

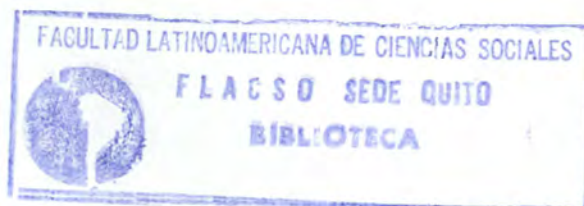
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TION. THE CASE OF GRENADA.

RHODA REDDOCK

SEMINAR ON: "THE OBJETIVES AND MARGINNS  
OF STATE INTERVENTION" ISS-FLACSO

**FACULTAD  
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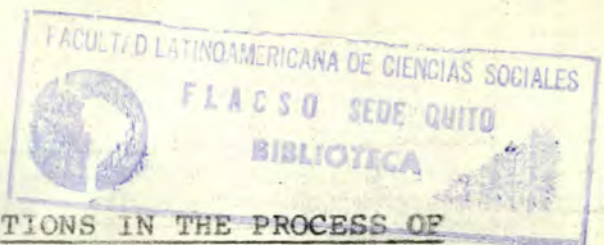
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Women's movement and organizations in  
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Rhoda Reddock

Seminar on: "The objectives and margins  
of state intervention". ISS-FLACSO.



WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF  
REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION: THE CASE OF GRENADA

Today in the world, societies which claim to be 'socialist' or in the process of 'revolutionary transformation' comprise approximately 'one-thirds of the earth's surface' (Wohlforth 1981:68). This major difference in material reality at the present time from that of Marx and Engels, or even Lenin's time, affords us the possibility of using the very methodology developed by them - historical and dialectical materialism to analyse this process. Relatively little was written by Marx and Engels on this subject and what was written was based on their experiences in early capitalist or even feudal society, combined with a vision of a classless yet economically viable society. According to Wohlforth, Marx's vision of socialist society remained with him to his death, it was based on the St. Simonian and Utopian socialist vision of a classless, stateless communal society ... but 'What I did new,' according to Marx in a letter to Weydemeyer in 1852 (quoted in Wohlforth):

'was to demonstrate: i) that the existence of classes is merely linked to particular phases in the development of production ii) that class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat iii) that this dictatorship itself constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.' (Marx & Engels 1975:64)

One of the characteristics of all countries which have experienced this process, has been the relative underdevelopment of the so-called capitalist relations of production, and of the capitalist productive forces. This subject is introduced here with a question, as adherents of the Capitalist World System approach would argue that the wage labour relationship has never been the majority exploitative relationship under capitalism.

These two statements have in the past and continue at present to raise fundamental questions with relation to the transitional process. For some the fact that the transitional process begins before capitalist development is 'mature' has led to 'severe forms of bureaucratic deformation' and degeneration' (Mandel 1974:8). While to others, the proponents of the theory and practice of the non-capitalist path to development begin from the incorrect assumption that 'ex-colonial, 'dependent' or 'peripheral capitalist' countries are less capitalist than 'central' or 'core' capitalist countries because the wage-labour relationship is not generalized. (Wallerstein 1978, 1979; von Werlhof 1982).

The experience of revolutionary successes in the last twenty years and other attempts at non-revolutionary social transformation, has to some degree led to discussion on the mechanisms of 'the transition'. This in part has led to the development of a theory of a 'non-capitalist' path of development or the path of 'socialist orientation'. This theory was adopted at the Declaration of Havana at the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of Latin America and The Caribbean held in 1975.

During this same twenty year period, the world has also experienced the re-emergence of the International Women's Movement, initially in Western Europe and North America. In spite of attempts to stop its spread through the use of anti-feminist propaganda, the woman's movement has now become effectively internationalized. Among its various currents, the socialist-feminists have emerged as one of its most dynamic manifestations, as the development of socialist/feminist theory has been able to present a major analytical and practical challenge to both radical and bourgeois feminism as well as male-oriented and chauvinist Marxism. One of the major contributions of the socialist/feminists has been in the

analysis of women's position in socialist countries. Comprehensive studies have been carried out on for example The Soviet Union, China, Cuba in particular and to a lesser extent other eastern European countries such as Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and Hungary.<sup>1</sup> More recently studies have extended to those countries stated to be on a path of 'socialist orientation', for example the Democratic Peoples Republic of Yemen (Molyneux 1979) and Guinea-Bissau (Urdang 1979).

In general, in spite of the historical, cultural and economic differences among the various countries, certain basic similarities have been found which occur to a greater or lesser extent in all situations. The main reason for this being that the same approach towards the emancipation of women has been used in all cases. Prior to the new work of feminist/socialists, the theoretical development of Marxist theory in relation to women, had lagged behind analyses of wage labour for example or the relationship of race to class. In the case of the latter, for years non-whites were being advised that 'race' was a secondary contradiction while class was the primary one. The experience of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements internationally however served to give race its rightful place within the analysis of capitalist society. Similarly, the women's movement is attempting the similar process of according 'sex' its place within the analysis of capitalist and indeed socialist society.

The traditional Marxist approach to the woman's question has been raised mainly in Engels work - The Origin of The Family, Private Property and The State, Marx and Engels in The Communist Manifesto, and various of Lenin's speeches and letters now compiled in a booklet entitled Lenin On The Emancipation of Women. To a lesser extent this tradition has also included the work of August Bebel, Women and Socialism.

Basically the theory can be summarised in the following way - The emergence of the monogamous family which heralded the fall of 'Mother right' and the oppression of women developed with the rise of private property and class society. As capitalism developed, production was divided in two main parts, private household production and public social production with women predominating in the former and men in the latter. Within the household, women are drowned in unproductive household drudgery performing unimportant tasks, and are economically dependent on men. As capitalism developed further however more and more women and even children would be drawn into social production resulting in the destruction of the bourgeois family. With the development of socialism, this process would be quickened. In their own words:-

'The bourgeois claptrap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation between parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more by the action of modern industry all the family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.' (Marx & Engels, 1951:3)

Based on this general understanding, a definite socialist strategy for the emancipation of women has developed. It has included the following components.

1. The view is held that with the abolition of private property the economic pre-conditions for the oppression of women have ceased to exist.
2. Any continuing oppressive situation, exploitation or discrimination is therefore an ideological remnant of the past.
3. The only way women can be truly emancipated is by their being drawn into social production.
4. The State can facilitate this by measures aimed at socializing housework through public laundries, crèches (nurseries), restaurants at the workplaces

and schools and other such communal facilities.

5. These developments are all gradual and will take time.

As a result of this strategy, most socialist countries have gone a long way in developing an infrastructure based on the acceptance of this theory and strategy. Recent analyses of the feminist/socialists however have come up with the following observations.

First it was found that some relative success had been achieved in the mobilization of women into industrial and agricultural jobs and services. This has contributed to a greater degree of social and economic independence than had been previously enjoyed. The former sexual division of labour however had persisted and was even transferred to new areas. For example, women continued to predominate in the areas of nursing, childcare and personal services. In some situations women were able to dominate in some previously male-dominated occupations for example medicine and law, however, through the process of 'feminization' now identified by feminist scholars the social prestige which these jobs previously had in the society tended to decline.

Another problem identified was the fact that the measures aimed at socializing domestic work have taken place largely outside of the home rather than within it. One result of this has been that women continue to have a double burden or 'second shift' of housework and wage work. This occurs and will continue to occur because all household tasks can never be carried out in a 'socialised' manner unless all households are socialised. So far, socialist countries contrary to the views stated by Marx and Engels in The Communist Manifesto continue to identify and protect 'the family' as the basic unit of society. A second effect has been that even when certain tasks are taken out of the home, the sexual division of labour



remains unchanged. The nurseries, laundries and restaurants are predominantly staffed by women. In many instances women are encouraged to enter predominantly male occupations but the opposite is seldom true. As a result of this women have in their own ways refused to or are unable to combine both activities, thus in Cuba, they withdrew from social production (Reddock 1979:115) while in The Soviet Union, the rate of child-bearing among urban women has tended to decline.

As a result of the continued domestic burden placed on women, their participation in political activity is often also constrained. The majority of men in the post-revolutionary situation are unwilling to give up the comforts of a domesticated and subordinated wife. Women are therefore torn between their revolutionary duties to 'be productive' and their responsibility to take care of their family. In some situations, for example in rural China (Davin 1976:46-7) older women have had to take over the housework which the younger women could no longer do. Seldom is the discussion of the socialization of housework within the home a part of strategies aimed at the emancipation of women. Men are sometimes entreated to 'help' their wives but the responsibility remains the woman's. One possible exception to this rule was the case of Cuba. In that situation a study carried out in 1974 into why attempts to draw women into the labour force had failed, (between 1969 and 1974 over 700,000 women were recruited into the labour force but it was increased by only 200,000, Bengelsdorf & Hageman 1978) it was found that the following reasons were responsible: 1) women's inability to cope with family chores; 2) lack of services to lighten the housework load; 3) women's lack of motivation to work; 4) a lack of understanding of the specific problems of women by the administration;



5) poor working conditions and 6) misconceptions on the role of women in socialist society (King 1977). Based on this realization, therefore the Cuban Family Code of 1975 legally placed equal responsibility for the household and child-rearing on men and women. In reality though this has proved to be extremely difficult to implement. The explanation usually given for this is that it is the result of backward ideological remnants. Few socialist countries have however gone this far, instead they refer to the special 'inequality' of women, for example in the following quotation:-

'Equality of men and women is not an arithmetical equation of course. It connotes equal opportunities at the place of work, in the family and in public affairs. At the same time as housewife and mother a woman needs a certain 'inequality'.

or another

'The Soviet Union has created all the conditions to enable woman to combine work in her chosen field and socio-political activity with motherhood.' (New Times 28-77:18)

One of the reasons (at an ideological level) why efforts to encourage men to do domestic work have failed is the continued analysis of housework as 'unproductive', and backward drudgery. The domestic labour debate among socialist/feminists has been able to establish among other things the indirect way in which unpaid housework contributes to capital accumulation under capitalism and its continued contribution to socialist accumulation.<sup>3</sup> As far as its 'productive' character is concerned, they pointed out that the term 'productive' as used in Capital Vol I, referred to those activities which contributed directly and immediately to the surplus-value of the capitalist. It was not a definition of what was good for capitalist society and even less so socialist society. Thus Marx is at pains to point out:-

'The labourer alone is productive who produces surplus-value for the capitalist, and thus works for the self-expansion of capital. ... Hence the notion of a productive labourer implies not merely a relation between work and useful effect, between labourer and product of labour, but also a specific, social relation of production, a relation that has sprung up historically and stamps the labourer as a direct means of creating surplus value. To be a productive labourer is, therefore, not a piece of luck, but a misfortune.' (Marx 1974:477)

On this same subject an additional point was made that under capitalism and socialism many other forms of 'unproductive' labour are paid and accorded high prestige such as intellectual labour and entertainment, therefore there was no real reason why housework should continue to be so analysed. The continuation of this devaluation of housework at the same time as there has been a glorification of women's role in motherhood has served both to devalue as well as to stereotype the doers of housework and to discourage men from participation.

The use of social legislation to 'protect' women has also been some source of problem. Again these gains have been extremely important in facilitating comfort and relative security for women in child-bearing and child-rearing, but the responsibility has been mainly on women. Studies carried out in Yugoslavia (First 1980) show that these 'protective' legislation for example one years maternity leave for women, has adversely affected women by 1) placing them in a disadvantageous position within the labour market and 2) reducing their promotional opportunities. In the glorification of motherhood, little attempt has been made to develop the similar responsibility of fathers, through for example long term paternity leave for fathers and similar child-rearing related facilities.

Another major question raised by these studies has been the work of women's organisations in these countries. One characteristic of all these countries has been the establishment of National Women's organisations aimed at mobilizing women throughout the country in the interests of the revolutionary cause. Delia Davin in her study of Woman-Work and the Chinese Communist Party from the 1920s to the 1970s was able to see many fluctuations in the Party policy towards women. For example there was a shifting emphasis from women's work as housewife and mother to that of peasant-producer or worker and vice versa, to suit changing economic situations. In other words women were always a manipulable variable because of their position within the family and their lack of a real 'right to work'. She was also able to show how often the leading woman comrades clung tenaciously to the official line on the emancipation of women, resisting all attempts by feminist women to affect policies and strategies more in the interest of women. In addition, this study showed clearly how gains made in the interests of women, because of their effects in radically restructuring male-female relationships, for example the Marriage Law of 1949 were eventually lost. This is because of the fear of alienating the male supporters through the advocacy of radical solutions which may go against their immediate interests. Women apparently comprise a less important constituency.

With the rise of the feminist movement, these organisations throughout the world in many instances have sought to maintain their distance from this development. In Latin America for instance, left-wing women's groups have been at pains to point out that they are 'feminine' and not 'feminist' organisations. Feminism has been dismissed as 'bourgeois'; a C.I.A. plot to divide the working class and a pastime for middle class housewives. In spite of this however the work of the socialists with the femi-

nist movement has had some impact and some women's organisations for example the Federación Mujeres Cubana (FMC) have attempted to come to terms with some of the new ideas and analyses. This situation is fraught with many difficulties as in order to counter criticism some countries may appoint token women to high positions. But the feminist critique goes beyond being simply a measure of the 'status of women' as may be overtly apparent using parameters such as numbers in high positions, or existing legislation or numbers of women in 'male' occupations and deals more in terms of the freedom of women in relation to the position of men of their own class and in their own society. As such the aim is not simply for equality but for human liberation in a situation where sexual divisions do not subordinate half of the human race for its entire lifetime.

Today in existing women's organisations the tension between the feminist aspects of women's struggle for example over 'housework', the sexual division of labour, control of sexuality and the character of male-female relationships and the more general aspects of the struggle such as national production and defence and anti-imperialist unity continues from time to time swaying in one direction or the other. So far few of these organisations have been able to come out openly and denounce the patriarchal aspects of their society but a gradual realization is taking place.

It is based on this rather general and broad introduction that I shall attempt to analyse the development of the National Woman's Organisation (NWO) of Grenada. Much less has been written on this country than on the Nicaraguan Women's organisation<sup>4</sup> for example. But as will be shown in the course of the paper many similarities remain.



## The Case of Grenada

Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique is a small Caribbean island - state comprising 133 square miles and situated in the south of the Windward Islands, 90 miles north of Trinidad and Tobago with a population of 111,184 in 1977. It is an independent country, formerly a British colony until 1974. On March 13th, 1979, Grenada experienced a revolutionary change when its former leader 'Sir' Eric Gairy was overthrown. For years the people of Grenada had suffered under the tyrannical rule of Gairy supported by his armed 'thugs' the mongoose gang and the 'Green Beasts'. Unlike the case of Nicaragua no protracted armed struggle had been waged but for years the people had been organizing and struggling to change their situation. For example in December 1970 the famous nurses strike took place where thousands of nurses and their supporters marched through St. Georges and occupied the office of the Ministry of Health. This was followed by protest demonstrations of farmers to protest against the government transference of the banana and nutmeg co-operative associations to an essentially corrupt Government control. These events took place within the framework of the 'black power' upheavals during the late 1960s and early '70s in The Caribbean.

In 1972 an organization known as Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Welfare (J.E.W.E.L.) was formed in the south-east of the country comprising among its members Selwyn Strachan and Unison Whiteman, some teachers, peasants and youth.<sup>5</sup> They were engaged mainly in community activities for example a farming cooperative and published a newsheet called The Jewel. Six months later, that same year, another organisation was formed. This was known as The Movement for Assemblies of the People (M.A.P.)

and was based in the more urban, St. George's area; it comprised mainly professionals, for example lawyers, Kenneth Radix and Maurice Bishop. Within six months of the latter's formation, The New Jewel Movement (N.J.M.) was formed through a merger of the two organisations.<sup>6</sup> From that period on the N.J.M. led the Grenadian people on in their struggle against Gairy, gaining a lot of support from among the youth who were the main groups being harassed and terrorised by the police and secret police. In other areas of the population in all communities and to a lesser extent in the workplaces. But the tyrannical activities of Gairy and the lack of activities as far as the day to day living conditions of people were concerned also served to swell the opposition against his government.

So far as the stated political programme of the N.J.M. was concerned, the N.J.M. in its 1973 Political Manifesto outlined that a future N.J.M. government would be based on 'peoples assemblies' including village assemblies of all adult citizens and workers assemblies of all those who worked for a living. The village and workers assemblies would elect a national assembly, which would serve as the government.<sup>7</sup> During the struggles which ensued, various people were killed, N.J.M. members were beaten, arrested and jailed in 1973. A successful general strike was called in January 1974. Later that same month on the 21st January in an army and mongoose gang attack on a 6,000 strong demonstration Rupert Bishop, father of Maurice Bishop was killed. This general strike preceded the granting of independence to Grenada by Britain under the leadership of the corrupt Eric Gairy, and to a large extent this was the focus of a great deal of protest activity.

In 1976 General Elections were called and the N.J.M. participated in an alliance with the opposition Grenada National Party (G.N.P.) and the right-wing United Peoples Party (U.P.P.) led by Winston Whyte. After the very corrupt election the People's Alliance of these three opposition parties won six of the fifteen seats in the National Assembly. The N.J.M. won three, the G.N.P. two and U.P.P. one. An analysis of the elections however (Caribbean Contact, August 1979) showed that had it not been for electoral corruption the chances of a Gairyite victory would have been extremely slim. After this the N.J.M. continued its work outside of parliament, assisted by the fact that sessions were seldom called. It began to organise bank workers through the Bank and General Workers Union, and to reach other workers in the Grenada, Mental and Manual Workers Union (G.M.M.W.U.) and the Commercial and Industrial Workers Union (C.I.W.U.). During this entire period, police repression continued with attacks on ordinary citizens, including rape and on N.J.M. activists and supporters.

The eventual seizure of power on March 13th, 1979, was the culmination of all of these developments. On Saturday March 10th word was received that Gairy had left instructions that six of the leading members were to be detained in six specially prepared dungeons. He was leaving for New York on March 12th. Later they were informed that further instructions had been left for them to be killed while he was out of the country. At that point the decision was taken to take political power. This was done when about forty-six N.J.M. members of the incipient Peoples Revolutionary Army (P.R.A.) attacked the Government army barracks at True Blue. The army, surprised, quickly surrendered, only one army commander was killed. The local radio station was then taken without a fight



and a broadcast was made calling on the people to 'rise up against the Gairy regime'.<sup>8</sup> After this top government ministers and 'henchmen' were arrested. There was general public support because of the work carried out by the N.J.M. over the years, and the broad alienation of the local middle-classes and bourgeoisie. However some solid Gairyite support in particular among rural agricultural workers and the peasantry continued to exist.

### Women and The Grenadian Struggle

As was noted in the previous sections, at least two predominantly female occupational groups contributed greatly to the political struggle prior to March 13th, 1979. In 1970, the famous Nurses strike in one way heralded the beginning of the era of protest and struggle against Gairyism and closer the end the predominantly female bank workers were in the forefront of the struggle for the recognition of the Bank and General Workers Union. In addition to these, women were extremely active the day to day level in a number of ways. According to one source:-

'As the anti-Gairy movement grew, Grenadian women began to play an active, behind-the-scenes role. This activism cut across all divisions of age and class, involving uneducated rural women as well as professionals like teachers and nurses. Women sold the New Jewel paper on street corners, conveyed messages secretly (sic) and offered their homes as meeting places and shelters for the N.J.M. On revolution day, women cooked for the soldiers of the Peoples Revolutionary Army, helped make arrests and occupied police stations until Gairy's forces surrendered.' (Epica, 1982; 9)

In addition to the general oppression which they had in common with the men, women under Gairy suffered from additional problems. One of these was of course the payment of lower wages for the same job especially among



agricultural wage-labourers, the added burdens of their responsibility for child-care and the family brought on by the high cost of living and what is known as 'sexual exploitation' in Grenada, 'the widespread practice of demanding sexual favours from women in exchange for scholarships or employment.' (Epica, *Ibide*). In addition 70% of the women between the ages of 15 and thirty were unemployed and those employed could be fired at will, for example on becoming pregnant. The participation of women in the political struggle was extremely powerful. But then so it has been in the majority of revolutionary struggles. The Grenadian Revolution however stands out as one which from the inception recognized the contribution which women had made and could continue to make to the process of revolutionary transformation. One explanation of this development, whether some would accept this or not could be the internationalization of the women's struggle, which on the whole has made both women and men more sensitive to the continued oppression and exploitation of women even if that is the extent of its effect. Another but not contradictory factor, could be that the of the contribution which women did make, gave them a degree of power which demanded the commensurate respect and attention.

### The Characterization of the Grenadian Process

In the period since March 13th, 1979, the Peoples Revolutionary Government of Grenada has begun a process of revolutionary transformation. However in an interview in 1979, Bernard Coard described the process at that initial point in time as one whose primary aim was not that of building socialism, but one of 'simply trying to get the economy, which has been totally shattered by Gairy,

back on its feet'.<sup>9</sup> He identified the primary tasks therefore as those -

1. to get agricultural production going again
2. to develop a fishing industry
3. to develop a lumber industry with the limited forestry
4. to develop tourism
5. to develop agro-industries based on the food processing of cocoa, nutmegs, bananas, other fruits, vegetables, coconuts, sugar-cane etc.

The development of a socialist society was seen as a long-term aim. He went on to conclude on this subject by saying:-

'So fundamentally, at this time, we see our task not as one of building socialism. It is one of re-structuring and re-building the economy, of getting production going and trying to develop genuine grassroots democracy, trying to involve the people in every village and every workplace in the process of the reconstruction of the country. In that sense we are in a national democratic revolution involving the broad masses and many strata of the population' (Searle; 1979; 12).

Today in 1982 no definite claim is being made by the P.R.G. to be in the process of socialist transformation. At the 1st International Conference in Solidarity with Grenada in November 1981, the Minister of Finance and deputy Prime Minister described the country as still being in the process of National Reconstruction.<sup>10</sup> In other speeches given on this occasion, the Economy was described as a 'Mixed Economy' inviting the participation of local and foreign private and co-operative involvement (Radix 1981 p. 65-66). Further to this in the Report on the National Economy for 1981 and the Prospects for 1982 by the P.R.G. and presented by Bernard Coard on the 29th January 1982. The economy was described in the following manner:-

'As Comrades are aware, we are developing our economy on the mixed economy model. Our economy as a mixed economy will comprise the state sector, the private sector, and the co-operative sector. The dominant sector will be the state sector, which will lead the development process. In our view, this is a realistic and feasible approach, if we want to make any progress.' (p. 64)

This approach is similar to that adopted by the Nicaraguan government.<sup>11</sup> (Harris, 1981, 7) In both situations this has been justified by the fact that in these early stages the government is not in the position as far as finance, technical expertise nor experience is concerned to exclude the private sector altogether. In the words of Bernard Coard:-

'We adopted this approach because it is the only approach in our view that is realistic, possible and feasible within the context of our country - a small developing country starting from an extremely primitive economic base (Coard, 1981, 44).

The view is held that the well-entrenched private sector in Grenada is capable of serving the national interest (Jacobs, 19 ;10). A similar explanation was also put forward in Nicaragua, where in January 1981, the Minister of Agricultural Development, Jamie Wheelock stated that:-

'Where there is revolutionary leadership, we can also make use of the middle classes, including sectors of the bourgeoisie. Their experience in agriculture, their administrative skills in industry can strengthen the country's unity ... The internal class contradictions are less important than the material gains we receive in the reconstruction of the national economy' (quoted in Harris, 1981; 8).

According to Harris however this strategy has turned out to be a very expensive one as the 'straight-forward self-interest' of the so-called 'patriotic private enterprise' has outweighed their national interest. Thus overall the level of production has not been as high as expected, investment has been small and there has been a greater con-

centration on current projects rather than on capital maintenance and improvement (Harris, *Ibiden*).

In both instances the primacy of the State sector over the private sector is stressed. In Grenada an Investment Code is being developed which would underline the role envisaged for the private and co-operative sectors. Some criticism of this approach has occurred. Some see it as an outright betrayal of the revolution, a criticism dismissed as ultra-leftist by the government. Others however, while accepting its expediency at present would prefer to see it situated within the framework of the ultimate objectives of the revolutionary process. Political pronouncements and declarations as well as action however, have to be placed within the existing national and international context. In this regard, both the practise of the former prime minister Eric Gairy of confiscating private property without compensation, as well as the hostile international climate and the local anti-communist bogey, have possibly influenced the adoption of such a position.

The influence of the theory of the non-capitalist path to development however cannot be discounted, and increased links with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has to some extent influenced political developments. The P.R.G. has maintained most of the approaches and principles of the incipient New Jewel Movement in 1973-74. However in the day to day unfolding of the economic process, a great deal is being adopted from these earlier models, for example the systems of material incentives and of special significance to this paper the organization of the national woman's organization.

As far as economic policy is concerned, the P.R.G. has identified agriculture as the main pillar or 'motor' of the economy (Louison, 1981,96, Coard, 1981; 45)

based on the reality that at least 35,000 of the population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture for a living. As such, agriculture is supposed to contribute to the economy by being - the supplier of food to the people; the major foreign exchange earner; the main basis for industrialization and agro-industrial development; the main employment creator and a means of increasing internal self-reliance based on the use of land as the main natural resource. (Louison, 1981; 95-6) In addition to this Coard (1981;45) stressed the importance of agriculture to the expansion of the tourist industry. Within this area all three sectors of the economy would participate, the private sector, in one sense as 66% of the 8,202 farmers own the land which they farm; the State sector through the Grenada Farms Corporation, Forestry Corporation and Sugar Factory Ltd. and the co-operative sector through the already existing co-operatives for example the Grenada Nutmeg Co-operative and new ones being developed among small farmers and unemployed youth and women by the National Co-operative Development Agency (N.A.C.D.A.) founded in April 1980. In this instance, one gets some idea of ultimate goals as co-operative development according to Minister of Agriculture George Louison is a means towards the eventual collectivisation of agriculture. (Louison, 1981; 100)

As noted earlier industrialization is to be focussed around agriculture. According to Kenneth Radix, the strategy is to be one of import-substitution but through the utilization of 'indigenous natural and human resources' (Radix, 1981; 64). This is one of the areas where both local and foreign private capital will have its greatest involvement. The leading role is ascribed to the Public Sector but joint ventures as well as totally private, local and foreign investment will also be encouraged. This is put forward as a strategy aimed at finding urgent

solutions to the problems of high unemployment and under-employment, high levels of inflation and towards the diversification of the country's economic base (Radix, 1981; 65). By outlining the principles of the draft investment code, the P.R.G. presumes its capability of controlling in particular foreign investment and accomodating it within the framework fo its overall economic goals , in spite of the difficulties experienced in this area, for example in Poland. It is important to note however that as far as industrial development is concerned, most of the activities so far, for example the Agro-Industrial plant and the Fisheries Corporation have been state initiatives.

This attempt at an analysis of the Grenadian economy is at best incomplete. It was however included to provide a basis for the analysis of the National Womens Organization (N.W.O.) within the socio-economic reality of post-revolutionary Grenada. The following section will begin this analysis.

### The Process of National Democratization

In partly a spontaneous and partly a planned process a system of national democracy has been instituted. This has been done through a system of Workers Parish\* Councils which due to their large mambership were eventually divided into zonal councils. Eventually also the N.W.O. began to organize Women's Parish Councils where the women's groups in a particular zone or parish would meet. At these Councils at least one member of the P.R.G. is usually present and discussions take place on draft legislation, the draft budget or other programmes, strategies for mobilization or accountability question and answer sessions with heads of state corporations and government ministers.

\* Parish - A regional division similar to a county.

These are always interspersed with cultural items - songs, poems, or skits written and performed by the people of the area. Through these means, the people are constantly aware and involved in the programmes of the government.

### The Development of The National Women's Organisation

Prior to March 13th, 1979, the precursor of the N.W.O. was the New Jewel Movement Womens Arm. This was formed in 1977 and comprised a number of small groups of women, operating underground. According to one source (Epica, 1982), there were at least six underground groups and their work was described thus:-

'We printed pamphlets, attacking the high cost of living, and calling for equal pay for equal work. We used to do house-to-house underground, and speak to the people who were against Gairy about why change was important and how women would benefit from it' (Epica, 1982; 97).

As would be expected at this time membership was largely limited to members and supporters of the N.J.M. In the post-revolutionary period this structure was found to be inadequate as it restricted access to large numbers of women who were not directly involved in the politics of the N.J.M. However in spite of this initial situation women were extremely active in the support of the Revolution. This was noted by Bernard Coard in an interview when he stated:-

'The upsurge of activity by women in Grenada is one of the most remarkable features of the revolution. Their participation and involvement at so many levels, particularly at the grassroots level of the villages is truly extraordinary. Right now, quite frankly, the men must be embarrassed, because the initiative has been entirely seized by the women ...' (Searle, 1979; 15).



The continuous activity of Grenadian women in both the pre and post-revolutionary process has been a constant subject of writing and discussion on Grenada. In fact, the Free West Indian, national newspaper of Grenada is one of the few newspapers internationally, including the socialist world, in which one can find so much included on the situation of women. In order to manifest its concern for the position of women in the society, already in 1979, two measures were taken in this direction. The first was to 'abolish sexploitation'. The practice which had developed under the previous government of women having to exchange sexual favours in return for jobs and scholarships both in governmental circles and in private enterprise. Another early move was the establishment of the Grenada Women's Desk within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Social Affairs.

Almost immediately after March in June 1979, the first National Womens Conference of Grenada was held. It's theme was 'In Search of Solutions to the problems facing Grenadian women.' It was attended by 76 delegates representing every parish and including Carriacou and Petit Martinique (Searle, 1979; 22). At this conference, the problems selected for study were; the high cost of living, bad working conditions for women workers, poor health facilities (especially for pregnant women), lack of water, roads and electricity, poor housing and the need for the provision of education and skill training to enable them to qualify for better jobs.

In June 1980 the N.W.O. launched a campaign to increase the participation of Grenadian women in national life. The objectives of this campaign were to; 'Organise all women; Educate all women; Build services for women; Create work for women and raise up national production' (Hodge, 1980;15). This was to be done through house to



house meetings, the establishment of community day care projects; community improvement projects which would directly benefit women, and help create work for women and the formation of co-operatives for poultry farming, handicraft work and agro-industrial production of preserves. In addition other activities related to children were identified, for example a campaign to get all children to attend school and of providing free milk to the poorest children in the communities, identified by the N.W.O. members. The area of education was also identified as one for special attention. This was begun with film shows, panel discussions, talks and cultural shows carried out in collaboration with the Centre for Popular-Education (C.P.E.).

On the 19th of June that year, at a rally in honour of two heroes - Tubal Uriah Butler and Alistair-Strachan, a bomb, intended for the leaders exploded killing three young women - 13 year old Laureen Phillip, 23 year old Laurice Humphrey and 15 year old Bernadette Bailey. The fact that three women and young women there killed is representative of the fact that women comprised a major percentage of the participants at this political rally. Among the thirty-seven who were injured and hospitalized the majority were women. (Hodge, 1980; 14) But far from intimidating them, this strengthened their militancy and defiance and in the solidarity marches which followed on June 20th hundreds more women who had never marched before including white-collar workers, middle-class housewives and schoolgirls joined the demonstration. This event served as a catalyst to the campaign of the N.W.O. outlined on June 1st. Women formed the majority of the recruits volunteering to join the People's Militia and became even more active in the N.W.O. and other activities.

Later that same year in October 1980, the Maternity Leave Law was passed. This law was passed after the original draft produced in April had been circulated and discussed by women's groups, community groups, employer's associations, trade unions and professional groups. Based on these discussions, changes were made to the original draft. For example the draft did not include benefits for unmarried teachers and student nurses and based on public response, all sectors of women workers were included. Also in the original, people working in small businesses with less than five workers were not eligible. Based on public response, a survey was carried out which showed that the only employers who may not be able to pay these benefits were some professionals who employed domestic servants. In response to this the draft was altered so that the government would pay half of the pay for these workers (F.W.I. 11.10.80). In the case where trade union contracts existed, workers could choose those provisions which were in their favour. Under the law all women workers are eligible to two months whole pay and one month half pay. Daily paid workers would get one/fifth of their annual salary. Employers who fail to honour these provisions face a \$1,000 fine or 6 months in prison while employers who fire a worker face up to \$2,000 fine or one year in prison.

This law was signalled as a major 'step forward' in 'protecting women'. Also in 1980, a law decreeing 'equal pay for equal work' was passed. This affected mainly agricultural labourers. Based on a report on these developments Grenada was elected to the executive of the Inter-American Commission of Women, of the O.A.S.

In December that year the 2nd Annual Congress was held, at this time the organisation comprised 1,500 members and it set itself the target of 5,000 members

by December 1981. It identified, based on a recent survey, the most pressing problems of women at that time to be: the need for work, day care centres (pre-primary and nursery) community improvements, the development of agricultural co-operatives was again stressed as a means of providing employment and the strengthening of women's traditional skills.

In its recruitment campaign during the ensuing months it was stressed that the N.W.O. was for all women and not only N.J.M. women. An information brochure stated the following:-

for

'The N.W.O. is not for some women only, it's all women. It joins young and older sisters together. Our members are road workers, nutmeg, pool workers, housewives, students, agricultural workers, unemployed sisters, teachers, nurses and domestic servants. You don't have to support any political aprty or any particular church. You don't have to join the millitia - although many N.W.O. members do. The N.W.O. is for all women who support the revolution, defend equal rights and opportunities for women and want to see Grenada progress and move forward ...'

During 1981, many groups were formed so that by December 1981 they had achieved its target of 5,000 members long before this deadline.

The activities of the N.W.O. have taken place within the framework of continuous mass mobilisation which has been allocated a special portfolio in the P.R.G. The success of mobilization efforts among women and their strong visibility in many aspects has given women confidence. Unfortunately however this strength has not been used by the N.W.O. to deal with the fundamental problems of the man-woman relationship which beset the community. In spite of the contribution of women to the revolution with their very lives, there is a deep fear that any acknowledgements of the contradictions existing within the 'family' and the 'private' sphere would serve to

destroy national unity. As a result there is the situation mentioned in the introduction, where there is fear in linking any of these activities with women's liberation and feminism. Feminism has been defined 'foreign' and as 'separatist' thus one source was pains to point out that:-

'If it is true that the revolution has changed the status of women in Grenada, it is even more accurate to say that through their involvement in the revolution, Grenadian women are changing themselves. Advancement has come not so much through pressure for women's rights as an isolated issue (the mode of the U.S. feminist movement) as through active participation and leadership in the revolution as a whole.' (Epica, 1981; 98).

The aims of the movement are discussed in terms of economic and women's rights and not in terms of emancipation or liberation, words which denote not only discrimination but also subordination and exploitation.

#### Activities of the N.W.O.

According to Bernard Coard in the Report on The National Economy for 1981 and the Prospects for 1982 - the role of mass organizations in 1981 (Year of Agriculture and Industries), in the country (including the women's organization) was to 'strike forward' in social services (1982; p. 67). During 1981, when the Ministry of Mobilization began to function effectively, there was a mass mobilization of people into the National Youth Organization (N.Y.O.), the Trade Unions, the Militia, the Productive Farmers Union (P.F.U.) and the 'Community' Brigades.

But prior to 1981 and during 1981, the work of the N.W.O. has been concentrated on the social services, to a large extent this emphasis has grown directly out of the real day to day problems of women and their children.

in a society where the Western nuclear family is not the norm. In doing this they have worked particularly with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Social Affairs. For purposes of discussion these activities can be divided in the following main areas - social welfare, education and community work.

#### Social Welfare:

For the most part this has centred around the welfare of children in Caribbean society as much as in others (or more) the responsibility of women. The women's organization took as its special responsibility the monitoring of government projects such as - primary health care, free school meals, free books and uniforms, free milk and so on. This in many ways was a logical development as in the Caribbean women are responsible not only for the nurturing of children but also for their economic well-being. With the aim of facilitating women's entry into social production, a great deal of emphasis was also put on the establishment of day-care facilities, and the continued support of existing ones. One of the most interesting aspects of the establishment of these centres has been that within the respective communities attempts were made to involve the other mass organizations in this work, thus the local youth organization, peoples militia and N.J.M. support groups all work together to establish and run the centres. In this way men and women are involved in the provision of these facilities. At the level of teaching though as yet no men are involved.

#### Education:

This has been advanced as the main way through which women can gain 'equality'. Thus in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, a mass education programme for women has been developed. Within the organization itself, special

study seminars have been organised as well as political education at the regular meetings. The subjects covered according to Minister of Education, Jacqueline Creft, include: Grenada's history from The Caribs\* to 1979; Grenada's economy; how to overcome underdevelopment; topics in World history and international affairs; the importance of education in establishing People's Power; women's needs and participation in the establishment of a People's Power; women's needs and participation in the establishment of a People's Democracy; methods of organizing women's groups; maternity law rights; first aid training. (Creft, 1981; 54)

In relation to more formal education, by the programme 'Every child in school' the practise of keeping girls at home to take care of younger children is being fought against. Within the formal education system some attempts to break down the sexual division of labour has taken place, through the awarding of scholarships to girls and women for technical courses as well as by encouraging them to attend local vocational institutes such as the agricultural school and the Fisheries School. Evidence of similar attempts with relation to men and boys are not apparent. The high value attached to 'male-dominated' field of employment and education serve to encourage women to enter these fields. At the same time however some attempt should be made to re-evaluate the 'female-dominated' fields as those continue to exist and to be primarily staffed by women. Similar encouragement should also be given to boys and men to enter these fields. The N.W.O. should be able also to boast of the number of boys studying home economics, advanced secretarial studies or early childhood education. Similarly also of male typists, nursery school teachers and cooks (not only chefs).

\* indigenous people of The southern Caribbean

At the same time as this is taking place, it is important that the women are maintaining the skills which they already have and that they are recognized as such. The constant reference to women who have skills and experience in agriculture, sewing, basketry, handicrafts and food preparation and preservation as 'unskilled' should therefore cease.

Also in the area of education some important work has begun in the area of curricula transformation. Merle Hodge Coordinator of The Curriculum Development Programme, wrote in 1980:

' The new woman of Grenada will be the product of a changing education system which is geared towards equal educational exposure for girls and boys and a more conscious attack, through education on the roots of sexual stereotyping than is evident anywhere in the English-Speaking Caribbean' (F.W.I. 2.9.80).

Along similar lines at the 2nd National Congress of the N.W.O. in 1980 one of the instructions (No. 10) given to the New executive was 'To ask the Curriculum Development Unit to ensure that a true image of women's abilities and her role in a revolutionary society is portrayed in all learning materials for our children'. This is of course a very important area and one which has often been neglected. It however will have little result if the material circumstances which determine women's oppression are not removed. In Cuba, via the Federacion<sup>de</sup> Mujeres Cubana (F.M.C.) attempts were made to deal with the question of sexual stereotyping at this ideological level through the press, school curricula and television. This however had little effect as 1) the low-status of the household 'role' of women continued, therefore women within the society were viewed first as housewives and second as workers and 2) there was a general acceptance of a certain degree of biological determinism in the allocation of women's jobs as women were often seen as physically weaker and on this basis excluded from many jobs. (Reddock, 1979;



145). In the Cuban case also the continued existence of 'machismo' as a phenomena and of male pride was a major obstacle which was passed from parents to sons within the family and could not be removed through accepted channels.

Similarly in Grenada the view that a change in ideas and attitudes are what is necessary is accepted. It is recognized that changes in the law are not enough. This was noted by President of the N.W.O. and Secretary for Women's Affairs Phyllis Coard in an interview with Prensa Latina in July 1980 in C pengagen, when 'she pointed out that the fundamental problem which a revolution must eradicate is not inequality in the eyes of the law - because that is changed easily - but the traditional attitude to women in many sectors' (F.W.I. 2.8.80). This struggle to change ideas and attitudes of course must be continued but other structural changes in the day to day power relations at a more basic level must also take place.

#### Community Work:

As mentioned earlier, the entire community is mobilized via the mass organizations for the establishment of nursery and pre-primary schools. But in addition to this a great deal of other work takes place - for example in the area of road-repair, fund-raising for local institutions, hospitals, health centres repairs to school buildings and community centres, repairs to the homes of single women and old people. In all of this the women provide voluntarily the manual labour required with minimal assistance from men.

In spite of a very creative approach in developing the new Grenadian society in general. The programme for women bears a striking similarity to that of the older socialist countries which themselves have inherent difficulties.



In the case of Cuba for example, Lewis, Lewis and Rigdon (1977) summarised the activities of the F.M.C. when it was institutionalised as:-

1. Mobilizing women for education, production and defense, by encouraging women to attend adult school, enter the labour force and join the militia.
  2. Carrying out periodic surveys of women's educational and employment backgrounds, skill levels and willingness to work outside the home.
  3. Establishing and operating sewing and dress-making schools, retraining centres for domestic servants and day-care centres for children of all working mothers.
  4. Establishing and operating study-groups for ideological training of all people but specifically of women.
  5. Presenting government policy to the women, more than representing women's position to government.
- (Lewis, Lewis & Rigdon, 1976)

#### An Analysis of The Work of The N.W.O.

Through these activities therefore, women and the N.W.O. have earned themselves high esteem in the society. But these changes in women's self-realization as well as the attacks on the sexual division of labour will have a fundamental effect on the relationships between women and men, women and women and men and men in the society. In China in 1949 after the Marriage Law which recognized divorce by mutual consent and the Land Reform which allocated land to individuals and not to families (thus women gained access to land a means of production). Women took this opportunity to refuse the domination of their mothers in law and husbands. The effect of this

was so widespread that the situation was soon altered making divorce more difficult and controlling the allocation of land. (Davin, 1976; 46). During this period of relative freedom there was an increase in the number of murders of women and suicides as men fought to retain control over their women. In the end, the men won, and even though women continued their work in social production male domination was restored.

Already in Grenada in this new situation women are gaining the confidence to fundamentally question and to refuse to accept their subordinate position. While in Grenada in 1981, one woman was overhead complaining to another 'He take a woman off de bus an put on a man!' She apparently had in no uncertain terms told the minibus driver the error of his ways. Similarly N.W.O. members, burdened by their daily work as well as voluntary duties are to be heard complaining about their double burden of housework which still has to be done, often late at night. Yet when asked whether this is ever discussed publicly the response would be NO, that would cause too much disturbance

The reality is that change is a dialectical process and change in one area also results in change in others. The question will be whether the N.W.O. and the P.R.G. will allow this liberating process which has already begun to continue or will it eventually be limited? Historically at crucial periods it is always the women who eventually have to sacrifice their freedom for the 'public good'. It is important to realize that all these changes bring the formerly suppressed or repressed contradictions to the fore and machinery will have to be established to deal with the new situation. In addition the political education of men will have to prepare them for the changes in the present situation which will have to come later.

Another area of importance is 'the family'. As noted in the introduction Marx and Engels recognized the oppressive and exploitative nature of the bourgeois family, when in the Communist Manifesto they stated:-

'Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital.'

(Marx & Engels, 1977; 50) (my emphasis)

In the case of Grenada and indeed the entire Caribbean region this statement underlined above holds true, yet 'the family' as the unit of society is still held. In the Cuban Family Code of 1975 this is stated while in the Principles and Programme of The Working Peoples Alliance of Guyana published in 1980 (?) the family is recognized as the basic unit of society and its 'strengthening' is seen as a means of ending domestic exploitation and woman and child abuse. (W.P.A. 1980 (?); 26) As yet in Grenada (to its credit) no such formal statement has been made but actions, based on these assumptions do take place. One example is the situation described as 'irresponsible fatherhood', where fathers do not contribute financially to the upkeep of their children. The position put forward is that this problem cannot be adequately dealt with until all men are employed. This prospective solution assumes that a man's 'responsibility' to his children is primarily a financial one. For working-class and peasant women their responsibility is both economic and social and the society castigates very strongly any women who contributes only financially to her children's life and well-being. In a

new society a man's responsibility to his children as well as other relatives is to be also socially responsible and this is possible even when men are unemployed. The stereotype of the male breadwinner is part and parcel of the western capitalist family model and this has to be eradicated with the rest of the system. At a broader level the whole question of the role of the bourgeois family in socialist society has to be studied and analysed so that strategies aimed at eradicating it and replacing it with relationships more in tune with socialist society can emerge. The relationship of 'the family' to the capital accumulation process in industrial/commercial production as well as in peasant/petty-bourgeoisie production has to be properly analysed. It is no accident that the family arose in history at the same point in time as did private property and class society. Any attempt to get rid of the latter and retain the former is fraught with the contradictions being experienced in socialist countries in their strategies 'on the woman question'.

The Caribbean working-class and peasantry recognized very early the limitations and uselessness of the bourgeois family for its needs. Attempts by the Colonial Church and State to force it upon them have virtually failed. In the present situation women (in spite of poverty) enjoy a degree of social and economic independence not enjoyed by their sisters in parts of the world where a 'stable' family exists, for example India. The commonly-held view that all working-class and peasant women want to be married is totally incorrect.<sup>11</sup> From very early these women recognize the limitations placed on them by legal marriage. The fact that this is often put off until a man can afford to be a breadwinner shows the economic as opposed to the social or affective basis of the bourgeois family.

## Conclusion

In conclusion then one can say that possibly more than in any other revolutionary process to date, the visibility of women in Grenada is outstanding. In addition from the outset measures aimed at ameliorating the conditions of women and involving them in national life continue. In spite of the creativity and innovativeness of the People's Revolutionary Government, there has been a growing tendency to closely adhere their strategy for women on the traditional strategies used in older socialist countries which have failed to 1) successfully challenge the sexual division of labour 2) socialise housework within the home and 3) transform the oppressive bourgeois family. The reason given for these failures is usually the time factor as old ideas are hard to eradicate. The question arises therefore of the connection between the old ideas and the old family. Is the former responsible for the latter or vice versa?

In Grenada as in other parts of the region women are already in an advantageous position as for large numbers of them they are not constrained by the old family system and so are freer to participate in the activities of the revolution and in social production. To try to re-establish patriarchal control over these women by 'strengthening' the bourgeois family would undoubtedly be historically a backward step.

In order therefore to develop new strategies, an analysis based on the peculiar characteristics of the regional and working-class situation, as well as a materialist understanding of the origins and continued bases for women's oppression and exploitation and its interrelationship to class and national oppression has to be developed. In doing so the traditional prejudices against feminism will have to be got rid of and the wealth of research and analysis carried on by the socialist-feminists taken into consideration.

FOOTNOTES

1. See for example the work of Elizabeth Croll (1978) Feminism and Socialism in China, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul; Batya Weinbaum (1978), The Curious Courtship between Women's Liberation and Socialism, South End Press Boston; Richard Stites (1978). The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia 1860-1930, Princeton; Delia Davin (1976) Woman-Work: Women and The Party in Revolutionary China, Clarendon Press, Oxford, Sheila Rowbotham (1975). Women Resistance and Revolution, Penguin.
2. 'feminisation' - the process through which certain occupations have assumed the character of being 'women's jobs'. As part of this process the value of labour power is cheapened. (Reddock, 1982; 2).
3. For more on the domestic labour debate see Terry Fee "Domestic Labour: An Analysis of Housework and its Relation to the Production Process" in Review of Radical Political Economies, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 1976; Claudia von Werlhof 'Women's Labour, The Blind Spot in the Critique of Political Economy,' (mimeo) University of Bielefeld, 1977.
4. Recent articles include 'Women in resistance and revolutionary movements: Latin America-Nicaragua in Resources for Feminist Research/Documentation, Vol. 10, No. 1, March 1981; 'Nicaragua: Victory and After' in I.S.I.S. International Bulletin, No. 19.
5. a) 'Grenada: Let Those Who Labour Hold The Reins: Interview with Bernard Coard by Chris Searle, Race and Class Pamphlet No. 7; Liberation, London 1979, p. 7. b) Ernest Harsock 'How the Gairy Regime was

Overthrown', Intercontinental Press combined with  
Imprecor, Vol. 17, No. 44, December 3, 1979, p. 1185.

6. Ibidem.
7. Harsoch, Op. Cit. No. 5(b) p. 1185.
8. Ibid p. 1187.
9. Op. Cit. No. 5(a) p. 11.
10. In: Grenada is Not Alone, Fedon Publishers, St. Georges, 1982; p. 27.
11. This will be developed in the forthcoming work of the author on 'Women, Labour and Struggle in 20th Century Trinidad and Tobago'.



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