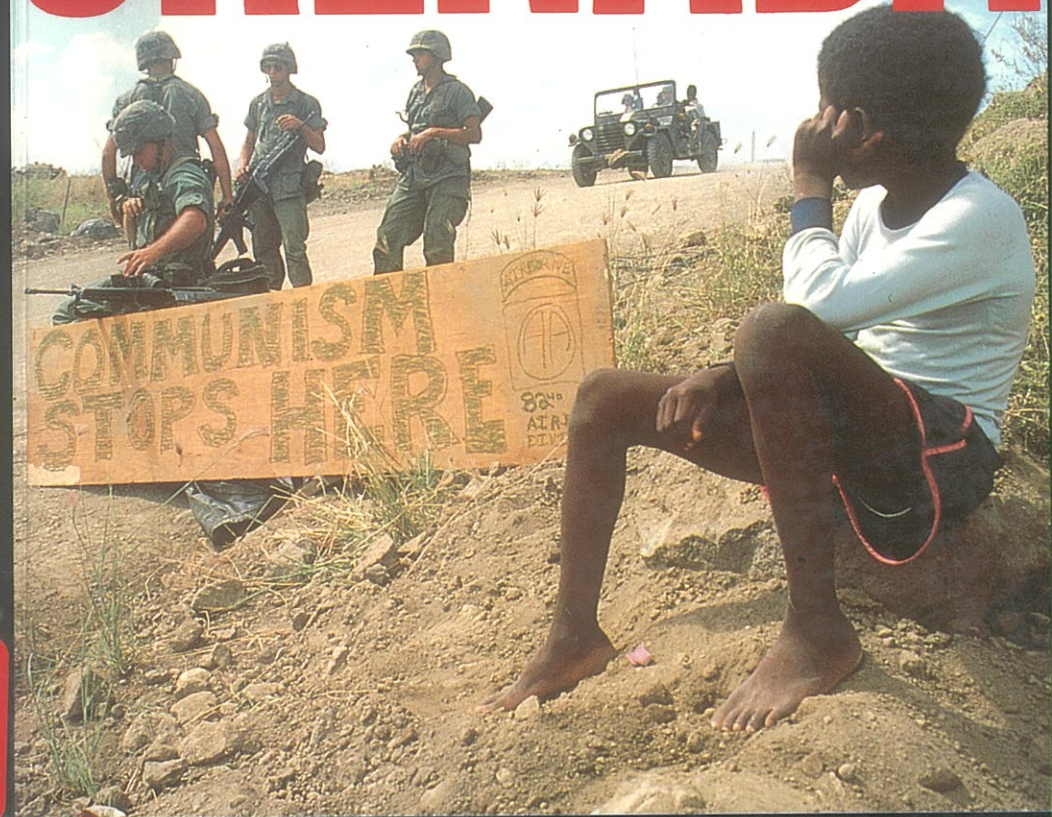


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James Ferguson



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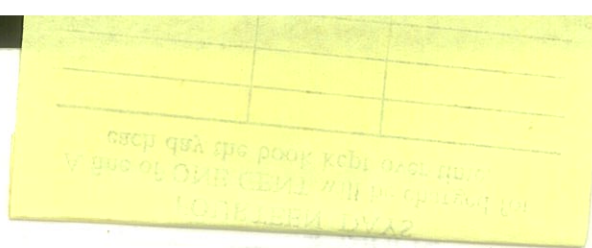
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Grenada: revolution in  
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# Grenada Revolution in Reverse

James Ferguson

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## Introduction 'Urgent Fury'

*'A period of self-doubt is over...history will record that one of our turning points came on a small island in the Caribbean where America went to take care of her own and to rescue a neighbouring nation from a growing tyranny.'*  
Ronald Reagan, 25 October 1984.

*'We blew them away.'* Vice-Admiral Joseph Metcalf III, 3 November 1983.

On 25 October 1983, the largest military action carried out by the United States since the Vietnam War until the invasion of Panama took place in the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada. Codenamed 'Urgent Fury', the operation actively involved 6,000 US marines and paratroopers, with thousands more in reserve. A further 400 paramilitary personnel from six Caribbean states were indirectly involved, although none took part in the actual fighting. The total cost of the exercise was later estimated by the US Department of Defense at US\$75.5 million. Its avowed objective was to invade the island, oust the *de facto* government that had been in power since 19 October and return Grenada to the US sphere of influence after four years of socialist revolution.

The invasion, claimed President Reagan, was conducted with 'surgical precision'. In reality, it was a clumsy display of incompetence, poor intelligence and what military strategists call 'overkill'. Not only did the invading force meet with unexpectedly fierce resistance from a small number of Grenadians, but it also engaged in wholly avoidable conflict with Cuban construction workers at the site of the new airport. In one of the many bombing raids which were intended to destroy specific targets, a psychiatric hospital was apparently mistaken for a military base when a number of Grenadian troops fled into it, and

some thirty patients were killed. Much property was destroyed, while high military and civilian casualties were incurred due to inadequate communications, lethal 'friendly fire' and an emphasis on aerial attacks. The operation took three days longer than anticipated; it was only on 28 October that a press statement, intended for publication on the 25th, was released to confirm the success of the invasion.

### Mental Hospital Bombing

The most controversial D-Day destruction . . . was that of the 180-bed mental hospital. The attack on the mental hospital was made by an A-7 Corsair light attack aircraft with a 500-pound bomb. The result was devastating. 21 Grenadian patients were killed according to US official estimates — and over 50 according to journalists who first discovered the death and the destruction. One will never know the exact number. The attack on the hospital was undoubtedly unintentional. It was what has nowadays come to be called 'collateral damage'. What is surprising is not that the mistake was made, but the fact of the failure by US officials to acknowledge that Grenadians had died in the attack. Official acknowledgment of attack on the mental hospital came on 31 October, six days after the Grenadians had been buried. The US marines who had been in the vicinity of the hospital for almost a week, it seems, did not report the matter to their superiors (or did they?). Admiral Wesley McDonald . . . said that he first learnt of the attack from the ham radio operators. But he did nothing till a Canadian journalist visited the site and made the bombing and the death and destruction public. The explanations for the attack were then advanced. It was asserted that the hospital was attacked because it did not have a red cross marking on the roof; that the PRA had raised a flag on it; that it was near Fort Frederick (which strictly speaking also did not deserve aerial punishment); and that the lunatics inside had been armed. The failure to find out about the hospital dead was explained by claiming that it was due to the Grenadian custom of 'burying their dead early'.

Source: Vijay Tiwathia, *The Grenada War: Anatomy of a Low-Intensity Conflict*, p.87.

Like the Falklands war the previous year, the Grenada invasion was an important exercise in official misinformation and media control. Just as the extent of US casualties was underestimated, so the number of Cuban personnel — and their military status — was deliberately



US soldier in streets of St George's, 27 October 1983

Jim Rudin

exaggerated in order to explain the difficulties encountered. Reliable reports suggested that the bodies of Grenadian soldiers were flown back to Havana with the Cuban dead so as to minimise the local death toll and inflate the Cuban casualty figures. Thirteen such corpses were returned to Grenada from Havana in late October and early November. The invading force attempted unsuccessfully to restrict news coverage to selected journalists, and most 'unofficial' reporters were effectively prevented from reaching Grenada until the military action had ended.

The official version of events, however, failed to prevent criticism of the efficiency of the operation and the grounds on which it was based. The three immediate justifications for the invasion — that US citizens, notably students attending an 'offshore' medical school, were in danger, that Grenada's Governor-General had requested assistance, and that the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) was entitled to invite US intervention — have all been subsequently revealed as spurious. Equally dubious was the longer-term rationale for the US action: that Grenada, and the new airport in particular, were intended as a staging post for Cuban and Soviet aggression in the Caribbean and Latin America. Despite statements from the

British-based electronics company, Plessey, that the airport was unsuited and unequipped for anything other than civilian purposes, the US Department of Defense insisted on displaying stockpiles of largely antiquated light weaponry as evidence of a threatening military build-up.

One aspect of the invasion did not have to be invented, however; the fact that the great majority of Grenadians welcomed the arrival of the US troops. The atmosphere of relief was therefore interpreted as a popular endorsement of the military action. If this much was true (even though civilian populations normally have the good sense to welcome invading armies), it was certainly much more questionable to assert that people were also celebrating the demise of the revolution. This, of course, was the image that the US State Department conveyed, but such an image overlooked two central details: that the revolution and its popular support had already collapsed six days earlier with the death of Maurice Bishop and others; and that the US 'rescue mission' was therefore saving Grenada not from revolution, but from a military coup that had already destroyed that revolution.

The reasons for the destruction of the Grenadian revolution have been extensively analysed and debated elsewhere (\*see p.15), and there is little to be gained from repeating the arguments that have made up its post-mortem. It is simply worth remembering that the dispute over leadership and ideological direction which split the New Jewel Movement (NJM) culminated in the murder of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and five of his leading supporters on 19 October 1983 at Fort Rupert, St George's. With this action and the further deaths of an unknown number of civilians at the hands of the army, ended the 4½-year regime of the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) and began the brief period in power of the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC).

For six days the RMC ruled by decree, attempting to impose a 96-hour total curfew throughout the island. Grenada's overwhelmingly agricultural population was forbidden under pain of death to tend crops or feed animals. Few Grenadians had reserves of food, and shops were closed indefinitely. Many people without inside sanitation were in theory prohibited from leaving their homes. Government radio repeated accusations against Bishop and his supporters, but little was known concerning what had happened at Fort Rupert or how many had died in the massacre. Reports that bodies had been left unburied, burnt or thrown into communal pits caused widespread revulsion which combined with a more general sense of trauma. Arrests and detentions of 'counter-revolutionaries' were

common, and although no recorded violent death occurred during the period of curfew, the atmosphere was one of fear and uncertainty.

The arrival of the US troops was therefore greeted with understandable enthusiasm by a significant number of Grenadians, including many who had supported the PRG. For some, the first priority was revenge against the RMC which was held responsible for Bishop's death, and the invasion seemed to offer such retribution. Had the invasion occurred earlier, the popular response would certainly have been different. 'If Bishop had been alive, leading the people', remarked Fidel Castro, 'it would have been very difficult for the United States to orchestrate the political aspects of its intervention.'

### Setting an Example

The invasion restored the self-esteem of the Reagan administration, whose foreign policy initiatives were following the general pattern of post-Vietnam failure. After Washington's disastrous involvement in Lebanon and impasse in Central America, Grenada offered the prospect of an easy propaganda coup. As Bob Woodward relates, the invasion became a potent myth for President Reagan and his presidency:

Grenada grew as a positive symbol in Administration lore. It was routinely invoked as a sign of a new toughness, reaffirming the Monroe Doctrine, big-stick and gunboat diplomacy — anti-Communism — burying once and for all the specter of Iran. The images were those of American students returning from Grenada, kissing US soil as they disembarked from airplanes, or a defiant Prime Minister Charles [of Dominica] at Reagan's side proclaiming the United States the savior of Caribbean democracy.

Undertaken in the name of national security and regional stability, the initial motive of the invasion was, as former Secretary of State Alexander Haig admitted, geo-political. Its function was primarily to demonstrate US military control of the Caribbean region by putting into action the 'Reagan Doctrine' which proposed 'rolling back communism' by military means. But once accomplished, the invasion also opened up a further possibility.

With the military victory won, the opportunity now existed to make an example of the island. Since 1979 Grenada had been viewed by Washington as a Cuban and Soviet satellite. Within the terms of the prevailing East-West conflict, this meant that Grenada was a military threat, but it was also a country which followed an economic and

political model unpalatable to the US. According to the Reagan administration, the PRG was moving rapidly towards sweeping state control of the economy and the forced collectivisation of agriculture, stifling individual enterprise in a welter of red tape. Worse, it was allegedly engaged in human rights violations and had established a repressive one-party state. The invasion could therefore be presented to the world as a liberation from communist tyranny and as a warning that socialist development was not a feasible option in the Caribbean.

As well as issuing this warning, the invasion also offered the opportunity to score an important ideological point by proving the superiority of the US-endorsed economic model for development. Washington hoped to discredit the revolutionary period by emphasising its supposed economic failures, and simultaneously to demonstrate the advantages of the US model by turning Grenada into its showcase. The island would become a laboratory for an experiment in development that would replace the non-capitalist approach of the PRG with the free-market capitalism favoured by the US administration.

US policy in the region was at that stage in the Reagan presidency precisely geared towards such crude ideological goals. The function of the so-called Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) of 1983, for instance, was to increase US aid and trade with selected countries in an attempt to strengthen links between their governments, local private sectors and US investors. Loyal allies of US regional policy such as Jamaica and the Dominican Republic were rewarded by increased bilateral aid and by valuable preferential access to otherwise protected US markets. Grenada, of course, had been excluded from the benefits of CBI for as long as the PRG had been in power. With the destruction of the revolution, however, the island was seen as a potential model for private sector-led development in a Caribbean micro-state and as a vindication of US regional policy generally.

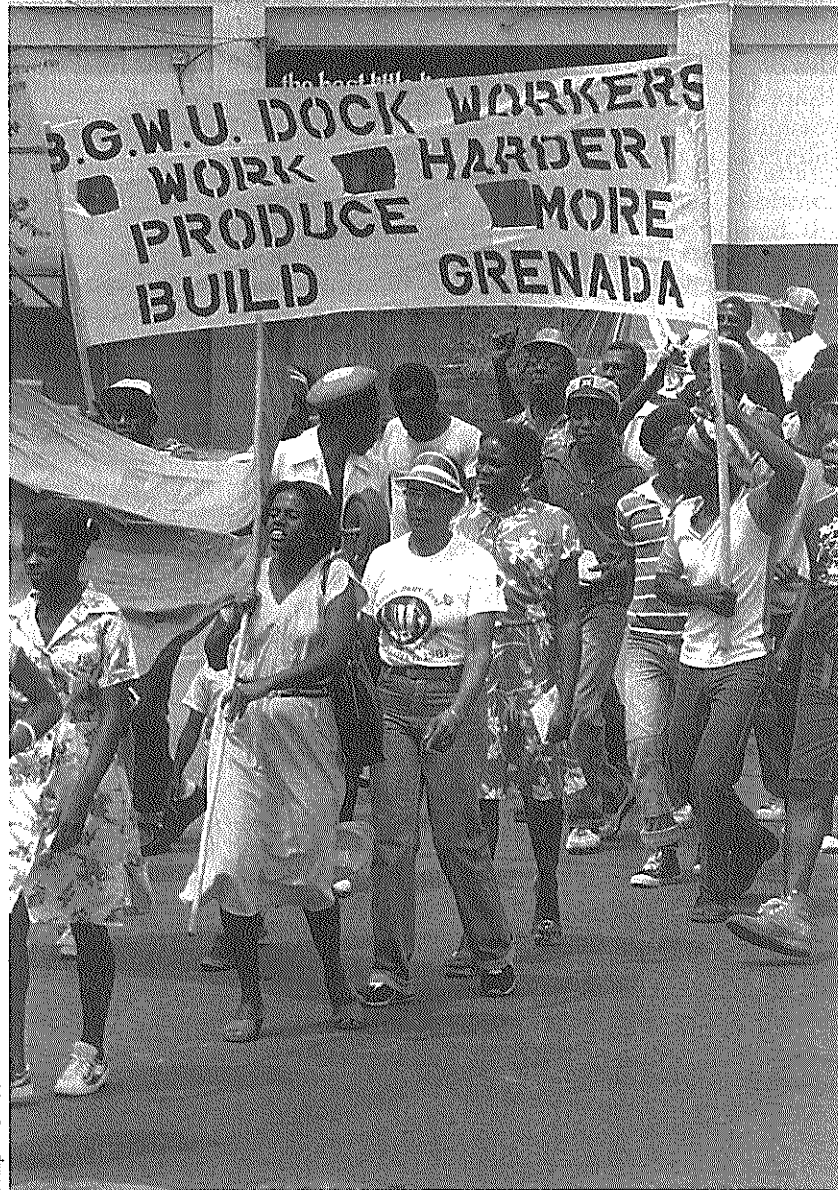
This tempting possibility had less pleasing financial implications. By cutting Grenada's links with Cuba, the Eastern bloc and various Third World countries, the US cut off much of the financial aid that was channelled into the PRG's development strategy. Having shunned the island's request for assistance for the previous four years, the US now found itself committed to playing the major role in Grenada's economic affairs. Repairing the damage done during the invasion promised to be a costly business, as did the prospect of building an infrastructure that would attract US investors. But the long-term aim lay precisely there, in the belief that private investment would provide the basis for Grenada's transformation from socialism to the free-market model.

This belief did not take long to fade into disappointment. Significant private sector investment has never materialised in Grenada. If the idea of a free market showcase ever existed seriously, it has long since disappeared. Grenada's story since October 1983 is that of Washington's failure to turn the island into a textbook model of free enterprise in the Caribbean.

## Revolution and Reaction

In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, most Grenadians supported the US action. Some sections of society, particularly the small business sector, which felt themselves to have suffered during the PRG regime, were enthusiastic, and within several weeks the local Chamber of Commerce had organised a 6,000-strong petition demanding a permanent US military presence in the island. Most Grenadians, however, were more ambivalent, even if hopeful that US aid and investment would bring a new prosperity. While welcoming the end of the RMC, they were concerned not to lose the significant gains made during the four years of the PRG. These gains had affected the lives of the overwhelming majority of people and were almost universally popular. Rooted in the commitment to transfer wealth and power to the traditionally poor and marginalised, the PRG's major social reforms formed the basis of its non-capitalist development programme. Their impact was felt in many key areas:

- housing: the PRG introduced low cost housing for the poor and a system of home improvement grants and loans that benefited an estimated 1,600 families;
- health: free medical and dental treatment was introduced for the first time. In the PRG's 1982-3 budget, 14 per cent of expenditure was devoted to health care, and at least one medical centre was established in each of the island's six parishes during the four years of the 'revo';
- education: the PRG introduced free primary and secondary schooling, offering free uniforms and textbooks to children from poor families. In 1978, three Grenadians were studying abroad on scholarships; in 1983, the number had risen to 330, of whom 50 per cent were educated in Cuba and 50 per cent in Eastern Europe. Education accounted for 22 per cent of the 1982-3 budget;
- employment: the PRG created thousands of jobs in an expanded security force and in infrastructural work. Unemployment dropped from an estimated 49 per cent in 1979 to approximately 14 per cent in 1983, largely due to state schemes



Philip Wolmuth

Trade unionists march to celebrate the third anniversary of the revolution, 13 March 1982

such as the Youth Employment Project which placed some 1,000 young people on training and work experience courses in agriculture and construction;

— women: a separate ministry of women's affairs was formed. It introduced paid maternity leave, pre-school and day centres, and campaigned successfully for the removal of discrimination in pay and conditions. Women benefited particularly from the literacy and adult education campaign organised by the Centre for Popular Education (CPE). The institutional sexual exploitation endemic to the previous regime was effectively eliminated;

— wealth: the government claimed a rise in per capita annual income from US\$450 in 1978 to US\$870 in 1983. Income tax was abolished for the lowest-earning 30 per cent of the workforce, while prices of essential items were strictly controlled;

— participation: the PRG involved thousands of people in decision-making through mass organisations, trade unions and zonal councils. The 1983 budget was discussed throughout the island by local groups, comments and criticisms being sent directly to the ministry of finance. Bodies such as the National Youth Organisation and the National Women's Organisation had 6,500 and 7,000 members respectively at the peak of their influence.

#### The Colonial Period

- 1498 Christopher Columbus sights Grenada during his third voyage
- 1609 First British attempt to colonise island repulsed by indigenous Carib population
- 1674 Grenada becomes official French colony after extermination of Caribs
- 1763 France cedes colony to Britain at Treaty of Paris
- 1795 Inspired by Haitian slave revolt, 'free coloured' planter Julien Fedon leads unsuccessful 15-month insurrection against British authorities
- 1838 End of slavery
- 1857 Cocoa replaces sugar as main crop
- 1951 Eric Gairy leads general strike

- 1962 Constitution suspended after British commission finds evidence of corruption by Gairy government
- 1973 New Jewel Movement formed; mounting protests against Gairy regime
- 1974 Grenada achieves independence

The legacy of social reform that the PRG left in Grenada was all the more remarkable given the island's history up until the revolution of March 1979. Grenada's evolution from sugar-producing colony to dependent micro-state had followed many of the stages common to most Caribbean territories. The gradual process of colonial withdrawal by the British promised to favour a small dominant class of landowners, merchants and state functionaries who controlled much of the best land, the export-import businesses and statutory agricultural marketing boards as well as the public sector utilities. The vast majority of people were politically and economically marginalised by this elite which was prepared to consolidate its power through an alliance with the colonial authorities or, if need be, through political independence. A middle stratum also existed, comprising urban professionals and larger-scale farmers, but the majority of Grenada's population were rural workers, employed on the estates, engaged in peasant production and small-scale trading, or commonly a combination of these. The shift from sugar as main export crop to newer crops such as bananas, nutmeg and cocoa had done little to affect land distribution in the island; in the 1950s it was estimated that 1.45 per cent of Grenada's farmers (or perhaps some 150 individuals) owned almost 45 per cent of the island's cultivable land. The creation of the 'spice island' had also involved the replacement of slavery by the system of *metayer* or share-cropping, whereby peasants worked on estates in return for rented smallholdings.

Extreme social inequality, colonial neglect and deteriorating conditions generated serious conflict throughout the Caribbean region in the 1930s and 1950s, resulting in increased trade union and political party organisation. The 'slums of the empire' thereby produced a generation of leaders who were to be instrumental in the process of political independence, thus obstructing the anticipated succession of the established colonial elites. In Grenada's case, Eric Gairy, a mercurial and populist trade union leader, rose to power by claiming to represent the island's traditionally marginalised majority. Using his

union base to create a political party, Gairy went on to win five out of seven general elections between 1951 (when universal adult suffrage was first introduced) and 1979.

### The 'Slums of the Empire'

In 1946 the Slum Clearance and Housing ordinance was enacted, specifically to provide proper houses for persons of the working class, to eradicate slum areas and to repair or demolish insanitary dwellings. By 1949, the Central Planning and Housing Authority (the executive authority established by that ordinance) had built 12 houses, and these were for persons who lost their homes during the 1945 floods . . . By the end of the 1940s, 86% of the houses in Grenada were still wood, wattle and mud; 80% were either one or two-room dwellings with no privacy for adults . . .

The standard of peasant infant care was very low. Between 1935 and 1950, an annual average of 400 children born in the hospital went home fat and healthy only to return in a few months in an advanced state of marasmus due to neglect and improper and insufficient feeding . . .

Many children had nothing to wear except rags or 'shirt-tails' and many were kept away from school due to lack of adequate and proper clothing . . .

The 1938 Commission on Economic Conditions among Wage-earners described the peasant's housing as disgraceful, his clothing as wretched and his body as emaciated by hookworms, venereal disease and tuberculosis. His children were ravaged by yaws and gastro-enteritis. These conditions still prevailed by 1949. In that year the Labour Commissioner reported . . . protein, vitamin B, calcium and iron deficiencies in the diet of workers and their children.

Source: George Brizan, *Grenada: Island of Conflict*, pp.240-241.

Based on clientelism and thuggery, Gairy's later periods in office were marked by economic mismanagement and repression. A colonial commission of enquiry in 1962 accused the Gairy government of systematic corruption ('squandermania') and political victimisation, and briefly suspended the colony's constitution. Ridiculed for his apparent obsession with flying saucers, Gairy's more serious failings included links with Pinochet's Chile and Duvalier's Haiti. To the British authorities, eager to be rid of their Caribbean colonies, Gairy was scarcely the ideal candidate for leading Grenada to full



Jim Rudin

Eric Gairy's government on Independence Day, 7 February 1974. Gairy is seated fifth from right

independence. Nevertheless, in 1974, amid widescale protest and state-sponsored violence, Gairy cut the island's formal colonial links with Britain.

Revered by many poor Grenadians who remembered him as the militant unionist of the 1950s and the self-appointed spokesman for the black majority, Gairy was anathema to the 'plantocracy' or land-owning elite who resented his crude populism and pilfering of government money. In response to Gairy's Grenada United Labour Party (GULP), the idiosyncratic vehicle for its leader's ambitions, the economic elite set up an opposition Grenada National Party (GNP), founded in 1956. Led by Herbert Blaize, a barrister from the dependent territory of Carriacou, the GNP was an orthodox conservative organisation, devoted to representing the interests of estate owners, the Chamber of Commerce and the urban middle class. It was in office twice (1957-61 and 1962-7), during which time the country stagnated.

The GNP, however, was unable to defend its constituency against Gairy's attack on the plantocracy. Given much more power by the internal self-government granted by Britain in 1967, Gairy introduced

a 'land for the landless' programme which amounted to the expropriation of political opponents' estates in the name of agrarian reform. Gairy took over many large agricultural properties between 1968 and 1973 and simultaneously rewarded GULP loyalists by purchasing their farms at inflated prices. In this way, he built up a significant state sector, based on a system of patronage and corruption. He also ensured a solid stratum of rural support by handing out smallholdings to landless estate workers.

Besides victimisation and nepotism, the alternation in power between the GULP and the GNP produced few significant changes in actual policy, despite the fact that the parties claimed to represent the rural majority and the urban elite respectively. Overt clientelism was common to both, as was uncritical support for US policy in the region. This combination of corruption and conservatism was the background against which the radicalism of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) flourished. A history of dubious electoral practice also accounted for the NJM's open distaste for the discredited 'Westminster model' of parliamentary democracy, even if, for tactical reasons, the NJM entered an unsuccessful electoral coalition with the GNP in 1976. The extent of popular support for the insurrection which ousted Gairy in March 1979 showed that most Grenadians were eager for the social transformation that the NJM, as principal political force within the PRG, promised. Gairyism and the conservatism of the GNP seemed to belong to the past.

### Return of the Old Order

The destruction of the PRG and the resulting overthrow of the RMC created a power vacuum in Grenada that the US was determined to fill. Soon after the invasion, old faces reappeared. Following four years of exile in the US, Eric Gairy returned to the island and resurrected the GULP, while Herbert Blaize, who had spent the revolutionary period in obscurity in Carriacou, revived the GNP. To many observers, the impression was one of *déjà vu* and dismay that the seemingly discredited Gairy and Blaize could once again lay claim to political power.

Their return, however, was not merely symptomatic of the post-invasion power vacuum, but also of the resilience of their support bases during the revolutionary period. The remnants of the plantocracy and the small business sector, the sponsors of the GNP, had certainly come under pressure from the PRG in its attempt to broaden the role of the state and cooperative sectors in the national

economy. But few expropriations or nationalisations had actually taken place, and instead the PRG had sought to form a pragmatic working relationship with the private sector in what the NJM strategists saw as an early phase in the process of 'socialist orientation'. They wanted first to eradicate the mismanagement of Gairyism and modernise the economy through an alliance with the business sector rather than pressing ahead with a full-scale socialist transformation. The PRG's pragmatism won approval from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, even though most large landowners and merchants limited themselves to the minimum of cooperation with the government. Consequently, the economic elite survived the PRG years and saw the US invasion as a chance to restore its political fortunes.

A significant degree of support for Gairy had also survived the revolution. This was perhaps more surprising, given his controversial human rights record during the 1960s and 1970s and given that his natural supporters — the poorest sections of the rural population — had benefited most from the PRG's programme of social reforms. Nevertheless, loyalty to Gairy apparently remained firm, particularly among older people in rural areas and those who owed their smallholdings to his highly partisan 'agrarian reform'.

Despite the radical project and the impressive achievements of the PRG, the old political forces therefore reemerged more or less intact. This phenomenon, together with the popularity of the PRG's reforms, was to create a serious constraint on US ambitions for Grenada. Neither Blaize's parochial conservatism nor Gairy's reactionary personality cult was the appropriate vehicle for US plans, while the majority of Grenadians were still attracted to the social programme of the PRG. What was clearly needed was a political force in Grenada that could bring in the modernisation and restructuring that the US planned for the island. For the US, that force was to prove elusive.

The last chapter of *Grenada: Whose Freedom?*, published by the Latin America Bureau early in 1984, concluded by predicting that the victors of October 1983 would face serious problems:

Although the crises of October 1983 were without parallel in the modern history of Grenada and had a considerable impact on Caribbean politics, those who have emerged victorious are left with a major challenge. If they are to provide for the genuine welfare of this little island they will have to do much more than simply act according to a constitution, which itself has already proved to be very difficult for them. As time passes the promises and achievements of those who invaded and those who benefited from the invasion will be judged against the limited but real

advances made between March 1979 and October 1983. This is especially the case for the younger generation, whose expectations were awakened in a manner that a determinedly pro-US system is not even concerned to match. Although it appears extremely unlikely, it is conceivable that the US will make Grenada a 'showcase' by ploughing in vast quantities of aid, but even if this were done it would not break the legacy of centuries of economic backwardness and would be likely only to reinforce external ties of dependence and an internal imbalance of wealth and power.

These predictions have been proven to be well founded. The social, economic and political challenges that have confronted the US and its local allies have been at least as acute as anticipated by critics of the invasion. Far from becoming a showcase of free enterprise virtues in the Caribbean, Grenada now stands more as an example of the limitations and weaknesses of such an approach to development.

\* Almost every published analysis of the Grenadian revolution's demise places ultimate responsibility with the NJM faction associated with Bernard Coard. Various interpretations as an act of personal ambition on the part of Coard himself, an 'ultraleft' putsch, or a combination of both, the move by the pro-Coard majority faction of the NJM Central Committee to reduce the extent of Maurice Bishop's executive power and to introduce so-called 'collective leadership' is usually seen as leading to the final internal crisis of the party, if not to the murders of 19 October 1983. Books and articles by Carew, Lewis, Marable, O'Shaughnessy, Thorndike and others all subscribe to the view that Coard's bid to win greater political control of the revolution resulted in the end of that very process (see *Further Reading*).

As yet, no coherent apologia for the 'Coardite' interpretation of events has appeared, although individuals and groups, in Britain, the US and the Caribbean, have been active in defence of Bernard and Phyllis Coard and the other defendants in the Maurice Bishop murder trial and the subsequent appeal (see p.102). Official statements from the NJM (UK) have lamented the 'tragic events of October 1983' and refer to Maurice Bishop as a 'hero', while Leon Cornwall — a member of the Revolutionary Military Council that took power after the massacre and subsequently condemned to death for his alleged part in those events — has described Bishop as 'a genuine revolutionary democrat and anti-imperialist fighter'.

On the exact circumstances surrounding Bishop's death, however, the existing NJM and its supporters have remained silent, condemning the trial of Coard *et al* as a US-sponsored 'kangaroo court'. Statements ascribed to the NJM in Grenada in the first half of 1989 alluded to 'mistakes' made in the handling of the internal party crisis of October 1983, while a pamphlet written

in captivity by Bernard Coard and published in Britain in late 1989 implicitly defends the NJM Central Committee proposal for 'joint leadership' against what is described as the 'massive cultism' surrounding Bishop's leadership. As yet, however, no overall account of the political argument and its violent denouement has yet emerged from this quarter.

## Chapter I

# Made in the USA

*'These places can't get along without outside investment, outside technology. Alone, they are not viable; they will in the end have to become something like offshore states of the United States.'*

Peter Johnson, director of Caribbean/Central American Action, 1984.

*'It's a lovely piece of real estate.'*

George Shultz, on arriving in Grenada, February 1984.

Personnel from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) arrived in Grenada 'almost in conjunction with the troops', stated Peter McPherson, the USAID administrator at a press conference on 8 November 1983. When asked about the relationship between the military action and USAID's role in the island, McPherson replied that 'the Department of Defense people and the AID people have been working closely, really together, as a team'. The initial 'disaster-assistance survey team' was soon joined by a larger mission, made up of representatives from the State Department, the Department of Commerce and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Its brief was to examine how US assistance could best be directed towards the Grenadian private sector and how US private investment could be attracted to the island. The appearance of USAID thus marked the beginning of Grenada's return to a free-market economy and a political doctrine of private enterprise.

### **USAID: assistance and profitability**

The political aims of USAID are succinctly expressed by former deputy administrator, Frank M. Coffin in an interview from the late 1970s:

## Conclusion

# 'A One-Night Stand'

*'There was a sort of Marshall Plan mentality. We just dumped in lots of money and lots of investors and suddenly they would all mix up and we would be back on this tremendous growth path. But development is never that way. Grenada has to come to grips with the reality of development'.*

James Holtaway, USAID Regional Director, May 1989.

During the 1988 US presidential election campaign, Vice-President-to-be Dan Quayle hailed Grenada as one of the outgoing Reagan administration's major foreign policy successes. Although this view was relatively commonplace for a year or more after the invasion, it has become increasingly rare. Instead, Grenada, with its once powerful symbolic message of resurgent US might and militant anti-communism, has faded into obscurity. This is partly due to new political attitudes, generated by changing East-West relations and a reduction in Cold War tensions. The Bush administration currently does not see the Caribbean as an important security threat, and President Gorbachev has made it clear that the USSR does not wish to support revolutionary movements in the western hemisphere. But the silence surrounding Grenada is also due to the embarrassing failure of the development project which the US imposed on the island and its allies in government tried to administer. Failure, ultimately, does not make good propaganda, and there is little to celebrate in Grenada.

What has the US achieved since October 1983? Large capital grants have repaired war damage, upgraded aspects of the island's infrastructure and laid the basis for a manufacturing sector aimed at foreign investors. Politically, a pro-US government somehow survived five years in power and oversaw the widescale reversal of the PRG's policies and programme. The perceived threats of Eric Gairy and the

left were more or less contained during this period, even if in the 1990 elections Gairy narrowly failed to return to power. The private sector has been restored to its traditional place in the island, while a handful of foreign investors has sought to take advantage of a generous set of incentives and tax-breaks. Due to high world prices for agricultural exports, favourable exchange rates and an increase in tourism, the island's economy has grown, while remaining highly undiversified and vulnerable.

These, however, are modest achievements when compared to the high expectations encouraged among Grenadians after the invasion. In contrast to the innovative blend of social reformism and economic diversification advocated by the PRG, they are also strikingly unoriginal in their aims. The general thrust of post-invasion policy has been to return the island to its pre-revolutionary status quo, while adding expanded tourism and offshore manufacturing to its limited economic repertoire. Certain elements of the PRG programme have been maintained, but names have been changed and budgets cut in a profound shift of priorities.

More disturbing is the price paid by most Grenadians for an unsuccessful experiment in economic deregulation. Education, health



Pro-US graffiti in Tempe, St George's

and housing have all deteriorated dramatically, while the burden of indirect taxation has fallen disproportionately on those least able to pay. Per capita income has barely kept pace with inflation, and public sector cuts have massively increased unemployment. The NNP government, despite its optimistic forecasts, persistently teetered on the brink of bankruptcy, unable to collect the taxes it imposed on the advice of its US backers. At the same time, freedoms and rights — the ostensible basis for the invasion itself — have been selectively defined and applied, especially as regards radical groups and individuals who challenge the new orthodoxy.

At the root of this failure has been the inability of government and the US to attract foreign capital to Grenada, thereby creating jobs and services to replace the demolished public sector. This, together with gradually declining levels of US aid, has fuelled disillusionment and resentment against the US. Far from being the island's 'saviour', the US is now more and more seen as a purveyor of broken promises. This feeling was well encapsulated in an article by US writer Gary Krist in an April 1989 edition of the conservative journal, *The New Republic*:

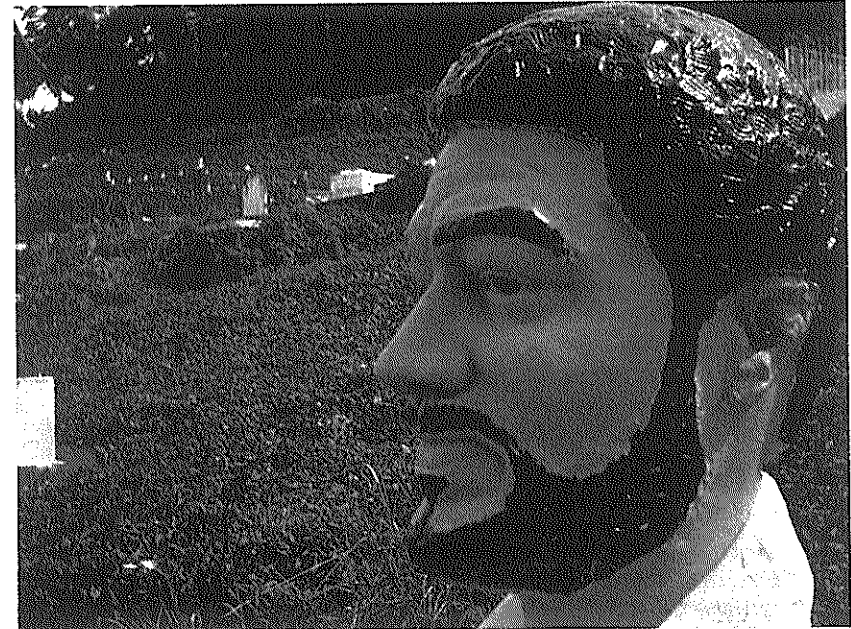
To put it mildly, our presence here — particularly in the poorer western and northwestern sections of the island — no longer occasions the universal adoration that is supposed to be our due as heroic champions of democracy... The reason for our cool reception is not entirely clear, but it seems to have less to do with our invasion/imperialist rescue/adventure mission itself than with the follow-up. That vast flood of American investment in Grenada, much anticipated in the years following the invasion, has not materialized. Although the Agency for International Development has helped build some dandy roads and a nice mental hospital on a hill below Fort George (presumably to replace the one we accidentally bombed), US companies have overwhelmingly decided that wonderful opportunities lie elsewhere. And now that Uncle Sam is starting to cut back on the economic aid (to a still hefty \$10 million a year, after pumping \$110 million into the country over five years), people are getting the impression that Grenada, having served its public relations function, will now be cast aside like a jilted lover. And to be honest, who can blame them? What started out as a marriage made in heaven has begun to look more like a one-night stand.

Disenchantment with US development plans has been paralleled by disillusionment with the political process itself. Where during the PRG period there was intense mobilisation and politicisation, there is now

apathy and cynicism. The young, especially, see themselves as disenfranchised and are turning in increasing numbers towards emigration. The main political parties do not inspire enthusiasm or confidence among most Grenadians, as demonstrated by the low turn out in the elections of March 1990.

The NDC government, unstable from the outset, will inherit these major problems. Yet, beyond US indifference and local disenchantment, there is another obstacle that Grenada's rulers will have to face for many years. The revolutionary period, while creating its own problems and failures, nevertheless gave most Grenadians a memorable taste of independence and participation. Despite the trauma and apathy that followed, the memory has endured and for many is bound up with the person of Maurice Bishop. That the NNP government should have commemorated the anniversary of Bishop's murder is indicative of popular respect for the former Prime Minister.

Whether nostalgia for Bishop's charismatic leadership is likely to be translated into support for a new revolutionary programme is altogether more debatable. But Bishop's legacy and the experience of the PRG years remain a powerful force in Grenada and are not underestimated by the more perceptive younger generation of



Memorial to Maurice Bishop in St George's cemetery

politicians such as Keith Mitchell and George Brizan. The brief experiment in self-determination and economic independence has left a lasting mark in other ways. A tradition of small-scale cooperative venture has survived the US-inspired crusade for privatisation and owes much to innovations from the revolutionary period. National and international agencies are continuing this tradition, assisting groups and communities in agricultural and manufacturing cooperatives. At the same time, the popularity of the USAID-funded 'Special Development Activities' programme reveals the enduring influence of the community self-help schemes initiated by the PRG. As programmes and projects started by the PRG now begin to bear fruit — the airport, the cocoa rehabilitation scheme, the health centres, etc — so the dynamism of that period stands in greater contrast to the inertia of the post-invasion regimes.

The failure of US policy in Grenada has not been spectacular in economic terms, although it is clear that extensive financial assistance has not created the sought-after investment and prosperity. Grenada is no poorer than its small Eastern Caribbean neighbours, yet nor is it any richer despite exceptional inflows of US money, amounting to US\$1,100 for every Grenadian. The failure has rather been in the inability of US technocrats and Grenadian politicians to create an alternative to the PRG's blend of reform and state-led development which actually enjoys real popular support. Instead of discrediting the PRG experiment by achieving the healthy free-market democracy envisaged by USAID, the post-invasion regime and its US supporters have discarded imaginative policies in favour of an unworkable orthodoxy. The final irony of post-invasion Grenada is that despite great promises and high expectations, the island has merely returned to the economic stagnation and political disenchantment which led to revolution in the first place.

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