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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT : The Importance of Grenada

1. Last week's coup in Grenada could well abort one of today's most striking and important trends: the growing number of left-leaning countries whose leaders are, to one degree or another, making overtures to the West. Indeed, the overthrow and murder of Maurice Bishop -- shortly after his very tentative efforts to establish a dialogue with the US -- will certainly send at least a temporary chill through leaders of those left-leaning governments contemplating or already embarked on this same course.

2. To be sure, we have no direct evidence of Soviet involvement in the Grenada coup. However, sixty-six years of Soviet history make clear that it is standard Kremlin procedure to violently replace an ally with a stooge. Two recent examples:

-- South Yemen -- In 1978, President Salim Rubay' Ali halted PDRY support for Dhofari insurgents in Oman, expanded relations with the Saudis, and began a campaign to open up new sources of financial aid from Arab and Western states. A US envoy was en route to Aden to discuss matters of mutual concern when the South Yemeni leader was overthrown and executed two days later.

-- Afghanistan -- On 23 December 1979, Soviet troops began their invasion of Afghanistan. On the 24th or 25th, according to several reliable sources, Soviet troops stormed the palace and executed Hafizullah Amin. Several days later, once they had the situation under control, they brought in Babrak Karmal -- a factional leader in the PDPA and then Ambassador to Czechoslovakia -- to head the regime.

3. At present there are at least seven left-leaning, third-world countries whose leaders are making tentative overtures to the West.

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-- In South Yemen, President Ali Nasir Muhammad Al-Hasani has been pursuing a more conciliatory policy towards the West over the past year, particularly springing from his desire to lessen the PDRY's isolation and to gain greater Western economic support. He has abandoned support for revolutionary movements in Oman and is about to reestablish normal diplomatic relations with Oman. He has reduced support for the PDRY-supported insurgency against North Yemen (YAR) and has halted propaganda broadcasts against his neighbors. He has indicated some interest in improving relations with the United States and in reducing somewhat the Soviet presence in the PDRY. The Soviets have considerable influence over a variety of Soviet-supported institutions in South Yemen, and also maintain in Moscow Ali Nasir's predecessor and pro-Moscow hard-liner, Abd-al-Fattah Isma'il.

-- In Suriname, Bouterse, apparently realizing the limits to what assistance Cuba can provide -- particularly in the economic realm -- has encouraged the more moderate leftists in his government to pursue Brazilian offers of economic, military, and [REDACTED]. As a result, relations with Cuba have cooled in recent months and the Cubans have expressed concern that their influence is decreasing. One month ago, Bouterse and Prime Minister Alibux reportedly turned aside an effort by the radical, pro-Cuban party to gain power. [REDACTED] good relations with Brazil and the United States were the cornerstone of Suriname's foreign policy.

-- In Mozambique, President Machel is heavily dependent on the Soviets for military assistance -- the key to his relations with Moscow -- but clearly has recognized the Soviets will not provide the economic aid he needs. He has been making efforts in recent years to expand economic ties with the West. Moscow is less concerned with Machel's overtures for assistance than his efforts to seek military aid from the West. Moscow registered its disapproval with Machel for a modest arms agreement concluded with Portugal in 1982. Within the last several weeks, Machel visited several West European capitals in search of economic assistance.

-- In Angola, President Dos Santos' search for Western aid has picked up dramatically in recent years as the UNITA insurgency has gained strength while the price of Angola's main export -- oil -- has declined. Moscow apparently has not threatened Dos Santos, but does pressure him periodically to stay in line for fear that his overtures could lead to a major foreign policy shift away from Moscow. Dos Santos' predecessor, Augusto Neto,

had actively sought Western economic assistance. In 1979, while in Moscow for minor surgery, Neto died on the operating table.

-- In Ethiopia, Mengistu has not sought aid from the West as actively as his counterparts in Mozambique and Angola. Nevertheless, Moscow has issued several warnings to Mengistu to stay clear of Western loans or aid offers.

-- In the Congo, President Sassou-Nguesso tries to maintain a careful balancing act between his search for badly needed Western economic aid and his need to maintain security ties with Moscow that he believes are needed to control potential unrest. All of his predecessors since independence in 1960 have been ousted by coups. Consequently, Sassou-Nguesso approaches the West for aid with great caution. Moscow, however, seems content to allow the West to bear the economic burden in Congo, focusing instead on retaining influence within the military and security apparatus of the Congolese regime.

-- Benin's leaders, long among the most radical in West Africa, have been showing signs of moderation. President Kerekou, who had helped the Soviets and Libyans gain a foothold in the region, is now attempting to loosen these ties by reviving relations with France and the U.S., encouraging private enterprise, and softening the regime's rhetoric. Thus far, the French have been the most responsive to Kerekou. There has not as yet been any indication of Soviet displeasure with Kerekou's efforts, even though the Cuban presence in Benin has been reduced and several Soviet technicians have been sent home at the request of the regime. The Soviets may calculate that the Libyan presence in Benin is sufficiently strong that these moves by Kerekou do not require a strong response. (West African leftists still regularly transit Benin to Libya, often on the weekly Aeroflot flight.)

4. Reports have lately arrived suggesting that this same trend is taking hold much closer to Moscow. [REDACTED] Andropov has cancelled his visit to that country in part because he opposes Bulgarian attempts to adopt a more accommodating foreign policy toward the West. [REDACTED] various departments in the Sofia government have been pressing for improved ties with the West as the only way to meet Bulgarian economic needs and that this policy is supported by Bulgaria's Zhivkov. And we have had any number of reports, many of them conflicting, that key leaders in Albania have decided that the time has come for their country to rejoin the planet Earth. More precisely, we have reports that the recent bizarre shootings in Albania are somehow connected to a policy battle in Tirana over the question of whether to establish some ties with the West for the purpose of economic and technical aid.

5. Under Andropov's rule, Soviet tolerance for dissent has declined markedly both internally and externally. It would not be surprising at all if Moscow was feeling sufficiently unsettled by the trend outlined here to act in Grenada, in no small measure to scare others back into line.

6. All this reflects a contradiction of Soviet policy. On the one hand, we know that Moscow has encouraged its Third-World allies to suck whatever economic aid they can from the West. This, of course, would relieve the aid burden on the Soviets. But at the same time, Moscow feels threatened whenever an ally tries to act. Curiously, there is a very close parallel to this contradiction within the Soviet Union itself. Time and again we see the Soviets flirt with domestic economic reform -- only to crack down hard on those who try to act in accordance with the Kremlin's directives. It seems that Moscow likes the idea of flexibility -- but cannot stomach the loosening of control that inevitably results.

7. The Soviets' policy of scaring Third-World allies back into line is likely to succeed, at least in the short run. Thus we should anticipate a slackening of interest among leaders of these countries in strengthening ties to the West -- or at least an apparent slackening of interest.

8. Several US initiatives would seem prudent. First, we ought to find some way of signaling these leaders that we understand their predicament and won't feel spurned by any sudden downturn in their relations with the West. Second, we should find some channel through which to continue whatever dialogues are underway.

9. Within the intelligence community, we should intensify our analyses of these countries. In particular, we need to answer these questions:

- What opposition is there, if any, to those leaders who favor overtures to the West?
- What connections are there, if any, between the opposition and the Soviets or their surrogates?
- What are the potentials for pro-Soviet coups?
- What can be done to shore up the incumbent leaders?

10. At the same time, we need to give rapid consideration to how the Soviets might retaliate for what in their probable judgment is a very dangerous setback. After all, the Soviets have always believed in the domino theory -- and one of theirs just fell over.


Herbert E. Meyer