

the next step

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Hands off Grenada!

- On 25 October a force of 3000 US marines and paratroopers stormed the Caribbean island of Grenada.

- We condemn this barbarous attack by the world's most powerful nation on one of the smallest countries in the world. We salute the heroism of those Grenadians and Cubans who have fought back against overwhelming odds.

- We demand an end to British complicity in the rape of Grenada, whether in the form of diplomatic approval, military back-up, or suggestions of 'a Commonwealth role' in imposing a new form of domination over the people of Grenada.

- We condemn the British Labour Party for beating its breast on behalf of Britain while American

imperialism rampages through the Caribbean. Labour has denounced the USA, not because of America's crimes against Grenada, but because Reagan's initiative insulted the Prime Minister and the Queen.

- We call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Grenada and give our unconditional support to the Grenadian fight for freedom.

TINY GRENADA has lived under the threat of invasion by its neighbourhood superpower for the last four years. The October assault was the culmination of a relentless build-up of pressure towards direct American interference in Central America and the Caribbean. Now Grenada's small and ill-equipped militia has been crushed by thousands of US marines and paratroopers, backed up by naval frigates, fighter aircraft and helicopter gunships and equipped with the latest in murderous military technology. For four years the people of Grenada have been asking — when would the US invasion come? Now the peoples of the whole region are asking — where will Reagan strike next?

The centre cannot hold

The world recession has ravaged Central America and the Caribbean. Poor countries dependent on the export of sugar, coffee, cotton and bananas have been devastated by a decade of declining prices on the world's commodity markets. Central America has been hardest hit — every country suffers mounting trade deficits and debts and burgeoning unemployment and misery. Last year alone the economy of El Salvador shrank by 10 per cent. In the Caribbean the feeble manufacturing sector of Puerto Rico, the bauxite mines of Jamaica and Guyana and the oil wells of Trinidad, as well as agricultural production have all been gravely affected by the world slump. Tourism, which provided foreign exchange and some jobs in the 'sixties and 'seventies, is now in steep decline. Between a quarter and a half of all workers in the region are now out of work. Deepening poverty has generated growing hostility among the masses against the imperialist system that dominates their lives. From Guatemala to Guyana popular resistance has erupted against foreign domination and the local agents who enforce the imperialist order through repression and terror.

The chain of events which led to the US intervention in Grenada began in 1979. In that year two incidents shook the region, threatening the domination of the USA. In March Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement overthrew Grenadian Prime Minister Eric Gairy in a popular coup that ended a corrupt and repressive dictatorship. In July the Sandinista

guerrilla movement finally ousted US-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza whose family had run Nicaragua since the 'thirties. Both changes of government set dangerous precedents for US influence. The New Jewel Movement had staged the first ever radical coup in the English-speaking Caribbean. The Sandinistas had pulled off the first successful popular revolt in Latin America for decades. If these examples were not to inspire imitation throughout the slump-stricken region, the USA had to act fast.

The USA is acutely sensitive to instability on its 'fourth border' to the south. Neither Grenada nor Nicaragua are an economic threat to mighty America — indeed the whole of Central America and the Caribbean is of minor importance in the USA's total trade and investment set-up. Yet the region is of central strategic importance as the gateway to the major economies of Latin America and as an avenue for oil imports from Nigeria and the Middle East. The Caribbean basin was the USA's first imperial domain and small shifts in the local balance of power can have far-reaching consequences at home. The USA has a long history of gunboat diplomacy from its expulsion of Spain in 1898 to its attempt to take Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

Equatorial triangle

In recent years the USA has held back from direct military intrusions into Central America and the Caribbean. Before Grenada the US marines' last outing was to the Dominican Republic in 1965. Through the rest of the 'sixties and 'seventies the USA pursued its interests through dollar-financed client states, diplomatic manoeuvres and CIA intrigue. For a period President Carter posed as a benevolent reformer dispensing aid programmes and homilies on human rights to the USA's favoured dictators. By the late 'seventies even a rapprochement with Cuba seemed possible. But the revolts of 1979 brought the USA's 'softly softly' approach to an abrupt end.

The threat of popular rebellion alarmed the US authorities and their local puppets. The Sandinistas' victory ignited guerrilla war in neighbouring El Salvador which threatened to spread and engulf Honduras and Guatemala. The New Jewel Movement's triumph over Eric Gairy terrified the ruling cliques on the neighbouring

islands. Linking contemporary anti-imperialist movements in Iran with developments in the Caribbean, opposition wall posters in Guyana asked 'Shah gone, Gairy gone, who next?' The Trinidad oil-workers' paper ran a front page headline — 'One "Eric" gone...' which caused some distress to Prime Minister Eric Williams. Within months of Bishop's takeover in Grenada riots swept Dominica and St. Lucia. The USA responded with a combined counter-offensive.

To justify further US intervention, the USA invented the notion of a 'triangle of communist subversion': Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada. The prospect of better relations between the USA and Cuba — and Fidel Castro's hopes of a relaxation of the crippling economic blockade — ended with Carter's 'discovery' of a Soviet battalion on Cuba in 1979. Both Carter and Reagan have accused Cuba of channeling Soviet weapons and supplies through Nicaragua to the guerrilla movement in El Salvador. This year Reagan produced satellite photographs which were supposed to reveal the construction of a military airfield in Grenada for use as a Cuban-Soviet base; it subsequently emerged that the British firm Plessey and a substantial EEC loan were involved in a joint project with a number of Arab countries and Cuba to build a tourist airport. Despite the marginal influence of the Soviet Union in the area and the virtual economic collapse of Cuba, the USA has carefully cultivated the notion that they are engaged in sponsoring a network of bases in Nicaragua and Grenada. The object of raising the bogey of communism in these countries which have little in common and few connections is to legitimise American interference in their affairs.

The turn of the screw

Behind its crusade against communism the USA tightened the economic screw on the radical regimes in Central America and the Caribbean. American officials worked flat out to block loans to Nicaragua and Grenada from the IMF and World Bank. Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative for aid and preferential trade explicitly forbade grants to the 'communist' countries. Financial sanctions have sometimes been used to help the CIA in its increased covert efforts to undermine troublesome regimes. The CIA stepped in during Jamaica's 1980 election campaign

to try and get rid of Prime Minister Michael Manley, who had remained too friendly with Grenada for American tastes. The unrest stirred up by a well-timed IMF austerity programme for Jamaica helped the CIA ensure Manley was defeated and replaced by the pro-Western Edward Seaga. Soon after the Grenada coup the USA encouraged Grenada's hostile neighbour states into the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, which subsequently provided the 'invitation' for the October invasion. Earlier this year American diplomats attempted to have Grenada kicked out of the Caribbean Common Market. The USA has used Canada and Venezuela to assist its financial manoeuvres and manipulated the leaders of Jamaica and Barbados to act as its local agents.

Counter-insurgency and direct intervention provide the sharp end of US strategy. The USA gives money, weapons and specialist training to reactionary forces throughout the region. It has backed genocide in Guatemala, mass terror in El Salvador and the Contra counter-revolutionary guerrillas in Nicaragua. This month 4000 US troops are practising a full scale invasion of Central America in Honduras, the latest in a series of similar exercises. The Grenadian invasion has had a number of dress rehearsals. In 1980 1800 US marines staged a mock landing at the Guantanamo Bay base in Cuba. In August 1981 120 000 US and NATO troops, 250 ships and 1000 aircraft participated in an exercise involving the invasion of two imaginary Caribbean islands with the object of seizing power and installing a pro-US government. The fictitious islands were named 'Amber' and 'Amberdine' — a grim warning of things to come for Grenada and its neighbours, the Grenadines.

Imperialism out!

The invasion of Grenada takes the USA a bloody step further into a struggle to assert its power over the masses of Central America and the Caribbean. The USA's careful ideological, political and military preparations indicate its determination to enforce the imperialist order whatever the cost. The continuing popular resistance to US terror, direct and indirect, in Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador and throughout the region shows the resilience of the forces fighting American barbarism. We must not let them be defeated.