

OUTLINE HISTORY OF GRENADA

- Grenada, formerly a British colony, attained internal self government in 1967. From the 1950s, politics had been dominated by Sir Eric Gairy, who combined flamboyant populism and strong-arm tactics with interest in UFOs and unconventional religion.
- On February 7, 1974, Grenada became independent over the objections of opposition parties, who feared Gairy's intentions, and later accused him of winning the elections of 1976 by fraud. The New Jewel Movement (NJM) formed in 1973 and led by Maurice Bishop, became the major opposition party. Its program stressed socialist and nationalistic ideals, and protested economic and social conditions in Grenada and abuses of power of the Gairy regime..
- On March 13, 1979 the New Jewel Movement overthrew the Gairy government in a nearly bloodless coup. Bishop became Prime Minister.
- The new government was initially welcomed by Grenadians and promised to hold early elections and respect basic human rights.
- These promises were never honored. The Bishop regime suspended the country's constitution, refused to call early elections, ridiculed English-style democracy as "Westminister hypocrisy" and turned instead to the Cuban model of "revolutionary democracy," which it tried to implement with Cuban aid.
- Human rights were regularly violated. Habeas corpus was abolished for political detainees. In 1982, there were 95-98 political prisoners. Freedom of the press and political freedom were abolished.
- Bishop established close ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba. In January 1980 Grenada was the only Latin American country other than Cuba to vote against a UN resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
- By 1980, there were approximately 30 Cuban military in Grenada (cf. approx. 1000 found there in Oct. 1983. There were also several hundred "construction workers" ostensibly engaged in helping to build a new airport in the southwestern corner of the island. Much of this construction was military in nature, and many of the "construction workers" military personnel.
- The October 19, 1983 murder of Bishop and most of his Cabinet was part of a power-struggle apparently instigated by Bishop's reluctance to move more quickly to "socialize" the economy.