
REVIEW ESSAYS

GRENADIAN CALLALOO: Recent Books on Grenada

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- MAURICE BISHOP SPEAKS: THE GRENADA REVOLUTION, 1979-1983.* By MAURICE BISHOP. (New York: Pathfinder, 1984. Pp. 400. \$30.00 cloth, \$6.95 paper.)
- AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN GRENADA: THE IMPLICATIONS OF OPERATION "URGENT FURY."* Edited by PETER DUNN and BRUCE WATSON. (Boulder: Westview, 1985. Pp. 185. \$15.00.)
- THE GRENADA INTERVENTION: ANALYSIS AND DOCUMENTATION.* By WILLIAM GILMORE. (London: Mansell, 1984. Pp. 116.)
- REFORM AND REVOLUTION IN GRENADA, 1950-1981.* By DAVID LEWIS. (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1984. Pp. 265.)
- BIG REVOLUTION, SMALL COUNTRY: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GRENADA REVOLUTION.* By JAY MANDLE. (Lanham, Md.: North-South Publishing, 1985. Pp. 107. \$10.00.)
- REVOLUTION AND INTERVENTION IN GRENADA: THE NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT, THE UNITED STATES, AND THE CARIBBEAN.* By KAI SCHOENHALS and RICHARD MELANSON. (Boulder: Westview, 1985. Pp. 211. \$22.00.)
- THE GRENADA PAPERS: THE INSIDE STORY OF THE GRENADA REVOLUTION AND THE MAKING OF A TOTALITARIAN STATE, AS TOLD IN CAPTURED DOCUMENTS.* Edited by PAUL SEABURY and WALTER MCDUGALL. (San Francisco: Institute for Comparative Studies, 1984. Pp. 346. \$16.95 cloth, \$10.95 paper.)

WORDS UNCHAINED: LANGUAGE AND REVOLUTION IN GRENADA. By CHRIS SEARLE. (London: Zed Books, 1984. Pp. 260. \$29.50 cloth, \$10.95 paper.)

GRENADA: POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND SOCIETY. By TONY THORNDIKE. (London: Frances Pinter, 1985. Pp. 206.)

A popular theme of the revolution in Grenada was that more had been achieved in the four years under the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) than in the previous four hundred. With only a little exaggeration, the same might be said for writers and publishers. Since the revolution on 13 March 1979 and the invasion of 25 October 1983, more has probably been written on Grenada than in all its previously recorded history. Necessarily, those volumes reviewed here represent but a sample of this burgeoning literature. They do, however, have the merit of being representative. Among them are books from within the revolution and entirely supportive of it (Bishop, Searle), books denigrating the revolution and entirely supportive of the U.S. invasion (Dunn and Watson, Seabury and McDougall), and books seeking to understand either the revolution (Lewis) or the invasion (Gilmore) or both (Mandle, Schoenhals and Melanson, Thorndike). Among the authors are scholars long familiar with the Commonwealth Caribbean or Grenada (Gilmore, Lewis, Mandle, Schoenhals, Thorndike), those for whom Grenada was but a convenient stage on which U.S. actors played out their roles and by which they may be judged (Dunn and Watson, Melanson), and finally, those who, for reasons of propaganda and opportunity, view Grenada as vindication of ideology—as omen or beacon, communist conspiracy or revolutionary democracy, tragic failure or outstanding success—and whose works, if read together, invite contrary conclusions in nearly every respect (Bishop, Seabury and McDougall, Searle).

How is one to proceed with so many contrasting views and occasional contradictions of "fact"? What is one to make of this particular Grenadian callaloo? The analogy is purposive. Justly the most famous of creole soups and a favorite in Grenada, callaloo combines African, French, and English culinary origins. No single "authentic" version exists—the main ingredients are specified, but proportions and preparation vary according to taste, as does the adding of extra tidbits to give it an individual flavor. The final experience of savoring callaloo is usually unique to time and place. So it is with the Grenada Revolution. The main ingredient is revolution, without which there would have been no secondary ingredient of invasion. But also important to the process were Gairicism, the West Indian context, Grenadian Marxism-Leninism, Cuba, Reaganism, and the Caribbean Basin as a focus of East-West conflict. All these ingredients need to be examined in order to achieve a

proper understanding of Grenada because all are a measure of the island's particularism and distinctiveness.

The structure of my review echoes such an understanding. First to be reviewed will be those authors who seek primarily to understand the revolution, either in whole or in part. Next will come those who have focused mainly on the invasion. Finally, I will briefly consider the themes cited above that impart original and exceptional qualities to events in Grenada.

The Revolution

Of the six and one-half books properly belonging to this section, the most comprehensive are those by Maurice Bishop and Tony Thorn-dike.¹ The former consists of twenty-four speeches and three interviews given by Maurice Bishop as Prime Minister of the PRG. Thorndike's book is a sympathetic, but critical, account by an English academic who has closely followed events in Grenada over the past twelve years. These two works, with the selection of documents from Seabury and McDougall, provide a core for understanding how the revolution unfolded.

Maurice Bishop Speaks: The Grenada Revolution, 1979–1983 is an expanded and updated version of an earlier work entitled *Forward Ever*. Only the introduction differs, reflecting on "the revolution betrayed" as well as the achievements of Grenada's "workers' and farmers' government." The speeches accurately mirror the public concerns within the Grenada Revolution and provide detailed commentary on many of its facets. They cover domestic and foreign policy equally and attest to the complex dynamics of change within the country and vis-à-vis the outside world that were generated by the revolution.

The domestic concerns of the revolution, summarized by Bishop in the concluding speech in the book (given in New York in June 1983), focused on economic development within a recessionary world economy, continuing social progress, and appropriate forms of revolutionary democracy for Grenada. These themes echo those encountered in earlier pages. They point, in particular, to the strength of the revolution in the social sphere and testify to real improvements in well-being that took place in Grenada under the PRG. Bishop can thus refer to an unemployment rate that "had dropped from 49 percent under Gairy to 14.2 percent," a budgetary process in which "thirty-seven cents out of every dollar is spent on health and education," and real increases in pay for the lowest paid workers in the country and for pensioners (pp. 294–98).

When discussing revolutionary democracy, Bishop seeks to establish three cardinal facts. The first is that Grenada has experienced a

revolution and that "the first law of the revolution is that the revolution must survive, must consolidate so more benefits can come" (p. 301). On this premise, no counterrevolution would be tolerated. Second, he asserts that the revolution in Grenada gave substance to what had been merely formal rights by expanding those rights and promoting mass participation. To accomplish this end, Westminster parliamentary democracy was wholly inappropriate: "to us, democracy is much, much more than an election. To us, democracy is a great deal more than just the right to put an 'X' next to Tweedledum or Tweedledee every five years" (p. 302). Consequently, new institutions were required, which in Grenada proved to be the mass organizations created by the New Jewel Movement (NJM), the revolution, and the workers. Third, Bishop stressed the direct accountability of the PRG through "the organs of popular democracy that have been built—zonal councils, parish councils, worker-parish councils, farmer councils—where the people come together from month to month" (p. 304). Mobilization and participation therefore emerge as the key themes, accompanied by education.

At no point in Bishop's speeches does one encounter any sign of difficulties or disaffection within the revolution. One might gauge from the speeches' frequency and number that the revolution was running out of steam or had peaked in 1981 (nine speeches date from this year) but not that it was about to collapse. The speeches strongly convey the impression that all the problems were external to Grenada and were to be combated by a vigorous foreign policy.

Bishop identified Grenada's principal enemy as the United States and its principal ally as Cuba. The tone of relations with the former were set by the famous speech "In Nobody's Backyard," which is reproduced in *Maurice Bishop Speaks*. In this speech, Bishop repudiated "any right of the United States of America to instruct us on who we may develop relations with and who we may not" (p. 28). He also set out what became a slogan for the revolution: "We are not in anybody's backyard, and we are definitely not for sale" (p. 31). Subsequent speeches attest to rapidly deteriorating relations with the United States in which charges of CIA-fomented destabilization and denial of economic assistance were vigorously denounced in a variety of fora. Relations with the incoming Reagan administration were particularly tense, and within a short period of time, a view was formed that the United States could well invade. The single most important element pointing in this direction was the U.S. military exercise mounted off Puerto Rico in August 1981. Code-named "Operation Amber," its objective was to capture a mountainous island and to install a government friendly to the United States. Bishop was to denounce this exercise as provocation "by a fascist clique in the U.S." and "a shameless rehearsal for eventual

invasion" (p. 251). In March 1983, he reiterated the theme that "an armed attack against our country by counterrevolutionaries and mercenaries organized, financed, trained, and directed by United States imperialism is imminent" (p. 279). When visiting the United States shortly afterward, however, he adopted a more conciliatory tone. It has been suggested in several quarters that the moderation of his approach contributed to his downfall in September and October 1983. Perhaps, but what is also recorded in the speech pertaining to this visit is a range of initiatives taken by the PRG to normalize relations, all apparently fruitless (pp. 288–91). According to this reading, little doubt exists that Grenada was the aggrieved party and the United States the aggressor.

Regarding policy toward Cuba, the PRG position was straightforwardly enunciated by Bishop at the first anniversary rally on 13 March 1980: "The very warm and fraternal relations which our country and people have developed with the brother people of Cuba have been one of the major sources of inspiration for our country and our process" (p. 82). A glance at the index of *Maurice Bishop Speaks* underlines the depth and salience of the relationship. Cuba was cited most often in Bishop's speeches (seventy times, as against sixty-five for the United States), and Bishop was crucial to that relationship because of the high mutual regard in which he and Castro held each other. Fittingly, *Maurice Bishop Speaks* ends with three appendices addressing the role of Cuba in the tragedy of October 1983, including Castro's speech on 14 November honoring the Cuban dead and Bishop's memory. Castro eulogized Bishop: "It was impossible to imagine anyone more noble, modest and unselfish . . . he was a true revolutionary—conscientious and honest" (p. 327). Castro also noted that Bishop was a symbol. Indeed, Bishop was the "maximum leader" of the Grenada Revolution: in the early years (1979–1981) on which this volume focuses, it was his revolution more than any other's. The speeches and interviews elaborate this fact well, which makes them essential for understanding the public face of the revolution and its multiple achievements.

The U.S. State Department has made observers aware that the revolution also had a private face and a darker side. Highlighting this perspective is the intent of Paul Seabury and Walter McDougall in *The Grenada Papers*, which is based on a selection of captured documents. These papers, they argue, reveal Bishop and the NJM in a very different light. Their message is thus the relatively simple and familiar one to North Americans of communist conspiracy. Grenada was the pawn, Cuba the proxy, and the Soviet Union the mastermind. If this scenario was indeed the case, all one can conclude is that a critical reading of the papers themselves do not show it. They instead facilitate understanding of two areas of the Grenada Revolution previously accessible only to