

by SELWYN R. CUDJOE

THE DAY, October 19, 1983, on which Prime Minister Maurice Bishop of Grenada was killed was a sad day for the people of Grenada and all progressive people throughout the Caribbean and the world. And October 24, 1983, the day when United States forces and a token Caribbean contingent invaded the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada, will go down in history as a day of infamy for those Caribbean leaders who "invited" the United States to invade our territories. Nothing can mitigate that perfidious act on the part of that bunch of reactionaries. It is one thing for U.S. imperialism to continue its longstanding policy of bludgeoning the Caribbean; it is quite another thing for these Caribbean politicians to collude with the imperialists in their design.

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From March 11, 1833, when the United States intervened in the Nicaraguan people's affairs, to the present time, the United States has interfered directly in the affairs of the Caribbean no less than 53 times. In the 20th century, the U.S. occupied Cuba from 1895 to 1902 and from 1906 to 1909; Nicaragua, 1912 to 1933; Haiti, 1915 to 1934; the Dominican Republic, 1916 to 1924 and in 1965; sponsored the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961; and now has invaded Grenada in 1983. The U.S. has always entered the Caribbean either to "stop the spread of communism," or "to protect U.S. citizens" or to protect its property.

The Caribbean has always been important for the U.S. in terms of economic and strategic interests. Writing in 1935, U.S. Major General Smedley D. Butler, one of the most decorated U.S. heroes, wrote:

I spent 33 years and 4 months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. And during that period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism. . . . Thus I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American Sugar interests in 1916. I

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GRENADA

CUDJOE

helped make Honduras "right" for American fruit companies in 1903. . . . Looking back on it, I feel I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three cities' districts. We Marines operated on three continents.

And so continues the adventurism of the United States on three continents of the globe.

As early as 1981, it was apparent that the United States was contemplating intervention in the affairs of the Caribbean once more. One indication was a rather crude editorial appearing in the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, which stated that the Caribbean threat to U.S. security lay primarily in the attempt by

Cuban dictator Fidel Castro to bring more of the islands under his sphere of influence, [and this] may lead to changes in administration aid policy. . . . Our change would entail U.S. assistance to enable the police forces of the English-speaking republics to cope with subversive elements. No area is more crucial to America's security. Three-fourths of all U.S. oil imports transit the Caribbean. Through these channels and the Panama Canal course the petroleum of the Middle East, Ecuador and Alaska. Additionally, the supertankers sailing from the Persian Gulf around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope transfer their cargoes into smaller sized vehicles at Bahamas, Virgin Islands, Trinidad or Aruba-Curacao rather than docking directly in U.S. Ports.

Complaining about the "alarming decline in U.S. military power in this sensitive area and the upsurge in Soviet-Cuban clout," the newspaper went on to quote a Heritage Foundation study, which concluded: "The Caribbean, once an American lake, is becoming a Socialist Sea."

Against this background and to facilitate its thrust into Grenada, the Reagan Administration called upon an array of puppets—principally the Prime Ministers Tom Adams of Barbados, Eugenia Charles of Dominica and Edward Seaga of Jamaica, who are among the most reactionary leaders of the English-speaking Caribbean. But although Washington attributed the initiative for the invasion to Mr. Adams, a *New York Times* report dated October 30 revealed that the invasion "invitation" had actually been prepared in the White House. It should also be noted that neither Jamaica nor Barbados is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Union that allegedly authorized Washington's action, and that at the meeting of the Caribbean Community in Trinidad some days prior all plans to invade Grenada were rejected.

On one level, then, the principal question posed by the invasion has to do with the U.S. as bully, with its flagrant violation of international law and all the norms of international decorum. On another level, however, the issue is the attempt by the U.S. to eliminate all aspects of

progressive transformation in the Caribbean and the struggle for socialist construction.

Ruled, in its history, by more colonial powers than any other territory in the Eastern Caribbean, Grenada was trying to consolidate its independence and was engaged in social construction, an extremely difficult process as the United States should know from its own history. Since coming to power in 1979, the New Jewel Movement had made tremendous achievements. From a negative economic growth rate in 1979, the Grenadian economy experienced a 5.5 percent growth rate in 1982, according to the World Bank. This performance, be it noted, was better than the economic growth of any of the countries that participated in the invasion of Grenada—in fact, much better than any other country in the Eastern Caribbean.

The construction, then, of another kind of social organization—a socialist democracy—that was/is consistent with the aspirations of the Grenadian people was the principal aim of the revolutionary New Jewel government (NJM) led by both the late Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard. And indeed, the New Jewel represented a new lease on life for a society that had suffered the ravages of colonial and neo-colonial neglect.

The New Jewel Movement, a combination of the Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP) and the Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation (JEWEL), was formed in 1973. Its leadership consisted of a large cadre of men and women who had come out of the Black Power movement of the 1970's, and its momentum was fueled by the tremendous hostility that the Grenadian people felt towards the brutal, one-man rule of Eric Gairy and his notorious Mon-goose Gang.

Two months after the NJM was founded, it brought together some 10,000 citizens—one-tenth of Grenada's population—for a People's Convention of Independence. Reminiscent of the early actions of Cuban revolutionaries in their struggle against the Batista regime, the NJM met on November 4, 1973, convicted Gairy of 27 crimes, and demanded that he resign within 21 days. Although the NJM succeeded in paralyzing the Gairy government for close to three weeks, its leaders did not know how to seize power. Thus, Gairy regained the upper hand and crushed the NJM with savage brutality.

In 1974, a revitalized New Jewel Movement arose, headed by Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard. Some point to Coard as being the person responsible for the reorganization of the NJM. Whatever the case, an important decision was taken at the inception of this new movement: It was agreed that Coard would be the leader of the Party, whereas Bishop would act as the public spokesman for the Movement. This division of responsibility followed from the fact that Bishop, as the

leader and spokesperson at Gairy's mock trial, had displayed a charisma that made him the natural choice as spokesman for the budding revolution. Coard, meanwhile, had proclaimed his Marxist leanings as early as 1966, upon returning from study abroad. Yet, the guidelines of the NJM must be emphasized here. In the NJM Constitution, it was agreed that no one should be the leader for too long a period of time, that the leadership would rotate, that there would be a one-man, one-vote rule, and the leadership would at all times take its direction from the Central Committee.

When political independence was granted to Grenada in 1974, the NJM attempted to increase its strength within the structure of parliamentary democracy. In 1976, allied with the Grenada National Party and the United Peoples Party (both rather conservative), the NJM contested the elections and won six of the 15 seats in Parliament. In the process, they captured 48 percent of the votes. Maurice Bishop became the leader of the opposition, and the NJM began to work more closely with the country's urban and rural workers. In March 1979 while on a visit to the United States, Gairy was overthrown by the NJM.

What were the goals of the NJM? Ten points are listed in its "Statement of Principles":

1. People's participation, people's politics, people's democracy.
2. People's cooperatives for the collective development of the people.
3. Health care based on need.
4. Full development of the people's talents, abilities and culture.
5. Full control as a people of our own national resources.
6. Employment for all.
7. A decent standard of living for every family.
8. Freedom of expression and religion.
9. The liberation of Black and oppressed peoples throughout the world.
10. A United People... A New Society... A Just Society.

Selwyn Strachan, a leader of the NJM, stated the following on October 29, 1979:

The NJM started off as what we would call a revolutionary party, a revolutionary democratic party. We never called ourselves socialist at the beginning. The New Jewel Movement was engaged in revolutionary politics, attacking the system, trying to raise the political consciousness of the people, and—fundamentally—raising democratic issues among the masses, trying to get them to struggle with us for democratic rights and freedoms. It started off on that basis. As we got more and more mature, we were able to work out a clearer ideological position. It didn't come artificially, it was the result of struggle, in a concrete way. Over a period we were able to work out a firm and definitive ideological position.

As Maurice Bishop indicated two years ago, the revolution succeeded in mobilizing the people for social and economic construction and gave them a sense of pride in themselves. Material achievements included increases in the number of secondary and university school places, as well as in the number of doctors serving the population. At the level of infrastructural development, the construction of an international airport to facilitate tourism was conceived and planned as a major spur to the economy. In this respect, much assistance for the construction of this airport came from the Eastern bloc countries generally and Cuba particularly. The United States, in its turn, went out of its way to prevent the members of the European Economic Community from assisting the government of Grenada in this endeavor. Feeder roads were constructed, diversification of the economy was attempted, and new markets were sought for Grenada's agricultural products.

But at the political level, the storm clouds of the present crisis were gathering. On its way to becoming a socialist state, Grenada had arrived at a stage of its development where the revolutionary regime's program was characterized by three major aspects:

1. The determination to lift Grenada out of its tremendous economic and technological backwardness, and to lay the foundation for socialism. In this regard, the building of the state sector and control of the country's financial institutions assumed much importance.
2. Stimulation of the private sector in order to boost productivity. The NJM calculated that Grenada's low level of technology, limited human resources and technical skills, and lack of capital made it imperative that some private enterprise be encouraged.
3. Continuation of Grenada's struggle against imperialism and its disengagement from the grip of capitalism. The government hoped to accomplish this through the diversification of trade ties, support of such endeavors as the New International Economic Order and active participation in such organizations as the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the process of change, with its above features, was illuminated the relationship between the Party and the State—specifically, their separate and distinct functions. And out of the dynamics of that change process in a society with Grenada's past could easily have arisen a conflict in priorities, either real or perceived. For sure, the Marxists in the NJM regarded the role of the Party as being (and remaining) of paramount importance—a view that would undoubtedly apply to Bernard Coard, an early Marxist as noted previously, and possibly to Lt. Austin. In any case, the problem of coordinating the functions of Party and State was not resolved and, indeed, festered and became acute

within the Central Committee of the NJM about a year ago. It seems as though a part of the leadership led by Mr. Bishop felt that a completely new Constitution that reflected the contemporary needs of Grenada was needed, while another faction led by Mr. Coard felt that the original Constitution ought simply to be revised. One dimension of the issue may have been Bishop's suspicion that the army was gaining too much control and needed to be reined in. He might have also felt that he deserved more power within the Party since he was certainly becoming the leading figure in the revolution—in fact, to most people, he was the Grenadian revolution.

On September 14, just prior to Bishop's departure to Hungary and Czechoslovakia (with a number of his ministers, most of whom were executed with him), the Central Committee of the Party (by a vote of 9 to 1, with 3 abstentions) reinstated the principles of the original NJM Constitution, leaving the Party and its development in the hands of Mr. Coard and the leadership of the State to Mr. Bishop. Additionally, Mr. Coard was directed to deal with economic matters.

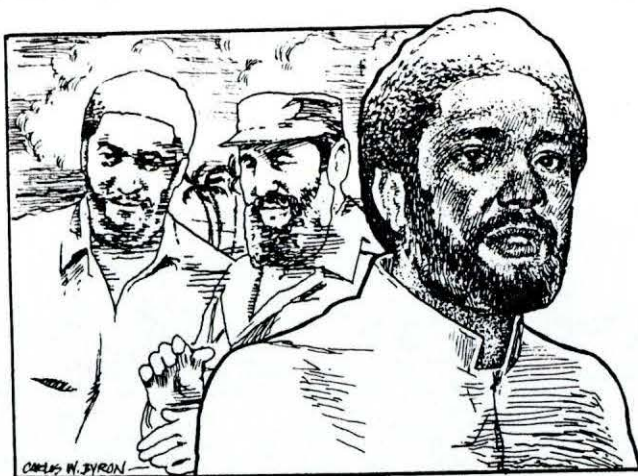
From this decision, Bishop apparently inferred that his authority was being clearly subordinated to that of Coard by a Central Committee which Coard controlled. At any rate, he asked for and was given some time to consider this resolution even though the vote of the Central Committee was binding. Before leaving the country on September 28, Mr. Bishop is reported to have accepted the Central Committee's resolution. By the date of his return from the trip, October 8, he is said to have changed his mind. Judged as being in defiance of the principles of the Party, Bishop was placed under house arrest.

Subsequent events, too numerous, confused and uncorroborated to review here, culminated tragically in the death of Maurice Bishop and his principal aides. Whatever the reasons for this first phase of a disaster that culminated in the U.S. invasion of Grenada, and even if imperialism should be revealed as having played a role, the execution of so many brave and committed people cannot be excused. In this regard, the statement issued by the government of Cuba is instructive:

No doctrine, no position proclaimed as revolutionary and no internal division can justify savage methods such as this physical elimination of Maurice Bishop and the outstanding group of honest and worthy leaders who died. The death of Maurice Bishop and his comrades must be clarified and if they were murdered in cold blood, the guilty deserve an exemplary punishment.

In the course of their own revolution, the Cubans had to learn well a principle that needs to be reiterated: Disagreements among revolutionaries are not to be solved with the gun.

From the moment of Maurice Bishop's death, the sympathy and



respect won by the Grenadian revolution began to dissipate among its fair-weather friends. Those persons and governments whose support for the revolution was more solidly grounded were deeply pained by the obvious error that had been made in the process of social construction and called on the people of Grenada to work out their problems.

The longtime, avowed enemies of the revolution, however, had seen their opportunity and acted, with Prime Minister Tom Adams of Barbados and Eugenia Charles of Dominica being prominent among them. With lightning swiftness, the Cuban warning about the desire of imperialism to use the crisis for its own benefit came to pass.

To justify the invasion of tiny Grenada, U.S. forces and their Caribbean surrogates advanced a host of reasons, all of which proved spurious.

First, the 17 killings which had taken place at Fort Rupert were cited. But if the killing of innocent people invited armed intervention as a redress, then why was not Jamaica invaded during its last election when close to 700 persons were killed and thousands were wounded in a political war between the members and supporters of Seaga's Jamaican Labor Party and Michael Manley's People's National Party?

A second reason given for the invasion was the fear that allegedly gripped the people of Grenada in the wake of the killing of Bishop and his aides. One U.S. official stated, on ABC's "Nightline," that the people of Grenada so feared for their lives that they were leaving the island in droves by boat. Well, why didn't the United States invade Haiti when all of those thousands of Haitian people were fleeing their country by boat out of fear of Baby Doc? Instead, the U.S. and the repressive Duvalier regime collaborated on interdicting any and all Haitian boat people and sending them back to Haiti.

Next, the Reagan Administration argued that "law and order" had

broken down and U.S. forces were needed to restore "democracy." Leaving aside the distinctions that are to be made between bourgeois and socialist democracy, and leaving aside the fact that the Grenada government was trying to build a socialist society, the question remains: How do you impose "democracy" on a country that you have invaded? Does not your invasion grind into dust the most basic precept of "democracy," i.e., the right of a sovereign people to express their will, not yours, through their political institutions?

Other implausible rationales included the claim that the U.S. medical students were in danger, and the claim that the Cubans and Soviets were taking over Grenada to turn it into a base for exporting revolution throughout the Eastern Caribbean. This last whimsy has been contradicted by numerous realities even the U.S. press has felt compelled to cite. But in any case, the accusing nation, the United States, has more armed forces in more parts of the world than any other country in the world—over 500,000 troops in 122 countries. Make that an additional 6,000 troops in 123 countries dating from the incursion into Grenada.

Neither international law nor the United Nations Charter nor the charter of the Organization of American States, with their principles of non-intervention, provides a basis for the U.S. and/or the Caribbean nations' invasion of Grenada. Those of us who support the rights of sovereign peoples have the obligation to take a clear and unequivocal stand:

- The people of Grenada must control their own affairs.
- We support the revolutionary process that was started by the people of Grenada.
- U.S. and Caribbean troops should leave Grenada immediately.
- We recognize the connection between the assault on Grenada and campaigns, military and otherwise, being waged against the sovereignty of other Central American countries.
- The actions of the U.S. in Grenada are manifestations of U.S. imperialism.

The struggle of people throughout the world for dignity and justice and the right to run their own affairs cannot be separated from the struggle against imperialism. In whatever form, under whatever cover, the intent is the same: To deny people the right to enjoy the fruits of their labor and the right to determine their own destiny.