

# Statement on Grenada by Robert ‘Bobby’ Clarke

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**October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

An open response to

1. Statements made by [Bernard Coard](#) on release from Prison in Grenada in September 2009
2. [Resonances of Revolution](#) by Rupert Roopnarine, and
3. Statements by the Cuban Government

## **Background**

I have been involved with Maurice Bishop, Unison Whiteman and Kenrick Radix, the leaders of the struggle in Grenada from the Nurses Trial from 1970. In 1973, I arrived at Pearls Airport in Grenada to represent Maurice Bishop before the Duffus Commission but was not allowed to enter Grenada and was placed on a plane and told to leave. I was then banned from Grenada.

In 1976, the New Jewel Movement entered the parliamentary political struggle and lost the Election after. The Election was rigged by Eric Gairy (thousands of young MJM voters were left off the Voting List). These thousands were put back on to the Voting List through Maurice Bishop’s intervention. The initial returns showed the MJM winning seats but at the end of the counting of the votes, Gairy had won a great number of seats. He had re-rigged the Election.

This is to put in retrospect the happenings of 1979.

## Events of 1979-1983

Two days before the take-over of 13<sup>th</sup> March, 1979 (the late) young Noel Layne of the NJM broke out of a Police Station in Parade, St. Georges and came to my home in Barbados. We had discussions and Noel returned to Grenada to take part in the revolution.

I arrived in Grenada on the 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1979 as one of the advisors to Maurice Bishop. The other advisors were Allan Alexander and Frank Solomon both of Trinidad & Tobago, Miles Fitzpatrick of Guyana, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent. We only met with Maurice Bishop, Kenrick Radix and Unison Whiteman. It was clearly understood at that time that the late Unison Whiteman was the second person in the Government after Maurice Bishop.

Around mid-1979, Unison Whiteman left Grenada for Jamaica to recruit Nurses for Grenada and to try to obtain medical supplies for the Grenadian Hospital. At that time, Maurice Bishop also left Grenada for a short period.

During the period when Unison Whiteman and Maurice Bishop were out of Grenada, Phyllis Coard made a statement on Radio Free Grenada advertising a meeting to be addressed in her words "*by Bernard Coard the Minister of Finance*"...and she added in "*and Deputy Prime Minister*".

Bernard Coard was not made Deputy Prime Minister by Maurice Bishop's Government but by his wife, Phyllis Coard.

From that date, the revolution was doomed.

Maurice Bishop had failed to deal with the position of Unison Whiteman and the Deputy Prime Minister-ship and this was a fault caused by his gentleness.

Around the month of July 1979, I returned to Barbados on Friday to spend the weekend. On that same Friday, Hutson Austin telephoned my brother, the late Dr.

Reginald Clarke and informed him to get in touch with me immediately because Maurice wanted me to return to Grenada. I returned to Grenada the following day with a friend and we were taken to a safe-house where we met Maurice Bishop and a friend of his. After a while, Maurice Bishop said to me, *“Bobby what are we going to do about Bernard Coard?”*

There is a background to Bernard Coard which I must state here.

In the early 70's, Bernard Coard had returned to Grenada from Jamaica and became a part of the Party. He had established a small, young group which he tutored in Stalinism and Lennism. Among that small group was:

1. Liam James (Owuso) (who became a member of the Central Committee)
2. Ewart Layne (who became a General of the Army and despatched the troops to Fort Rupert to execute Maurice Bishop and the others)
3. Cecil Prime (who became a Captain of the Army and was present at Fort Rupert for the executions)
4. Lester Redhead (who became a Captain of the Army and was also present at Fort Rupert for the executions)
5. John Ventour (who became a Captain of the Army)

After the revolution on the March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1979, the group was supposed to have been disbanded but continued to act secretly under the tutelage of Bernard Coard.

At the meeting with Maurice Bishop, we discussed calling a meeting of the Party Committee, to outline the problems and ask for the removal of Bernard Coard. We then tried to work out how that Committee would vote. My analysis was that Noel Layne, Hutson Austin and Kenrick Radix would vote for Maurice and other members

of the Party Committee would vote for Bernard Coard. I could not work out how the late Unison Whiteman would have voted because of the inability of Maurice Bishop to correct the position of the Deputy Prime Minister-ship.

The revolution went down hill from there with Coard taking an envious position. Maurice was loved and respected by the whole of Grenada while the people of Grenada had no use for Bernard Coard, and that rattled him.

Bernard Coard's mentor, Dr. Trevor Monroe of the Workers Party of Jamaica, a devout Stalinist at the time, advised Bernard Coard on all of the actions he should take to bring about a USSR style Government.

Maurice's position differed completely in that the Grenada Revolution should take the path of a combination of Marxist economics and Caribbean based cultural philosophy. We had looked at the Cuban model and we found it fitting that culture should play an important part in the development of the Grenadian Revolution.

The 'Bernard Coard group' had no interest in that concept. They saw the Party as a party of power in the interest of the Party alone and with little concern for the people of Grenada.

During the period from early 1980 to the invasion by the United States Forces in October 1983, Bernard Coard's youth group held several meetings in Grenada which involved the far left of the Caribbean groups. These included:

1. Monali (which later became the Workers Party of Barbados, copying Trevor Monroe's Workers Party of Jamaica)
2. Youlimo, the St. Vincent Revolutionary Party
3. A small St. Lucian group
4. The Trinidadian People's Popular Movement headed by Michael Alls.

All those parties were under the influence of Trevor Monroe and Bernard Coard.

Around July 1983, as the Grenadian representative in the American Association of Juris, I along with Allan Alexander of Trinidad & Tobago attended the meeting of the American Association of Juris in St. George's, Grenada. I was struck that at the opening of that Conference only Maurice Bishop and Kenrick Radix of the Government attended. After the Conference Maurice Bishop, Allan Alexander and myself held a meeting at the Conference hotel where we discussed the drawing up of the new Constitution for Grenada. Maurice Bishop, Kenrick Radix and I, left the Hotel and attended a party for the Grenadian students returning to Cuba to study. Maurice addressed the group and then Grenadian Ambassador to Cuba, Leon 'Bogo' Cornwall and ended by stating, if the United States ever attacked Grenada we the revolutionaries including the students will defend the revolution and Maurice Bishop to the end.

We then left that party and attended another meeting at a house at the bottom of the road leading to Maurice Bishop's residence and Bernard Coard's residence.

In 1979, Bernard Coard had demanded that the Government take over the house next door to Maurice Bishop's official residence so he could be next to Maurice for his own personal reasons.

At that party no other member of the Grenadian Cabinet was present but Dr. Trevor Monroe and Liam James were among the groups talking among themselves. I left Grenada the following day and returned to Barbados. Maurice Bishop left for Europe the following week.

In the week leading up to the 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1983, I received news that Maurice Bishop had been placed under House Arrest. I immediately telephoned the home of Bernard Coard and asked to speak to Bernard. Selwyn Straughan came on the phone and told me that Bernard was not available but I could talk to him. I told him that I wanted to come into Grenada right away to see if I could find a solution to the problems. He told me that 'everything was alright, no major problems'

Later that day I received news that the late Kenrick Radix had been arrested by the Army while addressing a large crowd in Market square in St. Georges, Grenada.

I was informed that earlier that day Selwyn Straughan had attempted to address the people in Market Square and he was stoned.

I put out a Press Release demanding that Kendrick Radix be released from jail immediately. A short time after, I received a telephone call from Selwyn Straughan, who at the height of his ignorance, demanded that I put out another Press Release stating that I now understood the problem and everything was ok in Grenada and that my position calling for the release of Kenrick Radix was wrong. My response to Selwyn Straughan cannot be stated in this article but I was brutally rough.

I later received a telephone call from Hutson Austin telling me that everything was ok.

I again requested that I should be invited into Grenada to seek a solution to the problem.

Hutson Austin replied again that everything was ok.

I spoke to the then Attorney General of Grenada, Mr. Richard Hart of the famous (3 H's of Jamaica) and enquired of him what was going on in Grenada. His response was that Maurice and Bernard are two big intelligent men and they will find a solution to the problem.

The same Richard Hart had been recruited to Grenada by Bernard Coard.

I did not know at the time that the same Bernard Coard group had invited the far left into Grenada to boost his position. The groups included Michael Alls of the People's Movement of Trinidad & Tobago and Rupert Roopnarine of the Working People Alliance of Guyana and others.

After not being able to go into Grenada, I contacted Errol Barrow, who was then leader of the Opposition. I asked him to intervene with Bernard Coard to see if we could find a solution. Errol Barrow had had a good relationship with Grenada before the revolution and had acted on behalf of the owners of the land at Land Supine which was bought over by the Government of Maurice Bishop to build a new Airport, now the Maurice Bishop International Airport.

I then told Errol Barrow that I will try to get in touch with Michael Manley and asked him for Michael Manley's telephone numbers. Errol told me he did not have them.

I eventually got Michael Manley's numbers and telephoned him

I explained to Michael Manley, the problems as I knew them in Grenada and of his friendship with Bernard Coard and asked him if he could immediately go down to Grenada and hold a meeting with Coard and Bishop to find a solution.

The late Michael Manley told me "I would have to get an invitation from the Government to intervene in the matter."

I explained to Michael Manley that the Prime Minister Maurice Bishop was placed under House Arrest by Bernard Coard and therefore he would not be able to send him an official invitation for him to go to Grenada and that he should try to get in touch with Bernard Coard to see what he could do.

The conversation ended on that note. I do not know if Michael Manley ever spoke to Bernard Coard. In desperation I tried to contact President Mitterand of France, Prime Minister Gonzales of Spain and Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada to no avail.

I tried to contact these three because Maurice Bishop had personally met with Mitterand who had agreed to set up a link with Air France from France to Martinique and a small airline from Martinique to Grenada to bring in tourist.

He met with Gonsales in relation to assistance with the international airport to be built and he had met with Trudeau who had agreed to the building of hotels at Grandanse to assist in the development of Grenada.

I then contacted Caldwell Taylor, the Grenadian Representative to the United Nations and informed him of my conversation with Prime Minister Michael Manley in relation to Manley going to Grenada to try to find a solution to the problem. I told him that Michael Manley wanted an official invitation. I also told him that Maurice Bishop was under House Arrest and could not issue an invitation. I asked the Caldwell Taylor to use his UN position to ask Michael Manley to go to Grenada to try to solve the problem.

During that time, I received a call from Grenada informing me that Bernard Coard had put Unison Whiteman under House Arrest. I telephoned Unison Whiteman and the conversation went something like this:

Bobby: *Uni, Bobby. Theirs or ours?* (meaning who was guarding him at his home)

Unison: *Theirs*

Before I could anything else Unison said,

*'Bobby as you know, we went through worse than this under Gairy. Whatever Bernard wants to do, kill me, beat me, makes no difference. Whatever Bernard wants to do let him do'.*

It was at that stage that I realized that the original leaders (Maurice Bishop, Unison Whiteman, Kenrick Radix and George Louison) who in the struggle against the cruelty of the Gairy regime were all under arrest by the new despotic leaders headed by Bernard Coard.

In desperation, I telephoned Tom Adams, the then Prime Minister of Barbados. I was told by his Secretary that Mr. Adams was in a special Cabinet meeting. I told



her to tell Mr. Tom Adams that it was Bobby Clarke on the line. Tom Adams came on the line and I outlined to Mr. Tom Adams all that I said above: my discussions with the Grenadian Cabinet Members, my trying to contact all these leaders of France, Spain and Canada and asked him what he can do to help in the present Grenadian situation.

During my talk, he did not interrupt me but at the end of my talking to him, he exploded:

“You! You is a Government?! You talking to Governments! Well tomorrow Maurice Bishop’s blood will be on your hands!”

And it became true.

After Bernard Coard was released from Prison in September 2009, he made a number of statements to the Press in relation to the Cuban Government. He admitted that ‘during the crisis the pre-occupation of the anti-Bishop forces of the ruling party was to prevent Bishop communicating with the Cubans in order to request their military intervention to crush the Party and Army of the Grenadian Revolution.’

This fear was born of what the Cubans had done in Angola in similar circumstances just a few years previously.

He continued that ‘this pre-occupation was not a product of paranoia (but) can be appreciated from the fact that this is precisely what Bishop did, once freed from house arrest on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1983.’

On the 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1983, the Cuban Government made the following statement:

*“On Wednesday October 12<sup>th</sup>, our Embassy in Grenada reported the surprising and unpleasant news that there had been profound divisions in the Central Committee of the Party in Grenada. On that morning of that day, Bishop had informed the Embassy staff of differences that had arisen sometime before*

*and that discussions had been carried out to try to reach a solution, but that he never imagined that the situation would become so serious in his absence. He simply reported the differences but did not ask for opinion or co-operation to try to overcome them, once again demonstrating his great respect for Cuba's Foreign Policy and for the internal affairs of its own party.*

*"That evening it became known that Bishop's opponents had obtained a majority in the Central Committee of the Party and in the Political Apparatus of the Army and Security Forces and that Bishop had been removed from his post in the Party and placed under house arrest.*

*"Since this was a purely internal matter, in spite of our friendship with Bishop and our trust in his integrity and leadership abilities, the Cuban Party and Government instructed their representative in Grenada to refrain completely from interfering with the internal affairs of the Party and of Grenada, in keeping with the principles and standards of Cuban Foreign policy.*

*"On Saturday October 15<sup>th</sup>, Comrade Fidel sent a message to the Central Committee of the New Jewel clearly expressing the Cuban position of total non-interference in the internal affairs of the party and the Country. He also expressed his deep concern over the fact that the split which had developed which could considerably damage the image of the revolutionary process in Grenada within the country and abroad; that even in Cuba, where Bishop was very well regarded, it would not be easy to explain the events and that he harbored the hope that the difficulties could be overcome with the greatest wisdom, calm, loyalty to principles and generosity".*

The revolution failed. Not because of the principles and characteristics of the late Maurice Bishop but of the cannibalism and the Pol Potism of Bernard Coard and his group. But further. up to today, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2009, the far left of the Caribbean, the parties mentioned above, still continue to state that Maurice Bishop and the others were killed in a cross fire at Fort Rupert although the evidence given in Court

at the Trial of Bernard Coard and the others, shows the deliberate order given and the deliberate act of execution of Maurice Bishop and the others.

The initial success of the Grenada Revolution brought together people from all over the World who realized the hopes that they themselves had, could now be achieved in a small country like Grenada. They were mostly people who were not political. So much so that when professional people wanted to come into Grenada to help and the United Nations only had funding for one person, three professionals would agree that one UN salary would be divided between the three to carry out work in Grenada to help to carry out the revolutionary concepts. That included:

- a new look at agriculture
- a new look at education
- a new look at industrialization - utilizing Grenadian clay for clay products
- a new look to deliver a water supply to the people efficiently
- an improved electricity supply
- an improved telephone system
- road widening and development
- a new Airport
- a development of Grenadian products from Grenadian agriculture including cocoa and cocoa butter.

Maurice Bishop had held meetings with the Czechoslovakian Government and the French Government in relation to among other things, to installing a better telephone system. The Czechoslovakian Government had agreed to give the Grenadian Government a complete telephone system from theirs as they were replacing their system with a new system from France.

The Soviet Union in discussion with Maurice agreed to supply Grenada with new water pipes for the country.

The Algerian Government had agreed with Maurice Bishop to supply 5 years of oil free to the Grenadian Government but as they had no small oil tankers to send to Grenada, they entered into an agreement with Mexico for Mexico to supply Grenada with the oil and Algeria will pay Mexico for the oil in Algerian wine.

The Cuban Government to supply Grenada with sugar for five years and also to do the work (pushing down the mountain and leveling the area at Pointe Saline) for the new Airport also to set up a Sandinista house-building Plant and also to supply doctors to Grenada.

When the Grenada Revolution took place the Grenada Budget was approximately 80 million dollars. To carry out the work mentioned above would come to 800 million dollars.

It was because of Maurice Bishop's open integrity and decency that Governments that were not communist or socialist, Governments like France, Canada, Spain, Algeria and Mexico were willing to assist in the development of the small country of Grenada.

Bernard Coard could never understand the humanity of Maurice as opposed to his pol pottist attitudes.

Robert "Bobby" Clarke.

October 14, 2009.