

Grenadian Consul explains revolution

By Nyewusi Askari

(Editor's Note: This is the last installment of the *Observer's* interview with Grenada's Consul General Burke).

Education: Before the revolution, three students went away on university scholarships in 1978. One of the three was Gairy's daughter. After the revolution, in the first six months, 109 scholarships, 109 people were able to go abroad to study.

Grenada has been able to reduce secondary school fees from \$37 a term to \$12 a term. Next year, Grenada intends to make it entirely free. There has been an increase of the number of scholarships in the secondary schools so that more children can get in. Also, a breakfast and lunch feeding program is being implemented in the schools so that those children who are too poor or are unable to return home for lunch will be able to keep themselves together.

Health: The present government inherited a situation where there were eighteen doctors in the government service, most of them concentrated in the hospitals. In the first six months, Grenada was able to get seventeen new doctors to come to their country. Twelve of these doctors and dentists came from Cuba on loan, and has been an extremely important contribution, that has made an enormous difference in the quality and quantity of health care available. In addition, there exist in the country now, four health centers and a new eye hospital has been opened.

Aid: Caribbean Development Bank has agreed to assist with \$3½ million for schools, building and refurbishing programme, and another \$5 million for the building of feeder roads for farmers. Aid in some abundance from the government of Cuba, particularly at the site of the New International Airport now under construction. Venezuela has provided Grenada with a small but significant cash grant towards the airport. Iraq has contributed \$½ million which will be used on the airport and roads. Algeria, Syria and Libya have combined to pledge a further \$27 million worth of aid.

In addition, Grenada has negotiated a loan of \$19 million over five years from E.E.C. Development Fund for use on projects.

Industry: Presently, Grenada's fishing industry is on the upswing. In one town, Victoria, a fisheries training school is in operation where Grenadian residents are being trained to compete with the best. As Prime Minister Maurice Bishop says, "This is designed to cut back on food imports." The plan is that every two months, to turn out at least thirty-five fishing experts. At the school, thirty-five places are reserved for Grenadians, and the other ten for residents in other Caribbean areas. Presently, the training is made practical by the presence and use of seven trollers. The people of Grenada are delighted at this innovation. It lets them know that they can move away from old-fashioned methods and ideas. The government intends to be as original and creative as possible, and in view of the world food shortage, the fisheries will not only benefit the people of Grenada but the world community, too.



CONSUL JOSEPH K. BURKE

One thing people often forget about Grenada is, it promotes a free and open society. It has nothing to hide. If anyone has any doubt, an invitation is extended. Come to our country and see what we are doing!

The Press: The best way to explain Grenada's position is simple. The government does not accept the meaning of free and responsible press as interpreted by "Torchlight" and many other papers up and down the region. The Torchlight was a right-wing capitalist newspaper opposed to the revolution. Imperialist forces attempted to use the Torchlight to try to assist them in their propaganda in Jamaica. It has been stated any times that the Grenadian government does not concede any right of the press to print or reprint libelous and scurrilous material which they know to be untrue. The Torchlight had done that on many occasions. The government totally rejects minority control of the press. In the words of Prime Minister Bishop: "We don't want any foreign ownership of our newspapers in Grenada, and we don't want no one man ownership of no newspapers in Grenada. We reject that completely. It can only mean that the views that get reflected here are the views of that minority. We do not concede that a free and responsible press, so called, has the right to distort news, to twist it and to falsify it. And there are hundreds of examples that I can quote, personally, out of the 'Torchlight' where that has been done."

Black Americans: When you come to the question of the Blacks and other oppressed minorities in America, obviously Grenada has a particularly close feeling, given her own cultural background and history. There is a very close sense of cultural identity, which the people of Grenada automatically feel for American Blacks and which no doubt is reciprocated by the American Black community.

Grenada's quarrel is with the system of imperialism, not the people of America. It's quarrel is with the American establishment and all its various manifestations - whether it's through the presidency or National Security Council or the State Department or the CIA or the powerful business lobby or the powerful media or whatever. After all, more Americans come to Grenada every year than the entire population of Grenada - 140,000

came by ship last year.

Grenada feels a close affinity to American Blacks and other oppressed minorities, to the working class movement in America, toward progressive forces in America. Grenada is willing to extend its solidarity with them in their struggles, and certainly would hope that they would extend their own solidarity to Grenada in its struggle. It's extremely important that all progressive forces get together and wage a consistent fight against the real enemy.

People's Mandate: Many countries, including America, are asking, When will the government of Grenada seek a mandate from the people through elections. First of all, Grenada couldn't have a better mandate than that of the 13th of March. The very fact that the people themselves by the very fact of taking part in the revolution as they saw it provided a mandate. In terms of the Constitution itself, Gairy had not been running the country under any form of constitution, but rather, had been running the country under the guise of constitutionality while ignoring all the things the constitution commanded.

The present government is willing, to hold elections. It is committed to that. That remains the case. But, the

people is not going to be stuck to any time period...It will depend on the objective situation of the country. Right now, the main concern is to lay the basis for genuine democratization of the Grenadian society, democracy from the grass roots up through the organization of people in the villages.

Overview: For now, Grenada will follow a policy of non-alignment, but this doesn't mean 'neutrality' because the country is committed to certain principles: anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism, anti-racism and anti-colonialism. Grenadian believe that it is important for small countries to be allowed to build their own processes in their own way, free from outside interference, free from the use or threat of force. The Grenadian dignity and pride as a people is beginning to shine. They do not live in anybody's backyard and are not accepting the right in America or anybody else to instruct them on foreign relations, telling them who their friends must be, or telling them what to do. The people of Grenada are going to defend what they have and are building. They believe that the spirit is to the point where they are going to fight to protect the revolution.

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