

STATEMENT ISSUED BY MAJOR CHRISTOPHER STROUDE, MEMBER OF THE GRENADIAN
REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 20, 1983

Further facts concerning the events of yesterday have been received as members of the general staff of the PRA spoke with soldiers who were present at Fort Rupert yesterday. In addition many phone calls have been received from Grenadians all over the country and additional information provided by civilians present at the fort.

The People's Revolutionary Armed Forces wish to let the Grenadian people know the further facts which have come to light. First of all, comrades, it must be clear to most people by now that the Revolutionary Armed Forces made every effort humanely possible to avoid bloodshed yesterday.

When the crowd approached Comrade Bishop's house early in the morning the soldiers had specific orders not to fire on the masses and they did not fire despite a lot of provocation by sections of the crowd led by Vincent Noel.

Indeed when the crowd broke through the barrier at the lower gate they shouted confidently "we know they are not going to fire at us; we know they would not shoot the masses."

In trying to prevent the people from storming Comrade Bishop's house the soldiers again under instructions fired in the air only, even when the crowd carried away Maurice Bishop.

The discipline of the soldiers and their love for the masses was seen again later when the soldiers obeyed instructions not to shoot at the leader or the crowd although they were fully armed and capable of defending the Fort. Rather than cause bloodshed the soldiers gave up their weapons to the masses.

Comrades, the events that took place during the hour which was spent at the Fort show us an entirely different side to the man whom we of the armed forces fully respected as our Commander-in-Chief. First of all Maurice Bishop ordered that the soldiers' canteen be opened for the crowd to take drinks. When an officer refused to do this he permitted the crowd to loot and damage the canteen.

In his presence many soldiers including female soldiers were stripped of their uniforms publicly. Vincent Noel himself tore off a female soldier's uniform and part of her underwear, many soldiers were abused and threatened and some boxed and cuffed. The man who so many times spoke in favour of women's rights stood by while female soldiers were boxed, beaten and humiliated.

Another very serious thing that occurred was that with the permission of Maurice Bishop the secret room was broken into and some secret documents with plans for the defence of our country against imperialist attacks were destroyed or read by civilians.

Most of the soldiers present at the Fort refused to be part of this madness. The majority stripped off their uniforms to signal their rejection of this type of behaviour.

The armoury was then opened and action began to arm some of the crowd, which included not only genuine former secret police and criminal elements. The soldiers felt deeply concerned but under instructions to avoid violence they did not resist being disarmed.

Comrades, it must be very clear to everyone that it was never the intention of the armed forces to shed the blood of our people. That is why the armed forces had firm instructions not to fire when the people invaded Maurice Bishop's house and even when they invaded the Fort.

But comrades the seizure of the military headquarters of the army changed the whole character of the issue. Let us be clear that blood was shed because Maurice Bishop led a civilian crowd into a military camp, and secondly because when the army came to restore control his group led by Vincent Noel fired on the military.

The first blood was shed by his group and by certain of the armed civilians when in firing on the military they killed three soldiers. A fourth has since died and we have to report tonight the tragic death of officer cadet Comrade Meyers, an outstanding officer of the armed forces from River Road, St. George's.

In addition several civilians were tragically killed in the cross fire. In all, many persons have lost their lives as a result of the irresponsible and crazy action of Maurice Bishop in carrying civilians including women and school children into a military installation. Maurice Bishop as Minister of Defence must have known what would happen as a result of that action.

He could have carried the people to the park or spoken to them in the Market Square or even moved to the radio station to address the masses, but why carry the masses into an army camp? Then why fire on the military? This made it impossible for them to re-take the Fort peacefully, it forced them to return fire and he must have known that in doing so both soldiers and civilians would have been killed.

Comrades, in addition it is now known that it was the intention of Maurice Bishop to have all of the officers of the Army present at Fort Rupert executed almost immediately. Indeed, had the armed forces delayed their action to re-take the Fort by just 10 or 15 minutes all the officers would have been killed.

Comrades, we wish to let the people know furthermore that despite the heat of the moment efforts were made to capture the leadership of the group alive but led by Vincent Noel they continued to fire on the soldiers who were then forced to return the fire. Comrades, the most tragic aspect of this incident is that it could have been avoided.

After Maurice Bishop seized the Fort the armed forces units outside tried repeatedly to establish communications with him to ask him to continue negotiations with the NJM Central Committee to settle the matter and to make the civilians leave the Fort.

Unison Whiteman came on the radio and shouted 'no negotiations, no compromise.' After that, Vincent Noel came on the radio. He also refused to hold talks. After that day they refused to answer the army's calls.

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Comrades, a lot of lies are being told on the regional radio stations. Some stories try to make out that Cde. Bishop was deliberately murdered by the army in the Market Square or that the army stormed the hospital. All the stories are continuing to repeat the lie that there is a power struggle between two factions of Grenada.

The regional radio and newspaper who have always hated the Grenada revolution dearly wish to smash it now. And those Prime Ministers like Tom Adams (of Barbados) and Eugenia Charles (of Dominica) who always hated Maurice, who always accused and threatened him, have suddenly discovered that they really loved him and what a great man he was.

Comrades, let us not be deceived. Those exploiters of the Caribbean masses always hated the Grenada revolution and feared that its example of giving benefits to the masses will be demanded by their own masses also. We of the armed forces regret very much that Bishop and Whiteman were determined to use bloodshed to solve this problem, because we recognise it has caused a big setback to the Grenada revolution and that the big exploiter governments of the region will seize this opportunity to attack us as bad and worse than they did in the early days of freedom to improve our conditions of life, to educate ourselves, to achieve a better future for our people.

The revolution brought us great gains, great benefits and we must ensure that those are not turned back. The Revolutionary Military Council is committed to continuing the work of the revolution and improving it.

To improve life for our people and to build a secure and better future for all our children, we call on our people to take part to unite and to continue to work to build our people's revolution.

LONG LIVE ALL OUR GRENADIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS!

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!

FORWARD EVER BACKWARD NEVER!