

Commentary on Grenada

By Otto J. Reich and Wayne S. Smith

Diplomatic Magic

Dear Colleagues:

Grenada was a paradigm of what is loosely called revolution and its excesses in our time, and it offers lessons which should not be ignored. In 1979, a small band of upper middle-class intellectuals toppled a regime which, as Anthony P. Maingot ("Options for Grenada," *Caribbean Review*, XII:4, Fall 1983) rightly points out, was a populist/black power revolutionary movement gone wrong because of the eccentricities of its leader. The new rulers, schooled in various revolutionary tracts and rhetoric, quickly shed their vague romantic and faintly Jeffersonian precoup program of a people's democracy and turned to an attitude of: we love the people and know what is best for them and so must guide their affairs.

But running a government is difficult, and these inexperienced young men needed help. The theory that cold US intransigence pushed the New Jewel government into the arms of the Cubans, however, is simply not tenable. Getting technical assistance from Cuba and later from the Soviet Union did not make them communists, of course, but there seems to have been a fairly rapid progress toward what they themselves called Leninism. Apparently toward the end, a hard core, which might be likened to the Bolsheviks, seized control. Scholars, I trust, will study this process when all the documents are available.

It is apparent that Bishop and his associates sincerely admired Cuba and the Soviet Union. He never, insofar as we know, expressed any reservation about supporting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Although much more study needs to be done, I feel comfortable in concluding, on the basis of the evidence, that (1) Grenada under Bishop sided with the Soviet/Cuban bloc from the beginning and (2) Bishop intended to install a Soviet-type state with a small elite controlling the masses and ultimately depending upon force.

The articles in "Grenada Explodes" contained points with which I agree and several with which I disagree.

I disagree with Errol Barrow ("The Danger of Rescue Operations") on virtually every point he makes, but on two in particular: (1) The students were in danger—believed themselves to be in danger—and no responsible government would simply hope for the best under the circumstances. Mr. Barrow should view the US Information Service's videotape of Grenadians trying to

escape from being shot by their own army. The new rulers, whoever they were, demonstrated quite a capacity for violence. (2) "The tragedy to the people of Grenada..." is simply not true. Mr. Barrow needs only to travel to Grenada and ask the people whether they believe the rescue mission was a tragedy.

Much of what Michael Manley ("Grenada in the Context of History") has to say about the success of the Bishop regime is mere myth. Grenada kept two sets of books—a technique taught by the Cubans—and the World Bank and IMF were simply the victims of a hoax. The economy was actually a disaster from start to finish. All major productive sectors continually declined. In addition, the documents illustrate that Mr. Bishop and his small coterie were ideologically under the deep influence of Cuba and the Soviet Union from the beginning. Nothing the US did or failed to do would have made any difference. Grenada did, in fact, receive more aid from Western sources than all of the other Eastern Caribbean states put together, but it did not seem to make a difference in alignment. It would be nice to think of Mr. Bishop's sordid little Leninist dictatorship as some kind of golden age, but the facts show otherwise.

Carl Henry Feuer ("Was Bishop a Social Democrat?") seems also to have joined those who are attempting to apotheosize Maurice Bishop. It will not work. One must look at the reality rather than the soothing words that Bishop used to charm the Europeans. Reality: Document number 102734, a letter dated 29 September 1981 from the "Office of Special Investigations" to Maurice Bishop, is a plea to release some of the several hundred detainees because the prisons are terribly overpopulated. One group is recommended for release because "there is absolutely no evidence of an incriminating nature available and it is therefore difficult to lay charges against them" (they had been in prison for two years by this time). One had been scheduled for release for several months but was not released because of fear he would spread unfavorable propaganda. I cannot believe a truly social democratic government would condone such behavior. As the documents revealed, the People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada was modeled very closely after the Soviet government, with decision-making authority resting in the Central Committee and in the smaller Political Bureau (the Grenadians used the term "Politburo"). Is there a social democratic

government in the world which is controlled by a Marxist-Leninist Politburo? Mr. Bishop was not a social democrat.

I find the opinions expressed by Wayne Smith ("The Grenada Complex and Central America") dangerously naive. Mr. Smith used the phrase "negotiating process" (or some variant, e.g. "come to the table") a total of 13 times on the first page of his article. There is a mind-set that believes the incantation of "diplomatic" and "negotiated" solutions can solve all the world's problems—that there is something magic about negotiations. Let me state categorically that this administration certainly does believe in negotiated solutions to problems, but negotiations have their time and place. Munich, for instance, was the wrong time and place. In Grenada there was no time; we sincerely believed then, and still believe, that 1,000 American citizens were in deadly danger.

Nestor Sanchez ("What Was Uncovered in Grenada") makes a good point; i.e., the arsenal found on Grenada was absurd for such a small island. What were the guns for? My opinion is that persons addicted to Soviet-style thinking just naturally start arming themselves to the teeth when they get in power, for control. It is straight from the Lenin textbook. But a deeper reason, I believe, is a certain psychological tendency to adhere to symbols of materialism, and what more basic symbol exists than the gun? The Mayday parade is thus the equivalent of a religious procession.

Anthony P. Maingot ("Options for Grenada") demonstrates a profound understanding of what has been happening in Grenada and the Eastern Caribbean. He makes a most important point that the Eastern Caribbean mini-states have had 57 elections since 1951 without taking political prisoners or resorting to death squads or torture. At the end of his article he states that these islands "are allies, committed to pluralistic democracy and human rights, and it is to that fold that they all want Grenada back. Surely the USA will want no less." Indeed the US is proud to be able to have a part, along with the Caribbean democracies, in the return of Grenada to what is by any reckoning a most remarkable assemblage of democratic, free societies.

OTTO J. REICH

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Wayne S. Smith Replies:

Otto Reich's critique of my views on the Grenada invasion is in keeping with the administration's usual tactic of obfuscation rather than reasoned response. To my statement that the invasion pointed up again this administration's incomprehension of the uses of diplomacy, Reich notes acerbically that there is a time and place for negotiations and that there was no time for them in Grenada since the administration believed our citizens there to be in danger.

Perhaps. But what about a year before the invasion, or two years before? Mr. Reich avoids any direct answer to that question. As I noted, the Bishop government had been pleading for talks with the US for more than two years. The Reagan administration rebuffed these overtures. If Mr. Reich doubts that, he should look at the cable traffic between the US Interests Section in Havana and Washington during 1981 and 1982.

Could accommodation have been reached? Was the Bishop government serious? The answer in both cases can only be "perhaps." But the possibility was at least worth careful exploration. The administration did not even bother. Why not? Perhaps because of the kind of rigid mind-set suggested by Mr. Reich's statement that since Bishop and his group were under Moscow and Havana's influence from the beginning,

"nothing the US did or failed to do would have made any difference."

In other words, Mr. Reich would have us believe, a government once touched by Moscow or Havana is lost and there is no point in trying to deal with it. But that, of course, is nonsense. There are many instances in which governments once under Moscow or Havana's influence have reasserted their independence. The Egyptian government, for example, was closely allied with Moscow for over a decade. When it saw that this was, in fact, not in its interests, it moved back towards us. American diplomacy smoothed the way. The Forbes Burnham government in Guyana was once heavily influenced by Havana. Today, relations between the two governments are, at best, correct.

Who knows, then, what might have been accomplished in Grenada had we been capable of imaginative diplomacy? But the Reagan administration was not. Thus I repeat that the invasion was, more than anything else, a monument to foreign policy mismanagement.

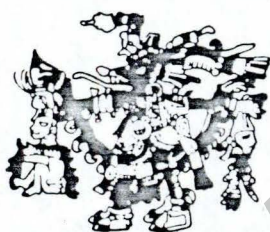
It was also a monument to doublespeak. Mr. Reagan first described the landing of American forces in Grenada as an invasion, then chided the press for saying the same thing and claimed instead that it was a "rescue operation." Obviously it wasn't that ei-

ther since American forces are still there.

Mr. Reagan first showed us pictures of an airfield under construction in Grenada and suggested that as it was too large for any legitimate need of Grenada's, it must be intended for some sinister military purpose. But now that Grenada is in our hands, the American taxpayer is being made to fork over \$19 million to finish that same airfield, which the Reagan administration now says Grenada needs for its tourist industry. Strange! That's exactly what the Bishop government said.

Assistant Secretary of State Langhorne Motley, in testimony to a congressional committee last January, said the US had considered chartering an ocean liner to evacuate our citizens from Grenada, but, he implied, had to give up that idea when the vessel was fired on by Grenadian forces. This turned out not to be true. The ship's owners, the Cunard Line, stated flatly that the vessel had not been fired on and could not possibly have been since it never even reached the area. Mr. Reich himself also contradicted Mr. Motley, denying that the US had ever considered such a charter!

Indeed, the administration has made so many contradictory statements about its invasion of Grenada that it is difficult to fathom what its real views are or which it expects us to believe. □



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Post-intervention Grenadian graffiti.

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The Grenada Questions

A Revolutionary Balance Sheet

By Selwyn Ryan

The Grenada revolution of 13 March 1979 was one of those definitive events which have had critical implications for the entire Caribbean. In terms of its impact on the region, it ranks with the Haitian and Cuban revolutions, as well as the upheavals of the 1930s which accelerated the growth and maturation of the labor movement in the anglophone Caribbean. As was the case with those events, the seizure of power by Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement was greeted by a storm of disapproval from the established interests in the English-speaking Caribbean, since the revolution successfully challenged, for the first time, one of the essential foundations of the political culture of the region: that the transfer of political power should be effected by ballots rather than by bullets.

The circumstances under which the NJM came to power raised questions about the meaningfulness of the Westminster model, especially since it was widely agreed that without adequate cultural and institutional supports, the model could and did produce tyrannical and corrupt dictatorships in the Caribbean such as those of Eric Gairy and Forbes Burnham in Grenada and Guyana respectively. The question that had to be decided was whether the people in countries such as these had an obligation to obey and defer to the political leadership regardless of the abuses inflicted on them, or whether they should adopt the Jeffersonian formula and rebel. Jefferson's justification of the seizure of power by the American colonists in 1776 was not remarkably different from that advanced by the NJM and its supporters.

There were some commentators who remained committed to the Westminster formula for selecting governing elites, but who were nevertheless inclined to tolerate the NJM demarche, provided it was subsequently legitimized by an election. It was felt

that if the NJM had the support which it claimed to have, it should put such claims on the line by facing the polls.

Those opposed saw the seizure of power by force of arms as "a scandal in the family" which could not be condoned. They also feared the demonstration effect of the Grenada model. There was concern that if what happened in Grenada was allowed to prevail, small radical parties might be encouraged to attempt something similar in other territories. The leaders of the Southern Caribbean were painfully aware of just how vulnerable the defenses of their island states were against a well-organized insurrection and were understandably anxious to have it made abundantly clear that the peoples of the Caribbean would not sanction this sort of arbitrary change of the rules of the game. As Bishop himself noted, "those who are making the loudest noises have the most to fear from their own people." Dominica, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Barbados were especially agitated, and there was even talk of inviting the British to send in troops to put down the rebellion and restore Gairy to power.

In Trinidad, the press, while recognizing that Gairy was equally a "shame in the CARICOM family," was frenzied in its hostility to the putsch. The government was of the same view, and a letter sent by Bishop to Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams was pointedly left unopened. The official position of the government was that Trinidad would continue to recognize Grenada as a country, but not its regime.

Obviously an event of such far-reaching implications, and one which causes such strong reaction, raises many questions. The first is a basic one—which Gordon Lewis suggests should be asked about the entire post-independence Caribbean experience.

To what extent are the people of Grenada better off today than they were in 1979?

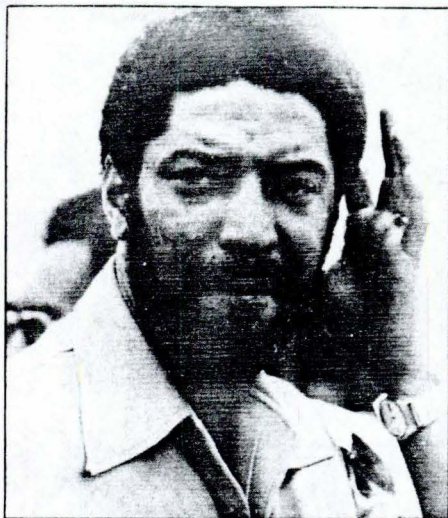
While four years is perhaps too short a period to assess the achievements of the Grenada revolution, an attempt might still be made to determine whether, on balance, more was gained than lost by the PRG's decision to defy the US and opt for the high

road of socialism. The regime made clear gains in the areas of education and health; and despite earlier opposition to building the airport at Point Salines, it was able to see it to near completion. The airport had now become the symbol of self-reliance, just as the production of 10 million tons of sugar (once deemed a curse which must be destroyed) had become a point of honor for the Cuban revolution.

A great deal of money was spent in the field of education. In 1981, the proportion of recurrent expenditure devoted to education was 21.3 percent, and in 1982, 22.5 percent. While the policy of free secondary education was initiated by Gairy and not by the PRG as the latter claimed, theirs was the responsibility to see it through to its conclusion and to extend its boundaries beyond the formal school to include the old and marginalized elements. With the assistance of people like Paulo Freire, Angel Arrechea of Cuba and volunteers from other Caribbean islands, the Centre for Popular Education embarked on a basic and then a functional literacy program which achieved a measure of success. Teacher training was also expanded through an in-service scheme, while schools were built and repaired. The content of textbooks used by the very young and the old was changed to reflect "the perceptions, needs and aspirations of the people" as well as the goals of the revolutionary government. Poor children were helped with uniforms, books and free lunches. More scholarships were made available to Grenadians at the University of the West Indies and in other countries such as Cuba, the Soviet Union, Mexico, and in Europe and Africa. Higher allowances were also provided for scholarship winners and their families.

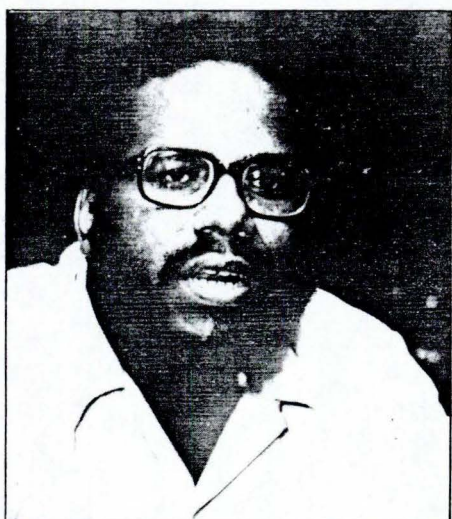
In the area of health, the regime was able to use the Cuban connection to increase and improve the delivery of medical and dental care. Drugs were made available at subsidized prices. The system whereby medical practitioners used state facilities to carry on private practice was stopped, and medical care in public hospitals and health centers became fully free. A program of preventive medicine was also instituted

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Maurice Bishop

WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



Bernard Coard

WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



Election board office in St. George's.

BERNARD DEDERICH

with some measure of success.

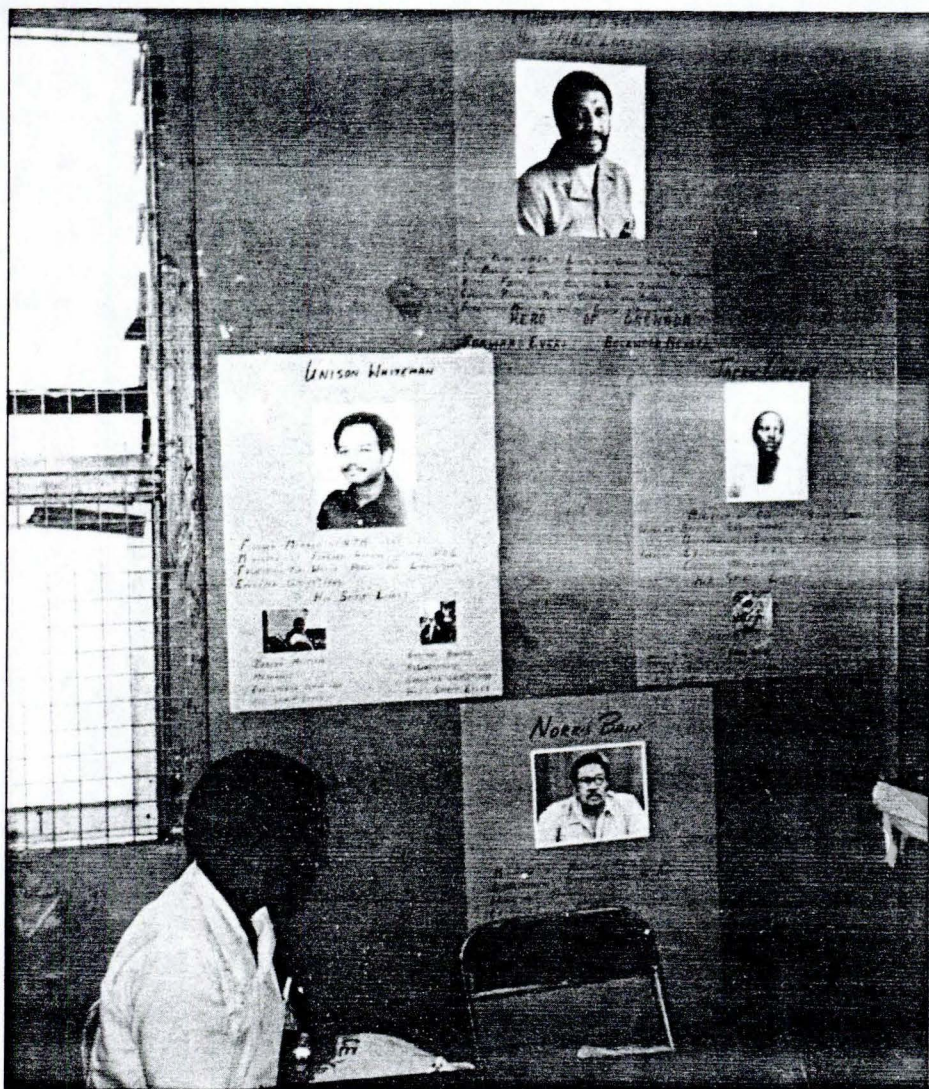
There were other areas where progress was made. Steps were taken to introduce a public transport system using mini-buses to compete with private modes. There was some attempt at community mobilization to clean drains, repair and paint public buildings and other forms of socially useful activity. The cooperative movement was encouraged, and unemployment was reduced by mobilizing youth in the militia and setting some to work on state-owned farms, in agro industries, and on road building. Another major achievement was the fact that under the PRG, Grenada became internationally important, and whether for or against the PRG regime, many Grenadians took pride in the fact that their small island state had become the center of international public attention. The PRG had succeeded in placing Grenada in the international political and economic market place.

How well did the Grenadian economy perform?

In terms of the management of the economy, a great deal of progress was made in the initial years when enthusiasm was high and the tasks obvious. The regime received assistance from the World Bank and other lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the European Economic Community and the Canadian International Development Agency. The economy reportedly grew by about 2 percent in 1979. The government had achieved a budgetary surplus of EC\$2.6 million in its first year of operation compared to the EC\$8.3 million deficit which occurred in 1978 under Gairy. It did so by raising license fees and company taxes, closing tax loopholes, introducing withholding taxes on profits expatriated by foreign companies, and rigidly curbing public spending and energy consumption. As one commentator observed, "in terms of good housekeeping, the Bishop government in the first year of its revolution was doing a great deal better than many Western governments, the US included. . . In terms of

orthodox economic planning and good account keeping the Grenadian revolution was streets ahead of, say, the Chilean government in the time of Salvador Allende. The foreign debt was still minimal, well within what Grenada could afford to borrow. While the countries of Latin America, many with governments backed by the Reagan administration, got into such a morass of debt that they had to turn over almost all they earned in exports to pay the foreign bankers who had lent the money, Grenada in 1981 was devoting only 3.7 percent of its export revenue to the servicing of the government debt." Much of this was the achievement of Bernard Coard who, though a Marxist, functioned as an orthodox minister of finance par excellence.

The economy continued to grow and in 1982, the real growth rate was said to be 5.5 percent, due largely to an expansion of the public sector, since private investment was close to zero. Capital expenditure in the public sector increased on an average of 35 percent annually in the 1979-1982 period.



Maurice Bishop Foundation.



Sir Eric Gairy

However, overall central government deficits doubled, increasing from 16.1 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1979 to 32.3 percent in 1982. The deficit was financed almost wholly from grants and public sector borrowings from abroad (especially Soviet Bloc and OPEC countries), and from commercial banks. External debt moved from 16 percent of GDP in 1978 to 29 percent in 1982. Most of the loans obtained were on concessionary terms and have been contracted with Eastern bloc donors (33% of total), and from international organizations such as the Caribbean Development Bank (19% of total), OPEC Fund (24% of total), traditional donors, such as Canada and U.K. (10% of total).

The Economic Memorandum on Grenada (1984) reports that "Gross Domestic Product at current prices increased at an annual rate of 14.2 percent during the period 1978-1982, but in real terms the rate of growth was a modest 3.4 percent"—not the 5.5 percent claimed earlier. "Insofar as the subperiods of 1975-1978 and 1979-1982

are concerned, the increased rates of GDP in current prices were 12.5 percent and 11.3 percent respectively. Correspondingly, the rates of growth of real GDP for the same subperiods were 3.8 percent and 0.2 percent respectively. Thus, it seems clear that the rate of growth of the Grenadian economy fell sharply, both in nominal and real terms, during the period 1979-1982 when compared with the period 1975-1978."

Part of the reason for the decline in growth had to do with the performance of the tourist industry, the agricultural sector, and the public enterprises and utilities. The tourist industry, which reportedly accounted for 80 percent of the foreign exchange earned from commodity exports, suffered a marked decline due to recession and American hostility. Stay-over visitors declined by 15 percent in 1981.

The agricultural sector, which is critical in Grenada since it produces jobs for over one-half of the total labor force and supplies over 90 percent of the country's commodity exports, performed poorly after 1979. Falling

prices (due in part to the depreciation of the pound vis-à-vis the dollar in 1982) and falling yields were said to be responsible, as were fragmentation of land holdings, lack of knowledge about modern agricultural practices, and inadequate supplies of capital and fertilizers. The decline in prices made it difficult for the marketing boards to subsidize inputs used by the farmers or offer attractive prices. The farmers, in turn, abandoned their farms or declined to reinvest. This was especially true in the banana, cocoa and nutmeg industries.

In the farm sector, the 23 farms owned by the Grenada Farm Corporation operated at a loss (so too did some private farms however). These farms, which had been taken over by the Gairy government and not the PRG, occupied 4,000 acres of the total farm acreage of 34,243 acres. The extent of the loss was due mainly to the fact that wages were higher than the value of work produced. The same was true of the National Fisheries Company, which was a disaster

Continued on page 39

Grenada Questions

Continued from page 9

and had to be closed down.

Failure was also due to poor linkages with the Marketing and National Importing Board (MNIB), which had been set up to export nontraditional crops as well as to buy basic goods in bulk from abroad. The MNIB, which had business types at its helm, failed in its export role and, contrary to revolutionary claims, the prices at which it imported certain goods were reportedly not cheaper than those available through the private sector with which it competed, though the markup on goods sold prior to its introduction had been higher. The hotels owned by the Grenada Resorts Corporation also lost money, as did the new agro-based industries, including the coffee processing plant.

The public sector was also a drain on the economy. One of the goals of the revolution was the expansion of that sector, and by 1982 there were 32 state enterprises despite reminders from the World Bank that these had not worked well in many countries. Grenada was no different, and Coard himself was later to admit that while some successes were achieved, all the state enterprises performed badly for one reason or another. The public utilities (Grenada Electricity Service and the Grenada Telephone Company) also performed miserably and there were frequent outages in both utilities

due mainly to obsolete plant and poor maintenance.

Reviewing the reasons for the poor performance of state enterprises, Coard pointed to weak management (very few trained managers in the country), lack of organization, poor record-keeping and accounting, low worker productivity, lack of training in modern methods of production, use of primitive technology and over-staffing.

To these deficiencies he added low educational levels and low political consciousness on the part of workers and managers. The latter were accused of refusing to attend management training programs or to permit workers to participate in the middle management supervisory and secretarial courses provided for them.

By September 1983 when the party crisis deepened, statements made in the now-celebrated Central Committee meetings indicated that the picture was far worse than had been revealed in February of that year, and that the early gains had not been sustained. The performance of the state enterprises had deteriorated even further. The roads were in deplorable condition. Bishop admitted that the economy was in the doldrums and that there were too many black-outs, too many bad roads and insufficient jobs to go around. There was also not enough money to pay the soldiers of the People's Revolutionary Army a living wage, and the latter often helped themselves to other people's produce to make up the deficiency. Clearly, the financial transfusions from the socialist world and other lending agencies were being gobbled up by the air-

port sector, leaving little for other immediately productive sectors.

How socialist was Grenada?

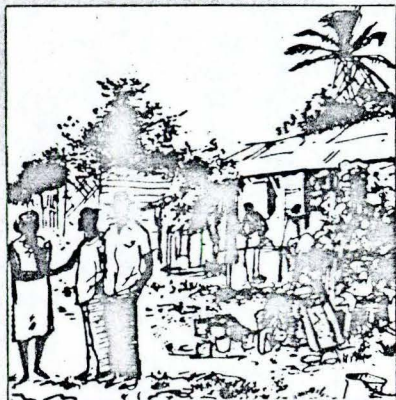
Although there was a great deal of talk about socialism in Grenada, the economy was anything but socialist. As Bernard Coard himself admitted, "We are developing our economy on the *mixed economy model*. Our economy as a mixed economy will comprise the state sector, the private sector and the cooperative sector. The dominant sector will be the state sector which will lead the development process." While the 1973 NJM Manifesto made no mention of socialism per se, it did call for the complete nationalization of all foreign-owned hotels, banks, insurance companies and housing developments. None of these nationalizations were actually attempted, and the economic policies instituted by the regime were designed to rationalize and modernize the economy rather than to socialize it.

In part, this might have been due to the fact that many of the key decision makers (Bishop included) were themselves petty bourgeois property owners. Perhaps, too, the NJM elite was acutely aware of the peasant and petty bourgeois nature of the society, and thus saw the need for a "staged" approach to the transition to socialism. Bishop himself said that "we see this revolution as being in the national democratic stage. We are an anti-imperialist party and government, and we believe that the process we are involved in at this time is an anti-imperialist, national democratic, socialist-oriented stage of development."

Thus the NJM remained in CARICOM

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and joined the Socialist International, which included a motley of reformist political parties. It also sought to retain the confidence of international lending agencies, which were dominated by capitalist countries, and the latter as well. Domestically, they sought to build alliances with progressive elements and even with the capitalist group, which they offended but never sought to eliminate. Land was not to be appropriated, and when an attempt was made to seize an estate and establish a "people's collective farm," the PRG reprimanded those involved and returned the land to its owner, a former governor of Grenada. Although a land utilization law gave the Minister of Agriculture power to compulsorily lease idle estates of over 100 acres if their owners made no attempt to develop them, the policy was really aimed to encourage the owners to develop their estates.

In the area of banking, the Canadian Imperial Bank, which indicated it was anxious to leave Grenada, was bought out to form the National Commercial Bank and enjoined to compete within the banking system, which was left virtually intact. There was no central bank (Grenada remained a member of the Eastern Caribbean currency grouping), and no restrictions were placed on foreign transactions or on the internal credit policies of the banks. Foreign hotels were not nationalized; the ones owned by

the Grenada Resorts Corporation were those seized from Gairy.

Socialism thus existed mainly on paper. It cannot even be argued that the revolution was anti-imperialist, since linkages were maintained with centers of European imperialism to say nothing of the regime's endorsement of Soviet imperialism in Afghanistan and elsewhere. What one had in Grenada might best be described as documentary radicalism, a radicalization in the vocabulary of politics. It is also evident that the perceived need to maintain good standing in the "anti-imperialist movement" required key members of the elite to strike radical postures and participate in international radical activity. This distracted attention from the necessity of paying closer attention to the real needs of the people of Grenada: improved infrastructure, higher prices for their agricultural commodities, better health and welfare standards and more jobs. All of this was achievable without having to pay the costs of the ideological overburden. Like Kwame Nkrumah, who sought to win Africa and lost Ghana, Maurice Bishop sought to win the world and lost Grenada.

Did the US push the NJM into the arms of Cuba and the Soviet Union?

The failure to legitimize itself by calling elections, the introduction of the concept of rev-

olutionary legality, the detention without trial of its political enemies—real and imagined, the closing down of the *Torchlight* and other newspapers, the seizure without compensation of the Coca Cola plant and the attacks on the churches were provocative steps which put the PRG on a collision course with the regional establishment. The development of close ties with Cuba sharpened the confrontation even further.

As had been the case with the development of ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union in 1959, the forging of close economic and political links between Cuba and Grenada was blamed on the United States. It is argued that the PRG was aware of the need to mend fences with the US and Caribbean governments, but was rebuffed when it sought aid and arms to defend itself against the possibility of a Gairy counter-coup. There were also reports about a possible naval blockade of Grenada. Thus, it was argued, the PRG had no alternative but to embrace Cuba. Revolutionary virtue was made of necessity.

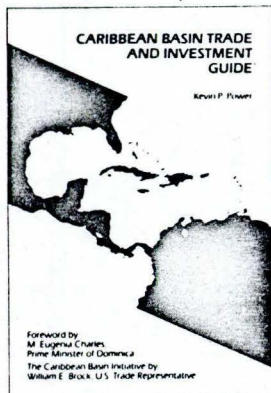
Unlike other Caribbean governments which recognized that their sovereignty and freedom to operate were limited and circumscribed by American sensitivities about communist penetration of the hemisphere, the PRG chose to defy and challenge American hegemony. Cuba and Grenada soon established diplomatic rela-

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- Country Listings of Exports to the U.S. by TSUS Code
- Business Contacts and Information Sources



Foreword by
M. Eugenia Charles
Prime Minister of Dominica
The Caribbean Basin Initiative by
William E. Brock U.S. Trade Representative

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tions; and shortly thereafter, aid in the form of arms and cement began arriving. As one pro-Grenada publication editorialized in relation to this development, "through its attempts to dictate policy to the Grenada government, the United States had provoked the very development it sought to forbid." In other words, it was the US that pushed Grenada into the waiting arms of the Cubans. Another commentator opined that "it was ironic also that the Cuban-Grenadian relationship should have been fostered by Washington, whose constant harping on the supposed strategic threat from a tiny Eastern Caribbean island caused the NJM to militarize their society more than they might otherwise have done."

This was a plausible but by no means convincing argument. The establishment of fraternal ties with Cuba need not have caused undue concern in Washington. It should be noted that Cuba already had diplomatic ties with many states in the Commonwealth Caribbean, including Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, and that Castro had visited Trinidad and Tobago and had been cordially received by Dr. Williams. Cuba also had ties with Mexico, Venezuela and several other nonsocialist Latin American governments. What was clearly at stake was not ties as such, but the nature of those ties. One grants that the Reagan administration over-reacted to the Grenada revolution, but it could be argued that both sides engaged in provocative behavior in the months following the seizure of power, and progressively became locked on a collision course which could have been avoided by mature statesmanship. While it is true that Bishop was on record about the need to establish a cordial relationship with the White House, it is clear that he felt that Grenada must be free to choose its own friends, to define and chart its own foreign and domestic policy. Thus he made no secret of his determination to follow the Cuban model. His embrace of the Soviet Union was also open and defiant.

No one would argue that Caribbean governments should spinelessly capitulate to every crude political or economic pressure emanating from Washington. On the other hand, small states in America's backyard (or anteroom if one dislikes the backyard metaphor) need to recognize that their economies are fragile and vulnerable, and that there are parameters within which they must operate if they are to survive. Such parameters are wider for some states depending on the complexity of their material and human resource base, but whether that state be Chile, Jamaica, Nicaragua, El Salvador or Grenada, the limits are there and can be exceeded only if deep reliance is placed on some alternative such as the socialist bloc. But even in such instances, there is a very high price to be paid in the

short and the long runs, and in the end one is never sure that the gains outweigh the costs in material terms or in the price that has to be paid in terms of the infringement of civil rights and freedoms.

In the case of Grenada, it was argued that the middle class was small and not in a position to destabilize and hold the country for ransom as did the middle class in Jamaica. It was also argued that Grenada's economic needs were limited and easily met by small injections of economic and technical assistance from socialist and other friendly Western countries which were willing to help Grenada despite US opposition. Thus, the opportunity cost of defiance was assumed to be relatively insignificant. On the other hand, the more pragmatic noted that Grenada had little to sell on the international market other than beautiful beaches, cocoa and spices and that most of these were traded with the West. Thus, the more prudent argued that a policy of open hostility to the United States and the local bourgeoisie was ill advised even though it might be exciting politically. It is worth noting that Bernard Coard had cautioned that there was need to temporize with imperialism and to move forward slowly with economic reforms.

Why did the NJM not seek to hold elections in 1979 after having promised to do so?

Shortly after seizing power, Bishop assured his listeners that "all democratic freedoms, including freedom of elections, religious and political opinion will be fully restored to the people." Firm assurances were also given by George Louison to the foreign ministers of the region that free elections would be held "as soon as suitable arrangements could be made." These commitments, however, were not kept, and within a week the coup was deemed a "revolution" which was "irreversible."

It may well be that after reassessment, the party was not certain that it could win an open election. The party had won only three of the seven seats which it had contested as part of a People's Alliance in 1976, and Bishop had won his seat by only 110 votes. It might also be that the anti-election orientation of Bernard Coard prevailed over the more "liberal" sentiments of Bishop, that the latter became persuaded that the Westminster formula was now irrelevant to Grenada, and thus he was prepared to thumb his nose at the sensitivities of the region.

Perhaps the NJM feared that an open election would invite the possibility of violent confrontations (including political assassinations) between the new government and its supporters, and those of the ousted Gairy. One in fact had to deal with the Gairyites, since any resort to the Westminster model would have made it impossible for the new government to debar Gairy's

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party from contesting the elections, even if Gairy himself could be precluded from returning.

All three possibilities were probably closely interlinked and pointed in the same direction. The Cuban model was also available as an alternative, and this may have provided added reinforcement for the predisposition to avoid open elections. Whatever the reason, it was a fatal decision, and I argue that had the NJM faced the polls in the months following the election, the party would still be installed in St. George's today, though its character would certainly have been different from that which came to de-

fine it. The NJM might well have retained the loose social democratic form which it had when it began.

Whatever the reason for the PRG's refusal to hold elections, they went on to provide an elaborate rationalization for their decision. Bishop took a Rousseauist position that democracy was not a mere matter of voting every five years. To those who shouted about the legitimacy of the vote, he replied with the slogan of "people's power" which Fidel had popularized in Cuba. A more meaningful democracy was said to involve the establishment of assemblies in the parishes, villages and regions within which

people would participate and make decisions which affected their daily lives. Similar assemblies would be established in a variety of functional areas. This, it was felt, would energize the people in a manner that no periodic election could. As Bishop intoned, "our democratic process is our strongest weapon for change, for development and for improvement of life in our country." Real democracy, as opposed to paper democracy, also meant that the disadvantaged and marginalized groups in society should be put in a position where they could make meaningful inputs in the policy-making process. Women, Bishop felt, were especially disadvantaged. There was also need to educate the masses so that meaningful participation would be possible.

How democratic was the NJM?

Despite all the rhetoric about democracy, the available evidence suggests that the political system in Grenada was anything but democratic, and that the dictatorship constructed by Gairy using Westminster formulas was replaced by a dictatorship legitimized by Marxist formulas. It is true that social rights were increased for workers and women. There were also assemblies and rallies, but these were manipulated and limited in their role and scope. No party congresses were held, and the Central Committee as a whole did not meet regularly until crisis struck in 1983. As members of the CC themselves admitted, the leadership was deferred to, and criticism (including self-criticism) only became institutionalized in late 1983 when it was much too late.

Those who did not accept, or who were even suspected of not accepting, the goals or strategies and tactics of the revolution were deemed to be dangerous traitors or saboteurs. Such persons were either put under surveillance and reported on by vigilante groups affiliated with the party or detained "to prevent them from acting in a manner prejudicial to public safety, public order and the defence of Grenada or with a view to subverting or sabotaging the People's Revolutionary Government." As Minister of National Security, Bishop himself signed many of the detention orders.

It was indeed ironic, though understandable, that a regime which had come to power through the use of violence should see no ideological contradiction in seeking to eliminate others who were suspected of seeking to do the same thing. And that is one of the main flaws in the argument which dismisses elections as mere routine. Despite all the justified criticisms which are leveled against Westminster-type elections, they are nonetheless part of a package of norms and practices which are mutually reinforcing; and once they are dismissed as irrelevant, there is nothing else which cannot be withdrawn in the name of the people's democracy, guided democracy or

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It was thus hardly surprising that after having suspended the 1974 constitution and detained the key followers of Gairy and some of their own supporters, the regime should seek to put the press under "heavy heavy manners." The *Torchlight*, the only independent newspaper then existing in Grenada, was ordered to cease publication on 13 October 1979. The PRG declared that it was opposed to the paper's policy of reprinting "anti-PRG" articles from foreign newspapers and the publication of stories which were allegedly aimed at undermining the support of key groups (such as the Rastas) for the regime.

The closing down of the *Torchlight*, a fly sheet with limited circulation, was clearly a case of overkill. It should be recalled that publishers of the *Torchlight* were allied to the Grenada National Party, and that the NJM and the GNP had been allies during the 1976 elections. The newspaper had not shown any consistent hostility toward the PRG, and the paper had both supported and criticized the regime on many issues. Indeed, an examination of past issues by the Caribbean Press Council revealed no evidence of clear and consistent bias. What was at issue were differing conceptions of what constituted a free press. The PRG was not merely concerned with what the *Torchlight* had said so far, but the use to which it could be put by the Grenadian bourgeoisie and the CIA.

The conclusion of the foregoing is that the NJM insurrection opened up possibilities for the transformation of Grenada into a genuinely democratic society, but that a great deal of what happened was counterproductive. The cosmetic language of socialism, revolution and democracy were used, but in practice nothing was achieved which could not be contained within the context of social democracy and the Westminster formula. Capitalism remained virtually intact, and all of the social and economic reforms introduced had precedents in Trinidad and Tobago and other parts of the Caribbean.

How do the people of Grenada view the NJM revolution and its legacy?

By September 1983, members of the Central Committee agreed that the mood of the masses was rebellious and that members of the army and the party were demoralized. Attendance at rallies had dropped, and mobilizers were being chased away. As Unison Whiteman admitted, "a popular rebellion had started." Post-invasion assessments indicate that the Grenadian masses shared the views of the party elite that the revolution had gone sour and that the NJM had lost the "mandate of heaven." In a survey conducted by St. Augustine Research Associates in December 1983, 86 percent of the 711 persons sampled welcomed the US-

OECS invasion as a "good thing"; only 10 percent were opposed. Ninety-one percent of those who felt that the PRG was taking Grenada into the socialist bloc expressed opposition to that demarche, with only 6 percent welcoming it. There was agreement that the PRG did achieve some gains, particularly in the fields of education, construction of the airport and health, but only 38 percent of the sample felt that, on balance, the PRG was "good for Grenada," with 44 percent disagreeing. When asked which of the policies of the PRG they disliked most, 20 percent identified their involvement with Cuba, the Soviet Union and the rest of the

The dictatorship constructed by Gairy using Westminster formulas was replaced by a dictatorship legitimized by Marxist formulas.

socialist bloc; 15 percent cited their policy of detaining political opponents; 12 percent pointed to the suppression of the press, while 10 percent said they disliked all their policies. Only 7 percent said they were upset most by the PRG's failure to call elections, and 5 percent objected to the creation of an armed militia.

An indication of the extent of popular dissatisfaction with the NJM is the finding in that December 1983 survey that only 4 percent of those sampled said they would vote for the NJM if an election were called in 1984, and only 3 percent felt the NJM could win such an election. A more telling finding is that as many as 51 percent of the sample said that the NJM should be debarred from even contesting the election. The speculation that the young might still be sympathetic to the NJM and would vote for it is not borne out by the survey. Fifty-two percent of the 16-21 age group and 49 percent of the 22-30 age group said the NJM should be deprived of its civic rights. Clearly the masses and the youth feel that the NJM had betrayed Grenada. Without Bishop they had lost all interest in the NJM. No Bishop, no revolution! The revolution had not become institutionalized.

How irreversible is the revolution?

The question that finally remains to be answered is the extent to which the revolution achieved any of the purposes it set for itself and the extent to which it is irreversible. To what extent is it true that the invasion ensured that no new Bishops will arise to continue that revolutionary tradition? My own view is that in a fundamental sense the revolution died with Bishop and that it will be a

long while before Grenadians will allow themselves to be seduced by revolutionary rhetoric. Those who see a revolutionary phoenix arising out of the bowels of Fort Frederick are giving vent to their hopes rather than reflecting reality. Theirs is the reflection of an exile mentality. The people of Grenada are not merely traumatized or in a temporary trance; they have learned not to trust the self-serving and cynical rhetoric of intellectuals.

Grenadian youth, it is true, have learned the language of class and anti-imperialism politics. They may, however, have also come to understand enough about politics not to be taken in easily by the absurd inanities of a Gairy or the romanticism of a revolutionary hero. They and their elders have lost some of the innocence in which they wallowed during the Gairy years, and they no doubt understand a bit more about the relationship between their material well-being and the international system. For the time being, however, they clearly feel that the US tie is a better guarantor of that well-being than were either Cuba or the Soviet Union. While the Cuban contribution may well continue to be viewed positively because of the badly needed services performed by Cuban workers, doctors and teachers, the Soviet Union gained few friends since its direct contributions were mainly in the form of weaponry—designed more to guarantee the military survival of the revolution than to improve material well-being of the Grenadian people.

For the moment, Grenadians seem willing to place their eggs in the US basket as long as that basket appears to have a safe bottom. So far, the Americans have played all their cards right. They have made commitments to complete the airport as well as to provide funding for a number of priority projects. Private investors have also been queuing up to seek out profitable investments, particularly in the hotel industry. One can only hope that whatever government replaces the interim administration will seek to filter out some of the cruder aspects of the American cultural and economic invasion. There is indeed concern among the more sensitive that Grenada will become too dependent on the US and become an American colony complete with exclusive residential enclaves for retirees and gangster types in the tourist industry. For the time being, however, the Grenadian masses seem quite willing to become the 51st state and to shroud themselves in the economic and military security blanket offered by the US, four-and-one-half years of the NJM notwithstanding. Coard was indeed prophetic when he remarked that ultraleftism is the right hand of imperialism. And regrettably, the events in Grenada have helped to strengthen reaction not only in Grenada, but in the entire Caribbean. *Plus ça change!* □