

ODEM: 1000, 24 OCTOBER, 1983

Item 1: Grenada

Sitrep by Foreign and Commonwealth Office as at 1530 hours,
23 October, 1983

1. Grenada achieved independence on 7 February 1974 as a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy. HM The Queen remained sovereign, represented by a Governor-General, Sir Paul Scoon, a Grenadian, who is still in office. On 13 March 1979 the opposition New Jewel Movement staged a successful coup during the absence of Prime Minister Sir Eric Gairy. The People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) led by Maurice Bishop suspended the constitution and governed by promulgating a series of 'People's Laws'. Following the revolution the PRG steadily expanded its links with Cuba and, to a lesser extent, with the Soviet Union.

2. Bishop, whose Marxism was tempered by pragmatism, lost a power struggle with hard-line elements led by his deputy, Bernard Coard, and was ousted in a coup on 13 October. On 19 October Bishop and some of his close supporters were shot, probably in cold blood. Nothing has been heard of Coard since the killings. There is no evidence of Cuban or Soviet involvement in these events. Cuba publicly condemned the killings and announced three days of mourning. The Soviet line is to suggest that the US Government is using the safeguarding of its citizens as a pretext for intervention.

3. Grenada is now administered by a 16-member Revolutionary Military Council led by General Hudson Austin, Commander of the 1,000-1,500 strong People's Revolutionary Army, who has the reputation of being a thug but about whom we know little. A 24-hour curfew has been imposed until Monday, 24 October, but the British High Commission Representative, Mr John Kelly, has been given a special pass enabling him to travel around between 6 am - 6 pm.

/4. General

4. General Austin called on the Governor-General on 20 October to tell him that the Military Council was in control and that within 3 days he intended to announce the composition of a broadly based Cabinet on which the military would not be represented. There would not be 'at this stage' a return to constitutional government. Austin added that he would not fill the rôle of Prime Minister. The Governor-General has reported that neither he nor his wife are in danger.

5. There are about 200 British citizens in Grenada, the majority of whom have lived there for some time. The few tourists could probably be moved in one charter flight. Additionally there are apparently 1,000 US citizens, 85 Canadians and a few other nationalities. The Military Council has publicly undertaken to protect the lives and property of foreign nationals and at present neither we nor the Americans have reason to believe that they are in danger.

6. On 22 October the United States diverted a carrier group led by USS Independence carrying 1,900 marines towards Grenada. This was announced publicly as being a signal to the local authorities of US concern for their nationals on the island. There is also a US warship at St Vincent about 70 miles away. HMS Antrim, the Caribbean guardship which was on an informal visit to Cartagena, Columbia, has sailed for Grenada where she is due to arrive (remaining over the horizon) at 2100 (local time) on 24 October. This movement was explained as being a prudent precaution for the protection of our nationals.

7. On 22 October the US National Security Council met under Vice-President George Bush to consider further moves, and again on 23 October. We have received undertakings from the Americans that we shall be consulted if they decided to consider any more active steps.

8. The British Deputy High Commissioner flew from Barbados to Grenada on 22 October on a charter flight with two US colleagues. He is due to return to Barbados on 23 October and

will make an immediate report. Over the telephone he described the capital, St Georges, as being outwardly calm but tense. He hopes to see the Governor-General and Major Cornwell of the Military Council (and concurrently Grenadian Ambassador to Cuba).

Reactions

9. Commonwealth Governments in the Caribbean and particularly members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) have reacted strongly to the events in Grenada. Jamaica has broken off all diplomatic relations and trade links. On 22 October Prime Minister Adams of Barbados told a member of the High Commission that OECS Heads of Government had decided unanimously to put together a multi-national force and to call on other Governments, including the US, France, Venezuela and the UK, to help in restoring peace and order in Grenada. The request to Britain was made orally but formally to our High Commissioner later that day. Letters to HMG and other Governments would follow immediately. Adams emphasised that since action would be taken under Article 8 of the OECS Treaty there would be no need for the Governor-General of Grenada to be involved. CARICOM Heads of Governments are meeting in Port of Spain today (23 October) to decide what joint action they should take against the new regime in Grenada, and will have the OECS proposal before them. Prime Ministers Seaga (Jamaica) and Compton (St Lucia) are known to be pressing hard for joint military action. Reports currently conflict as to whether or not CARICOM Heads of Government will endorse OECS proposals for military action.