

by Lionel Martin

US Invasion of Grenada in 1983

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havana, the cuban government became aware of u.s. preparations to invade grenada days before u.s. troops actually landed on the island. granma, the official party newspaper had a front page story on october 24 speaking about the threat of an imminent invasion. WR 542

from the moment word of the death of former granadian prime minister maurice bishop reached cuba, it was plain that the cuban government feared an attack on granada. in a statement issued october 20, the cuban govt said imperialism will try to use this tragedy and the grave errors committed by the grenadian revolutionaries to halt the revolutionary process in grenada and submit the country against to imperialist and neocolonialist rule. +

(above 2 lines last word should read +again+)

at the same time fidel castro strongly condemned the takeover of granada by bishop's opponents. +no doctrine, principle or proclaimed revolutionary position and no internal split justifies such brutal procedures...+ he said.

he warned +only a miracle of common sense, equanimity and wisdom on the part of granada's revolutionaries can save the revolutionary process there. +

the cuban government announced that it would not pull its nearly 800 technicians, constructions workers, doctors, military advisors, doctors and diplomatic personnel out of grenada but it said its relations with the new grenadian leadership must undergo an agonising reappraisal.

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exmartin (havana) - 2

the new grenadian leaders, fearing invasion, requested military reinforcements from the cubans in the event of an invasion.

on october 22 cuban president fidel castro sent a message to the cuban ambassador in grenada, julian rizo, he said that the evacuation of cuban personnel in the face of a u.s. invasion +might be demoralising and dishonourable for our country in the eyes of public opinion.+ +if the united states intervenes,+ he said, + we must defend ourselves as if we were in cuba but only if we are directly attacked.+ .

castro said that +if the yankees land on the runway of the airport near the university or onear it in order to evacuate its citizens, refrain from interfering.+ he was referring to the hundreds of american students at st. george's medical school near the new airport where about 500 cubans were putting the finishing touches on a project spread over three years.

castro told his ambassador in grenada. +it is not the new grenadian government we must think of now but of cuba, its honour, its people and its fighting morale.+

on the evening of october 22 the cuban government sent a note to the reagan administration calling for close contacts between washington and havana +so as to contribute to a favourable solution of any difficulty that may arise or action that might be taken in relation to the security of americans or cubans on grenada, without violence or intervention in the country.+

when the new grenadian leaders again requested cuban military aid in the event of an invasion, fidel castro replied (october 23). he advised the grenadian military leaders +to try to win over their people for the defense of the country.+ but he turned down their request for troops because of +the unfortunate developments in grenada which render as morally impossible before our people and the world a useless sacrifice that the dispatch of such reinforcements would represent in a struggle against the united states.+

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exmartin (havana) - 3

he told the grenadians: +if grenada is invaded by the united states, the cuban personnel will defend their position in their camps.+ he was speaking primarily about the construction camp at the new airport site .

the invasion took place at dawn on october 25. according to the cubans, while the u.s. troops were landing in helicopters in the area of st. george university with its hundreds of american students, there was no confrontation with the cubans who remained inside a defensive perimeter armed with infantry weapons such as soviet made ak-47's.

on october 25 at 8:30 am cuban time, the cuban government received a reply to its october 22 message from the u.s. government. dr. castro told journalists that this note arrived in cuban hands an hour and a half after u.s. troops began their first attacks on the cuban positions on grenada.

the note from washington offered the cubans safe passage out of grenada and said it agreed to the oct. 22nd cuban proposal to maintain constant contacts in regard to the safety of cuban and american nationals on grenada.kak

the u.s. note called on the cubans to cooperate fully with the invading forces. the same evening, john ferch, the head of the u.s. diplomatic mission in havana sent the cuban government a message which advised that +the cuban personnel stationed on grenada is not a target for the actions of u.s. troops.+ the note said the united states was fully aware that the cubans on grenada did not have the weapons or ammunition for prolonged resistance.

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exmartin (havana) -4 and final

at 8:30 pm october 26 fidel castro replied to ferch's note. the cuban government, he said, had done its best to prevent the intervention in grenada. he said that no foreigners had been in danger in grenada and that +the intervention had been totally unjustifiable.+ he called on the united states to find +an honourable way to put an end to a battle that far from honours the united states.+

Last night (oct 27) cuban deputy foreign minister, ricardo alarcon told journalists here that us troops had initiated the confrontation in havana. (this in reply to a u.s. government p(correction - above line should read +in grenada) press release that said the cubans had been the first to fire their guns). he indisted that the construction workers at the airport were only construction workers but he noted that most adult males in cuba have had army or militia experience and are familiar with weapons. to the charge that a huge cache of arms for the cubans on the island had been discovered in a warehouse, he said that they did not belong to the cubans but rather to the granadian government which planned to give arms to its people in the event of an invasion.

even before the cubans announced that the cubans had been subdued,

even before the cuban goverment announced that the lasz bastion of the cubans had fallen in grenada, cubans began to hold street rallies in support of fidel castro's policy and in condemnation of the american landings in grenada.

the last ditch defense by the cubans who were outnumbered and outgunned obeyed fidel castro's sense of dignity and honour. in his october 26 note to the us government, castro suggested that cuba's defense of its psotions in the face of what it considered an illegal invasion would +inflict a costly moral defeat on the united, states.+
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the president of the u.s. bishops conference refuted charges made by some church leader in miami that the delegation had been manipulated by the cubans. he said: given the obvious restrictions of the brief visit, we do not feel that we have in any way been manipulated by the authorities. + he said that the delegation had been free to go where they wanted and to talk to anyone.

the statement read by malone said the highlight of the visit was the celebration of public liturgies in churches in santiago de cuba and havana. +the participation of so many people, especially the young, was a source of great encouragement,+ he said.

he also noted that +the church in cuba has for many reasons experienced a significant loss of membership. +there seems to be reasons to hope that this trend has been stopped,+ he said.

the statement said that the u.s. bishops would explore the possibility of sending financial assistance to the church in cuba.

it ended: +we believe it is significant that the bishops of cuba and the highest authorities in government there may soon meet in dialogue in an intensive and ongoing manner. while there have been improved communication possibilities in recent times, this new level of discussion is a real sign of hope for the church in cuba. +

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