

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF A REVOLUTION: SOME LESSONS FROM GRENADA

by August Nimtz*

The Eastern Caribbean island of Grenada experienced from 1979 to almost the end of 1983 what may have been the most thoroughgoing socialist revolution in the Black world to date. Both its success and tragic demise offer a number of lessons for those who seek to understand and implement the process of socialist transformation.

I. THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The Grenada revolution must be seen as part of a world-wide historical revolutionary process. Its most immediate context in time is the post-World War II anti-colonial struggle. As was true for most Black activists in the diaspora, those in the Caribbean were much affected by the promise and reality of Africa's quest for self-determination. For many, the unfulfilled hopes of that movement became apparent all too soon. It was a revolution from the Caribbean, in fact, Frantz Fanon, who foresaw this reality as early as 1959 in his very prophetic work *The Wretched of the Earth*.

For activists in the Caribbean the lessons of "flag independence" in Africa became more comprehensible following the acquisition of formal independence by the states of Jamaica and Trinidad in the early 1960s. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, nationalists in the Caribbean had a chance to view "independence" from close-up.

There was another event of major importance that affected radicalising forces in the region, the Cuban revolution in 1959. Radicals in the Caribbean were, thus, provided with two very different recipes for self-determination and development in their immediate vicinity — the socialist path of Cuba and the Capitalist path of Jamaica and Trinidad. By the end of the sixties these forces were beginning to draw up balance sheets on both courses. While there were different interpretations of what the socialist path meant — for some it was Cuba, while for others it resembled what Tanzania was doing — few nationalists overtly endorsed the capitalist prescription. That Cuba had withstood the attacks and threats from the US and was able to bring concrete gains to its workers and peasants explains why so many were attracted to its course.¹

This was the period in which the Black power movement exploded, the first mass expression of opposition to the capitalist neo-colonial path in the Caribbean.² Whatever illusions activists may have had about individuals such as Prime Minister Eric Williams of Trinidad, who flirted on occasion with socialist ideas, and whose *Capitalism and Slavery* was a major indictment of imperialism, these came to an abrupt end.

The persecution of Black power activists in Trinidad, Jamaica, and elsewhere made clear to many the necessity of pursuing a non-capitalist road and that its realisation would require means other than the electoral process.

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It was this context that radicals found themselves in at the beginning of the seventies in Grenada. While the larger islands had been independent for a decade by this time, the micro-states like Grenada were just beginning the decolonisation process. Radicals in such places had already grasped the lessons of independence and, hence, viewed suspiciously the manner in which European rule formally came to an end. What greeted the new government of Prime Minister Eric Gairy of Grenada on independence day in January 1974 was not jubilant celebrations but rather a general strike. The populace of the island had experienced almost two decades of Gairy's rule by the time independence arrived, a tenure characterised by corruption, deceit and brutality — the reason, in fact, for the strike. Although Gairy had once been a popular leader who led the rural proletariat in a massive upsurge against the plantocracy in the 1950s, by 1974 he, like many of his counterparts elsewhere in the semi-colonial world, had degenerated into a ruthless despot allied to the commercial bourgeoisie.³ While few of the neo-colonial heads were model democrats, Gairy was particularly outrageous, especially from 1974 to the revolution in 1979.

This was the immediate situation, along with the aforementioned historical and regional framework in which revolutionary nationalists like Maurice Bishop, a lawyer, organised in 1973 the New Jewel Movement (Jewel was the acronym for Joint Endeavor for Welfare Education and Liberation), the party that would lead the revolution. In an interview with the Cuban magazine *Bohemia* in 1977, Bishop outlined its political evolution. It traced its origins to intellectual currents in the English-speaking Caribbean who had been influenced by the Black Power, African and Third World liberation movements.

But unquestionably through the Cuban experience we got to see scientific socialism close-up. This together with, together with the process that has taken place in recent years in Guyana and Jamaica, has been teaching us, on the practical level of day-to-day political struggle, the relevance of socialism as the only solution to our problems. Our party began to develop along Marxist lines in 1974, when we began to study the theory of scientific socialism.⁴

Bishop's comments reveal how examples — negative as well as positive ones — can help educate committed revolutionaries. Not only was there Cuba, but also the examples of Jamaica and Guyana. Though he did not elaborate, in referring to the latter two — respectively the "Democratic Socialist Experiment" of Michael Manley and the "State Capitalism" of Forbes Burnham — Bishop no doubt meant that he and his comrades had learned that not every government that employs socialist rhetoric is necessarily socialist.⁵ Only in Cuba was the rhetoric matched by reality.

The relationship of class forces on the international level is also key in understanding Grenada's revolution. The year 1979 was an auspicious one for the revolutionary process. In addition to Grenada, both Nicaragua and Iran exploded. Aside from the internal contradictions in all these countries, the relative weakness of imperialism at that period, most importantly US imperialism, explains in large part the success of these breakthroughs. In the aftermath of Vietnam and the resulting anti-war sentiment among its masses, US rulers did not have as free a hand to oppose revolutionary upsurges as had been true in earlier periods. Also, the situation in Iran and, to a lesser extent, Nicaragua occupied enough of their attention to allow the events in little known Grenada to go almost unnoticed.

The international situation must in turn be seen in the larger historical setting. It cannot be overemphasised that had the Cuban revolution not been able to survive, Grenada's revolution in all probability would not have occurred nor, as shall be seen shortly, been able to exist as long as it did. The Cubans have often remarked that Vietnam's liberation struggle which deeply occupied the US for over a decade gave them enough breathing space to survive in a very crucial period. Finally, of course, had there been no Russian revolution it is certainly clear that the Cuban revolution — ninety miles from socialism's most potent opponent — would not have been around to inspire and assist the Grenadans. Truly, Grenada illustrates that socialist revolutions cannot be explained in isolation from each other and must be seen as part of a larger revolutionary process that has its ebbs as well as flows.

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF A REVOLUTION

The revolution began on March 13, 1979, when the New Jewel Movement (NJM) led an almost bloodless insurrection that overthrew Gairy's regime while he was out of the country. A superficial view of the insurrection, which lasted about twelve hours, might suggest that it was no more than a *coup d'état*. In fact, what occurred was a popular revolutionary uprising whose character set the overriding tone for the process that was set in motion that day.

Early that morning, NJM leader, Maurice Bishop, went on the air at the just-seized radio station to announce that the uprising had begun with the capture of the army barracks by about 45 NJM cadre. He asked Grenada's masses to participate in the process by helping the newly-formed revolutionary army to disarm police stations throughout the country. Periodic bulletins during the day urged the population to show active support. The appeals were addressed to the entire population, but especially workers, youth and women.⁶ The response was overwhelmingly positive. Reports indicate that thousands of people, out of a population of 110,000, took part in the insurrection. Bishop estimates that around 1,000 workers were active participants. A week after the uprising some 20,000 people attended a rally in the capital to show support for what was now called the revolution and its leadership. A similar rally took place a few days later on the other side of the island where Bishop presented the motion that Gairy's regime be formally abolished and the new People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) be established. "When it came to the vote, some 20,000 arms and clenched fists shot up into the air for approval."⁷

The NJM successfully led the uprising because of the deep roots it had established among the masses following its founding in 1973. It had led massive anti-Gairy rallies, played an important role in two general strikes on the eve of independence in 1974, and emerged after the 1976 elections as the major opposition party. In that election, the NJM entered into an electoral alliance with two bourgeois parties. Although Gairy had the elections rigged to ensure victory for his party, the NJM with Bishop as its leader was able to capture 3 of the 17 seats in the parliament. Recognising that the electoral alliance was politically incompatible, the NJM broke with the two bourgeois parties shortly after the elections.

In the aftermath of the demise of the alliance the party went on a major campaign to establish a base in the working class. As it recognised the leading role of workers in revolutionary change, the NJM was also aware that its opponents had ties to workers through trade unions. This included Gairy himself, whose Grenada Mental and Manual Workers Union was responsible for organising the semi-proletariat agricultural workers against the plantation owners in the early fifties, the upsurge

that gave Gairy a base among this layer of workers. The NJM campaign was so successful that, by the time of the revolution, a number of its leaders had emerged as leaders in the union movement. A few months prior to the insurrection, Vincent Noel, a top NJM leader who held leading posts in two major unions for urban workers, helped lead a widely supported strike of Barclay Bank workers that helped identify the NJM with the struggle of workers including to some extent the agricultural proletariat.

With state power in its hands the NJM was able to strengthen its ties to workers even more. All of the anti-union legislation that Gairy had enacted was declared null and void. Laws were promulgated by the PRG that made it easier for unions to be formed, with the result that unionised workers rose from 30 per cent to 90 per cent. While most of the eight unions were led by the NJM, a few retained their links to opposition political forces, including the US CIA sponsored American Institute for Free Labor Development. Unions were allowed to operate free of the PRG. Public service unions had the right to see all relevant government documents for wage negotiations. NJM activists in unions sought to raise their political consciousness beyond narrow economism. The goal of the NJM was to make the unions fighting instruments in the increasing struggle with capital both domestically and internationally. To do this, Bishop said it was necessary "to work towards the total unionization of our workers and the maximum democratization of our union..."⁸

Whenever Bishop was asked what he considered to be the gains of the revolution he often would say "our view is that the greatest single achievement, the thing that we are happiest about, is the community mobilization, community development, community participation. That has really impressed us most."⁹ Along with the trade unions, Bishop was referring to the various mass organisations and institutions of popular democracy. All of these were formed through the initiative of the NJM for the purpose of instituting what the party sometimes called "revolutionary democracy", to ensure full and meaningful involvement of the masses in the decision-making process in every area of society. This perspective was a key plank in the 1973 Manifesto that brought the party into existence.

The most important mass organisations were the National Women's Organisation (NWO) and the National Youth Organisation (NYO). Thousands of women and youth felt for the first time in Grenada or anywhere in the Caribbean that they were actually determining their own destinies. These organisations were vital in popularising the programmes of the revolution.

In place of the Westminster model of government, the revolution instituted at the local and regional levels councils or people's assemblies, respectively zonal and parish councils. Parallel to these were councils for workers, students and farmers. They were the links between the PRG and the people. As such, they could summon government officials to appear before them to explain and discuss policies. It was Bishop's intention to institutionalise this entire array of bodies through a new constitution that would also provide for a national assembly. A particular innovation of the Grenadan revolution was the discussion and debate of the national budget by these councils. Never before had the Caribbean witnessed a budget-making process which involved literally the entire population.¹⁰

In sum, the manner in which the Grenadan revolution began — reliance on the masses — was not only continued but deepened.

Along with the institution of popular democracy, Bishop used to refer to what he called the two other pillars of the revolution — social and economic gains for the people and defence of the revolution.

In the midst of the international capitalist crisis, which continues to be particularly devastating for the Caribbean, Grenada was able to make significant achievements. According to the World Bank, revolutionary Grenada experienced steady economic growth in terms of Gross Domestic Product, virtually the only country in the Eastern Caribbean to do so. Much of this growth was led by the state sector which made up about 35 percent of the economy. The major economic project of the PRG was the building of the new international airport. Not only did it generate many construction jobs but it was key for the long term development of the tourist and agricultural industries. Cuba was the principal foreign contributor to the project through labour and equipment, while a number of other countries, capitalist and non-capitalist, provided financial assistance.

Through land acquisitions and some land reform, the PRG was able to establish a number of agro-industries which also provided jobs and stimulated growth. Agricultural output was also spurred by increased credit to peasants, guaranteed prices for their products, and access to training and extension programmes. In addition, the establishment of co-operatives of all types was facilitated by the government. State-owned banks made most of these programmes possible.

The masses benefitted tremendously from these and other PRG policies. After four years the unemployment rate fell from 50 percent to about 12 percent. There was an increase in real wages which was supplemented by the social wage. Because of Cuban assistance most health care was free. Public transportation became available for the first time. School fees were eliminated. A literacy campaign reduced illiteracy to about two percent. Government scholarships for post-secondary education were increased by more than one hundred percent. Free milk and school lunch programmes were instituted. Cheap loans for house repairs were provided and about 30 percent of the lowest-paid workers were exempted from paying income taxes. Finally, a national social insurance plan with generous benefits for workers was established.

A number of policies were instituted to deal with the oppression of women. One, a law enacted and implemented very early in the revolution, established equal pay for equal work and outlawed sexual harassment on the job. Another required employers to provide maternity leave benefits at almost full pay.

What Bishop called the third pillar of the revolution — its defence — began to be put in place even before the insurrection in 1979 with the formation of a clandestine armed wing of the NJM called the Peoples Revolutionary Army (PRA). The core of this was the small group of NJM activists that captured the army barracks on the morning of March 13. The success of the insurrection, however, was due to what informally emerged as a people's militia, the thousand or so Grenadians who actively participated in the disarming of the police. Politically, this meant that the bourgeoisie had been disarmed and a new army based on the masses had come into existence. It was not until the revolution came under attack and US threats began that the militia was put on a sure footing. Three to five-thousand Grenadians joined, including large numbers of women. The goal of the PRG was to create a militia of about 20,000, or about one-fifth of the island's population. In addition, the PRA became a regular army of about 2,500 full-time soldiers and the police force was reorganised along lines consistent with the revolution.

III. THE CHARACTER OF THE REVOLUTION

In the 1977 *Bohemia* interview Bishop explained what kind of society the NJM wanted to establish in Grenada:

Socialism is the future we would like to see in Grenada. At present the reality is that the most backward forms of capitalist exploitation exist in Grenada. We have to remember that Grenada — with its small territory, high unemployment, great poverty and misery, with all its commercial ties to imperialism, and with a profoundly repressive government — must accomplish democratic advances in step with the march of the countries of the region.

We know how poor and backward our country is. And we know how difficult it would be to resist the general economic and political pressures that imperialism would unleash against Grenada if it tried to break the bonds of domination without first making serious attempts to develop true and significant links with the socialist camp.

However, despite all the difficulties, we feel that the perspectives for the cause of socialist revolution in Grenada are good.¹¹

Two years after the revolution the Cuban newspaper *Granma Weekly Review* asked Bishop to characterise the stage the revolution was at: "At the national democratic, the anti-imperialist stage of the process we are trying to build."¹² He said virtually the same in an interview in 1982 with the pro-Moscow *World Marxist Review*, adding the phrase "socialist oriented."¹³

A number of observers of Grenada's revolution interpreted statements such as these and others by NJM leaders to mean that the party's perspective on socialist transformation followed the "non-capitalist path" theory (hereafter, NCP) of Moscow.¹⁴ According to this view, whose most visible supporter in the Caribbean has been Trevor Munroe, Secretary General of the Workers Party of Jamaica, there is the possibility for underdeveloped countries of moving toward a distinct social formation that is neither capitalism or socialism.¹⁵ It is called the non-capitalist or socialist oriented stage. While a country in this stage may be in transition to socialism, the theory holds that this is a necessarily prolonged phase. It comes into existence through an alliance of the peasantry, workers, sectors of the petit-bourgeoisie and so-called progressive wings of the national bourgeoisie, in other words a multi-class alliance. Thus, in the context of the Caribbean, Cuba and the Bahamas would, respectively, be examples of the socialist and capitalist paths, while Manley's Jamaica would represent the NCP.

Many critics of this theory correctly argue that it is essentially a variation of the Menshevik policy, revived by Stalin as popular frontism, which was used to justify class collaboration. Rather than being a vehicle for socialist transformation, the non-capitalist state actually puts a brake on the revolutionary process by demobilising the masses. Other critics argue that in the context of the English-speaking Caribbean and Grenada, specifically, the theory does not take into account the social and political reality of the area. Such is the view of Patrick Emmanuel, who was apparently a sympathiser of Grenada's revolution but is now a member of the US-backed occupation government on the island.¹⁶ Though the validity of his argument is questionable, as shall be discussed later, his point that persistent application of the theory in the face of the reality would lead to ultra-leftism is important and shall also be examined.

Can the Grenadan revolution be accurately described as having followed the NCP? Fitzroy Ambursley, a critic of this theory, opines that Bishop and other NJM leaders adhered to this perspective.¹⁷ However, the reality of the revolution after four years led him to conclude that while "there are a number of problems with the

theory and with its concrete application in a number of Third World countries, the Bishop regime has so far been highly successful in the political path it has chosen."

It is to Ambursley's credit that he recognised reality and did not deny the advances of the revolution, that indeed it was on the road to socialist transformation, "in spite of" its NCP strategy. However, a much more thorough reading of what NJM leaders said in relation to what they did reveals a less contradictory picture between the theory and reality of Grenada's revolution. For example, NJM leader Selwyn Strachan, in a 1979 interview with *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, which Ambursley cites, does refer to the revolution as "using the mixed-economy approach, the non-capitalist path at this stage."¹⁸ Later in the same interview, however, he was asked to elaborate on this:

The aim, of course, is socialism. But socialism can not just come... We have to prepare the ground for that social transformation. We see it now as democratizing the society...making sure that the economy is consolidated...increasing the overall level of productive forces, which will prepare us for the transition.

In other words, we are moving to socialism, bypassing capitalist development.

When later asked to compare Grenada's process with the Cuban Revolution, a socialist rather than socialist-oriented country in the language of the NCP thesis, he replied: "We believe that our course of development will be more or less the same as the Cuban revolution. There may be one or two minor differences, but nothing dramatic."

Discussing the revolution after the US invasion in 1983, Don Rojas, an advisor to Bishop and his press secretary, said:

I believe that it was still in its national democratic, anti-imperialist stage, and was moving into a socialist-oriented stage...With the party controlling state power, the process of transforming the property relations and production relations from capitalist to socialist had begun¹⁹.

In both cases the language of the NCP thesis is employed but with a different meaning. Grenada was seen to be on the road to socialism, not in some prolonged in-between phase.

A critical component of the NCP theory is that workers and peasants must ally with sectors of the national bourgeoisie. George Louison, another NJM leader, addressed in part this question in a 1981 interview:

We have never hidden that we are struggling for socialism. This is in our program and we consider our party to be a vanguard socialist party....Our relations with the bourgeois parties are non-existent. In the past when we entered into alliance with them, for instance against fascism, we always preserved our independence as a party....There are two businessmen in the government, politically men of the left-center, but they are no obstacle to the revolutionary measures.²⁰

In a socialist-oriented government the weight of the bourgeoisie is such that it is able to block the process of socialist transformation.

The key to the process in Grenada was what Bishop in the *Granma* interview described as the particulars of the national democratic stage:

We feel we must build a new grass roots, people oriented democracy in our country, from the village level right up to the national level. We see the need to build national organizations of the people, based on the people, relevant to the people's life and to their real problems, to ensure their participation on a daily basis in this revolutionary democracy.

This, of course, is the stage we are at: the stage of revolutionary democracy.²¹

Bishop's point is that the path to socialism is through the mobilisation of the toilers, reliance on their power and consciousness to advance the process, which is in fact what occurred in Grenada and what he regarded as the revolution's major achievement.

This is the central issue that Steve Clark addresses in his analysis of Grenada's revolution.²² He does this by providing a framework for understanding the tasks of the revolution, a suitable framework for analysing almost any transformation process in the Third World:

The challenge confronting the revolutionary leadership in Grenada was how to prepare, educate, and organize the working population to run that society given the existing material conditions in that small country. The answers could only be determined by a concrete assessment of the level of Grenada's economic and social development; the political relationship of class forces at home and internationally; the prospects for economic assistance from the USSR, Cuba, and other workers' states and from other sources; the class consciousness and organization of the working class; and the firmness of its alliance with working farmers and other non-proletarian working people.²³

The revolution was able to move the masses forward, Clark says, despite the objective and subjective limitations because political power was in their hands. That is, the PRG was a government that served the interests of working people, a workers' and peasants' government. Economic power, at the same time, was still in the hands of the capitalists which explains the existence of the mixed economy. Nevertheless, the government never disguised its bias in favour of the toilers. Along with economic policies that extended in a sensible and measured way the state sector, the PRG instituted other policies that empowered the masses in relation to capital. Whether this was through the encouragement of labour unions and siding with them in confrontations with capital, or the provision of the social wage, the outcome was a much stronger, more confident, and politically more conscious populace of workers and peasants.

What this discussion suggests is that the NCP thesis consists of language that has different meaning for different political currents and that in the Grenada context its content was decidedly revolutionary.

This is the framework for understanding the PRG's position on governmental elections. Even some of those who supported the revolution were critical of the PRG for not holding elections as it had promised at the time of the insurrection. Aside from the fact that there had been no demand from the masses for elections, and that the machinery was being set in motion for future elections when the counter-revolution and invasion occurred, Clive Thomas of the Working people's Alliance in Guyana now claims that the delay served to bring about the conditions that led to the coup that overthrew Bishop's government.²⁴ The reasons for the coup are to be explored shortly.

The most obvious problem with this argument is its assumption that elections are a guarantor of democracy. Can Thomas ignore the fact that Gairyism emerged in spite of elections? It was their recognition of this reality that most explains the reluctance of NJM leaders to hold elections in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. What Thomas fails to understand is that elections, whether the Westminster or US style, in societies where the bourgeoisie has power — even limited — are one of the important means by which this class imposes its interests on society as a whole. To avoid this, a government serving workers and peasants must ensure that elections are not used to involuntarily transfer political power to the bourgeoisie. It does this through various policies such as eliminating illiteracy, increasing the political con-

sciousness of the masses, creating institutions of direct democracy, and instituting procedures that minimise the impact of the bourgeoisie's wealth on the electoral process. In other words, it assures that the elections — real ones and not some Stalinist caricature — reflect the interests of the majority, i.e. are truly democratic. The PRG, therefore, was correct not to rush into elections without preparing the ground for the continuation of a worker's and peasants' government.

An especially important achievement of the revolution was the raising of international proletarian consciousness among the masses. Given the parochialism that imperialism fostered in the Caribbean along language lines, this was no mean feat. For the first time, large numbers of English-speaking Caribbean people supported a revolution in Latin America — the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. With its limited resources, the PRG even sent volunteers to help in Nicaragua's literacy drive in the English-speaking areas of the country. Except for Cuba, nowhere in the Caribbean was identification with the liberation struggle in Africa as strongly as it was in revolutionary Grenada.

The "Theses on Comintern Tactics", adopted by the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922, described the kind of government that emerges when workers have successfully taken political power away from the bourgeoisie, i.e., a 'workers' government' or a 'workers' and peasants' government'. "The most elementary tasks of a workers' government must be to arm the proletariat, disarm the bourgeois counter-revolutionary organisation, bring in control over production, shift the main burden of taxation onto the propertied classes and break the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie."²⁵ This is precisely the process that was underway in Grenada after March 13, 1979.

Once in place, a workers' and peasants' government makes possible the transition to socialism. On the fourth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Lenin put in perspective what had occurred in the previous four years and what was on the agenda:

Both the anarchists and the petty-bourgeois democrats (i.e. the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries...) have talked and are still talking an incredible lot of nonsense about the relation between the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist (that is proletarian) revolution. The last four years have proved to the hilt that our interpretation of Marxism on this point, and our estimate of the experience of former revolutions were correct. We have consummated the bourgeois-democratic revolution as nobody had done before. We are advancing towards the socialist revolution consciously, firmly and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese Wall, and knowing too that (in the last analysis) *struggle alone* will determine how far we shall advance....²⁶

For Lenin, clearly the completion of the bourgeois democratic tasks was the bridge to socialist construction.

In a June 1983 interview with the New York weekly, *Village Voice*, Bishop again used the language of the NCP thesis to explain the socialist character of Grenada's revolution: "In terms of our path of socialist orientation, there is the political essence — rule by the working people; the economic essence — development of the productive forces that would lay the basis for the building of socialism as a later stage".²⁷ Irrespective of the label, what Bishop is describing can only be a society in transition to socialism, not in a holding pattern of indefinite duration somewhere between capitalism and socialism. Precisely because political power was in the hands of working people, i.e. workers and peasants — which was never the case in Manley's socialist oriented Jamaica — the bourgeois-democratic phase of the revolution could be consummated and the road to socialism embarked upon.

Speaking in US-occupied Grenada in March 1984 with a leading member of the local bourgeoisie, the writer asked how he felt now that Washington was calling the shots. Holding up one of his well-manicured hands, he said, "Do you see my fingernails? These are the longest they've been in five years!" For this nail-biting capitalist, at least, there was never any question that the future of his class in revolutionary Grenada was at best problematic.

IV THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

Virtually from day one of Grenada's revolution, Washington adopted a hostile attitude towards the island. The Carter administration put pressure on the PRG to try to prevent it from establishing ties with Cuba. Under Reagan, the threats and destabilisation efforts escalated. In the summer of 1981, for instance, the Pentagon carried out military manoeuvres off Puerto Rico which included a simulated invasion of Grenada. In declaring that Grenada was a threat to US national security in March 1983, Reagan was attempting to prepare the US people for such an eventuality.

Grenada was indeed a threat, not to the US masses, but to its ruling class, and not for the reasons that Reagan offered. The revolution had increasingly become a source of inspiration for the oppressed workers and peasants in the region;²⁸ it was beginning to have a similar effect among Blacks in the US. Fear of this demonstration effect best explains Washington's aversion to revolutionary Grenada.

However, as much as US imperialism wanted to end the revolution, it would be an error to conclude that the invasion in October 1983 was inevitable. The White House understood that a full scaled intervention, even if successful, would generate such international resistance, given the revolution's popularity, that there would be severe political costs. What was needed was some opportunity that would make an invasion politically cheap. That opportunity came on October 19, 1983, when a section of the NJM leadership carried out a bloody coup that resulted in the assassination of six NJM leaders, including Bishop, and instituted a reign of terror. Rather than Grenadan masses ready to defend their country against the invaders, U.S. forces found a disoriented, demobilised and disarmed population that for the most part welcomed them.

The coup was just what Washington needed. As Fidel Castro pointed out, whether the CIA was involved is not certain but "the CIA could not have done it any better."²⁹ Thus, the invasion did not overthrow the revolution — that had been done on October 19. To quote Castro again, "the imperialist government of the United States wanted to kill the symbol of the Grenadian revolution, but the symbol was already dead.... the United States killed a corpse...."³⁰

The obvious question is, why the counter-revolution? Why did the revolution self-destruct? Although those who led the tragic events of October have yet to be heard from, there is a sufficient amount of information from documents and key witnesses and actors to provide for at least the outlines of an explanation.

What is known is that the coup was led by a secret faction of the NJM whose leader was Bernard Coard, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Trade, Industry, and Planning. The core of the faction comprised individuals who had belonged to the Organisation for Revolutionary Education and Liberation (OREL), a group that Coard formed in the mid-seventies that later fused with the NJM, about 1976. Coard, an economist who had taught at the University of the West Indies had close ties with Trevor Munroe of the Workers' Party of Jamaica (WPJ). It appears that the faction was organising as early as 1982, if not before, to capture the leader-

ship of the party. It is not known at this time if this faction had always planned to take power by military means. While it is probably safe to say that their intention was not to overthrow the revolution and thus hand Grenada over to Washington, the course they charted could hardly have resulted in a different outcome.

Why did Coard's faction oppose Bishop? At an extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee (CC) of the Party in mid-September 1983, the faction made a series of changes attacking Bishop's leadership.³¹ While Coard himself was not present, subsequent events suggested that he was orchestrating the attack. The faction claimed that there was a crisis in the country with the masses feeling increasingly alienated from the revolution. The reason, they said, was the lack of leadership by the Party, particularly the CC. Hence, it was necessary to replace certain people who had been lax in their work. The real problem, they charged, was Bishop. He lacked, they said, leadership qualities such as "ideological clarity", "brilliance in strategy and tactics", "Leninist style of organizing", and "supervision and control". By co-incidence, it seems, these were exactly the qualities, they pointed out, that Coard had.

On the last day of the two and a half-day meeting they proposed that there be a joint leadership of the revolution with Bishop as head of the PRG and Coard as head of the party. Despite the objections of Bishop and NJM founders George Louison and Unison Whiteman, who asked for more discussion, a vote was taken and the proposal was approved with nine of the thirteen present voting in favour of it. Coard, who had resigned from the Political Bureau (PB) and the CC in 1982, because of the CC's "style of work and priorities" was invited to return to the two bodies.

Bishop asked that he be given time to think about the proposal. Not having made up his mind by September 25, the faction charged at a general membership meeting on that date that he had violated Leninist Party norms. They said his delay was an expression of "petit-bourgeois individualism", not wanting to submit to the will of the majority of the CC. Further, they claimed that Bishop was attempting to start a personality cult, "one-manism". Most of the discussion at the meeting focused on democratic centralism and what constitutes a Leninist party rather than the merits of the joint leadership proposal. After hearing extensive criticism from a number of members for not going along with the proposal (the JLP hereafter), Bishop relented and agreed to it. According to the minutes, he said "I sincerely accept the criticism and will fulfill the decision in practice."³²

Shortly after this meeting, Coard's faction began a number of moves, to be discussed below, that led Bishop to raise with some party members his desire to reopen the discussion on the JLP, specifically its practical application.³³ Meanwhile, Bishop, Louison, Whiteman and Rojas went to Eastern Europe to obtain economic aid for the country. On the way back they stopped in Cuba for two days, October 6-8, for discussions with the Cubans. Coard's group accused Bishop of trying to get Cuban support in the factional fight to get rid of Coard. On October 12, the CC with Coard as chair moved to discipline Bishop. On the basis of the Cuban charge and another, that Bishop had spread a false rumor that Coard and his wife Phyllis, head of the NWO and CC member, were out to kill him — which Bishop strongly denied — the CC had Bishop placed under house arrest. That fateful step constituted a *de facto* coup and, thus, the overthrow of the revolution.

One of the few people who has attempted to defend some, if not all, of the actions of Coard's faction is Trevor Munroe, his long-time political cohort. While clearly not endorsing the executions, Munroe argues that the CC was correct in disciplining Bishop who, in his opinion, had violated the norms of democratic centralism.³⁴

Was there any validity to the charges against Bishop? Regarding the claim that there was a crisis in the country, if by crisis it was meant that the revolution had lost the support of the people, there simply is no evidence to substantiate such a claim. The revolution had, as already discussed, made significant material and social improvements for Grenada's workers and peasants. Obviously, in view of the objective difficulties confronting the revolution in an underdeveloped country as Grenada, there was much that remained to be done. In Louison's opinion, the problems most people complained about were the frequent electricity blackouts and the deteriorating roads. "People were vexed with these problems, but they had lost no confidence in the revolution ... The crisis which was being perceived was an artificial crisis."³⁵

According to Rojas, "Bernard and his people also said they were dissatisfied with the pace at which the revolutionary process was evolving."³⁶ Both Louison and Rojas reject this line arguing that the revolution's pace was appropriate given the objective and subjective constraints on the process — the reality outlined by Clark that Grenada's leadership had to take into account in meeting the challenge of socialist transformation. Castro voiced a similar assessment of the process on the island:

Socio-economically, Grenada was actually advancing satisfactorily.. Bishop was not an extremist; rather he was a true revolutionary — conscientious and honest. Far from disagreeing with his intelligent and realistic policy, we fully sympathized with it, since it was rigorously adapted to his country's specific conditions and possibilities.³⁷

As for the claim that there was a crisis in the party, it is now clear that there was some validity to this charge. The Party's suicidal behaviour indicated it was out of touch with the masses. The reasons for this will be discussed later. Suffice it now to say that much of this crisis, if not most, was due to the perspective of Coard's faction and the manner in which it functioned inside the NJM. The details of both are to be addressed shortly.

About a month before the September CC meeting, a *New York Times* article (August 7) also claimed the revolution was in crisis. A close reading of it, however, reveals that it was the local bourgeoisie and other opponents of the revolution who were in crisis — an indication of the revolution's progress. When asked to assess the overall situation, Bishop is reported to have said "that while he believed that his Government and party had made great strides in improving day-to-day life over the first three-and-a-half years in power, 'where enough had not happened in our view was precisely in terms of basic changes in values' ". In other words, the revolution was still unfolding, but not necessarily in crisis. The reporter seems to concur with this by suggesting that support for Bishop was widespread among the masses. However, the article does say this about the masses: "... they question whether he (Bishop) has lost control of his revolution." And mentions later that "there are rumours of a rift between the Coards and Mr. Bishop." The perception of who the revolution belonged to notwithstanding, it is clear now that the reporter was not completely off the mark.

The claim that Bishop lacked leadership skills such as "supervision and control" tends to be inconsistent with the "cult of personality" and "one-manism" charge. Leaders who want to run the show alone usually exert, or try to exert, too much control and supervision. In rejecting both sets of charges Castro came closer to the truth. "In our view, nothing could be more absurd than to attribute such tendencies to Bishop. It was impossible to imagine anyone more noble, modest, and unselfish. He could never have been guilty of being authoritarian. If he had any defect, it was his excessive tolerance and trust."³⁸

Regarding Castro's last point, Bishop himself might have agreed as his comments in the September 25 general meeting suggest. According to the minutes, he "admitted that his style of leadership has led to vacillation, indecisiveness in many cases. He confessed that maybe his conception of leadership is idealistic because of the historical abuse of power and one-man leadership... He further pointed out that style of leadership is in error since it calls for consensus, unity at all cost and this cause(s) vacillation. And he is not sure that he has overcome this."³⁹

At the September CC meeting, Louison argued that leadership weaknesses on Bishop's part applied equally to the CC. The way to overcome that, he added, was for the CC as a whole to assist Bishop and for individual members to improve their work. He reminded the CC that its shortcomings could be traced to the large number of its members who had lengthy illnesses over the previous year. The solution was not the JLP which, in his opinion, was a "formula for disaster". It would have led to a divided leadership and meant that Coard as head of the party would be the real leader of the revolution while Bishop, who was far more popular with the masses, would have been reduced to a figurehead.

Bishop's arrest was justified on the grounds that he had violated democratic centralism, specifically, by allegedly seeking Cuban aid in the factional dispute and spreading the rumour about the Coards. In the case of the former allegation, Castro vehemently denied it adding that his government was not even aware of the split in the NJM and took the unusual step of publicly criticising the Cuban embassy in Grenada for this.⁴⁰ As for the other allegation, Bishop also made a strong denial. Neither charge was supported by any evidence.

The charge of violating Leninist norms was posed by Bishop's opponents in a way that subordinated the political to the organisational issues. Leninist norms exist for one reason only — to further the process of socialist revolution. Failure to recognise this will otherwise lead to making a fetish of Leninism. Thus, questions about the usage of such norms have to be answered in terms of the political context in which they are being raised.

V. TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION

What were the politics of the counter-revolution? At one level of analysis this question is not difficult to answer, while at another it requires some speculation.

The political line of Coard's faction was revealed by its actions. At no time was this better illustrated than the period after the coup. Not only did these usurpers brutally assassinate the popular head of the revolution and five other NJM leaders, but they turned their guns on the unarmed masses killing or wounding, according to some accounts, scores of people.⁴¹ This unprecedented violence in Grenada followed in the wake of a mobilisation of 25 to 30 thousand people or about one-fourth of the population — probably the largest mass mobilisation in the island's history — on October 19 which freed Bishop from house arrest; the masses, in other words, voting with their feet rejected the decision of the CC. Recognising that it had no mass support, the new government then imposed a four day shoot-to-kill-on-sight curfew.

These actions by Coard's people stand in sharp contrast to those of the newly-formed PRG on March 13, 1979, when after taking power, it asked the masses to come out into the streets to participate in and show their support for what had been initiated that day. What was revealed most about Coard's faction in the aftermath of the counter-revolution was its profound contempt for the masses.

There were other instances of such an attitude prior to the coup. For example, an NJM member pointed out at the September 25 meeting that it would be difficult to explain to the people that Coard would be the *de facto* head of the revolution under the JLP since he was not as well liked as Bishop. One of Coard's supporters answered that the arrangement would be an internal party matter and the masses need not be told about it. Nothing else was said on this point.⁴²

Another instance was Coard's reaction to the growing protests prior to October 19, that demanded Bishop's release. "Bernard felt that if the masses demonstrate for weeks upon weeks, they are bound to get tired after a while and get hungry and go back to work. He said Williams did it in 1970 (the Black Power protests in Trinidad), and Gairy did it in 1974, and it could be done again".⁴³

As a final example, while Bishop and the others were out of the country in early October, Coard's people began to systematically disarm the masses by secretly collecting the arms of the popular militia that were scattered around the country. The outcome of the October 19 mass mobilisation reveals that the disarming of the masses was the key ingredient in the counter-revolution.

Therefore, on the most fundamental test of revolutionary credentials — reliance on the masses — the Coard grouping failed miserably. Its attitude and behaviour towards the people was elitist, claiming to know what was best for them.

It is interesting to recall the popular perception of Coard among the masses. Admittedly, with hindsight, it is perhaps understandable why he was not as popular as Bishop. In a small society like Grenada, people are more likely to be aware of the actual attitudes of leaders, especially their feelings about the masses.

The political orientation of Coard's faction was also reflected in the way it functioned in the party and the government. Clearly, the most important example of this was the existence of OREL as a secret faction in the NJM — one of the most serious violations of Leninist norms. Permanent factions in a party, no matter what their origin, tend to undermine unity in action because adherents often have more loyalty to their faction than to the party. Secret factions definitely undermine a Leninist organisation; hence, the reason for their prohibition. Democratic centralism assumes that all members have access to the views of one another which means ideas are to be openly discussed. A secret grouping obviously prevents this from happening. The OREL people regarded themselves to be more Marxist-Leninist than the NJM members at the time of the fusion.⁴⁵ They no doubt retained this self-image, however erroneous. Rather than trying to openly convince other NJM members of their views, they chose, however, to operate surreptitiously, thus sowing the seeds of divisiveness. This eventually proved fatal for the revolution as well as the party.

Coard had a penchant for secret manoeuvring. According to former PRG minister and NJM founder, Kenrick Radix, Coard and his people, as early as 1981, began a campaign to remove "old" NJM members from strategic positions such as the CC and PB.⁴⁶ This began with the removal from the CC of Vincent Noel, Vice-Minister of National Mobilization and trade union leader and one of the six executed on October 19. A year later Radix was removed from the CC. Coard's people claimed he had neglected his duties and was "ideologically underdeveloped". During this early period, even at the outset of the revolution, again according to Radix, Coard used his party and government positions to put his supporters in key posts, such as in the army and the Ministry of Interior. Also, he attracted followers by getting them jobs. Even after he resigned from the CC in 1982 he was still manoeuvring from behind the scenes.

In the two week period after the September 25 meeting, with Bishop and others out of the country, Coard's faction went on a major campaign to consolidate its position; this was one of the reasons why Bishop wanted to rediscuss the JLP. Coard began conspicuously appearing at army camps to fraternise with the military and approved salary increases for its personnel. He also offered material assistance to individual party members while explaining to them the internal party struggle, no doubt from his perspective. "Coard thought that with the party and army on his side, there was no way that he could lose power."⁴⁷

In conclusion, therefore, the accusations Coard's group made about Bishop's violation of Leninist norms were totally disingenuous. The faction not only flagrantly violated those same rules but they disregarded the *raison d'etre* of a Leninist party — to make a socialist revolution based on the masses. Their view was that socialist transformation occurs without and against the masses — a line diametrically opposed to that of Bishop and the actual course of the Grenadan revolution. The irony is that those who most employed the language of Marxism-Leninism proved in action to be the least Marxist and the least Leninist.

Given its politics and *modus operandi*, how might Coard's faction be characterised? Rojas and Louison refer to them as ultraleftists. The Cuban leadership calls them "Pol Potists" in reference to the so-called Marxist-Leninists who terrorised Kampuchea. Both are accurate descriptions. There is another label, however, based on a long history of Marxist analysis that may be even more accurate — Stalinists. Drawing on Trotsky's pioneering analysis of the USSR, James Cannon, the late founder of the US Socialist Workers Party, outlined what this phenomenon consists of:

The Stalinist bureaucracy represents privileged social groupings which have appeared for the first time in history on the basis of a workers' state.... its privileges and special interests collide irreconcilably with the interests of the masses in their march toward socialism. In order to serve their special interests the Stalinist bureaucracy was compelled to introduce a line of policy which contradicted the programme and tradition of the party. In order to impose such policy upon the party and upon the country, they were compelled to suppress party democracy, to force their line through by means of bureaucratic violence, and to concentrate all power in the party apparatus.⁴⁸

Although revolutionary, Grenada was not at the same stage of development as the Soviet Union when Stalinism blossomed in full; it can be said, nevertheless, that Coard's faction represented an incipient bureaucracy given the way it functioned. Its social base, also incipient, was a privileged layer in the party and government. Louison's comment about the faction's activities when Bishop was out of the country is revealing:

When I looked at what was done in those two weeks with party members I saw that we ran danger of creating a real elite in the society. A number of party members already had relatively good incomes in the Grenadian context. And these people (Coard's group) were discussing with them their personal situations, to give them even more benefits, so that the party was going to get more benefits than the average person among the masses.⁴⁹

A similar process was also taking place in the army and government. There is no question that the rest of Cannon's description of Stalinism aptly applied to the Coard group.

In addition to the aforesaid, there is some possibility that Coard may have been a conscious Stalinist. Munroe, his long-time political associate, is, according to many, not only pro-Moscow but also explicitly pro-Stalin. It is interesting to note that when Coard was asked in 1982 to prepare some basic readings for NJM members for internal education of the three books that he chose, two were written by Stalin.⁵⁰

Owing to Coard's ties to Munroe, a number of Bishop supporters have now raised questions about the latter's involvement in the counter-revolution. Tim Hector

of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement has gone so far to charge that Munroe masterminded it with Soviet involvement.⁵¹ There is no real evidence that this writer has seen to substantiate such a charge. What is known is that Coard spent a month in the USSR during 1983, apparently for medical reasons. Also, Munroe arrived in Grenada following Bishop's departure to Eastern Europe and endorsed the faction's analysis of the internal party struggle.⁵² Tass, the Soviet news agency, reported favourably on the coup on October 19. Finally, the pre-Moscow Communist Party in Martinique refused to condemn the coup.⁵³

In his analysis of the counter-revolution, Hector also characterises Coard as a Stalinist.⁵⁴ He goes further, however: "The essence of the dispute between Bishop and Coard turned on the question of whether as in Bishop's view the mass organizations of workers, students, farmers, women and youth would be centers of power, or whether as in Coard's view the Party and its Central Committee would be the centre of power."⁵⁵ Bill Riviere of the Dominican Liberation Movement, also a Bishop supporter, in his critique of Coard's faction says that their error was to assume that the "national democratic stage of the revolution had been completed, and the time was ripe to commence the socialist stage."⁵⁶ In the second stage "a classical Marxist-Leninist vanguard party" is necessary — which is what the faction saw itself implementing — while in the first, apparently, by inference, mass organisations are sufficient.

Aside from the fact that Riviere seems to ignore the fifteen year existence of the Bolshevik party in Russia prior to taking power in 1917, both assessments, unintentionally perhaps but unfortunately, nevertheless, tend to lend credence to the traditional social democratic charge that the Leninist party is inherently undemocratic and that it inevitably leads to Stalinism. This is not the place to defend Leninism against such charges; others have done a more than adequate job on this score.⁵⁷ Suffice it to say that the actual history of the Russian Revolution belies such charges.⁵⁸ Stalinism developed as a result of specific objective factors that confronted the Soviet Union in the aftermath of its revolution. Stalinism is not inherent in the process of socialist transformation, as twenty-five years of the Cuban revolution show — Washington's accusations notwithstanding. Lastly, the fact that many acts are committed in the name of Leninism does not necessarily make them so. Rojas put it correctly in the case of Coard's group: "... the call for a more Leninist orientation was misused to cover up what was in its essence a bid for power."

Surely, not every NJM member who supported Coard had the same politics — the ultraleft component, perhaps, but not necessarily the Stalinist. Why did the majority of the party go along with Coard and his faction? Also, while Coard may have always been a Stalinist he was not always an ultraleft, as Rojas explains: "It is ironic that up to about a year ago Bernard himself used to caution against the dangers of ultraleftism. We had a saying in the party that ultraleftism is the right hand of imperialism." What explains his break from this perspective?

Patrick Emmanuel, referred to earlier, wrote in 1982 that, to the extent that proponents of the NCP thesis tried to apply it in the face of the contrary reality of the Caribbean, they would likely resort to ultraleftism in the future.

He argued that, unlike the landless peasantry posited by this theory, Grenada's peasants were for the most part landowners, however small their plots.⁵⁹ As such, they had a more petit bourgeois outlook than landless peasants. The result was that it would be difficult to attract them to a socialist course. Hence, in his opinion, their participation in the multi-class alliance projected by the NCP thesis was unlikely.

There are two problems with Emmanuel's critique. One is that it is directed not simply at the NCP thesis but the Marxist-Leninist perspective on socialist transformation which assumes that socialist revolution benefits all working people, peasants who work as well as the working class. This perspective is based in large part on the actual experience of the Russian Revolution which took place in a society that Lenin more than once called petit bourgeois. He also argued, in his *Left Wing Communism — An Infantile Disorder*, that ultraleft attempts to deal with this reality would likely be futile.

The reality of Grenada's revolution is that peasants benefitted significantly from its programmes even though they had land prior to 1979. They still retained, for the most part, their petit bourgeois consciousness but the steady improvement in their lives by the revolution made the worker-peasant alliance — the backbone of any socialist revolution — a growing reality. It meant that the attraction of Grenada's peasants to the revolution required, as Lenin advised, patient explanation along with material advances — a necessity for landless as well as landed peasants — which is exactly what was being done until October, 1983.

Second, the reality of Grenada's revolution is that, as long as Coard and his faction adhered to the NCP perspective, they refrained from ultraleftism. Along with his earlier opposition to ultraleftism, Rojas says "Bernard also used to champion the necessity at this particular stage in the revolutionary process of forming tactical alliances between the working class and certain patriotic elements within the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. This was necessary because the fundamental class character of our society is petty bourgeois." (The assumption here is that Coard's view of these alliances was more along the line of the NCP advocates. Given that Munroe was one of the chief proponents of the line in the Caribbean — according to Emmanuel — such an assumption is not unwarranted.) Apparently, it is when they abandon the NCP view — their dissatisfaction at the pace of the revolution — that ultraleftism emerges, not what Emmanuel would have predicted.

These criticisms aside, Emmanuel may unwittingly have been on to something. As discussed earlier, the NCP perspective is inherently opportunistic. This is what is at the heart of its multi-class alliance. It reflects a lack of confidence in the masses which explains the need for the class collaborationist alliance — to put a brake on the independent mobilisations of the masses. It is rooted in pessimism about the prospects of socialist revolution in an underdeveloped country. Related to this is a lack of optimism about the situation in the advanced imperialist countries; i.e., the ability of the working classes there to hold back their ruling classes and to make socialist revolutions.

Bishop's actions, on the other hand, indicated deep confidence in the masses at home and abroad. An example of the latter was his trip to the US in June, 1983, to, in addition to other objectives, "speak directly to the people of the United States..." about the gains of the revolution and why it should be supported.⁶⁰

Ultraleftism, like opportunism, also reflects lack of confidence and disdain for the masses. Grenada obviously faced many obstacles in carrying out its revolution not the least of which, as Emmanuel underscores, was the social weight of its peasantry. This is what Rojas is alluding to in characterising the society as fundamentally petit bourgeois. Even Bishop, it seems, was concerned about this reality. According to C.L.R. James, the long-time Caribbean radical, Bishop raised this issue with him on a number of occasions saying, "CLR, I know that as a Marxist I ought to do this and do that, but there is no industrialism, there is no proletariat, what can we do? It is a peasant country."⁶¹ (This is also what Bishop is probably referring to in the

New York Times interview quoted above when he says the revolution had yet to bring about a "basic change in values"). While this may indeed have been a worry for Bishop, his actions indicate that he did not lose hope that the revolution would be able to surmount the petit bourgeois character of the society. For many others, however, this was not the case. A growing number of NJM members apparently began to doubt whether the revolution could be extended.

What seems to have aggravated this doubt was the increasing threat from Washington. With the Reagan administration in March 1983 claiming that the island was a threat to U.S. national security, revolutionary Grenada was put on notice that it was a prime target on Washington's hit list. For conscious adherents of the NCP view, the escalation of the threats must have been particularly alarming. The possibility of maintaining the socialist oriented holding pattern indefinitely looked increasingly remote. Imperialism was not prepared to allow such a luxury.⁶² Thus, the process had to be accelerated even if it meant without and against the masses whose petit bourgeois consciousness could no longer be indulged.

For Coard in particular, there may have been another factor in explaining his ultraleft evolution. That was the failure of the NCP line in Jamaica. There the socialist oriented, i.e. bourgeois government of Manley, supported by Munroe's WPJ, was voted out of office in 1980, in part due to the machinations of Washington; that power was not in the hands of the workers and peasants made it easier for the US to carry out its destabilisation plans. Just as Stalin resorted to forced collectivisation in the wake of his failed class collaborationist policies *vis-a-vis* the kulaks, Coard likewise embarked on an ultraleft course in the face of what was perceived as a similar policy failure, not only in Jamaica but Grenada as well. In fact, is it possible that Stalin's ultraleftism in the thirties was Coard's model — however inappropriate — for overcoming the petit bourgeois peasantry in Grenada? Did Coard erroneously equate Russia's kulaks with Grenada's small landholders? These are admittedly speculations, particularly in Coard's case, based on very limited evidence.

It is not being suggested that the aforementioned factors alone explain the ultraleftist evolution of both the Coard faction and the NJM membership. There is an additional factor, just as important if not more so, that is all too clear in the period leading to the counter-revolution — the alienation of the party from the masses. How else is one to explain the gross miscalculations of the party from the JLP to the arrest of Bishop?

When Louison was asked what are the important lessons of the counter-revolution, he focused primarily on the party, its failure to combat ultraleftism and openly debate issues, and the mistaken belief by the Coard faction and many NJM members that the party was the revolution. Rojas also admits that the initial discussion on the JLP reflected in part real problems in the party, mainly organisational, in his opinion.

The party's distance from the masses was largely due to the NJM's relatively small size. Through the revolution's life, the number of cadre remained virtually the same, about three to four hundred.⁶³ Stringent entrance requirements limited the number of new members. As one young worker in 1982 said, "I have been an applicant (to the party) for about a year now. It takes two to three years to join our party."⁶⁴ It is not clear how long this procedure had been in effect, but according to the CC minutes of May 1982 and Riviere Coard was responsible for imposing drastic entrance requirements, having argued that the party was not selective enough. This is not a credible argument and no doubt reflected Coard's hidden agenda. Entrance requirements are obviously necessary for a revolutionary party. However, if Gairyism

could produce 300 or so revolutionaries, it is absurd to argue that four and a half years of a workers' and peasants' government could not at least double that number.

A larger party composed increasingly of the most conscious leaders in the work places and mass organisations would have helped tremendously in overcoming the narrowness of the revolution's leadership and kept the party in touch with the masses and, hence, reality. It is instructive to point out that when Lenin became aware of Stalin's dangerous course at the end of 1922, he concluded in his famous "testament" that, in addition to Stalin's removal from the position of General Secretary of the party, the CC must be expanded significantly with "...mainly workers of a lower stratum... they must be people closer to being rank-and-file workers and peasants..."⁶⁵ He also thought such a move would help to avoid a split between Stalin and Trotsky. Of course, by this time Lenin, unfortunately, was near to death and could not conduct the struggle to have his ideas implemented.

The small size of the party seems to have contributed to its overall weakness in relation to the state and the mass movements. Riviere says that "...although theoretically the (CC)... was the source of decisions, for all practical purposes power rested for the moment in the hands of the state through its leaders in government."⁶⁶ In this regard, it should be noted that the NJM did not get a party headquarters until the second half of 1982. This writer was struck, when visiting the island in March, 1983, at how little activity there was in the office. Indeed, it was at the ministries and offices of the mass organisations, especially the National Youth Office where the action was.

A possible reason for this state of affairs was provided by Alain Krivine, a French Marxist, in a visit to Grenada in December, 1979. "The party and the state are still fused into one, even though the leaders who we met recognized the necessity of separating the two functions. 'But we don't have enough cadres', they say, 'to truly organize the party.'"⁶⁷ Thus, the problem may have simply been the extremely difficult task of trying to organise the party, state and mass organisations all at once with a relatively small number of people. The immediate tasks associated with state power meant that the party, and, to a lesser extent, the mass organisations, received inadequate attention. Had there been, of course, fewer entry restrictions for the party, this need not necessarily have been the case. Limited cadre might also explain why so many NJM leaders were ill at one time or another — too few people trying to do too much.

The weakness of the party was also reflected in the lack of confidence many of its members had, even some of the leaders, in confronting the Coard faction who tended to be more proficient in using the rhetoric of Marxist-Leninism. It is almost painful to read in the minutes of the September 25 meeting what Fitzroy Bain, a committed revolutionary and one of the six assassinated on October 19, said about the discussion on the JLP: "He said he is unhappy about labelling comrades and that more ideologically developed comrades put forward positions and others like himself, who are of a lower ideological level, feel timid in the face of these."⁶⁸ This was the kind of sentiment that Coard's faction was able to take advantage of.

In a speech before the Cuban Communist Party's Second Congress in December, 1980, Bishop said this of the Cuban revolution: "It has reminded us of the central role of the party in building the revolution. It has reminded us of the critical importance of being the genuine vanguard of the people, building and maintaining close links with the people through the mass organizations."⁶⁹ Bishop certainly understood the need for a vanguard party in the process of socialist transformation and, most importantly, understood, unlike the Coard faction, the need to link it to the masses.

However, in looking at the reality of revolutionary Grenada it seems clear that Bishop gave more attention to the state and mass organisations than the party.

Why Bishop gave less emphasis to the party is not clear. Some observers of Grenada's process have noted that the NJM was originally influenced by the ideas of C.L.R. James who argues that a Leninist party is not necessary in the transformation process; workers, he says, will spontaneously carry out the transition through councils and popular assemblies.⁷⁰

It might be noted that the group that Bishop organised, which later merged with the Jewel Movement in 1973 to form the NJM, was known as the Movement for Assemblies of the People. Also, in its 1973 Manifesto, the NJM declared that the government it envisaged would be based on a system of "peoples assemblies". As indicated earlier, Bishop was still in contact with James after 1979. While Bishop saw the need for a vanguard party, it is possible that his greater attention to the state and mass organisations reflected the legacy of James' ideas on him and other NJM members. On the other hand, it must be noted that James, himself is inconsistent on the party, having suggested at onetime that in an underdeveloped setting a vanguard party might be necessary; his actions in Trinidad in the sixties, however, belied this position. Whatever the case this is clearly an issue that needs to be explored in greater details.

VI. CONCLUSION

While certainly important, the presence of a Marxist-Leninist party is no guarantee against a counter-revolution, Stalinist or any other variety. The first Stalinist takeover occurred where the model of such a party had existed for almost twenty years, namely the Soviet Union. It is the particular configuration of objective and subjective factors in the larger historical-international context that alone can explain the tragic outcome in Grenada. The Cuban revolution, which Bishop looked to, is instructive in this regard.

As Martha Harnecker observes, the transformation process in Cuba "began without the presence of a strong revolutionary party."⁷¹ The Cuban Communist Party did not come into existence until 1965, some six years after the revolution began. Like Grenada, Cuba in 1962 had to confront a Stalinist bid for power led by Anibal Escalante, a former leader of the Stalinist and pro-Moscow Popular Socialist Party.⁷² This was one of the two organisations that fused with the July 26 Movement, headed by Castro, to form the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI), Cuba's first attempt to form a communist party. The Castro leadership was, however, able to defeat Escalante's bid. In his critique of the ORI under Escalante's direction, Castro said one of its major weaknesses was its "failure to integrate the masses." To avoid a repeat of this it was decided that, in the future, recruits to the party must be workers who are considered to be exemplary by their co-workers.

The success of the Castro leadership could be traced in large part to the authority it enjoyed among the masses for having led Cuba's first victorious anti-imperialist armed struggle. Most significantly, it did this without the pro-Moscow PSP. It had to form an organisation like the July 26 Movement precisely because the PSP, in its 35 years history, like virtually every Stalinist party in Latin America, had defaulted in waging a consistent anti-imperial, anti-colonial struggle.⁷³ It was, thus, a confident leadership based on the masses that was also familiar in many ways with Stalinism and not likely to be impressed with the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric of Escalante and his claim that he and his cohorts were the real revolutionaries. There

was also the international context to consider. Vietnam, as they have often remarked, did permit the Castro forces sufficient breathing space — free from a full-scale U.S. intervention — to forge the revolutionary party needed to lead the process of socialist transformation.

The Bishop leadership, for the most part, had a different historical and international experience. Stalinism, in the person of Bernard Coard, for instance, was a new phenomenon, not only for Grenada but the English-speaking Caribbean as a whole. This is not to imply that had the situation in Grenada been similar to what it was in the first years of Cuba's revolution things would have turned out differently on the island. Of course, it is possible that had the current liberation struggle in El Salvador been at such a level of development to occupy Washington's attention even more, Grenada might have obtained sufficient breathing space to solve its leadership problems. But to reduce the explanation of the counter-revolution to such a consideration would be mechanistic. What the Cuban case makes clear is that though a Stalinist bid is a likely feature of a revolution, its success is far from inevitable.

In his concise but insightful historical overview of the history of the Bolshevik party in "Left Wing" Communism — An Infantile Disorder, Lenin attributed the party's success to the richness of its experiences, its defeats as well as its victories. Most importantly, he wrote, it was the party's ability to learn from those experiences that explains why it successfully led the October Revolution. The success of the Cuban leadership — before and after taking state power — can also be traced to its ability to draw the correct lessons from its experiences.

The US invasion of Grenada was a new experience for the peoples of the English-speaking Caribbean. Although Washington carried it out with relative impunity and continues to occupy the island, it did pay a political price. The velvet glove of US foreign policy was removed. Workers and peasants in the region learned a lesson that the masses of Latin America have long known; US imperialism, if necessary, will directly intervene in a country to deny its people the right to self-determination. It was not a coincidence that the first socialist revolution in the Americas occurred in Cuba, probably the country most directly subject to US imperialism throughout its history. The evidence today is that the open arms that greeted US troops in October, 1983, in Grenada are increasingly being replaced by "Yankee Go Home!" signs.

In Central America the invasion stiffened the resolve of revolutionary forces there. El Salvador's revolutionaries, who themselves had only recently experienced and ultraleft takeover attempt of one of their organisations, saw in the wake of Grenada the need to forge greater unity among themselves; this, in fact, has occurred. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista leadership was able to convince Nicaraguans who were still doubtful, that a US invasion of their country is a real likelihood and, thus, every step must be taken to defend their nation.

The pretext for the invasion, the counter revolution, was also a new experience. Among activists and revolutionaries in the region it has provoked a major discussion. Correctly assessing not only the demise of the revolution but also the reasons for its success will be an important addition to the arsenal of revolutionary ideas. What would be more tragic than the counter-revolution is the drawing of incorrect lessons about Grenada. Hopefully, this article has contributed to the present discussion.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Frank Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York, Oxford U.P., 1978), chap. 11, on the impact of the Cuban revolution on the rest of the Caribbean.
2. For details on this movement, see Ivor Oxaal, *Black Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Race and Class in Trinidad* (Cambridge, Schenkman, 1982).
3. Gairy's earlier history is the subject of Archie Singham's *The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity* (New Haven, Yale U.P., 1968).
4. *Maurice Bishop Speaks: The Grenadan Revolution 1979-83*, eds. Bruce Marcus and Michael Taber (New York, Pathfinder Press, 1983), p. 22 (hereafter, MBS).
5. For a critical analysis of both governments, see the relevant chapters in *Crisis in the Caribbean*, eds. Fitzroy Ambursley and Robin Cohen (New York, Monthly Review, 1983).
6. On the details of the insurrection see Ernest Harsch, *International Press Inprecator* (hereafter, IPI), Dec. 3, 1979, pp. 1186-87. Also, EPICA, *Grenada: Peaceful Revolution* (Washington, D.C., 1982).
7. Harsch.
8. MBS, p. 234.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
10. PRG, 'to construct from morning': *Making the People's Budget in Grenada* (St. Georges, Fedon, 1982), discusses the details of this process.
11. MBS, pp. 22-23.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
13. Quoted in Ambursley and Cohen, p. 201.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-222, and Patrick Emmanuel, "Revolutionary Theory and Political Reality in the Eastern Caribbean," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 25(2) May, 1983.
15. Munroe, "Bourgeois Idealism and Commonwealth Caribbean Intellectuals: The Case of the New World", Kingston, Jamaica, 1972, unpub., and Gonsalves, *The Non-capitalist Path of Development: Africa and the Caribbean* (London, One Caribbean, 1981).
16. Emmanuel.
17. Ambursley, p. 201.
18. IPI, Nov. 19, 1979, p. 1122.
19. Interview with Don Rojas, IPI, Dec. 26, 1983, p. 759.
20. IPI, March 3, 1980, p. 200.
21. MBS, p. 182.
22. Steve Clark, "Introduction", MBS and *Grenada: A Workers and Farmers Government with a Revolutionary Proletarian Leadership* (New York, Pathfinder, 1980).
23. Clark, "Introduction", p. xvi.
24. Clive Thomas, "Hard Lessons for Intellectuals", *Caribbean Contact*, Sept., 1984, p. 7.
25. *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, ed. Alan Adler (London, Ink Links, 1980), pp. 397-98.
26. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, (Moscow, Progress, 1977), p. 579-80.
27. *Village Voice*, June 28, 1983. Reprinted in IPI, July 25, 1983.
28. This was confirmed by a visit to a number of islands in the region in March, 1983.
29. MBS, p. 327.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
31. Most of this account of the meeting comes from George Louison, an NJM founder and member of the CC and the Political Bureau (PB), who was in attendance, IPI, April 16, 1984, p. 7.
32. Minutes of the September 25, general membership meeting, *Caribbean Review*, Fall, 1983, 12(4), p. 58.
33. Clark, "Introduction", p. xxiv.
34. IPI, May 28, 1984, p. 329.
35. Louison, p. 208.
36. Rojas, pp. 758-59.
37. MBS, p. 326.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
39. Minutes of the September 25 meeting, p. 50.
40. *Newsweek*, Jan. 9, 1984.

41. Interview with Kenrick Radix, former PRG minister and NJM leader, March 20, 1984, St. Georges, Grenada.
42. Minutes of the Sept. 25 meeting, p. 51.
43. Louison, p. 214.
45. On the origins of OREL and the fusion, see the interview with Radix in IPI, April 30, 1984.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Louison, p. 213.
48. James P. Cannon, *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (New York, Pathfinder, 1972), p. 70.
49. Louison, pp. 211-12.
50. Personal communication from Ernest Harsch, staff writer of IPI who has read the CC minutes.
51. Interview with Tim Hector in St. Johns, Antigua, March 9, 1984.
52. *Communist Affairs* (London). No. 3, 1984, pp. 290-92.
53. Interview with Gilbert Págo of the Groupe Revolution Socialiste, Fort de France, Martinique, March 13, 1984. The People's Popular Movement of Trinidad and Tobago also supported the Coard faction but it is not clear if it has ties to Moscow.
54. Interview with Hector.
55. *Outlet* (Antigua), Oct. 21, 1983. Quoted in Cathy Sunshine and Philip Wheaton, *Death of a Revolution: An Analysis of the Grenada Tragedy and the U.S. Invasion* (Washington, D.C., EPICA, 1984), p. 7.
56. IPI, June 11, 1984, p. 363.
57. A good place to begin is Lenin himself, "Left Wing Communism" — *An Infantile Disorder*, especially sections 1-3, for his discussion on the relationship between the vanguard party and the masses.
58. Alexander Rabinowitz's *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (New York; Norton 1976), was written in part to address such claims.
59. This was due to the limited land reform by Gairy after coming back to power in 1967, which explains in part why he still has a base among the peasantry even today. This writer was told that his party would probably get about 25 percent of the vote in the projected elections because of his support in the rural areas.
60. MBS, p. 289.
61. C.L.R. James, "The Grenadian Revolution: from Self-defense to Self-destruction", *Communist Affairs*, (3), 1984, p. 303.
62. According to Louison, Coard's group in the days prior to the coup dismissed the likelihood of an invasion by the US. This sentiment on their part does not contradict the argument being made here. Most Grenadans never expected a full-scaled invasion. For most people, the likely scenario would have been a mercenary army landing or a step up in destabilisation efforts.
63. Clark, "Introduction", p. xxxv, also A. Sadiq, "Blow by Blow: A Personal Account of the Ravaging of the Revo," *Black Scholar*, (15) 1, 1984, p. 11. Clive Thomas gives a figure of 100 which seems much too low.
64. IPI, Feb. 22, 1982, p. 127.
65. *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*, ed. Russell Block (New York, Pathfinder, 1975), p. 67.
66. Riviere, p. 364.
67. IPI, March 3, 1980, p. 201.
68. Minutes of the Sept. 25 meeting, p. 54.
69. MBS, p. 125.
70. On James' impact, see Ambursley, p. 200, and Horace Campbell, "The American Invasion of Grenada and the Struggle in the Caribbean", *Black Scholar*, p. 4. James' major polemic is his *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950). According to P. Gomes, he was inconsistent on the party question suggesting at times that a vanguard party might be appropriate in an underdeveloped country. P.I. Gomes, *The Marxian Populism of C.L.R. James. Working Papers on Caribbean Society*, Dept. of Sociology, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, 1978.
71. Martha Harnecker, *Cuba: Dictatorship or Democracy* (Westport, Lawrence Hill 1979), p. xvii.
72. The similarities between the actions of Coard and Escalante are striking. For details, see Clark, pp. iliv-xlv.
73. This is also the view of the head of El Salvador's pro-Moscow Marxist party. See IPI.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION: THE CASE OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

The demographic transition theory is probably the most documented on the pre- and post-19th century population growth in Europe. It essentially states that the transition from high fertility and high mortality equilibrium to a low fertility and low mortality equilibrium is the result of socio-economic growth. A detailed discussion on the concept can be found in the writings of one of its formulators¹. Below we will only sketch the basic ideas of demographic transition and some inconsistencies inherent in the theory.

Demographic transition has three stages. The first stage is characterised by high fertility and high mortality, the latter being smaller than the former. The high mortality is usually taken to be an indication of socio-economic backwardness, such as low level of agricultural output, low calorie intake per head, lack of sufficient health services and lack of sanitary facilities. The high fertility rates that go along with high mortality are essentially the result of the latter. Besides, the structure of the family as an economic unit, the lack of economic opportunity for women outside the family, brief education and the economic view that the flow of wealth is from children to parents are some of the main points that contribute to the prevalence of high fertility in stage 1.

The second stage of demographic transition is characterised by a decline in mortality; this decline comes about as a result of greater productivity in agriculture, greater volume and pace of international trade, such as importing sweet potatoes from the Far East, the improved medical practices, especially inoculation, vaccination, the elimination of smallpox, and, finally, an improvement in sanitation such as the increased production of soap. The reasons seem to be improvements in social-economic conditions even though they took place before the industrial revolution.

The last stage of demographic transition shows a decline in fertility. This comes about gradually and is the result of rapid industrial progress and subsequent socio-economic transformation. In the process of industrial revolution, the traditional socio-economic relations within families become weaker. As a result of increased demand for labour by the industrial sector, urbanisation is accelerated and more people move from the agricultural sector. This demand for labour also releases women from their traditional role as more economic opportunities are open for them. This further weakens the traditional family as an economic unit and changes the traditional view on family size. Finally, the wealth flow is reversed, that is, parents spend more on children, and a conscious effort to decrease fertility takes place. This decrease in fertility starts with high income urban families, moves towards the low income and finally spreads to the rural sector. Unlike the decrease in mortality, the decrease in fertility is rather slow but finally reaches a new equilibrium with low fertility and mortality. This new equilibrium is characteristic of modern Europe, North America, Japan and, most recently, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. All these countries have reached a high stage of socio-economic growth.

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