

Bankers Trust Co.
Economics Division
280 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017

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GRENADA:
THE NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT

William H. Overholt
Vice President
Head, Political Assessment Group

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THE NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT

The New Jewel movement in Grenada is essentially a personal following of Maurice Bishop rather than an established institution. Bishop is a good friend of Fidel Castro and of Hugh Small, a leading Jamaican radical under Michael Manley. Bishop is intellectually impressive and socially suave. The movement is led by idealistic sons of the well-to-do. Bishop himself is a son of one of the largest landowning families.

The New Jewel government has undertaken some social reform and has been less corrupt than its predecessor. The predecessor was an extremely corrupt, very dictatorial, pro-Western regime. The New Jewel movement ideology consists of serious radicalism but not hardline Marxism-Leninism. The social reforms have not included nationalization of most of the economy. On the other hand, there is no evidence whatsoever of a commitment to democratic procedures. There have been no elections and none are planned. Some U.S. supporters of the movement argue that there are democratic values, but that these can be expressed in such a small country through consensual procedures rather than through formal elections; however, given the social divisions, this argument seems hard to sustain. Bishop has created a people's militia, and has armed two hundred Ras Tafarians. He has closed down one newspaper, apparently for political reasons. Grenada has a few political prisoners, but no massive repression, no torture, no killings. The objective record indicates that the New Jewel movement is not totalitarian and that it is not democratic. Those relatively favorable to the movement describe it as a group of romantic revolutionaries; those who dislike it describe it as a group of radical young thugs.

In foreign policy, Grenada is extremely close to the Cubans. Its United Nations votes line up virtually 100% of the time with those of the Cubans. Grenada was the only Caribbean country to vote in favor of the Russians on Afghanistan. The Cubans are building Grenada a huge international airport. The right wing in the United States tends to argue that this airport will be used as a Cuban base, but Grenada does in fact need an airport for domestic economic reasons; probably this debate can only be settled by waiting to see what happens.

The U.S. Ambassador has official instructions not to deal with the New Jewel movement. The U.S. has refused to accredit Grenada's Ambassador, in part because she was involved in illegal gunrunning. U.S. diplomatic behavior toward Grenada has not been fully professional or appropriate. U.S. Ambassador Ortiz behaved in an undiplomatic and threatening manner and was in consequence removed and replaced by Sally Shelton. According to Washington sources Ambassador Shelton gained her original State Department appointment because she was the mistress of Senator Lloyd Bentsen and is regarded with disdain by a good many professional foreign service officers, although she also has Carter Administration defenders.

POTENTIAL SOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT GRENADA

- 1) Latin America Reports
- 2) Prof. Franklin Knight, History Department, Johns Hopkins University,
Baltimore, Md., (301) 338-8000
Prof. Knight went to school with some New Jewel leaders. Prof. Knight's
own position is liberal-moderate left, with a tendency to explain away all
the problems of the Caribbean as caused by environmental conditions and
nasty big power interventions.
- 3) Terry Kleinkopf, Grenada Specialist, Department of State
- 4) Roberta Salper, formerly of the Institute for Policy Studies, a radical
think-tank.