

---

## REVIEW ESSAYS

---

### GRENADIAN CALLALOO: Recent Books on Grenada

*Paul Sutton*  
*University of Hull*

- 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 Gairyism, 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 Thorndike.<sup>1</sup> 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

those most intimately connected—relations with the communist world and the operation and organization of the New Jewel Movement in 1982 and 1983.

The greatest weakness of the Seabury and McDougall volume is its failure to step outside the papers and set them in context. It simply does not contain enough information on Grenada to permit any firm conclusions. Indeed, given the tendentious “introductions” by the editors, it could be seriously misleading if read as the sole account of the revolution. In other words, it should be treated as a valuable source-book in need of supplementation: a necessary but insufficient text for understanding events.

The only volume under review that can stand as a single source is Tony Thorndike’s *Grenada: Politics, Economics, and Society*. Its three major parts discuss “the environment,” “the revolution,” and the “the reckoning,” charting the course of the revolution as a process. It contains useful chapters on Gairyism and the domestic and foreign policies of the PRG. The core of the work is composed of three excellent chapters detailing the development, deployment, and decline of the NJM, topics that Thorndike discusses authoritatively. Access to the captured documents is but part of the story, which also rests on Thorndike’s knowledge of Grenada from countless interviews and frequent stays. The picture that emerges of the NJM is thus fuller and more credible than the accounts of other books on the subject.

To begin with, Thorndike establishes the fact that the NJM in its early days “was not self-consciously Marxist” (p. 43). It became so only in mid-1975 in response to developments internal to the party and to the political struggle against Gairyism. Bernard Coard was catalytic in the party’s internal development whilst Maurice Bishop became the leading force in the opposition to Gairyism. A certain duality therefore emerged (Coard as Leninist, Bishop as populist) that stayed with the NJM throughout the revolution and resurfaced at the end in the proposal for joint leadership. It is further testimony (if any were needed) to the slow development of the NJM as a party and reflects the West Indian background from which it arose. This context accorded to political leaders a considerable degree of latitude, or as Thorndike observes, “the general pattern [in the NJM] was to act first and routinize later” (p. 51). This view confirms, albeit indirectly, that lingering aspect of charismatic domination enjoyed by Bishop and relied upon by the NJM.

Accordingly, the NJM members were few in number. As of October 1983, the party consisted of but 350 members and of these only 72 were full members as opposed to having candidate or applicant status (p. 79). The members were, however, strategically placed to lead the revolution in the vital areas of the PRG, the People’s Revolutionary

Army (PRA), and the mass organizations (although surprisingly absent from many trade unions and the senior levels of the public service). Overall direction was provided by the Central Committee (CC) established in September 1979. Thorndike notes its diminutive size, "membership never exceeded eighteen and was normally fourteen" (p. 76), and that "it was unaccountable" in that "its deliberations were rarely divulged to the membership" (p. 72). Circumstances were therefore being created for a divorce between party members and the CC, let alone between the NJM and the masses. Indications of just such a possibility emerged in 1981. In April of that year, the CC "resolved to apply Leninist measures" to bridge the gap "between revolutionary intent and policy, and that of falling support" (p. 74). Mid-1981 also saw "the hospitalization of some activists due to exhaustion" (p. 74). What can be gathered from this sequence is that the crisis in the party and the revolution was a protracted one. It could have come to a head in 1982 but was delayed for a year for reasons that are not altogether clear (was Coard's resignation from the CC in 1982 an attempt to precipitate it?). When the crisis finally did emerge, it was probably all the more extreme in form and character as a result, constituting what Thorndike calls a "murderous implosion" (p. xiii) that sealed the fate of the revolution.

Thorndike's discussion of these last months is perceptive and informed, comprehending the deliberations of the CC and the arguments for joint leadership, the murder of Bishop and others, the policies of the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC), and the consequences in Grenada of the U.S. invasion. He does not analyze the invasion itself, however. Many of the matters dealt with are highly contentious, yet Thorndike manages to provide a balanced and detailed account. The impression conveyed strongly throughout his account is that events overwhelmed the actors. The final days of the Grenada Revolution are therefore cast as a Greek tragedy in which human agency is suborned to a deadly inner logic and a predestined end. The aftermath cruelly suggests that the revolution may as well not have happened.

Given this pessimistic view, what judgment does Thorndike finally accord to the revolution? His opinion is that it was a failure because it mismatched an inappropriate revolutionary theory (Leninism) with a hostile West Indian environment (the West Indian condition), that is to say, the revolution foundered on its lack of ideological authenticity.<sup>2</sup> His supporting case in the final chapter is very persuasive—if it is not the last word on the Grenada Revolution, it must surely be among the soundest. This analysis underscores the importance of background in understanding events in Grenada and brings scholarship to the fore in its interpretation. As a beginner's guide to the revolution,

Thorndike's *Grenada* is unlikely to be bettered for some time. Read alongside *Maurice Bishop Speaks* and *The Grenada Papers*, it constitutes an indispensable commentary for setting the record to right.

A balanced overall account of the revolution is also Jay Mandle's intention in *Big Revolution, Small Country: The Rise and Fall of the Grenada Revolution* and Kai Schoenhals's section of *Revolution and Intervention in Grenada: The New Jewel Movement, The United States, and the Caribbean*. These authors cover much the same ground as Thorndike but with less attention to detail. Their format is more that of a sustained essay, although of diverse kinds. Whereas Schoenhals's account is narrative, assuming little or no knowledge of Grenada on the part of the reader, Mandle's is analytic and thus best understood by those already somewhat familiar with events in Grenada and development problems in the Caribbean. Whereas Schoenhals is generally appreciative of the PRG–NJM and its project for Grenada, Mandle is critical.

Especially illustrative of Mandle's critical attitude is his treatment of the Grenadian economy under the PRG. Rather than attempt a general review of development strategy, he focuses on policy sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and the airport. In all three instances, he finds the thinking of the PRG deficient. In agriculture, for example, Mandle notes that "as late as 1983 the PRG had not found an acceptable means to break the deadlock it inherited" (p. 38) and hence the sector was at best stagnant. Mandle also criticizes the political system erected by the revolution, viewing it as an example of "paternalistic socialism," in which authority is vested in a leading party, not a person, and the masses of the population play only supportive roles (pp. 53–56). He therefore does not believe Bishop's and Coard's claims of a "new democracy" at work in Grenada because he believes that politics were strictly the prerogative of the NJM. For its part, the NJM could not fulfill the demands made on it internally or externally and eventually splintered under the strain. Much of this analysis is congruent with that of Thorndike and others. But Mandle goes further than most in arguing that failure was inevitable. He believes that neither Bishop nor Coard was prepared to revise the premises to which they were jointly committed (paternalistic socialism), nor was the NJM (pp. 87–88). The revolution was therefore ultimately sacrificed to the Leninist principles of "vanguard leadership" in circumstances that could not sustain it.

Mandle's criticisms of the Grenada Revolution are plausible. Incisively argued and fully informed, they draw on his considerable experience in analyzing Caribbean underdevelopment. His final chapter ought to be required reading for Caribbean socialists because of its analysis of numerous aspects of revolutionary theory and Caribbean experience. His substantive conclusion, however, appears lacking in one vital respect. It is all very well to propose that greater political



pluralism should accompany future West Indian revolutions but quite another thing to guarantee the geopolitical environment to sustain it. Mandle nowhere addresses this question—indeed he fails to give sufficient weight in his overall account to U.S. foreign policy. A critical dimension of the revolution has thus been lost. It is a curious omission for someone as knowledgeable as Mandle and also a seriously limiting reservation on what is otherwise an intellectually demanding study.

Schoenhals's "Grenada: The Birth and Death of a Revolution" is concerned with the fortunes and misfortunes of the island, past and present, which it seeks to comprehend in eighty-four pages. In such a format, something inevitably has to be sacrificed, and in Schoenhals's essay, theory takes a back seat. The historical background to revolution in Grenada is not so much explained as described; and the record of the revolution itself is set out on its own terms rather than probed in any detail (apart from the crisis of 1983). Overall, this approach results in Schoenhals's work adding little that is new to understanding events in Grenada except for his valuable insight into the revolution gained from associating with a number of its leaders while living in Grenada between August 1982 and May 1983.

One of the many points at which this association is evident is Schoenhals's account of "the self-immolation of the revolution" in October 1983 (p. 6). Significantly, this process did not occur out of the blue (as a misjudged power play by Coard or Cuba or the Soviet Union) but as a consequence of the rapidly deteriorating situation in Grenada that the July plenary of the NJM failed to resolve. Schoenhals therefore understands the motives of those who sought to reopen the question in late August and September as well as the sense of urgency attending their deliberations. Similarly, he does not view the proposal for joint leadership as necessarily a foolish idea or a false solution to the problems being confronted. Schoenhals believes that Coard had qualities that manifestly ought to have been more fully deployed while Bishop had weaknesses that needed to be compensated. Because they had worked together in the past, it seemed "a logical solution" that they should work closely together now (p. 82). Finally, although Schoenhals clearly lays "the greatest blame" for destroying the revolution on "the military triumvirate of Liam James, Ewart Layne, and Leon Cornwall" with their dogmatic Marxism and "uncompromising attitude" (p. 83), he does not entirely exonerate the other triumvirate within the CC (Unison Whiteman, George Louison, and Fitzroy Bain), who were reluctant to go along with majority decisions in what was a democratic-centralist party and who backed Bishop "during the final showdown" (p. 82).

Schoenhals's evenhanded treatment of the final crisis is to be welcomed in establishing that the picture was more complex and the attitudes and motives of the protagonists more mixed than is assumed

in many other accounts. His “feel” for the revolution and its context further emphasizes that to understand it fully, one has to take on psychology as well as ideology. The climax of 19 October was thus as much a collective catharsis by elements of the CC and the PRA as it was a conscious conspiracy by them. To put it somewhat differently, the revolution in Grenada, small and incomplete as it may have been, meant something to its militants that touched the essence of their being. If this point is missed, not only are the politics of the revolution needlessly diminished but its symbolic and actual significance for the region and for Grenada is lost.

This point reappears in the two remaining books under review in this section. Like Schoenhals, the authors witnessed the revolution at close hand and one of them (Chris Searle) played a significant part in developing some of its acclaimed reforms in education. His volume *Words Unchanged: Language and Revolution in Grenada* is therefore of particular interest. It establishes the undeniable existence of a cultural revolution in Grenada under the PRG that was the product both of deliberate government policy and newly awakened creative forces among the people, especially the young.

Searle attempts to let the ordinary folk of Grenada speak for themselves as much as possible. *Words Unchanged* contains many pages of interviews, verse, and reminiscence. Insofar as they are really representative (and they undoubtedly are), they constitute another voice from within the revolution (other than Bishop and the CC) and lead one to conclude that in the area of culture, at least, the revolution was genuinely popular and positive in its outcome.

Enthusiasm for the revolution also characterizes David Lewis's *Reform and Revolution in Grenada, 1950 to 1981*. Like the Searle book, this manuscript appears to have been substantially completed by early 1983, and the question of the revolution faltering or losing direction is consequently not considered. As in Searle's analysis, little or no criticism is made of PRG policies, and in the part dealing with Grenada from 1979 to 1981, Lewis merely sets forth the record of government in matters of economy, society, politics, and foreign policy as known to him at the time. This task he performs competently, particularly in discussing the economy, an area where he enjoyed a degree of access to “inside” information.

Lewis also provides valuable insights elsewhere, notably in his penetrating discussion of the years immediately preceding the seizure of power in March 1979. This topic entails an elaboration of Gairyism. Lewis correctly views this phenomenon as a system of political domination that was sociological as well as personal. That is, although the flamboyant and egocentric personality of Eric Matthew Gairy cannot be

discounted, the real basis of his government lay in the social structure of Grenada. This structure was marked by the usual two-class division, but one in which the large lower-class was composed of plantation workers, peasants, and semipeasants (p. 25). Gairy was the first modern leader to articulate their grievances and represent their interests.

Lewis also provides a fascinating account of the NJM's rise to prominence and power. He traces the formative years between 1970 and 1973, the NJM's part in the growth of popular opposition to Gairy around the issue of independence, and its involvement in parliamentary politics in the 1976 general elections and after. Lewis's explanation of these developments is again sociological, with class aspects in the foreground. Accordingly, the NJM is seen as initially tied to a stratum of "progressive professionals and intelligentsia" that emerged in Grenada in the late 1960s (pp. 63–66). This class base was confirmed with the independence struggle, in which the teachers' unions and the youth were the NJM's principal supporters (p. 98), although the NJM was also developing key contacts at this time with the business class and the bureaucratic elite (pp. 99–103). These class fractions collectively became the urban bastion that elected Bishop, Coard, and Whiteman to Grenada's Parliament in 1976 and permitted the NJM to consolidate its agitational and subsequently organizational links with the small Grenadian working class (Chapter 4). When the insurrection of 13 March was launched, the NJM therefore represented multiple class interests and possessed legitimacy as an opposition force. On this basis, the NJM could present itself to the Grenadian people as a national body and be welcomed by the majority as liberators from an arbitrary oppression.

Lewis's deployment of class analysis is a welcome addition to the literature because it helps situate the revolution in a dynamic context and renders questionable accounts that characterize the revolution as a conspiracy or in some way "alien" to Grenada's historical development. Similarly, Lewis casts doubts on the opinions of those who regard Leninism or noncapitalist development as inappropriate to Grenada's circumstances. His arguments refuting this perspective appear throughout the text and add up to a powerful case.

Lewis emphasizes that in the last resort, internal factors determined the timing and the trajectory of the revolution. This important insight underlines what must be the substantive conclusion arising out of all the books reviewed above: that the revolution was unique, the product of a particular logic and a distinctive set of circumstances. Other islands in the Eastern Caribbean could not follow where Grenada led; and the transformations and changes that the revolution occasioned were remarkable in themselves, fully understandable only in the context of a singular Grenadian reality. Like the Haitian and Cuban

revolutions before it, the Grenada Revolution was *sui generis*, even though it too drew on a shared Caribbean condition and a nascent creole consciousness.

*The Invasion*

The two and one-half books reviewed in this section serve different audiences and focus on different aspects of the invasion, with little overlap. They may profitably be read together by those seeking a general viewpoint on the U.S. invasion of Grenada or singly by those who wish to examine the invasion as one part of a wider whole, that is, to treat Grenada as a case study. No one of these books by itself permits understanding U.S. policy toward Grenada in all its complexity, and the reviewer can only conclude from the sources utilized in these works that such a study has yet to be published.

The work nearest to being an overview is Richard Melanson's ninety-four page essay, "The United States, the Caribbean, and Grenada," in *Revolution and Intervention in Grenada*. This piece considers in sequence the United States as a Caribbean power, the policies of the Carter and Reagan administrations toward Grenada and the Caribbean, the politics behind the decision to invade, and the immediate and long-term consequences of that action for U.S. policy. Melanson covers a great deal of ground, some of it rather thinly, but to his credit, he never completely loses sight of Grenada, and his work enables readers to begin to appreciate the salient points of U.S. foreign policy operative in this instance. They are the familiar ones (to Caribbean specialists, at least) of misperception, contrasts between administrations, and a reservoir of U.S. domestic support for intervention.

Illustrative of the misperceptions that arose was the mission of U.S. Ambassador Frank Ortiz to Grenada on 10 April 1979, an encounter widely regarded as critical in establishing the pattern of relations between the two countries. Bishop's account of events, as set out in his "In Nobody's Backyard" speech, accused the United States of a near gratuitous insult in offering but five thousand dollars in aid and in warning the PRG not to foster close relations with Cuba, while simultaneously denying Grenada the means to secure itself from external aggression. Ortiz's account had to await publication until the invasion but as cited by Melanson, it stresses that only one of eleven points that Ortiz raised with Bishop concerned Cuba; that the U.S. government, although not prepared to supply arms, would use legal means to restrain Gairy from invading; and that the small sum offered was the limit allowed him from his discretionary fund for aid projects (pp. 112-13). Who misunderstood whom? And was it willful? Ortiz knew of covert Cuban assistance and had formed the opinion that the PRG did not

want close links with the United States. Bishop experienced Ortiz as the overbearing representative of an overmighty power that has historically had little concern for poor black Caribbean people. As it turned out, both perceptions were right in general, although not in detail. That is, interests were opposed, but whether they were so opposed as to rule out accommodation is a moot point.

Melanson also emphasizes the differences in style of the Carter and Reagan administrations, contrasting the stridency of the latter with the distanced approach of the former. For example, under Carter, "Grenada was handled at the assistant secretary level," with "neither the president nor his secretaries of state making public statements about it" (p. 116); under Reagan, it quickly assumed a public prominence, with policy being "coordinated at the most senior governmental levels" (p. 130). How is this difference to be explained? Melanson believes that developments within Grenada had little to do with it and that one must look instead at the general posture of U.S. foreign and inter-American policy adopted by the two administrations. He spends some pages in reviewing this posture in both instances and then argues that Grenada became a surrogate for Cuba for the Reagan administration (p. 130), an argument he repeats in his concluding remarks that "the administration's approach to Bishop was a small-scale duplicate of its approach to Castro" (p. 177). If this was indeed the case (and Melanson appears to be on to something here), then the consequences for Grenada were bleak and stark. To arrive at an agreement with the United States would have meant doing no less than setting aside the substance of the revolution—and even this course might not have guaranteed survival unless the action was public and explicit, especially as regards rejecting Cuba and all its works. This course the PRG was not prepared to take, as the U.S. government probably knew full well. The way was therefore clear for the Reagan administration to take military action to end the matter according to its own definition of the situation. As Melanson explains, "in view of this history the only surprising thing about the Grenada invasion is that Reagan waited so long to carry it out" (p. 177).

The remaining important element is the domestic context of U.S.–Caribbean policy. Melanson notes that Reagan's decision to invade Grenada scored an overwhelming foreign policy success in the U.S. Congress and with the public. It was argued that prompt action had saved American lives, supported American allies, and advanced American national security interests, all at minimal cost. No debate on the invasion was judged necessary because the event was self-evidently successful and legitimate. The matter could be, and accordingly was, swiftly closed, aided materially by the policies of self-restraint adopted by Reagan in not proclaiming "a sweeping Grenada doctrine" that might be invoked to support military intervention elsewhere (p. 167).

In short, the invasion of Grenada was minimized, treated as a backyard sideshow having little or no consequence for U.S. foreign policy. As the American magazine *Newsweek* commented, "Grenada has disappeared off the radar screen: nobody talks about it much. It is now gradually sinking into the oblivion we reserve for our friends."<sup>3</sup>

The theme of the invasion's passing and limited significance also runs through Peter Dunn's and Bruce Watson's collection, *American Intervention in Grenada: The Implications of Operation "Urgent Fury."* This volume brings together eleven contributors whose primary and professional interests are military and intelligence matters. The subject of Grenada is accordingly a distant second to the main thrust of evaluating the performance of the U.S. military establishment in preparing and executing the invasion, which is characterized as "a minor engagement" (p. xi). This end is accomplished reasonably well by providing nonmilitary specialists with about as much information as they require on the subject. When *American Intervention in Grenada* steps outside this rather narrow compass, however, its utility dwindles and its judgment on matters internal to Grenada cannot be commended. The work's chief merit is as a commentary on U.S. intelligence and a record of the campaign.

Regarding U.S. intelligence, some interesting observations are made by Gerald Hopple and Cynthia Gilley. They charge that military intelligence on Grenada "was deficient" and "that political intelligence was of even lower quality" (p. 62). Consequently, senior U.S. officials confronting the crisis elevated "policy goals over intelligence inputs" (p. 61), in turn prompting responses by top U.S. decision makers on the basis of instinct and analogy rather than any real appreciation of the circumstances. As many have suspected, the decision to invade was therefore a knee-jerk response in which many criteria beyond Grenada (such as the bombing in Lebanon and general confusion in the Middle East) played a significant part.

Poor intelligence was also evident in the planning of the invasion. Stephen Andriole surprisingly reports that while preparing the National Security Council directive, "it was discovered that (a) there was no contingency plan on file for a possible invasion of Grenada, and (b) that maps and photographs of the island were inadequate" (p. 75). As a result, much frantic last-minute activity apparently accompanied briefings for the invasion, which were considered only barely sufficient in themselves. If this was indeed the case, and so far no evidence suggests that an immediate invasion was anticipated before 15 October, then the situation raises questions regarding the real level of U.S. military preparedness and CIA activity in the Caribbean. These levels are generally assumed to be high, but they may not be. There is obviously room here for further study, not only for academic purposes but to

clarify a necessarily key issue for all policymakers concerned with the region.

Once the invasion was underway, reporters were excluded from accompanying the operations. The two chapters by Frank Uhlig and Dorothea Cypher that detail the fighting rely accordingly on information provided by participants and U.S. defense officials. They detail the amphibious and army aspects of a combined service operation, and both accounts reach substantially the same conclusion, stressing the easy success of the campaign with all objectives quickly secured and casualties minimized. Cypher provides the final body count from official U.S. figures: "Nineteen U.S. servicemen lost their lives, . . . twelve of them were soldiers. Another 116 were wounded, 108 of them from the Army. On the other side twenty-five Cubans were killed, fifty-nine were wounded and 634 taken prisoner. Additionally, forty-five PRA were killed, 337 were wounded and sixty-eight were captured" (pp. 106–7). The number of Grenadian civilian casualties is not recorded, however. Indeed, in both accounts and throughout *American Intervention in Grenada*, the absence of Grenadians is a most telling feature. This perspective can be explained initially as the way the situation appeared to U.S. commanders. But whether U.S. academics, however policy-oriented, should subscribe to such a point of view is another matter. On this score, one must conclude that Grenada's story remains to be told, with the "costs" of the invasion to the Grenadian population still unknown, at least as compared with the "benefits" that the U.S. action is deemed to have brought.

Costs and benefits of a different sort concern William Gilmore in *The Grenada Intervention: Analysis and Documentation*. This work seeks to comprehend the legal arguments surrounding the invasion and to determine whether it can be justified according to international law. As with the previous two works reviewed, Gilmore's book is organized as a case study, with basic information on the background of the invasion being provided in the first section and primary documentation relating to the invasion reproduced in the third. Gilmore's analysis, the substantive core of the book, is contained in the second section, which examines in depth the three major justifications for the invasion advanced at the time.

With respect to the first justification, Article 8 of the Treaty of the Organization of East Caribbean States relating to the peace and security of its members, Gilmore concludes that "it is not easy to see how the situation prevailing in Grenada during October 1983 could be properly characterized as posing a threat to the security of neighboring states such as to justify, within the meaning of international law, the use of force in anticipation of an armed attack" (p. 55). In respect to the second argument, the need for protecting nationals (as advanced by the

U.S. government), he finds that “there appears to be a substantial *prima facie* case for suggesting that the United States justification for acting in defence of its nationals, in these circumstances, was unsound in law” (p. 64). Regarding the third justification, the invitation of the Governor General, Gilmore concedes a credible case supporting Sir Paul Scoon’s assumption of power internally following the death of Maurice Bishop but finds it difficult to argue that Scoon had the competence to issue an invitation to intervene or that the circumstances warranted it. This conclusion lies outside the arguments as to whether the invitation to intervene was issued before or after the invasion of 25 October. Gilmore clearly indicates at a number of points that he believes the latter interpretation. On all three counts, then, Gilmore finds the legal case wanting, “the justifications advanced, both individually and collectively, at best unconvincing” (p. 74).

Here Gilmore inadvertently puts his finger on what in retrospect appears to be the essence of the Grenada invasion—that from the U.S. side, it must be viewed as a wholly political act taken for wholly political reasons. According to this perspective, the military and international legal aspects, fascinating as they may be, become necessarily subordinate to wholly political ends. What these ends may have been for the Reagan administration are yet to be determined precisely, but the material reviewed above suggests that internal as well as external factors played a part and that calculating simple political advantage was all-important, that is, immediate domestic benefits were deemed to outweigh medium- or long-term international costs. In other words, the Grenada invasion was an opportunity not to be missed to score points with the U.S. public, with the interests of Grenadians or the inter-American system as a whole simply incidental or coincidental.

### *In Perspective*

What, finally, do these studies collectively reveal about the Grenada Revolution and invasion? Has any consensus emerged or is there at present merely a catalogue of disagreement? Where and what are the aspects in need of further study, clarification, or elaboration? Last but not least, what do these works add to the general body of literature on Caribbean studies and the West Indies in particular?

Before attempting to answer these questions succinctly, one general point common to nearly every book reviewed needs to be reiterated. It is necessary to emphasize Grenadian “particularisms,” without which no understanding can be achieved of either the revolution or the invasion. These particularisms, which were alluded to initially, can be broken into six aspects: Gairyism, the West Indian context, Grenadian Marxism-Leninism, Cuba, Reaganism, and the Caribbean and the Cold War.



*Gairyism* / It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Gairyism was the main cause of the revolution. Although some studies emphasize this factor more than others, nearly all attest to its importance. Lewis, Thorndike, and Schoenhals pay particular attention to the phenomenon of Gairyism, which is also a frequently invoked motif in Bishop's speeches. Had Eric Gairy not been in power for twelve years and had he been less intolerant of political opposition and dissent, the NJM probably would not have organized a clandestine wing and finally been driven to seize power.

*The West Indian Context* / Once the revolution was launched, the policies of the PRG quickly attracted those who favored radical solutions to deep-seated West Indian problems. Thorndike discusses such issues in his characterization of the "environment," as does Mandle in his excellent opening chapter on the plantation economy. Others also address the theme, notably Searle, whose book directly explores the oppressive cultural legacy of colonialism and provides a detailed record of the many activities by which the PRG sought to transform psychological dependency. Other West Indian islands were also burdened with a detestable past, but few seemed to have experienced it as forcefully as Grenada. As a result, when revolution came, it was also an act of liberating the Grenadian spirit, especially in the early years.

*Grenadian Marxism-Leninism* / The NJM was a phenomenon unique to the Eastern Caribbean. The party held power and possessed both a program and policies. The PRG was especially associated with policies and what can be regarded as the nationalist thrust of the revolution. Lewis, Mandle, Schoenhals, and Thorndike all provide useful general accounts of this component and attest to its vigor, although one must turn to Bishop for details. His sincerity and deep commitment to change are here entered into the record. Insight into the revolution and its eventual goal were, by contrast, the exclusive property of the NJM. Seabury and McDougall set forth relevant details, but it is left to Mandle, Schoenhals, and Thorndike to make sense of the program. Generally, they regard it as an aberration rather than an imposition until the final months. When the NJM failed, therefore, it faltered in the context of a revolutionary democracy that it had insufficiently fostered against a background of material gains that it had enhanced but by no means permanently secured. The consequence is the possibility that PRG policies may be tried again elsewhere, but the program probably will not. Leninism in the form practiced by the NJM is also likely to prove unique to time and place.

*Cuba* / Whether as proxy or provider, model or menace, Cuba appears at every turn and in nearly every book. Such close linkage was both

desired by the revolution and willed indirectly on it by the U.S. government, thus becoming simultaneously a guarantee of its survival and a contributory cause of its demise. Good reasons exist for supposing that such an explicit interdependence expressed a conjunction of circumstances unlikely to arise in the Caribbean again. To this extent, Cuban involvement remains a vital, but singular, factor in the Grenada Revolution.

*Reaganism* / A similar conclusion arises on considering the Reagan administration's decision to invade Grenada. Melanson describes this move as "a highly unusual response to probably unique circumstances" (p. 166), and the majority of contributors to the Dunn and Watson collection would concur with such an assessment. Indeed, some would go further in seeing the invasion as a peripheral affair of little strategic consequence. While military lessons could be learned, they consequently had only limited applicability. The same is true of politics. While the Grenada invasion conforms to a pattern of U.S. interventions in the region, enough factors in the circumstances surrounding the immediate decision to intervene can be cited to make it distinctive. Qualifications to any general conclusion are therefore in order.

*The Caribbean and the Cold War* / The invasion did set one precedent—that of overt unilateral military action by the United States in support of its interests in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Gilmore makes the point that the action was illegal but that this consideration mattered little to an administration locked into a Manichean interpretation of the world. Little evidence suggests that the United States sought to divest itself of this interpretation in its dealings with the West Indian states or those Western European allies with lingering interest in the region. At any rate, all such concerns were by definition subordinate, as they had objectively been since 1898. The Reagan administration therefore underlined an established fact of policy rather than departing from it, the unusual element being the singleminded determination with which this administration willed the means to end the revolution, even to the embarrassment of its closest allies.

In broad outline, these six qualifications set the revolution and invasion apart from the rest of the region. They attest to the view that the Grenada Revolution must be understood on its own terms as a sui generis revolution that if sometimes termed "improbable," was nonetheless authentic.<sup>4</sup> The "lessons" of the revolution therefore apply to Grenada itself, with analogies elsewhere (especially Nicaragua) having limited value. With respect to the invasion, a similar reasoning applies, although less so in the theory of intervention than in the facts of the case as it applied in October 1983. The U.S. government is neither more

nor less likely to invade Nicaragua because it invaded Grenada. In short, Grenada was original, and those authors who were closest to its revolution bear greatest witness to such a conclusion.

This interpretation points in two directions for future studies of Grenada and its significance. The first is to close gaps in knowledge that the books under review have revealed. The revolution is here better covered than the invasion, with many aspects already usefully discussed. The main areas in need of urgent research are consequently only two: the economy under the PRG, especially the contribution of the peasantry; and the precise nature of the relationship between the PRG and the NJM, with particular attention to the militarization of the latter. Another area that could be usefully studied in depth is Cuban-Grenadian relations, especially because the documentation needed is now partly available. The existence of the Freedom of Information Act opens the same possibility for U.S.–Grenadian relations. The lack of a detailed study of these relations is a deplorable omission. Until it is remedied, the real causes for the invasion are at best informed prejudice and at worst mere speculation. Similarly, the consequences of the invasion on U.S. policy and not least on Grenada itself need to be evaluated. Ample scope clearly exists here for an intensive and extensive research program and for further publication.

The other direction, an inherently more difficult venture, is to situate Grenada in the region. The premise of Grenada's originality may be wrong—despite the weight of particularisms, another Grenada may be in the offing. There is no shortage of possibilities, but whether the circumstances exist to turn them into probabilities is a very different matter. The nine books reviewed above place a premium on familiarity with the region, as participant or observer or both, as a key to understanding. Admitting this necessity in turn allows two tendencies to co-exist without obvious resolution. The first sustains the weight of traditional scholarship in defining the West Indies as culturally and politically distinct. The second identifies West Indian interests as increasingly bound up with the rest of the Americas, particularly in matters of economics and geopolitics. The experience of the revolution and the invasion validate both. Each side can therefore take comfort, but if they are honest, they will have to admit that no final judgment can yet be made. In the meantime, the Grenadian experience as a whole can be reflected upon and savored. This, in the end, is the final measure of any memorable callaloo.

#### NOTES

1. Schoenhals and Melanson's *Revolution and Intervention in Grenada* consists of two works, or as the authors state in the preface, "two juxtaposed essays, one from the

- Grenadian perspective, the other from that of the United States" (ix).
2. The West Indian condition, discussed by Thorndike in Chapter 1, is comprised of five elements: small size, limited resources, psychological dependence, economic dependence, and geopolitical strategic significance. See *Grenada*, 1–15, especially 11.
  3. See "Grenada: The Man from GULP Returns," *Newsweek* 103, no. 5, 30 Jan. 1984, p. 45.
  4. The phrase is attributable to Richard Hart, latterly Attorney General in the PRG and author of a valuable introduction to *In Nobody's Backyard: Maurice Bishop Speeches, 1979–1983*, edited by Chris Searle (London: Zed Books, 1984).