

By Our Own Hands

A People's History of the
Grenadian Revolution



Steve Cushion and **Dennis Bartholomew**

Introduction by **Luke Daniels**

Epilogue by **Chris Searle**



Caribbean Labour Solidarity

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Preface

The Grenada Revolution was probably the most important event in the English-speaking Caribbean in the 20th century. For most it came as a complete surprise but for those who were aware of the brutal actions of Gairy and his Mongoose Gang wielding absolute power in this most beautiful Spice Island, it was not so surprising and more of a welcome relief. Maurice Bishop and his comrades with the support of allies in the region, were preparing for the event for a little while. They seized their opportunity with Gairy out of the country and moved before the Mongoose Gang could strike to eliminate them.

The eventual bloodless coup put the revolutionaries in charge of the island and there was jubilation in the progressive left in the English-speaking Caribbean and further afield, not least in the mother country. The international progressive forces moved to support the revolution with whatever resources they could bring to bear on the island. Many a Caribbean Labour Solidarity supporter became engaged in practical support, none less than our late honorary president Richard Hart who gave legal advice and was later appointed Attorney General shortly before the revolution imploded.

Back with us in London, Richard was quickly in a mood of 'Don't mourn, organise' as many of the leading cadres of the revolution were arrested and put on trial by the invaders in Grenada. Richard put his considerable legal skill and determination to resist American Imperialism to work on the case; first in getting the life sentence commuted and later their release from prison.

This book by Cushion and Bartholomew is a brave attempt to bring the gains of the revolution to life once more, as they remember the days and achievements of the revolution; which the Americans so brutally tried to erase from our minds. They rightly point out this is not an attempt to erase the pain of losing a treasured leader and his comrades, who will always be remembered, but an attempt to move on in the interest of Grenadians who have suffered a terrible set back in their aspirations for a better future. It is clear that tragic mistakes were made and there are lessons to be learnt by all revolutionaries. One of those lessons is that we cannot afford to give up our fight for a society based on peace, happiness and justice for all.

We in CLS have always recognised the importance of the survival of the revolution and organized to raise awareness of a USA plot to invade Grenada. As the Americans became more desperate to end this example of what the descendants of enslaved Africans could achieve, we wrote to the British government urging prime minister Thatcher to give assurances that the British would not interfere in the internal affairs of their former colony.

But none of us could foresee the events that gave the Americans the excuse they badly needed to end this most amazing four year experiment in the English speaking Caribbean.

The story is ably presented here and I recommend this book to all who dare dream of a socialist future.

In Solidarity

Luke Daniels

President Caribbean Labour Solidarity



A youth group performs during the Revolution.

Introduction

Between 1979 and 1983, the people of the Caribbean nation of Grenada made a courageous attempt to overcome the legacy of slavery, British colonialism and a viscerously corrupt post-colonial dictatorship. The Grenadian Revolution ended with an internal dispute that resulted in the killing of a number of its leaders, including Prime Minister Maurice Bishop; these tragic events gave the US government the excuse to invade.

In the intervening 35 years, public attention has been concentrated on a seemingly interminable discussion about what went wrong and who was responsible for doing what to whom. This focus on the last few days of the Revolution has obscured the remarkable achievements of the Grenadian people during the previous four years. In the face of the unceasing hostility of the United States government under President Reagan and its continual destabilisation campaign, the people of Grenada rebuilt their economy with an emphasis on social justice and economic stability rather than mere profit for, mainly foreign, capitalists; they established a remarkable education system and improved their health service; they started a house-building and housing repair programme that addressed the needs of the poorest members of society. These and many more achievements risk being forgotten amidst the recriminations and rumour-mongering that has characterised so much of the post-Revolutionary debate.

Therefore, in order to rescue the achievements of the Revolution, this pamphlet will concentrate on the successes and challenges of the Grenadian Revolution and leave the detailed discussion of its end to those who wish to continue that debate. At a time when the neo-liberal policies of austerity are coming under increasing attack from ordinary working people, it may be useful to revisit this earlier struggle for social and economic justice. If a small island with so few resources and so many larger enemies can achieve so much, then there is no excuse for the failure of much richer Western governments to provide a decent life for all their citizens. But, like the people of Grenada, we will have to build a better world "By Our Own Hands".

Background

Truly understood, imperialism is nothing more than a method through which the resources of people are stolen from them by the forces of other people. The historic justification of such theft has been wrapped up by the empires in historical myth and magic; treaties and laws; protectorates and commonwealth, but when examined even in a cursory manner, empires remain nothing more than very well organised theft.

The British Empire was, up to the middle of the 20th century, one of the most effective and successful the world had seen, being able to efficiently steal the land, labour, raw materials and markets of many people from across the globe. In doing so Britain, as a matter of national policy, exterminated those who stood in its way; enslaved millions of Africans and others; and subjugated many more as part of this criminal enterprise. Over time, the economic changes brought about by this theft resulted in Britain developing different methods of production and distribution, rendering the direct enslavement of people redundant and leading to the abandonment of this method of control. Yet, Britain maintained its stolen territories and people until after World War II.

Prior to and following the War the clamour for liberation proved too strong and many of the colonies were granted independence. However, the structures inherited by the newly independent states were worn out or ramshackle; directly tied into the economic interest of Britain without providing any great benefit for the newly "freed" people; or leaving such countries with no real economic opportunity except to continue with the status quo.

The small country of Grenada was one such colony that was "granted independence" by Britain but not from Britain. This book examines the success of the Grenada Revolution, which successfully charted a different direction for its people but was ultimately defeated by the military might of the United States.

On the morning of 13 March 1979, the New Jewel Movement (NJM) of Grenada seized power from the government of Prime Minister Eric Gairy, thereby opening a period of Revolutionary change in that country. Grenada was the second country in the world, after Haiti, where the descendant daughters and sons of enslaved Africans seized power. It is the only English-speaking country where this has occurred.

During the four years of the Revolution, the Grenadian people, assisted by a wide range of committed individuals, organisations and countries achieved more for themselves than was achieved during the 300 years of enslavement and 100 years of colonial rule, the latter referred to by some as "enslavement-lite". The tragic end of this experiment and the subsequent controversy regarding how it ended has overshadowed the amazing progress made by Grenadians during this period. Some commentators take the view that this

misinformation was deliberately created and fostered precisely to mask such information thereby preventing discussion of the gains of the Revolution.

This book highlights the many achievements of the Revolution, with accounts and commentaries from a variety of sources including its participants. After reading this book, it is hoped that the reader will go on to discover the detailed accounts from others involved in the day-to-day activities of the Revolution, as well as the observations of outsiders, some of whom were antipathetic to the aims and triumphs of the Grenadian people. We include a list of suggested further reading at the end, in addition to a list our sources, which we are making available on-line.*

Brief history of Grenada

Grenada is one of the many small islands forming the Eastern Caribbean. It is 30 km long by 20 km wide and is comprised of a series of dormant volcanoes. It is blessed with abundant rainfall, a rich soil and tropical sunshine. Archaeological research shows that before the arrival of European settlers and the enslaved Africans, the island was inhabited by the indigenous Arawaks and Caribs. Sighted by Columbus in 1498, Grenada was invaded and colonised by the French between 1649 and 1743. After a lengthy period of warfare, the majority of the indigenous population was slaughtered or forced to flee to the neighbouring islands or into the hinterland of the island. The British finally gained control of the island in 1763 and proceeded to institute a slave-based plantation economy. Slavery was finally abolished in 1838, but Grenada did not achieve formal independence until 1974.

The period leading up to the Revolution has to be understood to give context to how and why the NJM was able to take power. This perspective cannot take place without a summary of the role of Sir Eric Matthew Gairy, who was Grenada's first Prime Minister, from the country's independence from Britain in 1974 until the 1979 Revolution.

In 1950, Gairy founded the Grenada Manual & Mental Workers Union (GMMWU) and was one of the organisers of the 1951 general strike, which demanded better wages and conditions for the estate workers in Grenada. The conditions for Grenadian labourers on these estates, the successors to the plantations on which they and their predecessors were enslaved, had changed very little following the Emancipation Laws of 1834-38. The newly "freed" Grenadians found themselves in a situation not far removed from enslavement but with the responsibility of having to provide their own food, clothes and shelter by "earning" wages from their previous "masters" on the same plantations on which their labour had been exploited. The strike sparked great unrest - so many buildings were set

* http://cls-uk.org.uk/?page_id=315

ablaze that the disturbances became known as the "Sky Red" days, resulting in the colonial authorities calling in military reinforcements from Britain and other Caribbean colonies to help regain control of the situation. Gairy was arrested but the authorities underestimated the guile of their opponent. For Gairy this was the springboard to prominence, as his detention and treatment at the hand of the colonial authorities increased his prestige among the rural poor, particularly women workers.

Following independence from Britain on 7 February 1974 Gairy became the first Prime Minister of Grenada. Although winning independence from colonial Britain and being very effective in opposition, as a leader he was objectively judged to be ineffective. Like many anti-colonialists of the time the skills that he developed and used to overthrow the status quo did not equip him to take on the challenges of leadership. There is also the view that what Gairy and those around him wanted was not a fundamental change in the existing condition but the opportunity to occupy, "the big seat", that is to take over the levers of power but not change the underlying structure of society.

In addition, the world in which Gairy had grown up was changing rapidly. Grenadians no longer aspired to be members of the family of the British Empire, with Britain as the mother country and the people of the colonies being clones of Britain, with darker skin. They were now influenced by events in Africa and the Third World; the Black Power Movement in the US; and cultural change emanating from Jamaica. Gairy was being overtaken by these events and achieving independence would not be enough to satisfy the needs of Grenadians.

Consequently, Gairy's term in office was met by increasing demands for change to the social and economic framework of the island. These calls were led by a younger, more vibrant, better educated and well-connected cohort, who were able to effectively articulate these calls. Unable to efficiently meet these demands, Gairy resorted to a series of bizarre activities so as to divert attention from his failures and used brutal methods to suppress his opponents

The New Jewel Movement

During the 1970s, the political situation in Grenada became increasingly polarized, violent and politically deadlocked. Gairy was unable to take Grenada forward politically or economically yet refused to yield power.

The opposition ranged against him comprised his formal political opponent, Herbert Blaize, long-standing leader of the Grenada National Party, but more importantly included leaders such as Maurice Bishop of the Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP), Unison Whiteman of Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education, and Liberation (JEWEL)

njm's statement of principles

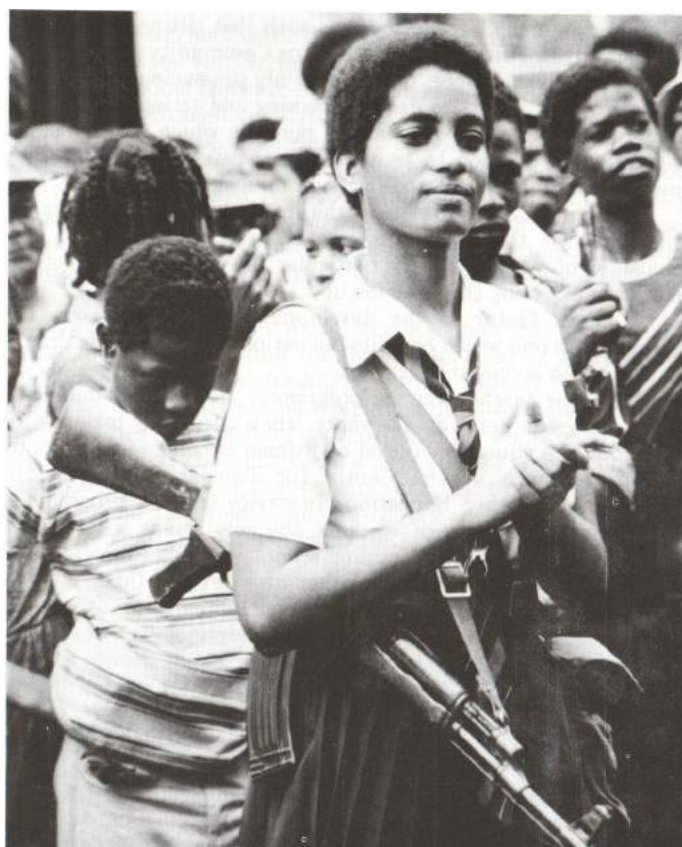
WE STAND FOR:

- 1 PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION, PEOPLE'S POLITICS,
PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY
- 2 PEOPLE'S COOPERATIVES FOR THE COLLECTIVE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE
- 3 HEALTH CARE BASED ON NEED
- 4 FULL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S TALENTS,
ABILITIES AND CULTURE
- 5 FULL CONTROL AS A PEOPLE OF OUR OWN
NATURAL RESOURCES
- 6 EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL
- 7 A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING FOR EVERY FAMILY
- 8 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND RELIGION
- 9 THE LIBERATION OF BLACK AND OPPRESSED
PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD
- 10 A UNITED PEOPLE..A NEW SOCIETY...A JUST SOCIETY

and many others. These younger political activists agitated through the existing structures to remove Gairy from office and power. On 11 March 1973 these two organisations united to form the New Jewel Movement (NJM), with Maurice Bishop, a well-respected lawyer and political figure, as its leader.

From 1973 to 1979, the NJM was the main opposition political party in Grenada. For the 1976 general elections, they formed an electoral coalition known as the People's Alliance, comprising the Grenada National Party and the United People's Party. Gairy was losing the support he once had, only narrowly winning the 1976 election from an NJM-led coalition. Although the result was declared fraudulent by international observers, Gairy used intimidation, beatings and killings by the secret police and his private militia called the Mongoose Gang to hang on to power. Bernard Coard, Deputy Prime Minister of the PRG during the Revolution, stated that the NJM won the 1976 election, and Gairy's election fraud had convinced them that only force would remove him from office.

In the late 1970s, the NJM created an armed wing, the National Liberation Army (NLA), also known as "the 12 Apostles". After receiving training from the government of Guyana and being supplied with arms bought in the United States, the NJM mounted the well co-ordinated Revolution. In 1979, a rumour circulated in St Georges, Grenada's capital that Gairy planned to use the Mongoose Gang to eliminate leaders of the New Jewel Movement while he was out of the country, thereby removing organised opposition while claiming a political alibi. On 13 March 1979, while Gairy was attending a UN meeting, the New Jewel Movement led by Maurice Bishop overthrew the government and formed the People's Revolutionary Government. The Grenadian Revolution had begun.



Women and the Revolution

Women's participation was very important for the overthrow of the dictatorial regime of Eric Gairy. The St Georges Progressive Women's Association (PWA), set up in 1977, was very active prior to 1979, campaigning for better wages, employment for women, better housing, medical facilities and democratic rights and, of course, opposing the "jobs for sex" that was a part of the endemic corruption under Gairy.

The PWA had its first post-Revolution meeting in June 1979 but it was realised that a different form of organisation was needed to construct the new society from that required to overthrow a dictatorship. It is one thing to outlaw the demands by employers and civil servants for "sexual favours" in return for employment, but the problem can only really be solved when the 70 per cent unemployment rate that women suffered under the old regime is massively reduced by developing the economy. Grenadian women can only achieve real equality as part of the overall development process that the Revolution aspired to build.

The PWA gave way to the National Women's Organisation (NWO), which held its founding general meeting in December 1980 although it already had 1,500 members in 47 groups. By December 1982, at the NWO Congress, it had 6,500 members, 22 per cent of the female adult population of 30,000. The NWO was at pains to stress that it was open to all women. It saw its role as a mixture of encouraging popular participation, promoting government programmes and holding government departments to account.

Its founding statement said:

The N.W.O. is not for some women only, it's for all women. It joins young and older sisters together. Our members are road workers, nutmeg pool workers, housewives, students, agricultural workers, unemployed sisters, teachers, nurses and domestic servants. You don't have to support any political party or any particular church. You don't have to join the militia though many N.W.O. members do. The N.W.O. is for all women who support the Revolution, defend equal rights and opportunities for women and want to see Grenada progress and move forward...

The NWO was also the main pressure group for women's rights and equality. The organisation's 1981 plan, for instance stressed the objective of ensuring the functioning of the free milk programme, neighbourhood clean-up and house repair programmes as well as monitoring government programmes for primary health care, free school meals, books and uniforms.

In the field of education, the 1982 NWO congress made women's education a priority, in particular encouraging full participation in the Centre for Popular Education. The NWO

collaborated with the Ministry of Education in developing the curriculum of mass education for women, which included:

- The law of equal pay
- Child care provision
- Maternity leave.
- Grenada's history from the Caribs to 1979
- The economy
- Overcoming underdevelopment
- World history and international affairs
- Women's involvement in People's Power
- Maternity law
- First aid.

The NWO also led the other mass organisations in establishing, servicing and running the day-care centres in order to enable more women to enter the workforce. This was part of women's involvement in "voluntary community work" such as road repair, in which many women moved out of their traditional roles into heavier manual labour. There was considerable effort to encourage women and girls to go into what had previously been seen as "male occupations" with laws stipulating equal pay for men and women in the same job. There was however, little effort made to persuade men and boys to enter traditional "female" occupations.

Merle Hodge, coordinator of the Curriculum Development Programme, wrote in the *Free West Indian* in 1980:

The new woman of Grenada will be the product of a changing education system which is geared towards equal educational exposure for girls and boys and a more conscious attack, through education on the roots of sexual stereotyping than is evident anywhere in the English-Speaking Caribbean.

The Revolution had to address the issue of inequality of women in society and sought to do so by introducing new laws. One of the major problems is not only inequality in the eyes of the law, which is easily changed, but also an ideological struggle, accompanied by organisation and political action, to overturn the traditional attitude to women's role in society. Nevertheless, legal changes to facilitate women's greater involvement in the economy do provide a framework within which this ideological struggle can take place.

The law on equal pay was thus an important measure to promote equality, but needed proper childcare arrangements to enable women's entry into production. So a great deal of emphasis was put on the day-care facilities. The other mass organisations were involved in this work at local level, with the youth organisation, people's militia and trade unions working together to establish, furnish and run the centres. Another important measure to

facilitate women's employment was the Maternity Leave Law, which entitled women who had worked for more than eighteen months for the same employer to three months of maternity leave, with full pay for two months. It also guaranteed women the right to re-employment with the same employer after three months. It is significant that pressure from the NWO considerably improved the provisions and they were instrumental in pushing for the first prosecution of an employer who refused to comply.

But women were also in the forefront of political activism - the fact that, in the June 1980 terrorist bomb attack on a political rally, the three persons killed and the majority of the injured were women, is evidence that women were present in large numbers. After this outrage, the majority of new recruits to the militia were young women and if anything women's organisation and determination were strengthened, as voiced by 60-year-old Agatha Francis, who was interviewed by Chris Searle:

... and for the women, they are proud and boast up of Maternity Leave. The kind of bad treatment the men give the women before, they done with that. The Revolution bring we love, and is that love that teach the men different, bring them work and cause them to respect we.



Building the Economy

Given the small size of Grenada, 133 square miles with a population of 100,000, and the lopsided and dependent economy that the British Empire had left on decolonisation, improving the economic performance of the country was always going to be an uphill struggle, with the only bonus being that the elimination of the previous government's corruption gave an immediate boost to the exchequer.

The Gairy dictatorship had left no database of statistics; indeed, there was no mechanism for collecting any statistics. The only possibility for planning was to heavily involve the mass organisations, while opening the books to public scrutiny. The process of preparing the 1982 budget involved 25 meetings of Workers Parish and Zonal Councils, the National Women's Organisations,

1982 Budget

Airport	\$38.7m
Agriculture	\$ 9m
Communication and Works	\$11m
Public Enterprises	\$ 5m
Industrial Development	\$ 5m
Health	\$ 4m
Education	\$15.5m
Debt repayment	\$ 2.9m
Interest	\$ 1.9m

the National Youth Organisation, trades union branches, the militia, the Productive Farmers Union, etc. Each meeting was attended by a government minister. The input was incredibly detailed and when the original draft and the final proposals are compared, there are major differences that reflect the consultation process. This, of course, is radically different from the approach taken in most "Western Democracies", where details of the budget are a closely guarded secret, kept under wraps in the Ministry of Finance, with even other Ministers at arm's length. The principle behind the budget was that recurrent expenditure should come from revenue and taxation, while loans and overseas aid were reserved for capital projects, the main one being the international airport. Accountancy was remarkably tight, a positive reaction to the loose accounting and resultant corruption of the previous regime, in part helped by the welcome given to the Revolution by the Grenadian civil servants, despite the fact that many of them were Gairyites, and aided by the recruitment of a number of very sharp economists from the rest of the Caribbean.

The overall context was for a mixed economy with a state sector, a public sector and co-operatives. The government economic strategy was based on the rehabilitation of the country's infrastructure, the stimulation of productive investment by the private sector, improved efficiency in the state sector and an emphasis on agriculture and tourism. In overall terms, the economy grew 2.1 per cent in 1979, 3 per cent in 1980, 3 per cent in 1981 and 5.5 per cent in 1982 - no small achievement given the recession that was taking place in the world economy. While 90 per cent of new investment was in the public sector,

the government introduced a system of accounting that required individual state-owned enterprises to produce a surplus to be spent on social programmes.

Undermining the dominance of the financial services industry was of vital importance if the ambitious economic plans were to have any chance of success. To this end, two state-run banks were set up, the Grenada Development Bank (GDB) and the National Commercial Bank (NCB). To this state owned financial sector was added the Grenada Bank of Commerce (GBC) by purchasing the local branch of the Royal Bank of Canada. Loans from these banks, at rates of interest considerably below that charged by the private sector banks, were mainly used for development projects and for any undertaking that would increase production and employment as well as reducing dependence on imported goods - 90 per cent of the loans from the Grenada Development Bank went to local industry, agriculture or fisheries.

Airport

The decision was taken that, for tourism to flourish and benefit the general population, an international airport was an absolute necessity. This was both a sensible economic priority and widely popular. Financed by loans and aid from 16 countries and internally by a 2 percent extra tax on all imports, the project was designed by the Grenadians, based on a British plan of the 1950s that had never been implemented. It was largely built by Grenadian workers, including voluntary community-organised labour, with vital and valuable assistance being provided by skilled Cuban workers. Dredging was carried out by a US company based in Houston, Texas, lighting by a Finnish company and the communications equipment was installed by Plessey Ltd from the UK using credit authorised by the British government. It was far from the Cuban project so decried by the Reagan regime in the USA. Considerable credit must be given to the Cuban government for setting up the Mt Hartman Quarry, Stone Crusher and Asphalt Plant.

The airport was linked to efforts by the Ministry of Tourism to attract more tourists, while the government set up the Grenada Resorts Corporation to manage the state-run hotels and co-ordinate these with the privately owned provision. Delegations from the Ministry of Tourism were sent to North America and to other Caribbean islands in an attempt to enthruse travel agents to promote Grenada as a destination as well as countering the hostile propaganda from the USA and its Caribbean allies. Efforts were made to publicise cultural and sporting events such as the Carnival celebrations, the Caribbean Netball Competition and the annual Carriacou Regatta. This charm offensive seems to have paid off, with August 1982 showing a 35 percent increase in stay-over visitors compared to the previous year, mainly coming from the USA, France and Trinidad. An

initial loss made by the Grenada Resorts Corporation had turned into a \$50,000 profit by April 1983.

Agriculture

If tourism was one major plank of the government's economic plan, the other was agriculture. We see another vestige of colonialism in Grenada, where the economy is based on export agriculture, but the population relies substantially upon high-priced imported food, much of which can be eliminated if its agricultural priorities are changed and a policy of import substitution encouraged. The object was to create added value to Grenada's agricultural production, something expressly denied during the colonial period, to expand exports, preserve excess production from the harvest and to produce local foodstuffs as an import substitution measure, with the aim of making the island self-sufficient in foodstuffs. This was politically important as well, as any reduction in imports increased the island's independence and reduced the reliance on the vagaries of the international market.

In 1980, all 26 of the publicly owned farms were consolidated under the control of the State Farms Co-operation. An analysis showed that four of these were inherently unviable and were closed down. In the remainder, a profit sharing scheme was introduced although wages in the sector were acknowledged to still be too low. Add this to the traditional stigma attached to agricultural work, which goes back to the days of slavery, and it remained difficult to persuade many young people to work in agriculture. One attempt to make the sector more attractive was the setting up of co-operatives. The Land Development and Utilization Act required owners of more than 100 acres of idle land to submit a development plan to the Ministry of Agriculture or face a compulsory lease of 10 years. As a result, the Land Reform Commission identified 4000 acres of idle land available for co-operative ventures to be funded by the National Co-operative Development Agency, which started with a \$1m loan from the National Commercial Bank. The programme started slowly, but by the end of 1982, around 200 acres had been brought into cultivation by co-operatives. Each co-operative had to have a feasible plan before being allocated its founding loan and then training was given in both the financial and agricultural skills needed for the undertaking to succeed. Nevertheless, growth in the co-operative sector of the economy was slow and several failed to keep up their loan repayments - hardly surprising considering that each venture was starting from scratch. Co-operatives were also set up in construction, fishing, food processing and two restaurants.

The main sector in agriculture, however, remained the private farmers, 8,000 persons in total. The Productive Farmers' Union acted as both a trade association, organising bulk

buying and collective marketing, and a mass organisation representing the interests of the independent farming sector and forming part of the process of participatory democracy. The government had a policy of strengthening the agricultural base of the economy by assisting small farmers, in part by granting \$4.6m assistance in the form of credit, seeds and tools.

The main assistance to the whole agricultural sector was the Marketing and National Importing Board (MNIB), set up to both market the products of the island's agriculture and agro-industry, locally and for export, and to import essential materials such as fertilizer, powdered milk and cement, which were sold at below cost. In 1982, the MNIB had a turnover of \$25m. It succeeded in stabilising the prices for some basics, in particular rice, and managed most internal purchases and distribution, even buying the produce of "backyard farmers", as allotment holders were known. Sales revenue went from \$6.5m in 1981 to \$12.2m in 1982

The major problem faced by all sectors of agriculture was the sudden rush of agricultural products at harvest time, much of which had to be sold at low prices or went to waste. The PRG therefore decided early on to link agriculture to industry with agro-industry development, both to increase self-sufficiency and generate foreign exchange. The True Blue military base, a major centre of repression under Gairy and burnt down in the fighting that secured the victory of the Revolutionary forces in 1979, was restored and converted to an agro-industry complex at the cost of \$1m. In its first year it processed 200,000 pounds of preserved jellies, nectars, pepper sauce and fruit juice, all branded as "Spice Island". By 1983, the agro-industry enterprise had a turnover of £850,000.

Fishing

Not so successful was the fishing industry. Previously, Grenada had imported the overwhelming majority of its fish and meat, despite being an island surrounded by good fishing waters. It became a priority to set up the National Fisheries Company to procure fish and seafood as an important source of protein. This was initially done with too much haste and, by 1982, the undertaking was producing only \$175,000, 4 per cent down on the previous year, while needing a subsidy of \$200,000. The government closed down the failing company and then re-launched it under new administration with structures designed to avoid waste. At the same time, the Fisheries Training School at Victoria started training fishermen and women 25 to 30 at a time on three-month courses. The co-operative sector also helped; for example, the five members of the Fontenoy Cooperative Fisheries Production Society were given a loan to build a fishing boat with which they were able to catch 1,500 pounds of fish a week. The Cuban government made a gift of four trawlers and, by 1983, the Fish Processing Plant, part of the True Blue industrial complex, was

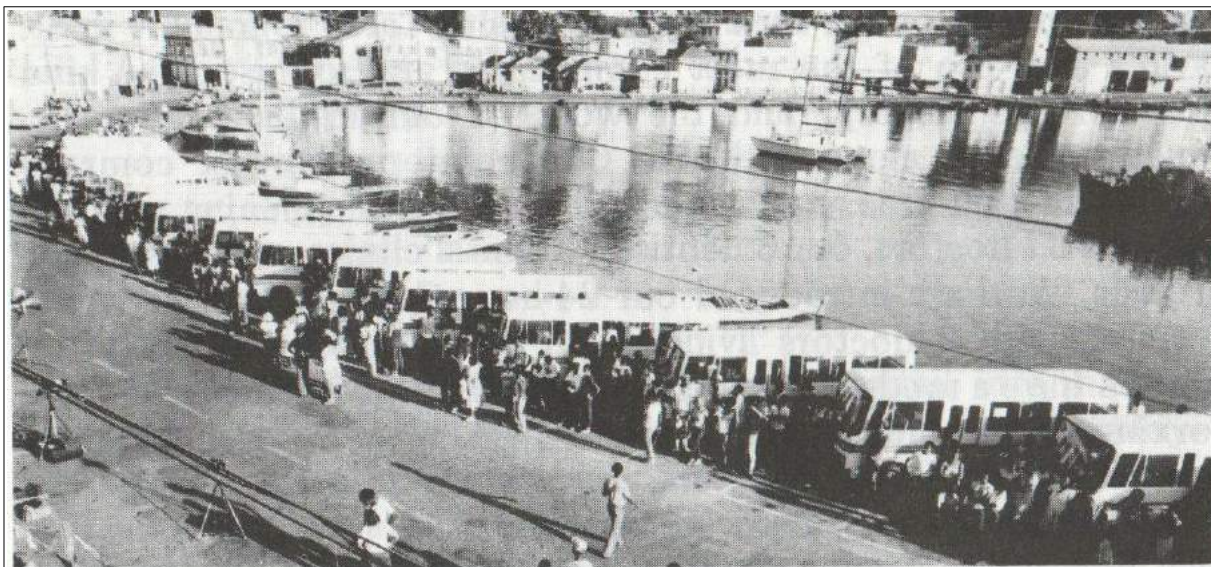
moving towards its capacity of 3,500 pounds per day, so rather than importing salt-fish, Grenada was exporting to neighbouring islands, a process made easier by the Port Improvement Project.

Transport

All of this needed investment in infrastructure. In this context, the airport has already been mentioned, but probably the most important was the road building programme that linked the various projects together and enabled the transport of goods and people. By 1982, 67 miles of feeder roads had been built and the Eastern Main Road project well under way, with the help of the Caribbean Development Bank and aid from the EEC (forerunner of the European Union). Voluntary labour, particularly by farmers, made an important contribution to the road-building programme, while contracted-out work was paid by the task rather than by the time taken, thus avoiding the common practice, which bedevils public construction projects in most capitalist economies, of contractors bidding unrealistically low to secure the contract and then letting the project cost spiral out of control to the detriment of the public purse. The improvement in road structure was important for the National Transport Service, the first public transport system on the island, the demands for which figure prominently in all the meetings of the various mass organisations. Twenty-six Japanese buses were initially purchased, but a report on the first anniversary of the service in March 1983 indicated that another 12 would be needed to meet the demand. However, the same report did indicate that there were demands from passengers for further training of the drivers and conductors.



The Revolution inherited an obsolete and badly maintained electricity system, with three of the seven generators not working, which was not able to supply all the island's existing need at one time and certainly had no room for expansion. In order to solve this problem, the government took over GRENLEC and negotiated a \$6.5m loan from the European Development Fund to purchase two new generators. Electricity supply was brought to many rural areas where previously there had been none. The story of the relationship between GRENLEC and the National Cash Register Company is worth recounting. NCR announced that they could no longer maintain the existing accounting



The people demanded them through their organ of popular democracy, the Parish Council, and the Revolution delivered them – buses, a fleet of 26, comprising the nucleus of Grenada's first national transport service.

machines, but would sell new ones for \$170,000, while their resident engineer on the island had only been trained to repair the new machine not the old one. In this case, Cuban computer engineers, familiar with patching up old US-made machinery, were quickly able to return the existing accounting machinery to service, but it is indicative of the problems a small, underdeveloped country has to deal with when faced with a multinational corporation.

This increased economic activity had an important effect in reducing the chronic unemployment faced by the island's workers before the Revolution, from 49 per cent in 1979 to 14 per cent in 1983. There were some immediate wage increases after the Revolution and in the first year consumption rose by 30 per cent. Thereafter, wage rises more or less matched inflation and consumption remained stable. One of the hardest parts of revolutionary construction must be to convince workers to increase productivity when previously they had instinctively done all they possibly could to reduce it, having seen that increased productivity only increased their employer's profit and resulted in higher unemployment. The involvement of the mass organisations so deeply in the budget preparation process allowed for the argument to be made that increased production, if managed in the interest of the mass of the population, could provide a surplus that could increase services and enhance the social wage. This certainly appears to have struck a chord; the minutes of the meetings called to discuss the budget are full of detailed suggestions for increased efficiency, reduction of waste, while equally exposing corruption and denouncing time-servers.

Social Wage

The question of the social wage was central to convincing people to increase productivity and accept wage rises that matched inflation. By improving the health service and making it free, by reducing and then abolishing secondary school fees, providing free school books and uniforms, by the house repair programme and rent control, as well as many similar social improvements, the amount of money that no longer had to be spent increased the value of the wage packet.

The health service emphasis was on preventative medicine at community level, with a public health education programme, particularly co-ordinating community involvement in the anti-dengue fever campaign and the immunisation of agricultural workers against tetanus. Health care was provided free, but patients were still required to pay for their prescriptions. Twelve specialist doctors, including three dentists, came over from Cuba, which greatly reduced the need for medical travel to other islands and improved the doctor patient ratio. Dental clinics were set up in each of the seven parishes, as well as the establishment of a new eye clinic and a fully equipped maternity unit. Greater use was made of nurse-practitioners and a 24-hour Casualty Service at the General Hospital with two doctors living on the premises. Medical provision was also extended to the islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique with two resident doctors and one dentist and the establishment of a new health clinic while the existing one was refurbished. Much of the refurbishment of local clinics was done by voluntary labour.

The house repair programme gave interest-free loans to poorer families to buy materials to repair their homes, repayable over 10 years, and communal, mutual labour proved a useful way to effect the repairs, although the government also set up a House Repair Unit. In total 17,000 families benefited from this programme. The National Housing Authority constructed 30 low-cost housing units in 1981 and 50 in 1982. In 1983, the government of Cuba contributed a prefabricated housing plant capable of producing 500 houses a year. The state banking sector organised the provision of low-cost mortgages repayable over 20 years for this new housing. The Rent Restriction Act also made it obligatory for landlords to repair the property they rented out. If a landlord failed or refused to make the necessary repairs, the tenant was authorised either to make the repairs themselves and deduct it from the rent or to call in the House Repair Unit who would charge the landlord. The Rent Restriction Act provided for community-based Rent Assessment Boards to fix rents and, until the boards were established, rents were frozen. If a landlord subsequently overcharged, they could be fined or imprisoned.

Budget

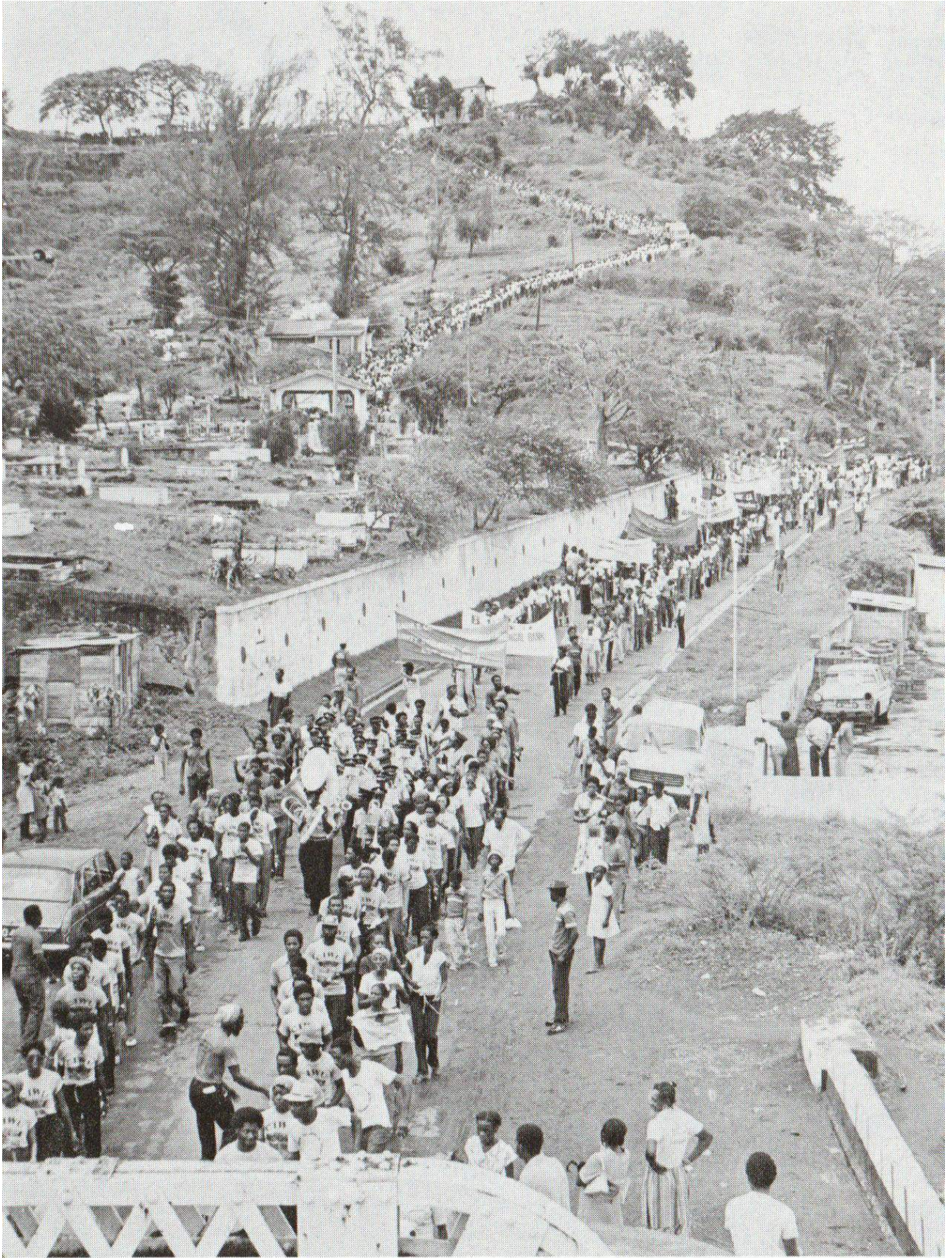
A similar process of popular participation in the budget process occurred for 1983. In January and February of that year 20,000 people attended meetings of either mass organisations or the zonal and parish councils in order to discuss the proposals. This process resulted in a recurrent budget of \$81,350,000, 37 per cent of which would be spent on health and education, with a predicted revenue income of 86 million. A further \$145,000,000 was planned to be spent on capital projects including the completion of the International Airport and the Eastern Main Road, beginning work on the Western Main Road, the continuation of the feeder roads project and the expansion of the electricity and telephone systems. At this point, the Ministry of Finance moved from planning only for the year ahead to producing a three-year plan. However, this recognised that, despite a better economic performance than the rest of the Caribbean, the fall in the international price of nutmeg, cocoa and bananas, on which the country was still very heavily dependent, as well as the general reduction in tourism as a result of the world economic recession would make the next few years "hard grinding".

Perhaps most interesting, given the hostility of the US government, is the continued support of the IMF, whose 1982 report on the island's economy is most encouraging. The report stated that "*Government's objectives are centred on critical development issues and touched the country's most promising development issues*".

This, as well as other achievements, is perhaps attributable in part to what former US Ambassador Shelton considers to have been one of the major successes of the Revolution, namely:

. . . the significant improvement in the administration of the Government and the apparent cleaning out of corruption . . . [this] Government is widely credited with being one of the most efficiently run in the Caribbean.

But no matter how honest and efficient a government may be, social advances of the kind described above can only be achieved by mass popular involvement. The most striking aspect of the Grenadian Revolution, as described by all visitors to the island, is the commitment, enthusiasm and sheer hard work displayed by the overwhelming majority of the population. The widespread participation in the economic planning process was combined with the mobilisation of the women's movement, the youth organisation, the trade unions, the workers' parish councils and the small farmers' association, along with many less formal community-based organisations, to put theory into practice. Credit for the start made to radically transforming the island's economy and social structures must first and foremost go to the ordinary citizens of Grenada, who demonstrated the changes that can be made "by our own hands".



May Day 1981: Grenada Forwarding .

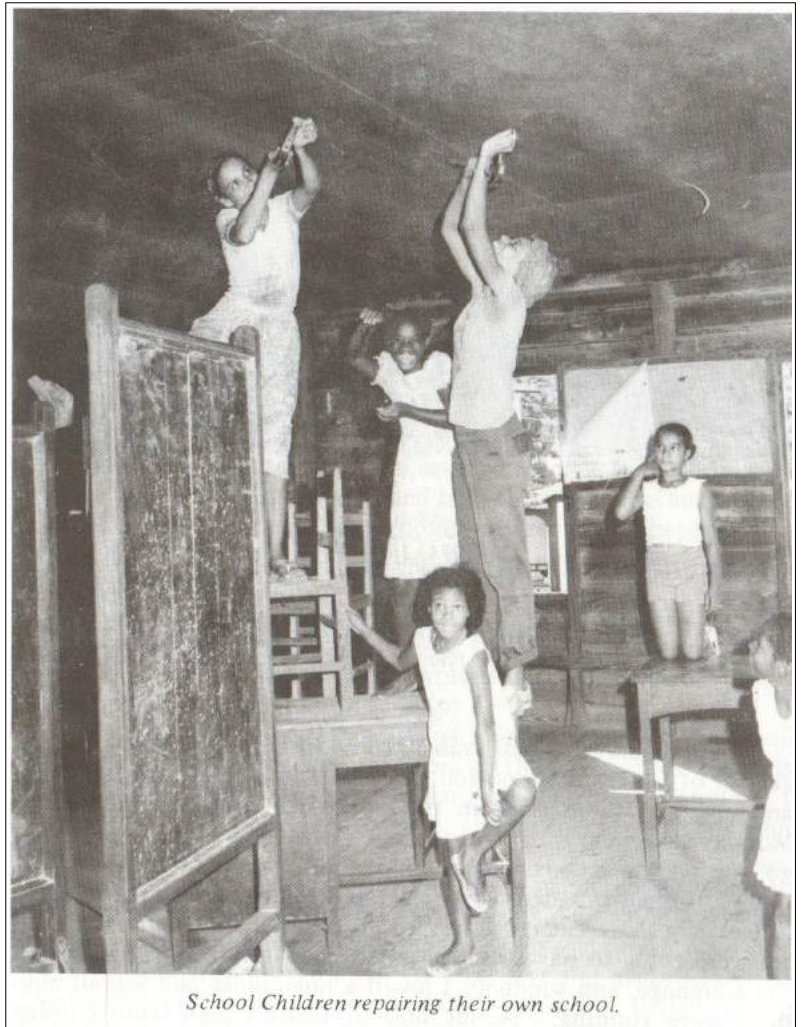
Education for All

If the economy was a success story, the results for education were more mixed. However, economic growth did contribute to significant changes in education policy. It made possible an increase in spending on education as well as creating a demand for workers with higher skill levels. It was quickly clear that without improvements in education, economic progress would be retarded.

Under Gairy, education was unchanged from the days of Empire, based on a Eurocentric model calculated to demean the history of the people of African and East Indian heritage, thereby undercutting their self-confidence. Most primary schools were in a dilapidated condition. There was little secondary school provision, with fees that placed it outside the grasp of the overwhelming majority. There was one teacher training college that only catered for 50 students a year. A majority of the island's 600 teachers were unqualified and there was a high proportion who were either time servers or, having what was known locally as a "visa mentality", saw their involvement in education as a route off the island. This meant that local people bore the cost of training teachers who then took this investment to the metropolitan countries - a sort of educational neo-colonialism, foreign aid in reverse.

To quickly address the need for teacher training, the National In-Service Teacher Education Program (NISTEP) was devised, with the help of Chris Searle from England and Paulo Freire from Brazil. It was probably the most ambitious programme of teacher education ever undertaken in a Third World country. All unqualified teachers were given a three-year in-service course that expected them to attend training sessions every Friday, while skilled workers and community leaders provided work-related education in their absence.

In June 1980, the full-time teacher training college programme was suspended and all resources



were diverted to NISTEP, although this was amended to allow 40 teachers with 15-20 years' experience but no qualifications to pursue a one-year full-time course of study. The sheer ambition of NISTEP produced a sceptical response from many of the external examiners from the University of the West Indies (UWI), who were particularly opposed to the inclusion of all teachers including those who did not have the normal prerequisite examination passes to have been admitted under the old scheme. These reservations did mean that the NISTEP qualification was only fully recognised in Grenada as UWI was reluctant to endorse the resulting qualification, although a compromise was reached whereby those who did have the necessary four O-level entrance requirement were permitted to take the regionally accredited examinations. There was also some resentment among the unqualified teachers at the compulsory nature of the scheme and the high workload it involved with the result that a significant number of teachers left the profession completely.



Despite these reservations, the Ministry of Education decided to make a start and deal with the problems as they arose, reasoning that the children of the island had waited long enough for a proper education system and that requiring all teachers to be properly trained was an essential prerequisite. Of the 380 teachers who stayed the course, the overwhelming majority were successful, having shown a high level of commitment and enthusiasm. Many teachers threw themselves into developing the new curriculum with vigour and, while not an overwhelming success, standards improved greatly, new schools were built, a new set of primary school readers were produced and lessons were learned about teacher training that pointed a way forward. If we compare the school leaving exam

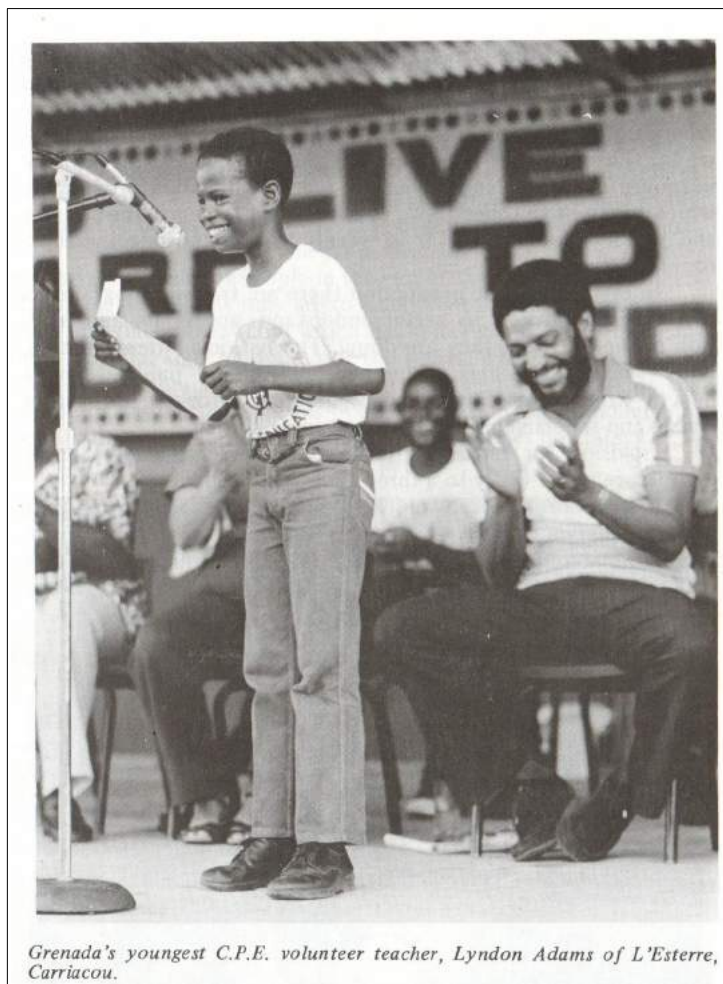
pass rate, it went from 3 per cent in 1978 to 32 per cent in 1982. While not all teachers participated in NISTEP with any enthusiasm, it may be argued that those who did gained greatly in professional abilities and their student's education prospered. To help create the infrastructure in which education could prosper, state spending on education was increased markedly so that, in 1982 for instance, the education budget at \$17m represented 23 per cent of the budget. This enabled a school repairs programme, in part implemented by community voluntary labour, and the opening of another government secondary school, the first new one in 100 years. To enable more students to attend this increased secondary provision, fees were halved in 1980 and abolished in 1981. As for higher education, the debts of the Gairy government to the University of the West Indies were paid in instalments so that Grenadians could again enrol. Add to this the scholarships offered by Cuba, USSR and East Germany, and by 1982, 300 students were attending higher education institutions compared with only three in 1978.

The aim of the educational policy was to counter the past educational neglect of the majority and produce an educated and politically aware working class, integrating education into the Revolution's social, political and economic goals. Countering the previous pro-imperialist education was, of course, political, and this was condemned by enemies of the Revolution as "propaganda", as if the previous system that extolled the virtues of an outdated British Empire, instilled the values of free-enterprise capitalism and only catered for the needs of a small elite was not in itself "political". Part of the work of NISTEP involved young teachers in the development of the curriculum of which the most successful innovation was the production of new series of early reading books called *The Marryshow Readers*, named after the famous Grenadian anti-colonialist of a previous generation. These drew on the lives of ordinary working families in Grenada for their subject matter, a marked contrast to the previous offering that had dwelt on the lives of middle-class children whose daily experience was far removed from the lived experience of the overwhelming majority of Grenadian families. They made a conscious effort to counter the sexist portrayals of the traditional early reading material. Their educational innovation was to teach Standard English as a second language to native Creole speakers. They were produced in sufficient numbers as a contribution from the Cuban government to enable every primary school child to have their own copies, a welcome break from previous practice. It is perhaps a back-handed compliment to these small books that one of the first acts of the "Interim Administration" was to withdraw them and return to the old "Janet and John" model that extolled bourgeois values and role models.

Undermining old attitudes was not just the work of those educating the young. The Centre for Popular Education (CPE) started as a literacy programme in August 1980, but soon became much more, incorporating songs, poetry and dance in its approach, to both

instruct in terms that ordinary people understood and to enhance the self-belief of a people who had been seen themselves undermined by hundreds of years of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It was an important source of intergenerational solidarity as the young taught the elderly to read, while at the same time learning much from the traditional wisdom of their elders. Fifty-eight per cent of the CPE students were women, while women also made up a significant proportion of the volunteer teachers. Illiteracy was reduced from about 20 per cent to less than 3 per cent of the population. From 1982, phase two branched out into Maths, English History, Politics and the Natural Sciences as a form of post-literacy programme. But above all, the distinguishing feature of the programme of the Centre for Popular Education has been its emphasis on popular participation, so it not only increased people's educational achievements, it also encouraged the use of often unrecognised existing skills in the building of the new society.

In the years since the overthrow of the Revolution, there has been considerable criticism of the education system in Grenada between 1979 and 1983 and indeed they did not achieve all that they intended. However, given the parlous state of the school system under Gairy and the ambitious programme they set themselves, the considerable improvements that occurred during the Revolution are quite remarkable in the context of a small, impoverished, "Third World" island and put many richer nations to shame.



Builders and Defenders

*Why bad-talk me, it is plain to see,
Take a trip and see for yourself
It was never so, it's better for sure
We are moving to higher heights, I'm sure*

CHORUS

*We are building and defending our Revolution
We are building and defending our Revolution*

*This ent no joke, this ent no sport,
We are working to build our Airport
Any country feel they could stop we
Tell them for me please don't worry*

*All my people in this country
We are living like one big family
Oh my leaders, they fight the struggle
Just to get rid of imperialism*

*As far as I can see, as much as I know
There's no dictator in this country
Mr. Tourist, you are welcome
To the beautiful land called Grenada*

Catherine Ventour



Democracy, Politics, Policies and Constitution

In 2017, when asked about the development of participatory democracy in Grenada, Bernard Coard, one of the leaders of the Grenada Revolution and Deputy Prime Minister of the PRG said:

It just happened. It was not planned although we [the NJM] had put in in the Manifesto we did not have the resources to engage in the work necessary to bring it about. It happened because the people made it happen. It just happened.

One of the questions raised is how did participatory democracy develop in Grenada during the four years of the Revolution; what were its benefits; and is it a useful lesson for other communities elsewhere? There are many revisionist historians who perpetuate the argument that European conquest of other peoples, in general, and the British Empire in particular, brought a great many benefits to the conquered people. They cite concepts such as civilization; progress; that old staple - railways; and democracy. Unfortunately, all of these benefits by-passed Grenada, including the democracy bit.

As stated elsewhere in this book and in greater detail in other publications the basis of empire was, is and remains the organised theft of resources. There is no country or continent that has risked its wealth in order to benefit other peoples. The discussions on the causes of the Second World War, itself a contentious title, are for discussions elsewhere.

The purpose of the British Empire in Grenada was not to bring democracy to the enslaved Africans or the later indentured Indian labourers but, surprise, surprise, to engage in organised theft of their labour and produce and to exploit them in each and every way for the benefit of rich families in the UK, such as the Campbells and Brownlows. The Empire was not sustained by acquiescence but was instead underpinned by laws and guns.

Following the near collapse of the economic model of enslavement in parts of the Empire, including Grenada, in 1834-38 Britain abolished laws that had legalised enslavement. In 1833, Grenada became part of the British Windward Islands Administration and remained so until 1958. This period of 125 years is referred to as "enslavement-lite", as it still bound the "freed" people to the previous economic model, but without the whip, torture, and chains.

The Government of Grenada passed through a number of phases that by the 1870s resulted in a very limited form of representative government. In 1917, Theophilus A. Marryshow agitated for a new but limited participative constitutional dispensation for the Grenadian people. As a result, Britain concluded that Grenada was ready for constitutional

reform. This resulted in 1925 in the "generous" grant to Grenadians of the right to elect five of the 15 members of the Grenada Legislative Council. However, this was on a restricted property franchise enabling a mere 4 per cent of Grenadian adults, the wealthiest, to vote.

Thus, the Grenadian people, the daughters and sons of enslaved African and indentured East-Indians were effectively observers of Grenada's "democratic" process. Like the upper-circle audience in a theatre, they could watch the stage from afar but were not permitted to participate. The Gairy period brought about change but only moved the Grenadians to the back of the dress circle. Between September 1972 and March 1973 the Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP), a predecessor to the New Jewel Movement (NJM), held discussions with young people across Grenada regarding its belief that a new democracy should be developed to engage effectively with the people at all levels of society. Such assemblies MAP believed should be based both in relation to geography and production. The former was composed of parish and village assemblies and the latter of workers' assemblies, based upon the various industrial sectors.

Manifesto

The NJM then embarked on a major campaign across Grenada on questions of policy; the political situation under Prime Minister Gairy; and the way forward for the people. The assemblies of the people platform were incorporated into the NJM's speeches and the subject discussions with others. In mid-1973, following extensive discussions with a wide range of Grenadians, the NJM drew up its Manifesto, which was followed in early November 1973 by its distribution and discussion countrywide. This was approved in November 1974 at the People's Congress at Seamoan, St Andrews, organised by the NJM and attended by more than 10 per cent of Grenada's adult population. Thus, the platform of village and workers' assemblies became the official policy of the NJM, which would be introduced sometime in the future as part of the desire of the organisation to change the body politic of Grenada. It should be noted that some observers stated that the attendance at the Seamoan Congress was young and old but overwhelmingly female.

On seizing power the NJM had planned to radically change the way in which Grenada was governed and how its people could best effect the direction of their future. The Manifesto outlined how JEWEL would implement these ideas. The thinking of the revolutionaries was that politics involved decision-making about resource allocation. As such, JEWEL did not believe that the process should be an "exclusive club" whose members comprised the rich, powerful and well-connected. This was the model left by the retreating empire in order to ensure control through indirect means, as illustrated by the Gairy model of government, an incompetent, faint and poor, kleptocratic copy of the

British Westminster model. JEWEL proposed instead that the Peoples Assemblies would be a better form of government in that it would empower the poor, marginalised and powerless. The rationale being that it would involve the greatest number of people for the greatest amount of time. This, JEWEL felt, would ensure people would be assured of "... both their political ...and economic rights", thus giving power, and ultimately supremacy, to the children of several centuries of chattel slavery.

The leaders of the Revolution did not envisage that the People's assemblies would assume this role immediately following the NJM taking power. The proposal was for the formation of a provisional government that would, among other things, be dedicated to developing and implementing these assemblies. The proposed make-up of new government was unclear in the Manifesto, with the authors stating that it all depended on how things developed. The Manifesto also said that on taking power a provisional government should be established comprising a cross-section of society including members of political groupings such as the Grenada United Labour Party, Gairy's party; the Grenada National Party; and NJM.

The provisional government, as envisaged by the Manifesto, would also be a representative body made up of workers from all sectors and parts of Grenada. Rather unrealistically, the Manifesto saw the provisional government as operating on a collective leadership basis. There would, the Manifesto stated, be no Premier, and presumably no Prime Minister, but instead a different leader, a "chairman", would be elected during the interim period. At this time ministers would also be appointed by the provisional government/national assembly.

It should be realised that during the period of enslavement the countries and islands of the Caribbean produced enormous wealth for Britain. It is without doubt that this allowed for the development of the Industrial Revolution and Britain's pre-eminent role in the world, a status it enjoys even now. However, for the peoples of the empire, especially those of the Caribbean, the riches enjoyed by Britain were inversely proportional to the physical, social and economic suffering of these people. So, at independence Grenada was bereft of the skills and resources required to take its people forward. This lack of human and material resources would hamper the Revolution and continues to hold back the development of the people of the Caribbean to this day.

People's Assemblies

To understand the development of the People's Assemblies, the organisational history of the NJM has to be studied. Following its defeat by Gairy during the upheaval of 1973/4, the Party examined its operational method and found them to be totally inadequate. Up to

that time it had operated based on crowd politics, agitation and rhetoric. The internal structures of the Party were poorly organised, with the leadership not attending to the details required of a modern political organisation.

From 1974 onwards the NJM developed a policy of member development, membership improvement and structural change. This enabled JEWEL to effectively create a large membership over the following years and to effectively engage with them. Organised Party Support Groups (PSGs) were developed across the country. These acted as a forum for members. In addition, created were Work Committees, which were allocated specific tasks.

Coard described these as particularly successful as they "*ensured division of labour, specialisation, adequate delegation of responsibilities and opportunities for all to 'train on the job'...*". Also created around this time was a monthly roving NJM Council Open Delegate Meeting, which was open to all members, but was intended as a higher discussion forum for committed members. The Council would meet at different locations across the country thereby giving an opportunity for local members, who lacked adequate transport to attend and participate.

Following Gairy's overthrow the revolutionaries decided that these monthly peripatetic meetings were insufficient for the discussions necessary for a democratic organisation. Thus the NJM Council Open Delegate Meetings became NJM Parish Council of Delegates Meeting. These would meet monthly in each of Grenada's seven parishes. The first such NJM Council of Delegates Meeting was overwhelmed by non-NJM members wishing to attend. This was the case at all of the other parish meetings. It was calculated that the national NJM Council Open Delegate Meeting had a total of 500 regular attendees countrywide. However, the Parish Council meeting would regularly attract in excess of that number. As a result of attendance being open to all local people, within three months of the Revolution the word "Delegate" was dropped from the title of these meetings. Shortly afterwards "NJM" was also dropped from their title and became Parish Council Meetings. The unleashed potential of the Grenadian people resulted in these Parish Council Meetings proving to be physically inadequate for those wanting to attend. At some of the meetings more than 1,000 would attend. Consequently, they were changed from Parish to Zonal Council Meetings, with the former splitting into two of the latter. In the case of St George five Zonal Councils were formed. By 1981, more than 28 zones were created across the country, and they met regularly.



The evolution of a process of democratic control across Grenada, such as the Zonal Council Meetings, was extended to those who belonged to particular groups or were involved in particular areas. So, Women, Youth, Workers and Farmers Parish Council Meetings were also established. The contents of these meetings during the Revolution began with Government Ministers and the leadership of the Revolution presenting reports to the people followed by questions, suggestions and criticism. These developed into fora where senior public officers were asked to make presentations and engage in Q&A regarding their area of responsibility. Over time it became the norm for the Chief of Police, the Chief Medical Officer, the Director of Airport Construction, Permanent Secretaries of all Ministries to make regular reports to these meetings.

The success of the process, although very weak and to a certain extent embryonic in nature, was the confidence it gave to Grenadians; instituted a degree of control of their economic and material environment; strengthened their understanding of the issues and challenges faced by the new Government and the Departments of Government. With such knowledge the ability to exercise real decision-making became stronger.

Constitutional Commission

Consequently, many of the programmes of the Revolution were conceived, tested and/or fleshed out at these meetings. Among these were the proposals to develop a National Transport System; the introduction of a National Insurance Scheme; the creation of the National Commercial Bank; the development of the Adult Literacy programme and many other ideas. At the Zonal level the meetings concentrated on local issues such as schools,

health centres, roads, etc. However, they also discussed national and international issues including the US policies in the region and elsewhere, the freedom struggle in South Africa; Palestinian self-determination. In 1983 the PRG moved to give effect to another aspect of its 1973 Manifesto, the development of a constitution relevant to the needs of Grenadian People. A Constitutional Commission was formed, led by the eminent lawyer, Caribbean historian and writer Richard Hart. A founder member of the Peoples National Party of Jamaica, he had migrated to the UK following his expulsion from the PNP and there worked as a solicitor. He was recruited out of retirement by the PRG to become the Attorney General of Grenada.

The brief given to the Commission was to draft a new constitution. As part of its work the Commission examined the operation and experience of a number of Councils, with the intention of ensuring they were placed on a legal footing. The revolutionaries hoped that as a result all adult Grenadians from a specific area would have the right to access, participate and be elected to the executive of the various Councils. Unfortunately, 1983 was also the year in which the structures of the Revolution appear to have encountered challenges, for reasons not yet fully understood. The authors do not accept that the Revolution was on the point of collapse. No empirical evidence has been provided for this. The major infrastructural development, the International Airport was almost complete; the legal and social role of women in the Revolution had been strengthened; many of the hundreds of students studying overseas were returning to Grenada; a successful and free national health service had been created; a National Insurance Scheme was launched. It may have been that the Revolution, its leaders and people were tired rather than the process was on the point of collapse.

One of the many obstacles faced by the Revolution may have been their setting of too high an expectation for themselves. That challenges could not be overcome by the enthusiasm of the party members and the people alone. Bernard Coard explains that in the four years and seven months of the Revolution the assemblies, as described above, happened almost by accident. However, their role does not appear to have been given any legal status and their role can best be described as that of consultative bodies on their way to becoming legally established. Further, the NJM appears to have abandoned them when the crisis within the leadership overcame the Party.



Community Work: The building of Birchgrove Community Centre.

Salt-fish Journalism

When they speak of a 'free press' comrades, we are to understand that they talk of the right to have journalistic licence... But this journalistic licence simply means the right to print lies and slander people, the right to provoke people to violence, the right to hold one position only and to pretend that that position represents the whole truth... We have to recognise that it is the same voice with one idea that the voice of the people can never get expression in their journal or in their publication.

*Maurice Bishop speaking of *The Torchlight* newspaper.*

Detention without Trial – An affront to Revolutionary Democracy?

The New Jewel Movement (NJM) published its Manifesto in 1973. The document set out a series of clear policy objective that they would follow upon gaining power. Included in the policy is the statement:

...The new society must not only speak of Democracy, but must practise it in all its aspects...

Upon overthrowing the brutal Gairy dictatorship the NJM created the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG), a broad-based administration, to carry out the policies of the Manifesto and other programmes. During its short life the PRG arrested and held in detention-without-trial a significant number of persons. How was this possible, when the NJM's much-vaunted ideals are considered? Many have asked how could the movement that led a popular Revolution come to a position where it can imprison its own citizens without providing them the recourse to proper judicial process.

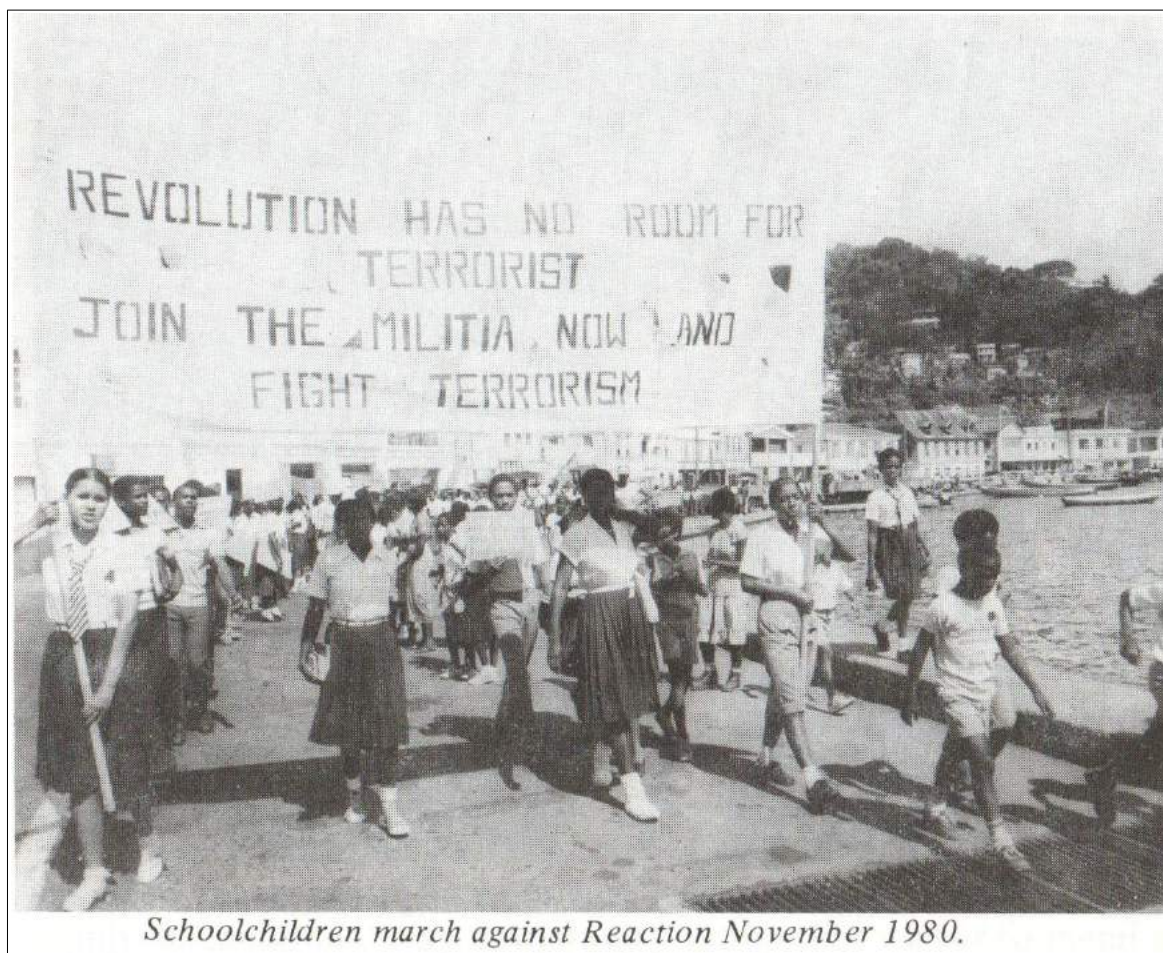
During the Gairy years the NJM leaders suffered harassment, torture, unlawful detention and other brutal, illegal acts. On the morning of 13 March, the NJM declared that it had brought democracy to the people of Grenada. This was their clear stated intention and was carried through with the introduction of proper procedures to the police and other security services of the country.

The new government faced numerous obstacles, many of which it overcame by strengthening the unity between the government and the people of Grenada. However, it is clear that the young Revolution faced an orchestrated campaign of destabilisation throughout its period in office. These included threats of invasion from mercenary forces; threats of invasion from the USA, bombings, resulting in the deaths of three young Grenadians; shootings that killed many; economic destabilisation designed to overthrow the Revolution and many similar acts of aggression, described later in this booklet.

Objectively, it can be seen that the destabilisation faced by the PRG was unprecedented in its scope and effect. Under normal circumstances, and in a secure and normal society, acts such as those committed against the Grenadian people and government would be treated as ordinary crimes. However, the situation faced by the PRG as a result of this continuous process of destabilisation threatened to overwhelm the Revolution and was clearly designed to curtail the ambitions and aspirations of the Grenadian people. The measures used by the PRG to deal with acts of destabilisation included detention without trial. The Revolution made no excuse for doing so but pointed out that countries faced with similar or near similar situations resorted to similar measures.

Examples cited by the PRG include the detention of alleged "enemy aliens" and known British fascists by the British authorities in the Second World War. The UK government, over the last few years, has used a variety of detention methods, such as Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures in the so-called war against terror. In some cases the measures described above have been subject to limited judicial oversight but in other cases no such provisions were put in place. In Grenada a review committee, headed by Maurice Bishop, was established to examine the continued detention of those held by the PRG. Many were released following such reviews. Detention without trial not the best method of ensuring security but it was not the worst, particularly when placed in a regional context. The Reagan regime that was so critical of the PRG's record on Human Rights actively supported the governments of Colombia and El Salvador that were notorious for their use of death squads.

The 20-20 vision provided by hindsight can lead us to say that the revolutionaries should have brought those detained to trial as soon as possible. Whilst not doing so was a dreadful mistake, we can understand why this was not done.



Schoolchildren march against Reaction November 1980.

Revolutionary Foreign Policy

Five basic principles guided the foreign policy of the People's Revolutionary Government:

1. Anti-Imperialism and Non-Alignment;
2. Achievement of a New International Economic Order;
3. Promotion of World Peace and Co-operation;
4. Pursuit of Regional Co-operation and Integration;
5. Support for National Liberation Struggles

On this last point, the government gave particular support to the anti-Pinochet resistance in Chile, perhaps to make amends for Eric Gairy's close relationship with the Chilean dictator. In the rest of the world, they felt a close affinity with SWAPO in Namibia, the ANC in South Africa, the POLISARIO Front fighting for the independence of the Western Sahara from Morocco and with the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The PRG felt a particularly strong outrage at the brutality of the Duarte dictatorship in El Salvador.

Their regional policy was to work for:

1. The elimination of colonialism from the Caribbean with particular emphasis on self-determination for Puerto Rico.
2. The end of the US blockade of Cuba.
3. Defence of the revolutionary government of Nicaragua.

Indeed, Cuba and Nicaragua were Grenada's closest allies, co-operating both economically and politically.

The basis of foreign economic policy was:

1. No compromise on ideological questions in order to achieve external material and technical support;
2. Mutual respect;
3. Official government to government assistance based on a mixed economy with a dominant state sector.

This approach crystallised in an agreement with Cuba on economic, scientific and technical co-operation that, in the first instance, covered the supply of experts and training and which resulted in technical assistance in construction, fishing, public health, transport, agriculture, the sugar industry, education and sports. Cuba loaned \$30 million dollars' worth of heavy equipment to help with the construction of the International Airport, along with on-the-job training for 60 Grenadians in its operation and maintenance, as well as over 250 skilled construction workers. The government and people of Cuba supplied 10 fishing boats, so that by 1981, the country was catching \$170,000 worth of fish. But it was

not just Cuba with whom Grenada reached agreement. For instance, a loan agreement with the Caribbean Development Bank funded the renovation of the port in St Georges with the Canadian government providing technical assistance and training.

Iraq provided loans to help with the construction of the airport terminal building while Libya and Syria also provided lines of credit. OPEC also helped finance the airport as well as funding the National Bus Service. Despite attempts by the US government to hinder such co-operation, many European countries, both individually and through the EEC proved to be sources of funding and mutually beneficial trade. Maurice Bishop's visit to France in September 1982 gave rise to an agreement on economic co-operation. The visiting delegation managed to persuade the government of François Mitterand not only to make substantial development grants to Grenada, but also to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, the first time that France had made such grants to countries other than its ex-colonies in Africa.

More surprising was the ability to reach agreement, again despite US animosity, with both the International Monetary Fund and the British Export Guarantees Department. Many countries, notably Tanzania, Cuba and East Germany, provided scholarships to enable Grenadians to enter higher education in unprecedented numbers. East Germany also contributed a printing press and supplied a fleet of trucks on terms of soft credit.

But nothing sums up Grenadian foreign policy better than the widespread outrage at the cricket tour of apartheid South Africa organised by Geoffrey Boycott, in which some Caribbean cricketers took part:

The People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada condemns in the strongest possible terms the obscene act of a group of cricketers, nationals of certain member states of the Caribbean Community, who have joined the infamous trek to South Africa, that contemptible citadel of racism and apartheid.

It is shocking that for "thirty pieces of silver" sons of Africa would become mercenaries and minstrels for racist imperialism and mock and betray their black brothers and sisters who resolutely continue to fight this cancer.

The recent racist outburst in Birmingham by that same Geoffrey Boycott, now a BBC commentator, shows just how right they were.

Destabilisation – Bombings, Shootings and Resistance

Why destabilise?

Although overwhelmingly popular, the Grenada Revolution was faced with considerable opposition from within and without. The turmoil from which the Grenada Revolution was born included the hundreds of years of enslavement of its people, its role as a producer for the British Empire until 1974, the subservient nature of its economy to larger economies, being born into the Cold War and the resistance to it by the supporters of the Gairy dictatorship.

Those benefiting most from the pre-Revolution situation were those most resistant to the changes introduced by the Revolution. In addition, the United States has declared, without consulting any of the countries affected, that the Caribbean, Central and South America were its zone of influence. Often cited as the Monroe Doctrine it was in fact the interpretation of the Doctrine by US President Theodore Roosevelt, which stated that, in cases of flagrant and chronic wrongdoing in any country in the region the United States could intervene in that country's internal affairs.

Of course the US is the only arbiter in determining what comprises "wrongdoing" by a country in "its zone of influence". The fact that the people of a country of the Americas have voted for, supported or benefited from a change in the political, economic or social model will not prevent the United States from intervening in the region. It is estimated that America has intervened or invaded its neighbours, big and small, over 130 times since its own creation.

For example in 1890 the US invaded Argentina, followed by Chile in 1891, Haiti in 1891, Nicaragua in 1894 and many others, although Nicaragua appears to be a favourite with an invasion every 10 years, on average. More recently, Panama was invaded in 1958 followed by Cuba, Panama the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Chile.

Why Grenada?

The Grenada Revolution occurred in an English speaking country. As such, its progress could be disseminated to and witnessed by speakers of the language, in a form unmediated by translation. It was also a country populated by people of African/Indian descent with few resources save their own intellectual capabilities but determined to change the *status quo* ceded to them by Britain at the end of Empire.

Most importantly, the Revolution was successful in that it brought material benefits to its people in the form of women's rights, housing, healthcare, education, employment, etc. Alongside of these the people of Grenada were able, after several hundred years, to stand

proud and determine their own destiny. As many Grenadians said, "We did it by our own hands".

In doing so, the success of the Revolution caused alarm to some regional Government and powers beyond the Caribbean, whose economic model was based on that overthrown by the Grenadians on 13 March 1979.

The Revolution's birth at the time of the heightened tensions between the Western and communist powers caused the US to view it initially with great hostility, leading eventually to a decision being clearly made and expressed to overthrow it. In this respect elements of the British establishment sided with US foreign policy, although a thorough reading of the history of the period will show Britain's role to be more complex and not just Janus-faced.

Examples of destabilisation

Even for a country as small as Grenada with a population of 110,000, the scope of this publication cannot recap all of the various efforts to turn back and destroy the Revolution. Readers are invited to read the detailed publications produced by supporters and opponents of the Revolution since October 1983, including those from the Central Intelligence Agency and the US Department of Defence, in order to get an exhaustive picture.

The attempted destabilisation of the Revolution began after just a few days of the 13 March and continued up to October 1983, followed by the US invasion of Grenada on the 25th of that month. Here are some of the examples of the methods of destabilisation used against the Grenadians and how the Revolution dealt with these.

Mercenaries and "Soldiers of Fortune"

The mighty US did not wish to be seen blatantly invading tiny Grenada after the Revolution. As with the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, they sought to overthrow the PRG through the use of a proxy mercenary force, which included some remnants of Gairy's secret police and supporters.

In April 1981 members of this force were arrested prior to launching an invasion of Dominica, a territory to the north of Grenada. Their clear intention was to use Dominica as a base for an invasion of Grenada.

The Grenadians responded by mobilisation of the people to such dangers, increasing the size of the Popular Militia, along with recruiting more members of the Army and securing training for Militia and Army personnel in Cuba and the Soviet Union.

PRG-79

BEAT BACK NEW THREAT OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION



The grief-stricken faces of Loraine Phillip's family as they mourn at the graveside of young Loraine, killed in the brutal bomb attack of June 19. Such grief and mourning caused by counter-revolutionaries must never happen again in our country.

COUNTER REVOLUTION ON THE RISE:

Counter-revolution is on the rise again in Grenada. Remnants of the criminal gang, who planned and carried out the bombing at the Queens Park are still operating in Grenada, backed by outside forces.

This small clique is making a last desperate attempt to gain power for themselves by the use of rumours, destabilizing pamphlets and violent acts of terrorism. These activities are aimed at making us a people lose confidence in ourselves in our revolution and in our ability to move forward and to solve our problems. With this they hope to pave the way for a final attempt at overthrowing the Government and turning back the revolution.

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Internal destabilisation

While the Revolution was popular across all sectors of Grenadian society, some groups interpreted it as an opportunity to engage in their own agenda. A number of youth thought that the Revolution was the opportunity to engage in large-scale cannabis cultivation in the north of the country, ignoring the international destabilisation it would have brought to Grenada. They were arrested as part of normal police action.

Others were engaged in action directly designed to bring down the Revolution. In June 1980 a bomb was exploded at Queen's Park with the intention of killing Maurice Bishop and other members of the Revolution. Instead, three schoolgirls were killed and more than 90 others injured. Later on, while on his way to plant another device the bomber was blown up by his own explosive.

In the St Patrick's Parish, a group engaged in a murderous spree culminating in the killing of four men along a country road, the abduction, murder and mutilation of a People's Revolutionary Army soldier. The gang were found hiding in the Parish. Despite being surrounded and encouraged to surrender they engaged the local militia and were themselves killed. The PRG responded by fully informing the population of these atrocities, further encouraging their support of the Revolution and recruiting members of organisations such as the National Youth Organisation and the National Women's Organisation.

International financial destabilisation

During the Revolution Grenada was able to achieve economic success in a number of areas. It was financing and building, with material and personnel assistance from Cuba, the International Airport. The Agro-Industrial plant at True Blue was coming into production. European investors had signed initial protocols of interest in developing huge tourist facilities in Grenada and many other schemes were progressing, as the country entered a significant period of development. However, some entrenched businesses could see that the Revolution would at some stage impact upon and possibly curtail their interests. These enterprises were clearly hostile to the Revolution and worked to bring it down.

One such example was GRENLEC, the local power company, whose shares were owned by CDC, a British multinational. In 1981 CDC, Esso and Barclays Bank engaged in a scheme to shut down Grenada's electricity supply. GRENLEC's local management stated to the Government that it had no money to purchase fuel; Barclays refused to grant GRENLEC any loans and Esso refused to supply fuel. Had this threat been implemented, it would have brought the Revolution to a standstill. The response from the

Revolutionaries was for the PRG to acquire a majority of GRENLEC's shares and put new leadership into the company.

Internal dispute in the leadership

It is clear that the leaders of the Revolution, including those who were prominent in Government and/or the NJM played a role in the destabilisation of the Revolution. This they did by failing to notice the enemy without, while concentrating on conceptual disputes within. The United States, through its manifold agencies, is always prepared to execute plans designed to thwart those it considers are engaged in "wrongdoing" wherever they are but especially those in its "zone of influence". With hindsight it is clear that the US spy agencies had, at worst, penetrated the leadership circles of the Revolution or at least were privy to its internal disputes. It was therefore incumbent on the revolutionaries to be aware of this and to consider it as a factor when engaging in those disputes that would inevitably arise.

The scope of this book is not to examine the detail of what led to the internal collapse of the NJM and the Revolution. As stated elsewhere, events of the Revolution such as this are covered in detail in other publications. It was crystal clear that the Reagan government was looking for a pretext to invade Grenada and overthrow the Revolution. It was also clear that the groundwork was being prepared for an invasion of Grenada.

The following report was published by United Press International (UPI) on 6 April 1982:

A massive military exercise involving 45,000 troops and 60 warships will get under way in the Caribbean later this month in yet another signal to Cuba of the U.S. intention to maintain a presence in the troubled region.

Navy officials said Tuesday the exercise, called 'Ocean Venture 82,' would run from April 22 until May 16. It will draw from all branches of the service and will include a mock Marine invasion of Puerto Rico, the use of B-52 bombers, two carrier battle groups and airborne warning and control system aircraft.

It will be the third, and largest, military exercise in the Caribbean Basin this year. 'Operation Safe Pass' was conducted in March and the five-week 'Readex 82' is currently under way.

Navy officials said 'Ocean Venture 82' is designed to 'demonstrate and improve the capability of the United States to protect and maintain the free use of sea lanes in the Caribbean basin and the Gulf of Mexico.'

Rear Admiral Robert P. McKenzie, commander of U.S. Forces-Caribbean at Key West, said the exercise would 'show Cuba that we are very capable of projecting

significant power into this region. We're hoping people would begin to notice.

'The Caribbean basis is so vital to U.S. interests... a region we have neglected for far too long. There is a very real, serious threat not only to the region but also to the United States.'

'Ocean Venture 82' will include a simulated U.S. attempt to impede the flow of arms shipments to Central America by a mock country called 'Brown.'

The events that led to the killing of Maurice Bishop and others on 19 October were the pretext Reagan required for an invasion. This was made more urgent when on 23 October 1983 more than 240 US service personnel, including 220 Marines, were killed by a truck bomb in Lebanon. On this occasion the Revolution had no answer.



African Liberation Day, 1981.

Conclusion

The Grenadian Revolution stands as one of the most exciting attempts to create a new social system based on equality, social justice, solidarity and resistance to imperialist intervention. The economy was revived and expanded; unemployment was markedly reduced; education was brought forward from the colonialist dark ages, both raising standards and, at the same time, expanding provision to cover the majority of the population; new systems of democratic participation were started; laws promoting equality for women were both enacted and, more importantly, enforced. These are just the highlights of a remarkable period, which was all the more remarkable given poverty and lack of resources left by British colonialism and the Gairy dictatorship and in the face of the relentless hostility of the most powerful state on earth.



We must not let the tragic end of the Grenadian Revolution blind us to the example that it sets us. There are those who wish to interminably discuss what went wrong, let us allow them to do so at their leisure. We are presenting the goal of a better world for us all and we believe that, if the people of Grenada could make such advances in such a short time, we too can win a better tomorrow, as long as we also strive to achieve this "By Our Own Hands".

Then I became involved in the Militia. It was clear that if we wanted the Revolution to succeed, then we had to be prepared to defend it.

Dorcas Braveboy describing the initial effects of Militia training on her and many of her sisters.

Epilogue by *Chris Searle*

The Prime Minister of Grenada during its revolutionary years, the late Maurice Bishop, called the Grenada Revolution "*a big and popular school*", and three and a half decades on from its disastrous implosion, it still has hugely positive lessons to teach us. A full and cogent summary of many of its major achievements in economic, social and political areas is set down in this narrative, for the "Revo" was unique in what it accomplished during its four and a half years of existence, and many brave, innovative and powerfully intelligent men and women from this three small-island nation in the Eastern Caribbean transformed life for their people in remarkably original ways. So much so, that during those years Grenada became the entire Caribbean's nub of change and advance, and some of the finest and most active brains of the region from Guyana, Trinidad, Barbados, St. Lucia, Jamaica and Cuba came to work towards its development as a whole-Caribbean nexus. From the USA, too, militants, progressives and intellectuals came to add their solidarity, from Angela Davis and Harry Belafonte to the CIA renegade Philip Agee. At almost any time during those years you would meet Caribbean luminaries bringing their skills and experience: Cheddi Jagan of Guyana, the Trinidadian educationalist, novelist and author of the *Marryshow Readers* Merle Hodge working in Curriculum Development, the Caribbean's greatest novelist George Lamming of Barbados convening and speaking at meetings throughout Grenada and Carriacou, historian and lawyer Richard Hart serving as Attorney General, the Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal and the epochal Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Brazilian literacy pioneer Paulo Freire, one of Africa's paramount writers the Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the President of Mozambique Samora Machel, all came to Grenada to give their inspiration and knowledge. A new, unified civilization was beckoning in Grenada in its half-decade of transformation.

Such unity of Caribbean purpose was rare and precious enough in one small-island state, yet it was exemplary for progressive forces across the region, and much further afield. You would find meetings in small communities across the islands on the anti-apartheid campaigns in South Africa, the Palestinian struggle and I remember well a truly educative and moving meeting given by leaders of the American Indian Movement, who were touring Grenada. The first week I was there, I stayed in the same hotel as John Stockwell, the ex-CIA operative and author of the book *In Search of Enemies*, who was speaking at meetings of village councils and trade unions

throughout Grenada, warning its people of how the CIA worked. There was so much to learn, so much to heed, so little time.

The essential message of revolutionary unity was the most important theme of those tumultuous years. The Revo's most dire failure was to ignore its grounding principle during its most vulnerable moments; the violence, betrayal, disintegration and loss of so many brilliant people that followed was a lesson for us all that must always be remembered. The truth of those terrible events is still emerging and must be fully revealed in all its aspects, for the sake of the future and all those determined to create a more just, equal and unified Caribbean for all its people.

But the narratives and meanings of the lucid words of Bartholomew and Cushion are vital, as the true benefits and progress of the Grenada Revolution are a marker for us all. As Cheddi Jagan declared at the Grenada solidarity conference in 1982:

It is like a breath of fresh air, a tonic to the frayed nerves of a people long betrayed, battered and bruised ... a monument to the Caribbean people's courage and political will to stand up to imperialist attack and blackmail.



Electricity comes to Petit Martinique – no longer a forgotten island, October 1982.

Sources

The principal source for this booklet is the library of the University of the West Indies Open Campus in St Georges, Grenada. They have a collection of newspaper cuttings and government press releases from the time of the Revolution that proved extremely valuable. The British Library and Senate House Library provided examples of contemporary pamphlets produced for the PRG by Fedon Publishing:

Grenada is Not Alone

In the Spirit of Butler: Trade Unionism in Free Grenada

To Construct from Morning: Making the People's Budget in Grenada

Education is a Must

Is Freedom We Making: The New Democracy in Grenada

For a website containing many of our sources for this booklet:

http://cls-uk.org.uk/?page_id=315

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Caribbean Labour Solidarity

CLS is not tied to any political party in the United Kingdom or the Caribbean. We work to unite all those who support equality, democracy, justice and social progress in the Caribbean. We will support all who recognise that the struggle against racism, fascism, imperialism and neo-colonialism in the Caribbean requires the building of strong international links between the working people there and their sisters and brother globally. We continue to play an important role, along with our sisters and brothers everywhere, in the worldwide peoples' movement for justice through the publication of articles in a variety of media; production of our bulletin *Cutlass*; organising or participating in public meetings or conferences; arranging pickets and demonstrations; joining deputations; collating and presenting petitions; distribution of our literature; and other associated activities. Through these actions we continue to popularise the activities and causes of the anti-imperialist fighters of the Caribbean.

Through our links with the trade unions and solidarity organisations in Britain we set ourselves the objectives of mobilising opinion in aid of these struggles. In doing so we also recognise the special bonds that exists between black peoples everywhere despite the different conditions in which their specific struggles are waged. We also actively participate in the struggle against racism, which has been the springboard for the development of organisations like the English Defence League in the UK, the Front National in France, Golden Dawn in Greece and other fascist organisations now gaining strength in Europe on the back of the current economic crisis. We therefore support anti-racist, anti-fascist campaigns in various forms including exposing these fascist organisations; the fight against the police harassment of black youth, trade unionists and progressive workers; the fight against institutionalised racism in employment, education, housing and its other forms.

In so doing we recognise that the British Empire has bestowed a bitter legacy on sections of the working classes in the UK and the former colonies. As an organisation seeking to maintain and expand solidarity with the black workers and their allies in the Caribbean we already make a distinct contribution to the anti-racist struggle in Britain. We urge all those who share these aims to join us and to participate in our work. It is fun, informative and empowering. In our work we collaborate with and seek united action with all sororial/fraternal groups that share our commitment to the anti-imperialist struggle.

By Our Own Hands

A People's History of the Grenadian Revolution

Dr. Steve Cushion

is Secretary of Caribbean Labour Solidarity and Branch Secretary of the University and Colleges Union, London Retired Members. He is author of "The Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution" and "Killing Communists in Havana".

Dennis Bartholomew

worked in the Grenada High Commission during the period of the Revo'. he was a member of Cause for Concern, a UK-based group that supported the New Jewel Movement prior to 1979. Following the US invasion he has worked to promote the ideas and successes of the Grenadian Revolution

*When we hear the news of the revolution that morning,
it was joy come out in the morning! Joy come out in
the morning! As if I lifted up that morning!*

Scotilda Noel

