Lessons of Grenada
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Summary

Until the discovery of the Grenada Documents in October 1983, some people in the United States still harbored the myth that the New JEWEL* Movement (NJM) and the government of Maurice Bishop in Grenada were nationalist reformers of a social democratic bent who were pushed into the arms of the Soviet Union and Cuba by inept United States diplomacy. A review of the documents created by the Bishop government quickly dispels that myth. The documents show that the NJM leaders knew from the beginning which ideological direction they were pursuing and carefully planned each step of the way, eagerly accepting Soviet and Cuban guidance and assistance.

The NJM leaders sought to hide their true intentions from the Western democracies, however, to avoid contrary pressures and opposition. To accomplish this deception they initially used respected community leaders as window dressing in the revolutionary government. As power was consolidated, they forced them out. The same process occurred in Nicaragua during 1979-82.

In their efforts to consolidate a Communist state, the NJM leaders worked on two fronts. On the internal front a combination of Marxist indoctrination, deception, and repression worked well. Imprisonment of opponents was routine and totally arbitrary. Under the Bishop government, life for Grenada’s people went from bad to worse in all respects.

On the external front the NJM carried out a systematic campaign of propaganda and deception to influence world opinion. Until the release of the Grenada Documents, they largely succeeded in convincing many in the United States that they were reformers working for a more just society.

In their dealings with the Soviets and Cubans, on the other hand, the NJM leaders constantly sought to prove that they were good Communists, useful as a launching pad for spreading subversion to neighboring countries, and useful allies in international fora.

Churches, particularly the Catholic Church, were regarded as enemies. The Cubans provided guidance about how to conduct anti-church activities. When the government of Maurice Bishop did not appear to be succeeding in its campaign against the Catholic Church, the Cubans recommended, and their advice was accepted, that the People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) seek the help of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, who had instituted the so-called “popular churches” to provide the Nicaraguan people with a Marxist-Leninist alternative to traditional religion.

The New JEWEL Movement, posing as a Social Democratic Party, obtained membership in the Socialist International (SI). Once in the SI, the Grenadians served as a Trojan horse for Cuban interests.

Finally, in the Soviets’ own words they considered the Bishop government to be a Communist ally, along with Cuba and Nicaragua. And the Grenada Documents show that it was a Soviet ally because it chose to be, not because, as some claimed, the United States pushed it into Soviet arms.

Lessons of Grenada:
Two Years Afterward

When the joint North American-East Caribbean rescue team arrived in Grenada in October 1983, they found more than the shambles produced by the fatal internal struggle that brought down the regime of Maurice Bishop and the New JEWEL Movement; they also found thousands of documents that told the day-by-day story of that regime. This unique window into the four years of Bishop’s dictatorship consists of some 35,000 pounds of official government documents, ranging from secret treaties, internal memoranda, and diplomatic dispatches to private diaries and photographs, copies of which are now available in the National Archives of the United States in Washington, D.C.

Never before has there been wide access to so full an archive of documents showing a government’s progression toward Marxism-Leninism. The Grenada Documents are the most complete record to date of a country that was, however briefly, a member of the Communist bloc.

First of all, the documents provide a clear picture of how the Soviet Union treats such countries, including the crucial role of proxy states such as Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and North Korea.

Second, they show how pro-Soviet countries of the Caribbean region cooperated to subvert both neighboring countries and respected international political groupings—the case cited being that of the Socialist International.

Third, they reveal how Bishop and his comrades sacrificed their own independence in the international arena to the point where Grenadian delegates to international conferences would sometimes leave the hall to check with their Cuban “advisers” to find out how to vote, or what to say.

Fourth, they demonstrate that the so-called People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) deceived the world at large about its real intentions concerning both internal...

An aerial photo showing the military garrison for Cuban troops in Grenada. Castro’s military was training the 9,000-man Grenadian military. This force, drawn from a population of only 95,000, made Grenada one of the most militarized societies in the world.
democracy and its international ties. Finally, they give us a complete picture of how the New Jewel Movement (NJM)-the political base of the PRG-exercised power on Grenada for four years.

**Deliberate Deception**

Perhaps the most shocking discovery in the Grenada Documents is the candor with which Bishop endorsed the deception of both the Grenadian people and the non-Communist world at large. This remarkable disclosure took the form of a secret speech to a general meeting of the NJM in September 1982. Entitled “Line of March for the Party,” Bishop’s speech explained the ultimate goals of the PRG and the tactics it had adopted to achieve those objectives. As to the former, Bishop described the NJM as a Marxist-Leninist Party, with the objective of installing “socialism” in Grenada. However, there were some problems. Because it would take time before full “socialism” could be achieved, it was therefore necessary to make temporary alliances of convenience with the middle classes. Such alliances were necessary both because of the shortcomings of the NJM’s own followers and because they served to fool potential opponents of the revolution. Bishop left no doubt about the willfulness of the deception:

... within the first few hours of taking power, we tried to build an alliance and we begun to build that alliance for two main reasons; Firstly to hold on to power in the first few seconds, minutes, hours, days and weeks. And the second reason was to defeat imperialism, in the months and years thereafter...

... the first set of names we announced for the ruling council was fourteen.... And these fourteen names were made up mainly ... of the petty-bourgeoisie, the upper petty-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.... And this was done deliberately so that imperialism won’t get too excited and would say “well they have some nice fellas in that thing; everything allright.”

But while the NJM went into an alliance of convenience with other political forces on the island, there was never any question in the minds of Bishop and his comrades about really sharing power with the others:

... while we are in an alliance with sections of the bourgeoisie and upper petty-bourgeoisie, they are not part of our dictatorship. They are not part of our rule and control-they are not part of it. We bring them in for what we want to bring them in for. They are not part of our dictatorship because when they try to hold public meetings and we don’t want that, the masses shut down the meeting. When we want to hold Zonal Councils and we don’t want them there, we keep them out. When they want to put out newspaper and we don’t want that, we close it down.... In fact, if the truth is told, they have been repressed by the dictatorship.

But the cold reality revealed in Bishop’s words, and in the four years of history contained in the Grenada Documents, was not apparent to the outside world. Less than a month after Bishop’s seizure of power, the *Washington Post* correspondent in the area had voiced this theme:

Cuban political and military overtures to the Caribbean’s newest government has provoked a strong U.S. diplomatic response that many here believe may succeed only in pushing Grenada farther to the left....

... public opinion here, even among those who profess to be nervous themselves over Cuban influence, has decided overwhelmingly that the United States is a bully, and a stingy one to boot.

As late as October 1983, many respected observers in the United States and elsewhere still harbored hope that the government of Maurice Bishop would eventually move toward moderation. Some believed that if Grenada had, indeed, moved toward the Soviet Union, then somehow the fault must rest with two United States Administrations that failed to understand the internal dynamics of a popular third-world revolution. This line of thought was expressed in an editorial in the *New York Times*, for example, following the murder of Maurice Bishop by his own comrades in October 1983:

The United States’ undifferentiated hostility to leftists in this hemisphere, has been rewarded with a hard lurch to the dogmatic and pro-Soviet left. Whether Prime Minister Maurice Bishop’s regime could have been lured into moderation will never be known. But his killing suggests the inadequacy of policies that seek to influence leftist regimes by shunning them.

And the *Times* concluded by commenting that the most important question for the United States to ask itself after the fall of Bishop was “how to respond to annoying yet essentially unthreatening radical regimes.”

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Although Ho Chi Minh and V.I. Lenin were two of the heroes of Grenada’s rulers, Maurice Bishop, the devoted Marxist-Leninist Prime Minister, attempted to hide the true direction of his revolution “so that imperialism won’t get too excited.”
Implicit in such views of Grenada was the notion that Bishop and the other NJM leaders were in some sense open to suggestion—that their convictions were subject to change. Unfortunately, there is not the slightest indication in the Grenada Documents that this was the case. On the contrary, there is considerable evidence that Bishop personally, along with all the other key leaders of the NJM, were determined long before the seizure of power to take Grenada into the Soviet camp.

**Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan Connection**

In 1977, two full years before the revolution, Bishop and Unison Whiteman (who later became foreign minister in the PRG) were interviewed by the Cuban magazine *Bohemia*. Bishop was explicit about his plans for Grenada:

> The triumph of socialism in our country will only be possible through firm ties with the socialist world and close cooperation with the more advanced governments of the region.  

Of the “advanced governments of the region,” the most important by far was Castro’s Cuba, with which Bishop’s regime developed an intimate relationship.

While it was the goal of the NJM to achieve a position of importance within the Communist bloc (as we shall see through the diplomatic exchanges with Moscow), Cuba was the intermediary through which most sensitive requests to the Kremlin passed, and Cubans were the most common overseers of Soviet programs in Grenada. Indeed, when Grenada requested assistance in intelligence and counter-intelligence from Yuri Andropov, then director of the KGB, the request was answered by the Cubans, rather than by the Soviets directly.

The documents contain several secret treaties and agreements, including a series of military, economic, and political arrangements with the Soviet Union and the Cuban Communist Party, that well define the relationship of Grenada with the Soviet bloc. The Soviets and Cubans, in total secrecy (several of the treaties and agreements actually contained a clause promising that secrecy would be maintained), agreed to accept Grenadian delegations for training in military and paramilitary activities, propaganda, subversion of the churches, and general political indoctrination. So Grenadians went off for training at the Lenin School in Moscow, which is the most important training facility for foreign Communists in the Soviet Union, and at the Nico Lopez School in Cuba.
Above: The interior of a Cuban Barracks in Grenada, complete with a photo of "Che" Guevara, the late hero of the Cuban revolution. (AP photo) Below: The Cubans and Soviets sought to conceal their involvement in the military build-up of Grenada and their use of Grenada as a staging area for sending arms to Communist revolutionary groups elsewhere. One method of concealment was to use false shipping labels for arms. This photo shows a crate of ammunition labeled "Cuban Economic Office."
The Soviets and Cubans were planning to use Grenada as a support base for guerrilla movements throughout the region. The vast amount of arms and ammunition found in Grenadian Army warehouses were far in excess of Grenada’s own needs.
The brutal October 19 attack by troops loyal to Bernard Coard resulted in the killing of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and scores of innocent Grenadians. American citizens, including hundreds of medical students, were also placed in grave jeopardy due to the chaotic situation which existed on the island. (AP photo)
An important element in these agreements was the considerable amount of money and manpower devoted to carrying out the indoctrination of the Grenadian people in the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism. Indeed, when the great internal political crisis struck the PRG in the summer of 1983, the basic response was to announce a vast “ideological crash course” for the entire population of the island. We know from the documents that Soviet instructors participated in the “crash course.”

In July 1983, W. Richard Jacobs, the Grenadian Ambassador to Moscow, wrote a long report to Grenada in which he announced: “The Comrades responsible for Grenada in the International Section, have told me that they operate on the basis that the NJM is a ‘communist party.’” And Jacobs gave many reasons for Soviet satisfaction with Grenada’s performance, including the Grenadians’ vote in the United Nations on Afghanistan which was “one of two Latin American votes (the other being Cuba) in their favour.” The Soviets were obviously pleased with the Grenadian practice of meeting regularly with other Communist and Leftist parties in the Caribbean region. Jacobs said that such meetings were “critical to the development of closer relations with the USSR,” because it was necessary for Grenada to “be the sponsor of revolutionary activity and progressive developments in this region at least.” Bishop had in fact discussed this subject three months earlier in Moscow during his conversations with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Referring to the assistance Grenada was giving to parties of a Marxist-Leninist persuasion, Bishop quoted from his own notes of the meeting:

Of course it is part of our internationalist duty to assist these developments to the extent of our capacity. We hold organizational/ideological seminars twice yearly: 13 countries-25 parties. Even

A U.S. Army medic provides medical care for a young Grenadian.
The troops of the United States were welcomed by the Grenadian people as liberators. A CBS News-New York Times poll a week after the rescue mission found that 91% of the Grenadian people approved of President Reagan’s decision. (AP photo)

Below: After the United States announced that its forces were leaving Grenada in 1985, such slogans as “USA Must Stay” appeared, reflecting a fear among many Grenadians that the local and foreign Communists would stimulate social and political unrest with the departure of the American presence. (AP photo)
this limited assistance (i.e. airline tickets, subsistence, etc. plus direct financial grants to Left parties) amounts to well over $500,000 so far. This is in fact already beyond our abilities and it will grow in quantities as these organizations develop. The USSR needs to get involved in providing some material support through the most appropriate channels, to ensure the survival and development of these progressive organizations.\textsuperscript{11}

Gromyko was quite pleased with Bishop’s activities, and told the Grenadian leader that “it is our opinion that this entire region is today boiling like a cauldron ... you spoke with great warmth in relation to Nicaragua and Cuba. We believe that these countries are living examples for countries in that part of the world.”\textsuperscript{12}

The Grenadians scarcely needed to be convinced of the necessity of following the Cuban and Nicaraguan examples. In all their activities, Bishop and his comrades looked for guidance to Managua and Havana. Indeed, on some occasions the guidance was nearly total. In the summer of 1982, for example, Grenada sent a delegate to Libya to attend the founding meeting of the General Congress of the World Center for the Resistance of Imperialism, Zionism, Racism and Reaction. In his report the Grenadian delegate stated:

I left Grenada on June 11 to attend what I was informed to be a Conference in Solidarity with El Salvador. It was only on my arrival in Cuba, together with delegates from other Caribbean Revolutionary and Democratic parties and Organisations that I learnt the true Character of the Conference in Libya.\textsuperscript{13}

His actions in Libya are suggested by the concluding words of his report:

Cuba always contacted Grenada to invite the Caribbean to the Latin American and Caribbean meeting, and generally made Grenada aware of the behind the scenes issues involved in the Congress and what is their position and general guidelines for us to follow.\textsuperscript{14}

The Cubans instructed the Grenadians in two other activities that help to clarify both the objectives of the Bishop regime and the nature of its international
Members of the United States Congress being briefed on the extent of Soviet arms shipments to tiny Grenada. By October 1983, Grenada had more men under arms than all its Eastern Caribbean neighbors combined. (AP photo)

This is one of the three Libyan planes, ostensibly carrying medical supplies to Nicaragua, that in April 1983 were found by Brazilian authorities to be actually carrying military equipment to the Sandinistas. Had the airbase being built by Cubans at Point Salines been operational, Colonel Qadaffi’s planes would not have been required to refuel in Brazil, and the arms he was sending to the Sandinistas would not have been discovered. (See page 16.)
involvement: the subversion of the Socialist International, and the subversion of the churches on the island. In each case, Cuban intelligence officers from the Americas Department of the Cuban Communist Party provided the guidelines for Grenadian actions.

The War against Religion

The PRG regarded the churches as enemies, and the main PRG analysis of the churches described them as institutions “against whom our work is directed.” The churches, and particularly the Catholic Church, were considered a basic threat to the success of the revolution, and the leaders of the regime believed that “if serious measures are not taken, we can find ourselves faced with a Poland situation.... we see the church in the immediate period as being the most dangerous sector for the development of internal counter revolution.”

Although the Grenadians were concerned about the churches, they did little in the way of systematic subversion before mid-1982 when they received guidance from the Cubans. As the Americas Department analysis of the religious situation shows, by the summer of 1982 the Grenadians had not successfully infiltrated the churches. ("There are no signs of systematic progressive projections within the Grenadian clergy.") Nor was there anyone within the PRG or the New JEWEL Movement who devoted time in earnest to religious matters. This was a major mistake in the eyes of the Cubans, who noted that most of the island’s schools were under religious direction, and that there was no state-run public school system. The Cubans accordingly made a series of recommendations, beginning with the usual requirement that the PRG send people to Cuba for training. They then suggested:

- Monitor all sermons by the various parish priests and preachers in the society.
- The controlling of all hierarchy [sic] meeting of the church in particular the Catholic and Anglicans.
- Controlling all elements of the society that pay visits to the hierarchy.
- Tapping of the hierarchy of all the leading counter churches phones.

Finally, the Grenadians were urged to avail themselves of the services of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, who had adopted a similar program of their own, and had
instituted the so-called “people’s churches” to provide the Nicaraguan people with a Marxist-Leninist alternative to traditional religion. Thus, the Cubans believed that the PRG should be brought into contact with the leaders of the Nicaraguan people’s churches “and other Latin American countries linked to the theology of liberation and, in general, to the idea of a church committed to the Revolutionary positions.” Quick to accept the Cubans’ advice, the Grenadians appointed a member of the Party to take charge of the anti-religious operations, and to undertake contacts with the Nicaraguans in order to open “progressive churches” on the island. They set about removing from the schools “all deeply religious head teachers by whatever means most suitable, replacing them with more progressive elements,” and they required that all teachers attend political education classes, in which indoctrination could be carried out.\textsuperscript{18}

The Cubans brought to Grenada manuals for instruction in “scientific atheism.” Since the manuals were in Spanish, it is doubtful that they were widely read by government officials, but they served as the basis for the instruction the Cubans gave to their Grenadian comrades. And for those religious leaders who showed willingness to cooperate with the Communists, there was always the possibility of being invited to Cuba.

The Subversion of Democratic Socialism

The documents concerning the role of the NJM in the Socialist International show clearly the hostility of the Grenadian leaders toward democratic socialists, both in their own region and throughout the world. The Socialist International is an organization of democratic socialist parties, and membership in the SI was denied to any party judged to be anti-democratic (the Sandinistas, for example, were refused even “observer” status). The NJM fooled the SI into thinking that the Grenadian movement was democratic, and Bishop’s party was admitted in 1980.

Once inside the SI, the NJM leaders worked as surrogates of the Cubans, who are not members of SI. Indeed, the Grenada Documents contain numerous

This airbase was being built by imported Cuban workers, despite high unemployment in Grenada. The secrecy was intended to hide the fact that, once completed, Point Salines would have been a military airbase capable of supporting Soviet and Cuban operations throughout the region. (AP photo)
A U.S. Air Force officer escorts Cuban diplomats to a waiting transport plane at Point Salines Airport. Twenty-seven Cuban diplomats, including Cuba’s ambassador to Grenada, left the island by the order of Grenada’s Governor General.

(AP photo)

Fidel Castro welcomed the coming to power in 1979 of long-time allies in Nicaragua and Grenada. He is shown here in Havana on May Day 1980 with Daniel Ortega and Maurice Bishop. (AP photo)
Cuban analyses of the SI, including what appears to be an intercept (translated into Spanish) of a telex from a leader of the German Social Democratic Party to his counterpart in the Austrian Social Democrats. The Cubans were deeply concerned about the role of the SI in Central America and the Caribbean, because some of the leading European Socialists and Social Democrats were openly critical of Cuba and Nicaragua, and, with the passage of time, of Grenada as well. The Cubans were angered, for example, by an SI effort to convince the Sandinistas to behave more moderately, both at home and in the region, and they undertook to organize a pro-Communist bloc within the SI that would undermine moderates like Mario Soares of Portugal, Felipe Gonzales of Spain, Bettino Craxi of Italy, Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela, and Helmut Schmidt of Germany. In their analysis of the SI, the Cubans were hostile to the role the democratic socialists sought in the region:

As for the strategy of the international Social Democracy on Latin America and the Caribbean, in our opinion, it points to the following directions:

- to oppose the “model of democratic socialism” to scientific socialism in an attempt to recover the essential values of the bourgeois representative democracy system;
- to deviate and neutralize the revolutionary and progressive movement, that is to prevent the victory of new socialist revolutions;
- to undermine the influence and progress of the socialist camp, particularly of Cuba and the URSS [USSR].

In other words, the Socialist International was an enemy.

The Cuban-led bloc held a secret “regional caucus” in Managua in January of 1983, attended by five regional parties along with the Cuban Communists. This group included the Grenadians, the Sandinistas, representatives of the Salvadoran guerrilla movement, the Chilean Radical Party, and the Jamaican People’s Nationalist Party. The Cubans led a discussion designed to generate “initiatives to neutralize forces within the SI that are against US.” These forces were said to include the Italian Social Democrats, the Portuguese Socialists,
Grenadians leave St. Mary's Church after services commemorating the National Day of Thanksgiving for the multinational force rescue operation. The Catholic Church was a primary target of the New Jewel movement. The Bishop government was advised by Cuba to follow the methods of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas to neutralize the Church, which was viewed as an impediment to consolidating Communism. (AP photo)
American medical students show their reaction to being rescued by the U.S. and Eastern Caribbean troops.

Rescued Americans boarding a C-141 en route to America and freedom.
and the American Social Democrats, USA. In short, the Cubans had organized the pro-Communist parties of the region into a fifth column within the Socialist International.

**Life under the New JEWEL Movement**

The Grenada Documents contain hundreds of pages of internal police and intelligence reports that show how Grenadian citizens were kept under surveillance, and many of them arbitrarily arrested. As Bishop put it in his “Line of March” speech to the Party:

... consider how people get detained in this country. We don’t go and call for no votes. You get detained when I sign an order after discussing it with the National Security Committee of the Party or with a higher Party body. Once I sign it-like it or don’t like it-it’s up the hill for them.  

It was “up the hill” for so many of them that the regime had to build a new prison to house them all. The regime’s criteria were invariably political. Organizations like the traditional trade union movement were closely watched, and people were singled out for surveillance on the grounds of their class origin and political sentiments.

When ABC-TV sent a “20/20” team to Grenada a year after the rescue mission to find out what life had been like under Bishop’s regime, they found several people who had never determined why they had been arrested, harassed, and beaten, and they found one man who had been identified as an enemy of the revolution-who had done no more than express his feelings in a bar. All of this was of a piece with the treatment of the churches, even the use of methods hitherto unknown on the island. As head of the “Special Branch” (the political secret police), Michael Roberts reported to Bishop in 1980 that “the old MI 5 [British counter-intelligence] methods of work, after experimentation, have proven to be not effective enough.”

Apparently Roberts meant that the British methods did not encompass blackmail, assassinations, infiltration of churches, and other similar techniques taught by the Cubans and Soviets.

The Grenada Documents demonstrate that life on the island went from bad to worse under Bishop’s regime. In one discussion after another, the leaders of the PRG lamented their failure to manage the island’s economy, to improve the lot of the people, or to lay the groundwork for any longterm growth. The only activities that grew steadily were those in which Grenada played a role useful to the Soviet Union, such as military training and the importation of weapons. According to estimates of the United States Department of Defense, Grenadian agreements with the Soviet Union, Cuba, North Korea, and Czechoslovakia would have resulted in delivery by 1986 of sufficient equipment for a fighting force of roughly 10,000 men, considerably more than was needed to defend a small island with a total population of about 120,000 people. The figures are even more impressive when it is recalled that most of the neighboring islands had no armies at all, only local constabularies.

The Soviets knew that Grenada gave them a potentially important ally in the eastern Caribbean. When Einstein Louison, the Chief of Staff of the Grenadian Army, went to Moscow, his Soviet counterpart, Marshal N. V. Ogarkov, told Louison that “over two decades ago, there was only Cuba in Latin America, today there are Nicaragua, Grenada and a serious battle is going on in El Salvador.” The Soviets knew that in Grenada they had acquired an ally who would support Soviet objectives and copy Soviet methods, not because the United States and other Western countries left them no option, but because that is what the ruling government wished to do.
A peaceful Grenada.
Unless otherwise credited, all photos are courtesy U.S. Department of Defense.