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 batallion on Cuba in 1979. Both Carter and Reagan have accused Cuba of channelling 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.

Grenada under imperialism

From British colony... To American colony

THE USA IS NOT the first imperial power to send gunboats to Grenada. In 1796 an English fleet under General Abercromby invaded Grenada with a force of 2000 troops and savagely crushed a slave rebellion led by Julien Fedon. In the resulting devastation a quarter of the island's slave population perished. After two centuries of British rule Grenada became 'independent' in 1974. Although its Prime Minister Eric Gairy was a British creation and the island remained a member of the Commonwealth, Grenada came increasingly under American influence.

Maurice Bishop's seizure of power in 1979 alarmed the USA. Bishop's New Jewel Movement mobilised Grenada's workers and peasants to back up the new Government's more independent stand against foreign domination. Washington feared the spread of Grenada's example and began to draw up the invasion plans which it finally put into action on 25 October. Reagan and the right have labelled Grenada a communist base, linked to Cuba and the Soviet Union and bent on subversion throughout the region. At the same time, many Western radicals have celebrated Bishop's Peoples Revolutionary Government as a socialist model of Third World development. Both have distorted the reality of Grenada under Bishop, the right to justify imperialist interference, the left as an excuse for its own failure to challenge imperialism at home.

Slave state

The British ran Grenada from 1762 when they seized it from the French. At first it exported sugar from plantations based on slave labour. After slavery ceased to be profitable, Grenada became an impoverished colony where black and coloured sharecroppers and smallholders produced cocoa, nutmeg and other spices. Later bananas became another key cash crop. The British firm Geest still retains a monopoly over the Grenada banana trade that it established in the 'fifties. (See EPICA, *Grenada, the peaceful revolution*). Although Grenada has built up a small commercial sector, linked to tourism and services, manufacturing has not developed significantly. In 1977 the largest plant on the island was a brewery employing 76 workers. For many Grenadians emigration, to the neighbouring islands and beyond, has long been the only alternative to unemployment or under-employment at home.

The British authorities selected and house-trained Eric Gairy to run Grenada after he led a general strike in 1951. Gairy's trade union became an arm of the colonial administration for 20 years before Britain finally withdrew. In the end Britain imposed Gairy rather than face a more radical alternative. Paradoxically, the British strategy provoked strikes and bloody demonstrations *against* independence on the terms offered – i.e. independence under Gairy. The anti-Gairy movement was led by the 'committee of 22' and brought together virtually every section of Grenadian society. It included the Rotary Club and the Churches and the newly-formed New Jewel (Joint Endeavour for Welfare, Education and Liberation) Movement of young middle class intellectuals. British cash and American-inspired strike-breaking succeeded in installing Gairy in February 1974.

Gairy was popular in Washington and London, but widely detested in Grenada. Through a combination of patronage, corruption and the brutality of his notorious 'mongoose gang' of criminal thugs he kept the island secure for imperialism. Even Grenada's plantation owners and businessmen were outraged by Gairy's interference in their agricultural marketing boards and his economic mismanagement. The NJM confined its criticisms of Gairy to his incompetence, corruption, brutality – and his eccentric preoccupations with flying saucers and wearing badges. As class-wide opposition to Gairy gathered strength in the late 'seventies his Government became increasingly isolated. In March 1979 he left the country to attend a session of the United Nations' 'outer space legal subcommittee'. It took a small group of armed NJM activists only half an hour to overpower Gairy's armed forces. That day the Peoples Revolutionary Government was proclaimed.

Building alliances

The Peoples Revolutionary Government of Grenada was something of a puzzle to Western commentators. Its pragmatic policies continually contradicted its radical rhetoric. In February of this year, the Economist Intelligence Unit's *World Outlook* observed that 'Mr Bishop of Grenada has emphasised that his government wishes to maintain links with its Caricom partners, Mexico and Venezuela and the EEC, in spite of its links with Cuba, Nicaragua, the USSR and Eastern Europe'. On the eve of the US invasion the *Sunday Times* was still bemused: 'Grenada, under Bishop, was a revolutionary state with close ties to Cuba, East Germany and the Soviet Union. But he had equally strong ties with the EEC, Canada and good standing with the IMF'. The explanation for this paradox lies in the subordination of Grenada to the imperialist system.

The New Jewel Movement regime sought to pursue a less subservient course in the world than that followed by Gairy. To strengthen his bargaining position with the USA and Britain, Bishop had to rally the workers and the youth of Grenada behind his Government – and he had to seek friends abroad who would back his independent stand. Hence a movement, whose founding programme in 1973 made no mention of the word 'socialism', adopted the anti-imperialist and even anti-capitalist vocabulary of the Peoples Revolutionary Government. At the same time, the New Jewel Movement never moved away from its middle class base and its all-class approach. Its aim was to strengthen the existing Grenadian economy – a capitalist economy totally dominated by imperialism. Hence the pragmatic approach of Bishop and his ministers to local businessmen and foreign investors and bankers. The New Jewel Movement mobilised the workers, the peasants and the youth to back its limited challenge to imperialist control. But the US government recognised in these forces a mortal threat to its power throughout the region that it had to suppress.

The Bishop Government reformed the taxation system, rooted out much of the graft and corruption of the Gairy years and introduced a bold programme of welfare reforms. In a short period of time it improved working conditions and workers' living standards. It embarked on a programme of 'grassroots democracy' seeking to popularise the Government's policies by means of mass consultation exercises. Disaffected youth and Rastafarians were drafted into the Peoples Revolutionary Army. But the Government made no moves to expropriate Grenada's capitalists.

Even the limited proposals for nationalisation of banks, companies and hotels in the NJM's 1973 programme were quietly shelved. Shortly after the NJM takeover in 1979 Bishop's deputy Bernard Coard explained the new Government's priorities as 'not the building of socialism, quite frankly, but simply trying to get the economy, which has been totally shattered by Gairy, back on its feet' (*Race and Class* No 2, 1979). The Chamber of Commerce welcomed the new Government as 'a glorious opportunity for Grenada to build something new and different in the Caribbean' (quoted in Ambursley and Cohen, *Crisis in the Caribbean*). For all its socialist rhetoric the Peoples Revolutionary Government was explicit in its commitment to the capitalist economy. As *The Times* recently observed of Coard, he is 'considered an ardent Marxist-Leninist, but his economic pronouncements expressed a commitment to maintaining a healthy private sector in a mixed economy'.

The NJM Government pursued a similar approach to international affairs. Bishop proclaimed that Grenada was in 'nobody's backyard' and identified himself with the 'non-aligned' bloc of Third World countries. But he remained receptive to foreign investors in Grenada:

> 'We are convinced that there are many civilised investors with sympathy for our point of view, who are not greedy and will be prepared to negotiate suitable terms with us. We are always happy to do business with such people.' (Interview in *West Indian Digest*, March 1980)

In 1981 the NJM joined the Socialist International, a loose federation of reformist parties, dominated by the big European socialist movements. Bishop's rationale was pragmatic: the organisation, he said, 'offers our party one more opportunity of diversifying our relations with political forces around the world, with the governments of various countries' (Interview in *World Marxist Review*, April 1982). Bishop was more concerned with winning EEC aid than with gestures of socialist internationalism. Earlier this year Bishop spent a fruitless week in Washington attempting to overcome US hostility and win aid and investment.

Persistent American and British sanctions against the Bishop Government pushed it into forming closer ties with Cuba, the Soviet Union and the Arab world. Several radical Arab regimes helped to finance Grenada's 20-year project to build a decent tourist airport. The Soviet Union signed a few minor trade deals and sent experts from the Soviet planning ministry Gosplan to advise NJM economists – a dubious contribution given their performance at home. Cuba provided construction workers and some military aid. The limitations of Soviet and Cuban military involvement in Grenada became apparent during the US invasion. While Cuban workers fought heroically to defend Grenada, the Cuban Government had neither the resources nor the military capability to assist them. A few Soviet rifles and bullets were the best 'evidence' the USA could subsequently produce for Reagan's paranoid fantasy about a base for communist subversion.

Grenada was neither a communist nor a Soviet-Cuban base. It was a relatively weak Third World country trying to achieve a modest degree of capitalist development in the teeth of the world recession. It seems that the pressures resulting from Grenada's isolation led to the coup that ousted Bishop and provided the immediate pretext for the invasion. While the course of events remains obscure one thing is clear: there was no substantial political difference between Bishop and Coard who apparently led the faction that ousted him. In 1979 Coard declared that 'with the revolution has come the end to the forcible seizure of people's property'.

Unconditional support

While Reagan deludes himself with communist conspiracies many British radicals view the NJM Government as part of the unfolding of 'a revolutionary process' in the Third World. This ignores the NJM's own statements of its limited objectives. The Bishop regime set out to stabilise capitalism in Grenada, not to build socialism. Its socialist rhetoric aimed to win popular approval (and raise productivity) at home and influence rich (or at least richer) friends abroad. Many socialists in Britain prefer to cheer on 'progressive forces' in the Third World rather than take on the reactionary forces at home that keep countries like Grenada in subjection.

The Revolutionary Communist Party does not have to pretend that Maurice Bishop was a Lenin to give our unequivocal support to his Government and his people against American and British barbarism. We give unconditional backing to any country dominated by imperialism irrespective of the political complexion of its leaders. We supported General Galtieri of Argentina against Britain and we have no hesitation in backing Bishop or Coard against the USA. Whatever the failings of the NJM and whatever the outcome of the power struggle within its leadership, we can be sure that the future of the people of Grenada will be a hundred times worse under direct American, British – or Canadian – imperialist domination. The forces unleashed by the New Jewel revolution terrified the Reagan regime in the USA – and they can still liberate Grenada. We must do what we can to help them here in Britain.

Mick Hume

Britain and the Grenada invasion

Tories back America Labour backs Britain

'ON A MATTER of this kind', Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe told Parliament on the day of the US invasion of Grenada, 'it is still possible for more than one view to be held'. What Howe meant was that the British Government was torn between its loyalty to the NATO alliance and its particular concern to preserve Britain's national interests. The Tories squirmed under the burden of this dilemma, but stayed faithful to their American allies. For the Labour Party there was no dilemma – it always puts Britain first. Labour castigated the Tories for subordinating Britain to the USA and stridently asserted the independent role of British imperialism.

Margaret Thatcher only learned of the planned assault from her good friend Ronald Reagan when the marines were virtually on the beaches of Grenada. The British Government was embarrassed at the USA's invasion of a member of the Commonwealth and offended by the lack of consultation from Washington. After Thatcher's Falklands glory, Grenada was a blow to British prestige. As the *Financial Times* commented, it revealed 'the limits not only of British power, but of British influence'. Yet what more could Britain expect? The Tories' loyal *Daily Telegraph* observed in an editorial entitled 'Embarrassing' that 'after our almost complete withdrawal from the region we have no right to expect to influence events in the Caribbean'. It concluded that it was 'inevitable and on the whole desirable that the US should have filled the vacuum which we left'. This was the consensus of the British establishment. Behind a facade of affronted imperial dignity, it gave its approval to US militarism in the Caribbean, where Britain once ruled supreme.

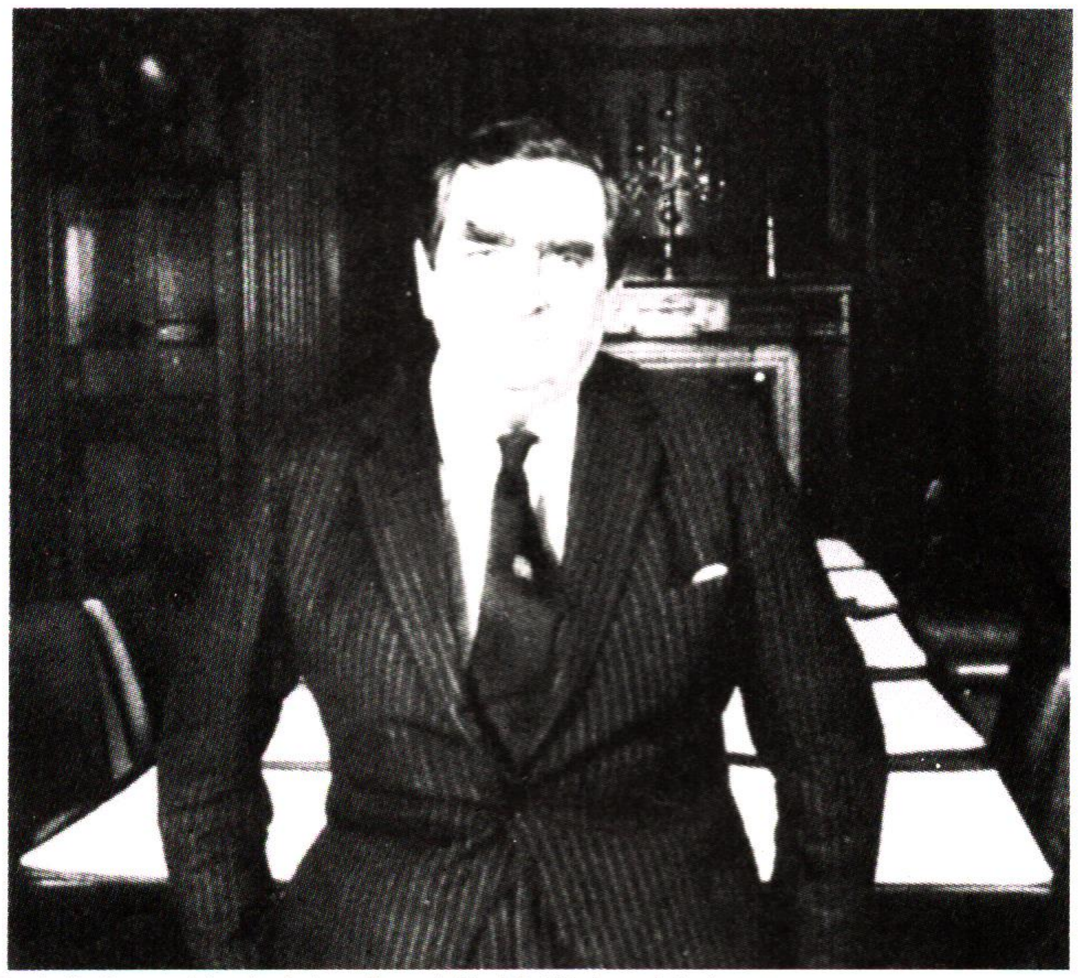
The British ruling class has, on the whole, come to terms with playing second fiddle to the USA on the world stage. Since the Second World War declining Britain has come to rely more and more on its superpower ally. The USA acts as policeman in parts of the world where the sun has set on the Empire, but where Britain retains vital trade links and investments. Indeed *The Times* considered it reassuring for Britain that 'the USA has shown itself willing to use force'; this display of military might 'may provide a useful salutory warning in some quarters'. Thatcher was stung by critics of her support for Reagan over Grenada into stating the broader rationale for her Government's allegiance to the USA:

> 'We stand by the United States and we continue to do so in the larger alliance. The United States is the final guarantor of freedom in Europe.'

Thatcher's backing for Reagan's invasion indicates her recognition of the USA's role as the ultimate guarantor of imperialist interests world-wide.

Labour and imperialism

Britain's deference to American power is reflected in its complicity in the campaign against Grenada. While Grenada has remained in the Commonwealth, Britain has cooperated in economic sanctions against the Bishop regime, cutting aid from £300000 in 1979-80 to £57000 in 1982-83. The British Government collaborated with the USA in setting up the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and backed the aim of fostering a 'regional defence force'. Lord Carrington visited the area in 1980 and approved the supply of British weapons and British military advisors to Barbados and St. Vincent, the two islands closest to Grenada. In October the OECS provided the fig leaf of an 'invitation' to the US marines and Barbados provided a local base. The British destroyer HMS Antrim observed the operation from a few miles away, off the Colombian Coast. The blood of Grenada is on British as much as American hands.



Denis Healey: uniting the Labour Party behind British imperialist interests

Britain may still have a role to play in the subjugation of Grenada. Now that America's vastly superior firepower has attacked the popular movement, some British politicians and newspapers are calling for a Commonwealth 'peacekeeping' force to be drafted in to pick up the pieces. Such a force could help enforce a new system of government more acceptable to the imperialist powers after the carnage of October. Whether backed by American, Commonwealth or United Nations troops, the British authorities have put forward Governor-General Sir Paul Scoon, the last vestige of the Empire, to do his best in establishing a new form of imperialist domination over the people of Grenada. Britain may be a junior partner in the rape of Grenada, but its commitment cannot be questioned.

While the dominant counsels of the British state swallowed their wounded patriotic pride and fell in behind Reagan, the Labour Party took up the cause of imperial Britain. Labour in Parliament condemned the US invasion of Grenada, not because it was an assault on the rights and freedoms of the Grenadian people, but because it was an insult to Britain. While American marines trampled through Grenada, Labour foreign affairs spokesman Denis Healey complained that 'the British people will not relish the spectacle of the British Prime Minister allowing President Reagan to walk all over her'. This seems a dubious proposition. But Healey had an even greater concern than the dignity of the Prime Minister. He was outraged that 'a foreign state' had invaded a Commonwealth country 'subject to Her Majesty the Queen', and that the British Government had only been informed as the invasion was taking place. Healey was particularly aggrieved that Reagan had not observed constitutional proprieties regarding the Queen's stooge in Grenada, Sir Paul Scoon. He accused Thatcher of a lack of 'grit', 'fibre' and 'resolution' in defending Britain's honour and of 'failing in her duty to the Commonwealth and failing in her duty to the Palace'. While Thatcher proclaimed an uneasy loyalty to her NATO ally, Healey banged the drum for Britain, the Commonwealth, Her Majesty the Queen, and her esteemed Governor-General of Grenada.

Healey's performance in the House of Commons galvanised the parliamentary Labour Party in admiration. In his grasp of the issues and the harshness of his invective he far outshone both the new party leader Neil Kinnock and his deputy Roy Hattersley. Healey has been meddling in Latin American and Caribbean politics through Labour's international connections for the past 30 years. As a sort of superior British secret service agent, he knows many of the local rulers personally and is well-placed to identify British interests. His display of chauvinist rhetoric over the US invasion was unequalled in Parliament since Michael Foot urged Thatcher to despatch the Falklands Task Force 18 months ago. Now, as then, the left was rendered speechless by the patriotic oratory of the party leadership. Backbench newcomer Jeremy Corbyn could only feebly echo Healey by describing Thatcher's accommodation to the USA as 'pathetic and demeaning'. The Labour Party can still roar like a British lion to condemn Thatcher as Reagan's obedient poodle.

Labour's strident anti-Americanism found another ally in the House of Commons in right-wing Unionist MP Enoch Powell. In recent months Powell has upbraided Labour left MPs who have retreated from the virulent hostility to the EEC for which he once respected them. But Labour's defence of British sovereignty over the Grenada issue restored Powell's faith in the chauvinist commitment of the Labour Party. His asssertion that if the USA could not be trusted over Grenada, then it could not be trusted over the control of cruise missiles in Britain, was applauded to the echo by the Labour left. According to Powell the 'United Kingdom' had become 'something horribly resembling a satellite of the United States'; he called upon the British Government to 'pursue alone its duty to United Kingdom interests'. There is little to choose between Labour's response to the Grenada invasion and Powell's xenophobic nationalism.

Outside Parliament Tony Benn has long been a champion of an independent foreign policy for Britain. Only days before the US invasion, he devoted his regular *Guardian* column to a discussion of Britain's alliances and weapons. His theme was 'Britain's need to disengage itself from its subordination to the US'. While Powell moved from Grenada to the missiles, Benn moved from Cruise to the Caribbean. For him, a few days later, the USA's action raised the question of 'Britain's future as a self-governing country enjoying the right to determine its own foreign and defence policy'. Benn's alternative is for Britain 'to move towards a more non-aligned position' which , he reckons, 'might allow us to play a more constructive role with others, in the search for world peace, development and human rights, and in the process, restore self-government to Britain itself'. This argument truly demeans the labour movement – it is a grotesque apology for British imperialism.

End British barbarism!

When Britain was fully self-governing, independent and non-aligned it had an Empire which stretched around the earth. Britain's 'constructive role' was to rob and rape and murder in every corner of every continent. The Caribbean provides a classic example: genocide, slavery, superexploitation, repression, piracy, corruption, wars – for the best part of three centuries. And, contrary to the prejudices of many of Benn's admirers, British imperialism is not confined to history. What contribution to 'world peace' did the Falklands Task Force make? What sort of 'development' has Britain fostered in the plantations of Sri Lanka, the mines of South Africa or the banana groves of Grenada – in all of which British capitalists still squeeze the sweat and blood out of impoverished workers? And what concern has Britain for the 'human rights' of millions who live in terror under British-backed regimes around the world?

Britain is a powerful and rapacious imperialist power. It has been superceded by the USA and others, but it retains major holdings overseas and one of the biggest armed forces in the world to help sustain them. Britain is nowhere a force for peace and progress: the only positive contribution it can make is to get off the backs of the peoples of the Third World and stop interfering in their affairs. The Labour Party wants to take advantage of American barbarism in Grenada to promote the cause of Britain's independent imperialist interests. What is even worse, it seeks to portray vicious British imperialism as a progressive force, disguising its savage practice with fine phrases about 'peace', 'development' and 'human rights'.

The British labour movement has no interest in supporting Britain's independent role as an imperialist power. The Commonwealth is nothing more than Britain's slice of the Third World, and the Queen, the figurehead of British imperialism. These are symbols of oppression and exploitation around the world, not least in the Caribbean. The Grenadian War calls for labour movement opposition to US militarism. It equally demands that British workers act to stop British complicity with the USA and that they repudiate Labour's drive to corrupt their solidarity with Grenada into support for flagging British imperialism.

Mike Freeman

the next step

Stop the warmongers!

THE UNITED STATES' invasion of Grenada is its first act of direct military interference in the affairs of another country since the Vietnam War. It has provoked the biggest row within the Western alliance since Britain's occupation of the Suez Canal in 1956. The Grenada conflict opens a new phase in the drive towards World War Three.

President Reagan ordered his marines into Grenada less than a week after 250 American soldiers were blown to pieces in Lebanon, on the other side of the world. The Beirut bombing dramatically summed up the plight of US foreign policy. Proclaiming a global crusade against communism, US forces shelled the Chouf mountains from the Eastern Mediterranean and occupied Beirut under the guise of a 'multinational peace-keeping force'. But neither the Druze villagers of the Chouf, nor the Shiite Moslems who claimed responsibility for the audacious bomb attack in Beirut are communists, or backed by the Soviet Union. While Reagan's justifications for US militarism appeared increasingly unconvincing, American troops began to pay the price for US interference in the Middle East morass.

As 1983 drew to a close the USA abroad looked a sorry sight. Ever since the Ayatollah Khomeini humiliated President Carter over the Iranian hostage crisis in 1980 nothing seemed to go right. America's protracted attempts to reconcile Israel and the Arabs had come to nothing. It had been embarrassed by Britain over the Malvinas and by France over Chad. The USA's insistence on installing a new generation of missiles in Europe had provoked massive anti-American demonstrations in virtually every EEC country. And the US drive to exert its influence in Central America had succeeded only in widening the sphere of conflict from Nicaragua to El Salvador to Honduras and Guatemala and even to Costa Rica. Reagan desperately needed a result somewhere, anywhere, to show the world that the USA still ruled. As *The Times* commented the day after the Grenada invasion, 'many will feel that Mr Reagan was unduly influenced by the frustration his administration has felt at being unable to win any visible victories in its struggle against communism'. Where better than a tiny island within a secure US sphere of influence for America to display its military might?

Recession and rearmament

The chaos wrought by the world recession draws the armies of the West towards intervention in the Third World. Twenty years ago the Western powers could give up their colonies and, while the world economy expanded, still maintain their grip over Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even during the past decade of deepening crisis the West could sustain the imperialist order through local proxies and IMF directives. But that was before the Shah of Iran fell and Mexico and Brazil announced their inability to repay their massive debts. The Newly Industrialising Countries are now racked by unemployment and austerity, mass protests and brutal repression. From Santiago in Chile to Manila in the Phillipines the old order is crumbling fast. In the more backward capitalist countries from El Salvador, through Chad to Pakistan, recession and climatic disasters are combining to push millions towards starvation. Growing popular resistance meets savage terror from Western-backed regimes. Today the imperialist powers are obliged to reassert control by direct military interference.

Conflict in NATO: take sides against imperialism, not with Europe against America!

To safeguard their trade and investments against the rising wrath of the Third World all the Western powers are rearming fast. The USA leads the way – the biggest share of the increased expenditure in its 1984 defence budget is devoted to strengthening conventional army, navy and air forces. The centrepiece of the USA's global strategy is the Rapid Deployment Force, now 400 000-strong with new bases in Oman, Somalia, Kenya and Egypt from which to launch crack troops into any part of the Middle East. In 1980 President Carter proclaimed the doctrine on which the RDF was based:

> 'Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the US. It will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.'

Reagan has since doubled the size of the RDF and given it a new command authority. He has boosted the US Special Forces – the infamous Green Berets of Vietnam notoriety – and added three new aircraft carriers to the US fleet.

Britain too has joined the military build-up. Fresh from its Falklands' triumphs, the Navy has been spared threatened cuts and its fleet has been strengthened. The RAF's capacity for long range operations has been significantly extended by its acquisition of six Tristar aeroplanes from Lockheed. The revitalised Spearhead Batallion of 2000 men stands in readiness at Lyneham. The French – controversial suppliers of Exocets to Argentina and super Etendard fighters to Iraq – have assembled a formidable conventional force alongside their nuclear 'force de frappe'.

The carve up

In recent months, the NATO allies have shown that they are prepared to use their military hardware to guarantee their interests in the Third World. Britain lashed out at Argentina; France sent paratroopers into Chad and the Allies have linked arms to try to crush resistance to their puppet regime in Lebanon. Up to now the Western powers have marched more or less together in the drive to suppress the masses of the Third World. But conflicts have simmered beneath the surface. Both the USA and the European powers had their reservations about Britain's South Atlantic adventure. Mitterand and Reagan fell out over Chad and again over Lebanon.

The greatest strife, however, has been over the broader problems of the Middle East and Central America. In both regions the European powers only grudgingly respect US hegemony and increasingly resent being squeezed out of the action. The EEC's recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation since 1980 and America's continuing close links with Israel indicate radically divergent approaches to the central conflict of the Middle East. Reagan has condemned the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua and the FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador as agents of Moscow and Havana. Meanwhile France has sold arms to the Sandinistas and given recognition to the El Salvador guerrillas.

Grenada has brought these conflicts right out into the open. Even before Reagan's latest action, the French Government resented US attempts to block EEC aid to Grenada. In 1981 foreign minister Claude Cheysson curtly dismissed US interference in talks over loans for Grenada's tourist airport:

> 'What America thinks is of no importance. Let us forget about the Americans. This is a decision for the EEC and Grenada.'

When the US marines invaded, Mitterand's Government declared its 'unequivocal condemnation'. More significantly, the West German Government was scarcely less critical, calling for 'the return of sovereignty and the restoration of human rights'. Every other European power but Britain took a similarly anti-US line.

Even in Britain there were influential voices less prepared to forgive the Americans than were the Tories. The liberal wing of the establishment was mortified at the way Britain's senior ministers had been humiliated. *The Guardian* was bitter:

> 'Our views – when offered – were of no account. Our expertise in the Caribbean was utterly disregarded.'

And twisted:

> 'America's friends over many decades – like this newspaper – can only watch in anguish.'

The *New Statesman*, outraged by the militaristic rhetoric of US Government officials, observed that 'if such attitudes continue to dominate American foreign policy, the post-war Western alliance will disintegrate'. 'An end to the special relationship', declared the *Financial Times*. The liberal voice of British business wanted a more independent foreign policy which could give Britain greater weight in its dealings with over-weening America. It looked towards Europe:

> 'The more the US indulges in ill-considered unilateral actions the more essential it is that the European allies should concert their policies.'

Grenada has intensified the economic rivalries and political conflicts that now threaten to tear NATO apart.

The notion of an independent Britain aligned with Europe against the USA remains the preserve of exasperated liberals. Up to now the USA has succeeded in rallying not only Britain, but most of Europe to its side in opposition to the Soviet Union. This is why the crusade against communism is so vital to the USA in its dealings with both Europe and the Third World. The USA compensates for its declining economic power by insisting on the primacy of the political and military relationships it first imposed on the world in the Cold War against the Soviet Union in the 'forties. The arrival of US cruise and Pershing missiles in Britain and Germany confirms Reagan's success in holding NATO together by raising once again the spectre of a Soviet invasion of Europe. As the *Financial Times* conceded after its outburst of anti-American sentiment, 'on the central issue of East-West relations the European members of NATO have no alternative but to cleave to their most indispensable security guarantee, the alliance with the United States'. The fact that Reagan can convince not only millions of Americans, but also millions of Europeans of the absurd proposition that Grenada was a Cuban-Soviet base indicates the usefulness of this powerful weapon.

War and the RCP

The liberal dream of an independent Britain in an anti-American alliance with Europe is the guiding vision of radical and anti-war circles in Britain. Thus a group of left-wing Labour MPs is backing the scheme for 'peace' in Central America promoted by the EEC and fronted by the Contadora group of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama. But in reality this is a scheme for 'peace' in the region on the terms of Europe rather than on the terms of the USA. The masses of the region, who have long experience of exploitation at the hands of European as well as American imperialists, will find little to choose between the rival bands of oppressors. A Commonwealth (British) or EEC peace in Grenada would be just as reactionary as any American or United Nations solution. Imperialist domination is imperialist domination, whatever the accent of the ruler.

In the same week as the Shiites of Beirut launched their bomb attack on the US marines and the marines launched their invasion of Grenada, 250 000 people marched in London against the threat of a future nuclear war in Europe. The Revolutionary Communist Party demonstrated with a banner which read: 'If you want peace – fight against war'. It listed the wars we have actively campaigned against – in the Malvinas, Chad, Lebanon, and, most importantly, the war in Ireland. Our fight begins at home in a challenge to British imperialism. We do not back British or European imperialism in preference to US imperialism. We denounce Britain's complicity with the USA over Grenada, its open partnership with the USA in Lebanon and its independent barbarism in the Malvinas and in Ireland.

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