



TOP SECRET
ASSESSMENT
OFFICE

Cuban Involvement in The Eastern Caribbean

An Intelligence Assessment

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National
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Assessment
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An Intelligence Assessment

*Information as of 4 April 1979 has been used
in preparing this report.*

[Redacted]

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**Cuban Involvement in
The Eastern Caribbean** [Redacted]

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Key Judgments

Havana for the last several years has sought an entente cordiale with the governments of the Caribbean while at the same time cultivating the area's leftist leaders and their youthful followers. [Redacted]

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This two-track policy has not been notably successful—especially in the English-speaking ministates of the area—although Havana has made considerable gains by participating in regional, youth, labor, church, and women's groups and by encouraging nascent radical political movements. [Redacted]

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Recently, however, the Cubans can claim a breakthrough in Grenada, where their support of the New Jewel Movement (NJM), beginning in 1976, contributed to the ouster of P. M. Gairy's regime. [Redacted]

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The Cubans provided the NJM financial and limited material support and training [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Since then Havana has moved cautiously—withholding diplomatic recognition of the Bishop government in hopes that the Commonwealth Caribbean states will do so first. [Redacted]

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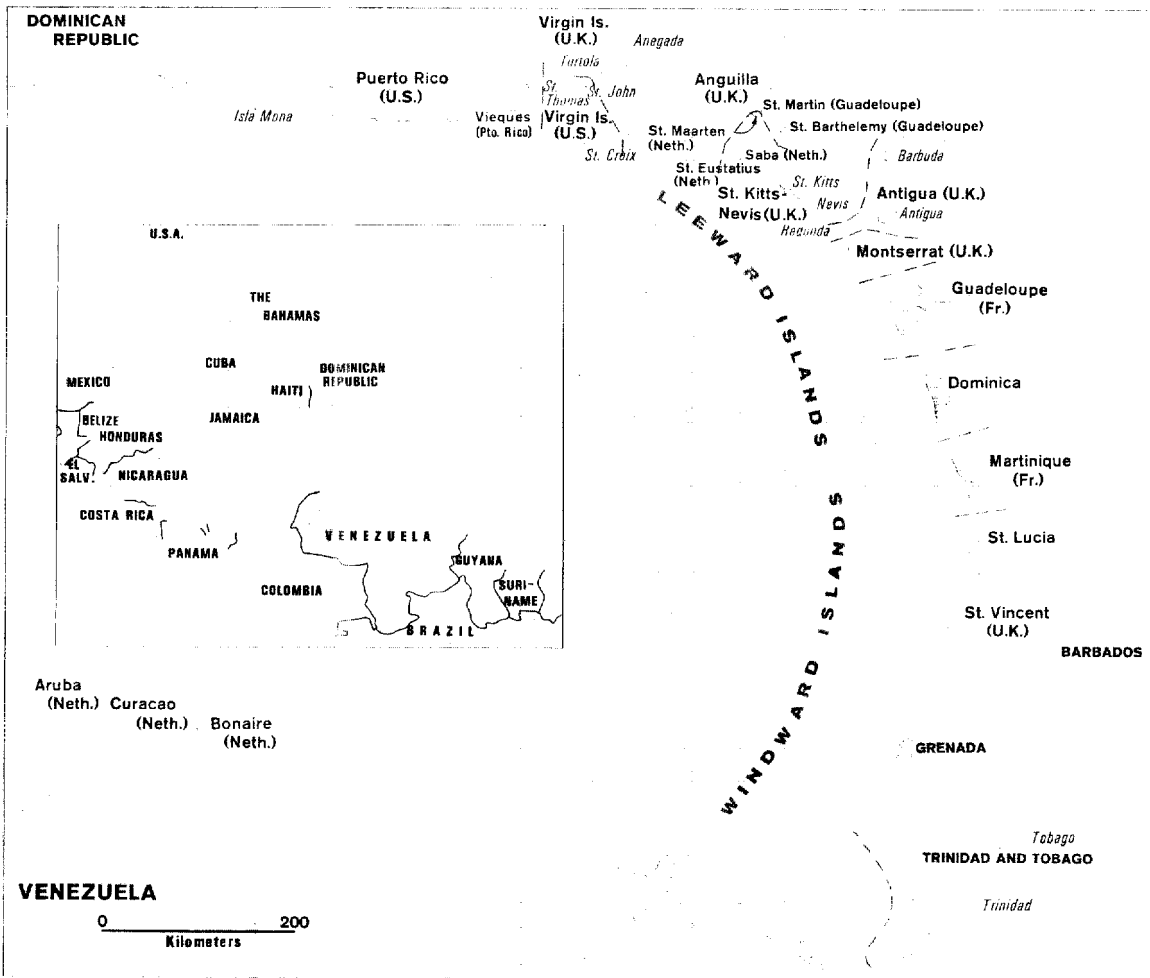
The Grenada coup—viewed throughout the region as a “pushover”—is likely to tempt the Cubans to act more boldly in advising other action-prone radical groups.

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The Eastern Caribbean



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**Cuban Involvement in
The Eastern Caribbean** [Redacted]

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The recent coup in Grenada that brought to power the leftist-oriented New Jewel Movement—a group with close ties to Havana—has raised questions about the nature of Cuba’s involvement in the Eastern Caribbean.¹ This memorandum analyzes Cuba’s activities in the region during the last 15 months and offers some conclusions about what impact the coup is likely to have on Cuba’s future policy there. [Redacted]

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Since Havana began to focus on the Eastern Caribbean in 1975-76, it has pursued a conscious two-track policy designed to give Cuba a major leadership position within the region over the next five to 10 years. On one level—reflecting in part the Castro regime’s desire to be accepted as an integral member of the Caribbean family of nations after years of being ostracized—the Cubans have sought to promote cordial relations with governments in the region. At the same time, here as elsewhere, Havana has manifested its commitment to fostering the growth of radical socialism by developing close ties with leftist leaders and their youth-based constituencies. The Cubans believe that socioeconomic trends in the region will push the islands on a leftist and “anti-imperialist” course and are confident that in many cases the young radicals they have befriended will sooner or later come to power. Recent developments in Grenada have doubtless bolstered Cuba’s optimism. [Redacted]

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Government-to-Government Initiatives

Cuba’s efforts over the last year or so to strengthen its ties with governments in the Eastern Caribbean have at best met with only limited success. This has been the case not only in the larger islands of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago—where the leaders are known to want to hold the Cubans at arm’s length—but also in at least one of the newly independent ministates—where Cuba expected to be well received. [Redacted]

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¹ For the purposes of this assessment, the Eastern Caribbean will be defined to include the independent countries of Grenada, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica and St. Lucia, as well as the three remaining British Associated States of Antigua, St. Vincent, and St. Kitts-Nevis. [Redacted]

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Despite the fact that Havana has had diplomatic relations since 1972 with Barbados—as well as with Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago—it has yet to be permitted to open a diplomatic mission in Bridgetown. To demonstrate its interest in expanding contacts with the government of Prime Minister Tom Adams of Barbados, in March 1978 Cuba designated its Ambassador to Guyana to cover Barbados as well. Since then the Cubans have been urging the Adams government to permit them to open an embassy and a consulate to handle the limited trade between the two countries. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Barbadian officials have made it clear that they remain wary of Cuban contacts with local radicals. In January 1978, for example, Adams denounced “scientific socialism” and its advocates in the Caribbean. His comment was sparked by the persistent criticism and local political activism of Ralph Gonsalves, who resides in Barbados but also heads a pro-Cuban leftist movement in St. Vincent called the Youlou United Liberation Movement. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

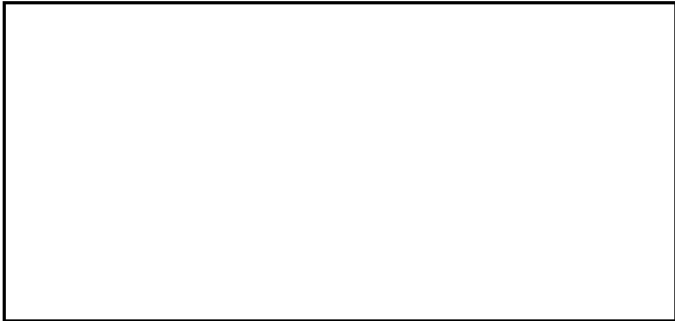
In Trinidad and Tobago, as in Barbados, Cuba’s presence has been restricted to a Cubana Airlines office that services regional flights terminating in Georgetown, Guyana. Cuba has also been pressing to open a resident embassy in Port of Spain and—to entice the Trinidadians—has offered to provide technical assistance, especially in agriculture. [Redacted]

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outspoken in his warnings about the Communist threat in the region. [redacted]

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Strengthening Ties With Regional Radicals

Despite the obvious negative results of its efforts to cultivate regional governments, Havana has continued to solidify its ties with radical leaders. The key event in the Castro regime's attempt to win youthful converts to Cuba's brand of socialism and to its "anti-imperialist" foreign policy was the 11th World Youth Festival in Havana from 28 July to 4 August. Among the participants from about 140 countries were delegations from Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Dominica, Antigua, St. Vincent, and St. Lucia. In practically every case, local radical leaders had controlled the selection of delegates. [redacted]

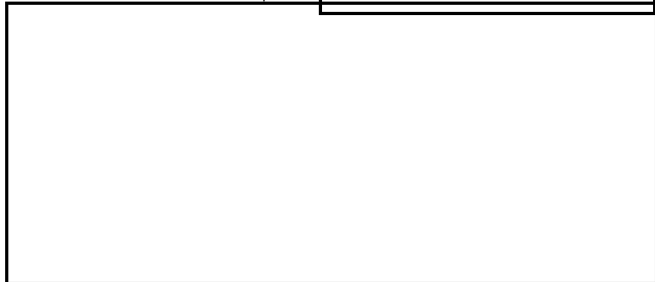
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More surprising to the Cubans has been their failure to solidify what once looked to be a promising relationship with Dominica's Patrick John. In 1976-77, using Dominican radical Roosevelt Douglas as an intermediary, Havana had ambitions of making Dominica—once it became independent—a "showcase" for Cuban development assistance. Cuba offered to supply John with aid in a variety of fields, the Dominican Premier's wife visited Cuba, and tentative arrangements were made for John himself to travel there. [redacted]

On 22 August, soon after the youth festival ended, a number of leading Caribbean radicals gathered in Trinidad—no doubt at Cuban urging. To promote greater unity of leftist forces, they established a committee responsible for coordinating youth activities in the area. The committee's members included Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent's Youlou United Liberation Movement (YULIMO), Bernard Coard of Grenada's New Jewel Movement, Tim Hector of Antigua's African Caribbean Liberation Movement, and Roosevelt Douglas of Dominica. [redacted]

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Motivated in part by disagreements with local leftists as well as by a belief that the prospects for substantial foreign assistance were greater in the West, John delivered a strongly anti-Communist speech in January 1978. Subsequently, he shelved all plans for close ties with Cuba. The shift in the Dominican Government's attitude was dramatized last November during Dominica's independence celebration when a correspondent representing Cuba's official new service, Prensa Latina, was removed from a news conference, interrogated by police, and expelled from the country. [redacted]



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The Cubans have fared no better in St. Lucia—the second British Associated State to gain independence recently. The same Prensa Latina correspondent was tossed out of St. Lucia in October while trying to interview government leaders. The Cubans managed to wangle an invitation to St. Lucia's independence celebration in late February but apparently only after some difficulty. [redacted]

Havana's closest ties to a regional radical group—aside from those to the New Jewel Movement—have developed with YULIMO. [redacted]

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Cuba's initiatives with the remaining governments among the British Associated States have also been unproductive. Neither St. Vincent nor St. Kitts-Nevis has accepted Cuban offers of technical assistance, and Premier Vere Bird of Antigua has been especially

[redacted] As of last spring—echoing advice they had earlier given to other regional radical movements—the Cubans were urging YULIMO to

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pursue the electoral route to power and to broaden its base of support by uniting with other local leftist groups. [redacted]

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The Cubans have also broadened their ties with radicals in St. Lucia. The Worker's Revolutionary Movement—a small Marxist-Leninist group—recently formed a St. Lucia-Cuba Friendship Society.

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[redacted]

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[redacted] George Odlum—the leader of the majority, radical faction of the much more important St. Lucia Labor Party—is an admirer of the Cuban revolution, but he has so far been less active than most other Caribbean radicals in seeking out Cuban officials. Cuba can be expected to urge these two groups to submerge their differences and to pursue a united front approach in order to win the elections scheduled for later this year. [redacted]

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tinue—as they have since 1976—to send their members to Cuba for three-month courses at the Lazaro Pena International School of Labor Cadre. The Cubans have consistently urged their allies among Caribbean labor leaders to join with other local radicals to form a unified leftist movement. [redacted]

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The Cubans have also recognized that among religious groups in the Caribbean there are social activists who admire many of the Castro regime's accomplishments. Havana has sought to cultivate these leaders and to reinforce their conviction that the church has a vital role to play in social change. The Cubans have taken a special interest in the organization Christian Action for Development in the Eastern Caribbean (CADEC)—the development arm of the Caribbean Conference of Churches. Prensa Latina officials in Kingston, Jamaica, have supplied material to CADEC's monthly journal *Caribbean Contact* and [redacted]

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Penetrating Major Institutions

Another important aspect of Cuba's strategy for promoting a shift toward radical socialism has been its effort to develop ties with young activists within major nongovernmental institutions such as labor unions, religious bodies, women's groups, and the press. [redacted]

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In the labor field, representatives of Cuba's Central Organization of Cuban Workers were instrumental in December 1977 in holding the First Caribbean Trade Union Conference, which was attended by some 40 labor organizations. The conference decided to create a Caribbean Workers Committee of Unity and Solidarity, with its headquarters in Georgetown, Guyana. In November 1978 the executive secretariat of this committee met in Havana to discuss the Caribbean workers' "struggle for full sovereignty against penetration of multinational companies, economic dependence, and unemployment." [redacted]

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The major focus of Cuba's contact with regional women's organizations has been the women's arm of Jamaica's ruling People's National Party. A number of visits have been exchanged between top officials of the Federation of Cuban Women and their Jamaican counterparts, including Prime Minister Manley's wife, Beverley. In turn, the Jamaican organization has tried to foster cooperation with women's groups elsewhere in the region. [redacted]

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Another longtime goal of Cuban policy has been to weaken the influence in Latin America and the Caribbean of Western press agencies by forming a competing group of regional journalists. Last September the Cubans tried to further this effort by encouraging three Barbadian newsmen to organize an alliance of working journalists. [redacted]

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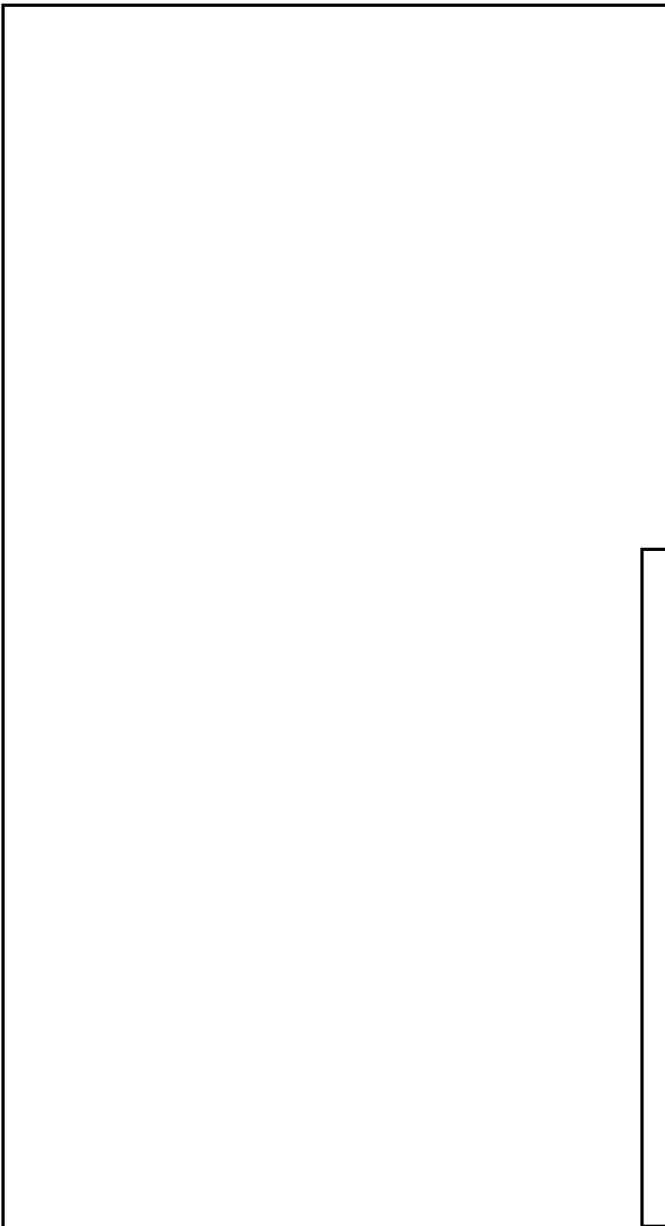
At the end of April the Cubans will play host to the Trade Union Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Sugar Industry Workers. In addition, various leftist trade unions in the Caribbean con-

To emphasize the historical bonds that link it to the rest of the Caribbean, Cuba has given special attention to promoting contact in the cultural field. Cuba's cultural organization, Casa de las Americas, has created a new category to ensure that a Caribbean cultural figure will receive an annual award. In addition, in July Cuba will play host to countries attending the region's major yearly cultural event, the Caribbean Arts Festival. [redacted]

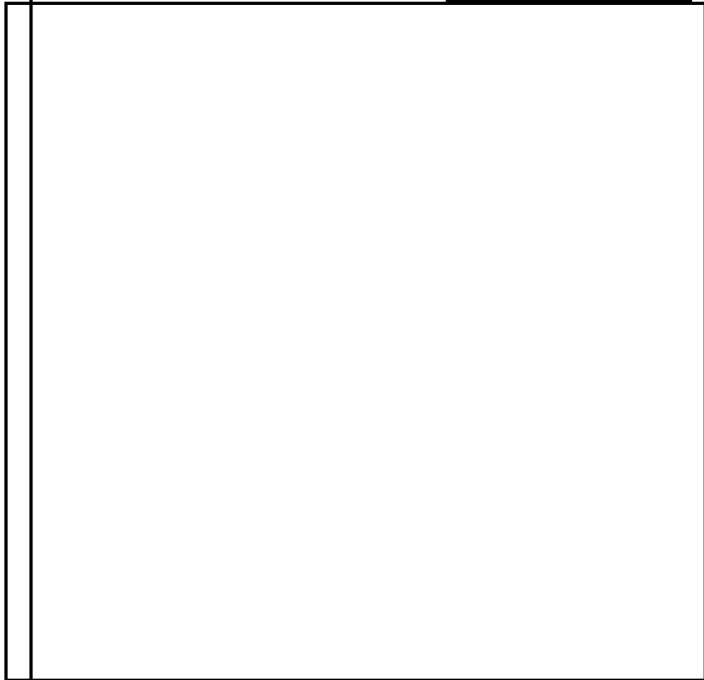


Maurice Bishop [redacted]

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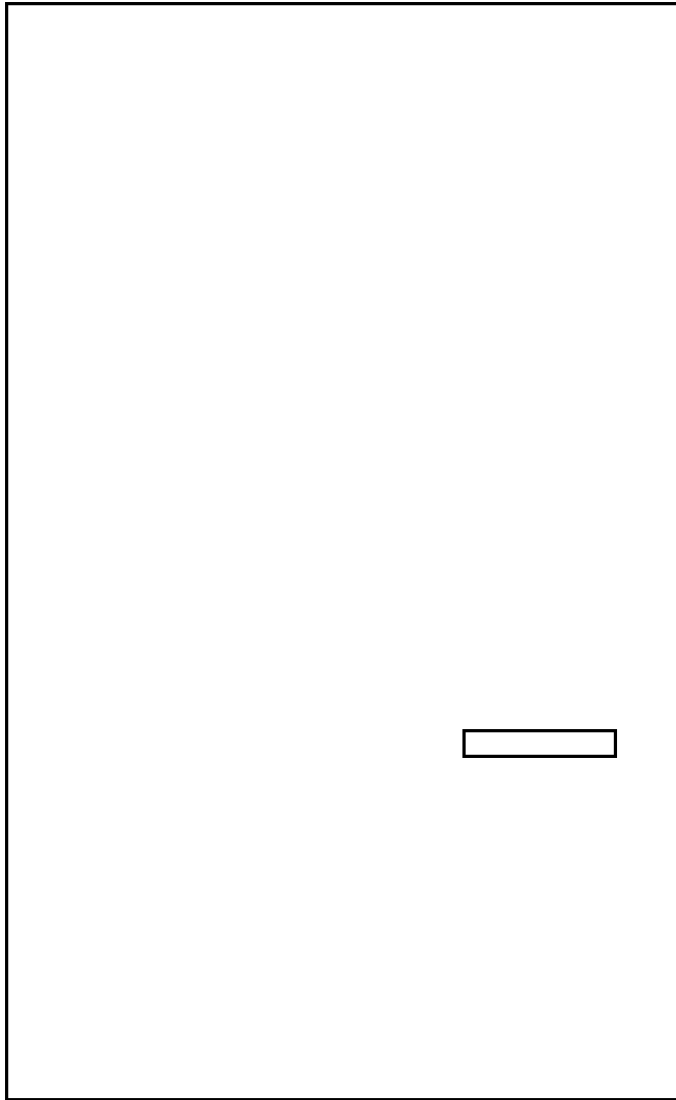


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Once Cuba establishes diplomatic relations with Grenada, it can be expected to offer a variety of technical assistance to the Bishop government. When Bishop visited Cuba in May 1977, he expressed particular interest in Cuban programs in public health, housing, education, sports, agriculture, and fishing [redacted]

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On the basis of Cuba's track record in Jamaica and Guyana, it would not be at all surprising if Cuban officials became involved in more sensitive areas as well. Concerned that Bishop quickly consolidate his hold on power to prevent a countercoup, Havana may well offer advice and training in the security field as it has done in Jamaica and Guyana. In Jamaica, under the guise of merely providing training in construction techniques, the Cubans have helped to train numerous young leftists to be community organizers, who then provide grass-roots pressure for social change. Similar programs could develop with Grenadian youth. [redacted]

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Outlook

The coup in Grenada will heighten Havana's interest in the Eastern Caribbean and will likely spur it into greater activity. Cuba can be expected to adhere to its policy of working to expand its influence both with governments in the region and with radical leaders. In dealing with opposition leftists, the main thrust of Cuban policy will be to counsel them to coalesce with other "progressive" forces with a view toward coming to power via the electoral route. [redacted]

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The easy triumph of a ragtag group of New Jewel Movement members over the more numerous Grenadian security forces may well tempt some within the Cuban leadership to urge a policy of providing paramilitary training to Caribbean leftists, especially when they confront unpopular governments at home. The chief of the America Department, Manuel Pineiro, for example, would be the most likely to argue for such a shift in policy. After all, he and many of his top subordinates are not likely to forget that they came to prominence by guiding Cuba's effort to export its revolution to Latin America in the 1960s. [redacted]

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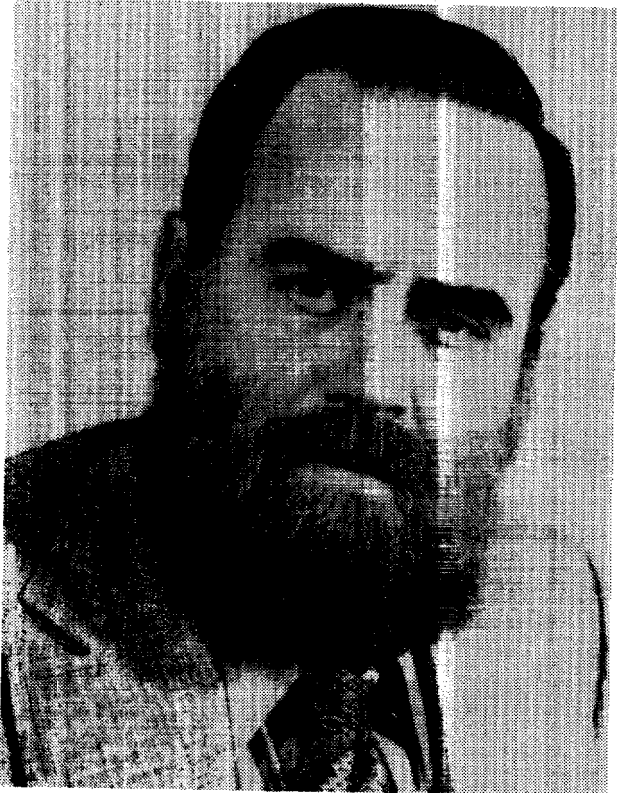
Since the coup, the Cubans have proceeded cautiously, presumably to avoid damaging the image of the new regime in St. Georges. Preferring to let the Commonwealth Caribbean states take the lead, Havana has yet to establish diplomatic relations with the Bishop government. The Cuban press has noted that the Commonwealth foreign ministers criticized the use of violence to attain power, but it has sought to justify the move by depicting Gairy's regime as a renegade state in the Caribbean. Cuba's party organ, *Granma*, has pushed the line that Gairy was unique among leaders in the English-speaking Caribbean in his willingness to deal with the South Africans and the Rhodesians, as well as to receive military aid from Pinochet's Chile.



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Manuel Pineiro

Given these factors, unless pro-Cuban radical groups are confronted with harsh repression at home or are clearly blocked from any hope of achieving power via legal means, Havana is likely to urge them to avoid resorting to violence as the prime means of achieving power. Havana is also likely for the foreseeable future to be extremely cautious and highly selective about offering paramilitary training to radical groups in the region. [redacted]

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Counterbalancing that temptation are several inhibiting factors. Given continued high levels of unemployment among young job seekers in the Eastern Caribbean and the present steady emigration of skilled members of the middle class, the Cubans probably believe that they can afford to be patient. Havana, moreover, has invested a great deal in persuading other states in the Caribbean Basin that its days of promoting subversion in the hemisphere have ended—except in the case of widely unpopular governments such as Somoza's in Nicaragua. Cuba no doubt realizes that it could seriously damage its credibility if it were detected providing paramilitary training to dissidents preparing to topple the elected government of a tiny Caribbean island. Havana would also have to take into account the US reaction if such information were to come to light. [redacted]

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