 1950s. They were banished together for fomenting a general strike. Later Mr Blaize parted with Mr Gairy to form the Grenada National Party. He was elected chief minister and, in March 1967, the first Prime Minister. Six months later he was ousted at the polls by Mr Gairy who ruled Grenada, increasingly repressively, for the next 12 years, until he was deposed by the revolution of the New Jewel Movement headed by Mr Maurice Bishop. Mr Bishop and Mr Blaize are former political partners, having formed a coalition to oppose Mr Gairy at the previous election, in 1976.

In August 1984, three centre parties formed a coalition to fight Sir Eric Gairy at the elections. The Grenada Domestic Movement, led by Francis Alexis, deputy dean of the Barbados Law School, and the New Democratic Party, headed by teacher George Brizan, joined with Mr Blaize's Grenada National Party in the New National Party. Their campaign was supported by groups in the Caribbean and the USA.