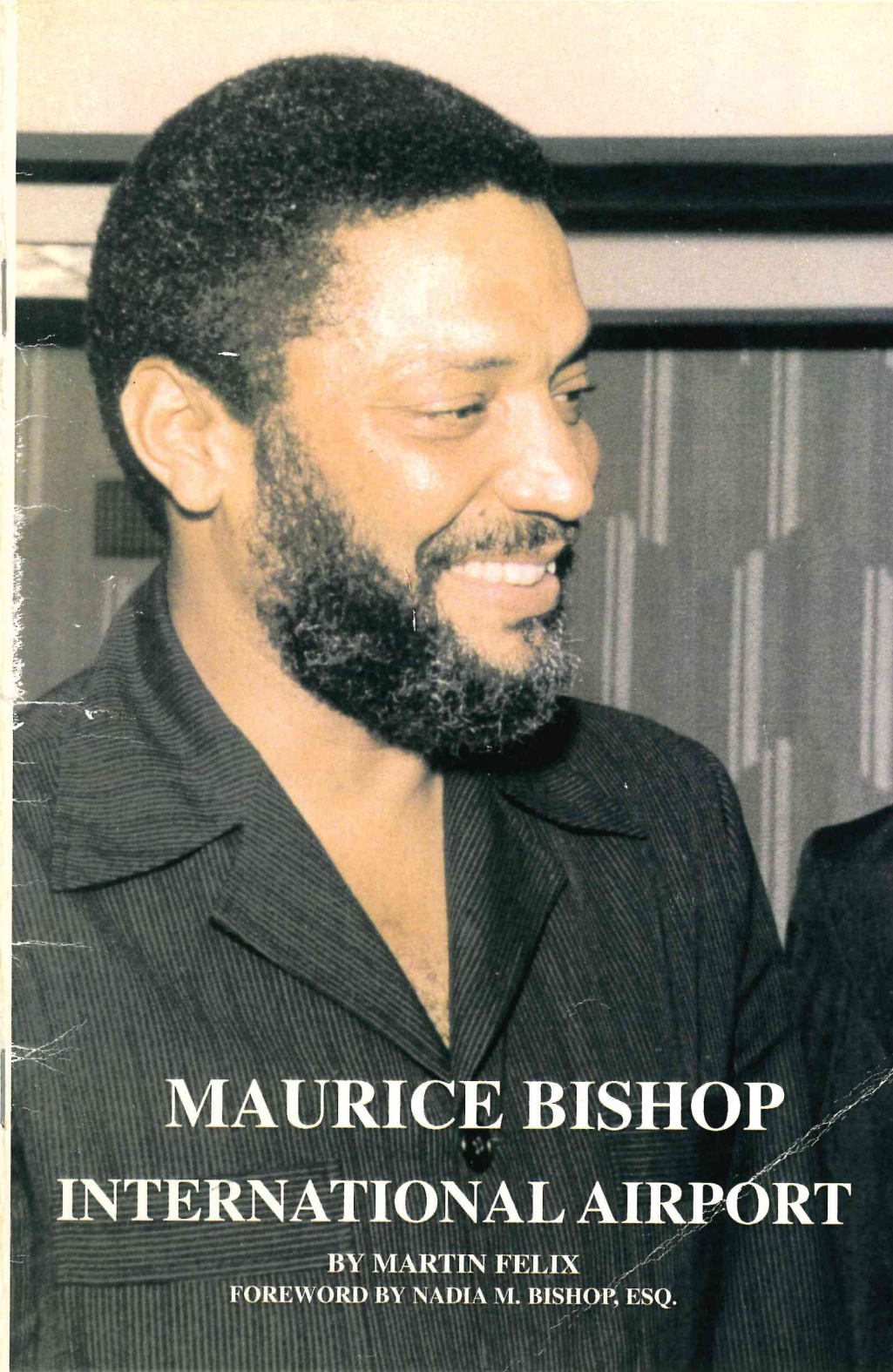




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MAURICE BISHOP INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

BY MARTIN FELIX
FOREWORD BY NADIA M. BISHOP, ESQ.

MAURICE BISHOP INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

GRENADA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT RENAMING CAMPAIGN

Martin P. Felix

Foreword by Nadia M. Bishop, Esq.

Maurice Bishop's photograph courtesy of Maxine Townsend-Broderick

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FOREWORD

Writing this foreword has proven to be more difficult than I expected. Mainly because I initially felt the need to convince readers of the value in renaming Point Salines international airport, Maurice Bishop International Airport. I felt it would be an acknowledgment of all of Daddy's efforts on behalf of the Grenadian people, and thus, people had to be convinced of its worthiness. Then I sat down and thought about him, the man I knew, and about the way he interacted with Grenadians. In a moment the error of my perception was revealed. The principles Daddy advocated for and succeeded in putting into action brought him contentment.

Maurice Bishop did not work on behalf of Grenadians for recognition or personal gain. My Father had the honor of receiving his personal rewards while still living in the flesh. In addition to his family, his joy extended to the sense of pride that people took in themselves and Grenada after the Revolution, regardless of their status. He was heartened by many things, including: Grenadians' willingness to serve; the

interest of expatriates in giving back to their country; elder Grenadians willing to learn to read and young Grenadians willing to teach them; the spirit of cooperation; and the excitement of building an airport to expand the national economy. These were his rewards.

One of his greatest lessons to me was that of service without expecting something in return. He lived his life as an example of the maxim, "to those whom much is given, much is required." Due to the many advantages he was afforded as a child, in his youth, and as a man, he constantly gave back to others.

As a child, I remember many times feeling jealous and resentful of 110,000 people – the entire population of Grenada. Although I knew my Father loved me, it seemed that any of them – it didn't seem to matter which one – could always take him away from me. Many weekends our family would have plans to go to the beach, and just as we were about to leave a voice would be heard in the yard. "Brother Bish, Brother Bish you in there? I need some help Brother

Bish." My brother John and I would collectively groan as Mum started unpacking the towels that were meant for Daddy. None of us needed to hear the specifics of the problem. If it was important enough to bring that man out on a Sunday, we knew it would be important enough for Daddy to address immediately. Maurice's reward was knowing that he could help those who turned to him.

Then there were the evenings when a truck would back into the yard. Daddy would go out to meet the driver, usually an old man, or sometimes a middle-aged man who brought along his family. This man would take Daddy's hand as if to shake it, then bring him close for a hug. We would hear him thanking Dad for some legal service that had been provided. Then they would go around to the back of the truck and look at fruits and provisions laid out as if they were Crown Jewels. The biggest yams, plantains, mamiapples, bananas, mangoes, and the prettiest tomatoes and cucumbers would be laid out on crocus bags. Dad would say,

"Brother So and So, I told you it was no problem. You could get a lot for all of this in the market." "I have more for the market Brother Bish, don't worry, this is for you, the wife and them growing children." "Thank you then Brother, thank you." After everything was brought into the house, Mum would ask Dad when he had found out that the bank was taking provisions as payment? He would say, "just yesterday you know." She would "chupps," say "uhh hmm," and we would all start laughing.

Daddy realized that his clients' desire to give back to him empowered them. Thus, instead of protesting, he gratefully accepted their gifts. Pretty soon, to listen to him, you would think he had only done the work so that he could get the fruits and provisions. These tokens of appreciation were Maurice's reward, not the expectation of a monument to his memory.

We should all be so lucky to love what we do, and for whom we do it, as passionately as Maurice Bishop did. Although we missed not having him at every family outing, we seldom

asked him not to go because the joy, excitement and enthusiasm with which he returned home was an inspiration to us all. When there were financial concerns, he was aware that he could not work for everyone for free, but he could serve the one who had come to him that week. The next week would take care of itself. Like the girl on the beach with thousands of stranded starfish. She may not have been able to save all of them by throwing them back into the water, but for each one that she did save she made a difference.

Although his remains have yet to be laid to rest with respect and dignity, the memory of Maurice Bishop is still fruitful. He made a difference while he was alive. Many lives were enriched, valued and made whole because of his commitment to service.

I remember after the Revolution, we were considering where to move. John and I were 12 and 10 years old respectively. We visited a house with beautiful grounds, a lovely view, high ceilings, big rooms, chandeliers, and a winding

staircase. I knew it was home. We had finally arrived. I even knew which bedroom was going to be mine. Then we met downstairs and amidst all of the chatter about whose room was whose, and how big the closets were, he said quietly, "we can't live here." We all looked at him incredulously. And I said, "sit down Daddy 'cause I know you aren't feeling well. This house is perfect, why can't we live here?" "I represent the people of Grenada," he stated seriously. We continued to look at him blankly, although Mum got up, already saying goodbye to the place. "How can I represent people, many of whom live in poverty when I live like this?" John and I sighed dejectedly knowing we had lost. Whenever the Grenadian people came into the analysis, they always won. So we went to live at Mount Wheldale – no chandeliers, fewer and smaller rooms, no elegant grounds, no staircase. That was Daddy. He would not be happy in an elevated living environment if he had not lifted his people with him.

As the Revolution progressed, he attended Young Pioneers functions and listened as the children spoke, sang and chanted proudly about Grenada. He encouraged the upliftment of women with his support of the National Women's Organization ("NWO"). He advanced the goal of literacy for all Grenadians through the Center for Popular Education ("CPE"). He walked with farmers through cocoa fields, embracing and sharing in their pride at being able to harvest and refine their cocoa products in their own country. These were Maurice's rewards.

Maurice Bishop did not dedicate countless hours to free legal services, or miss family outings, or participate in strikes, or get up again after being savagely beaten, to have an airport named after him. He did those things because he had to. They were as natural to him as breathing. He loved Grenada and Grenadians passionately. Not serving them would have been like not breathing.

Martin Luther King did not work on behalf of poor people in order to get a Nobel Peace Prize; he did it because it was in

his heart and it had to come out. Mother Teresa did not serve the disenfranchised and discouraged because she wanted recognition; she did it because it was in her heart and it had to come out. T. A. Marrayshow and Uriah "Buzz" Butler did not work on behalf of the peoples of the Caribbean because they wanted fame and memorials; they did it because it was in their hearts and it had to come out. Maurice Bishop did not serve his country because he expected an International Airport named in his memory; he did it because it was in his heart, and it had to come out.

We honor him for the same reason we honor the others. All of their lives have enriched our lives, empowered us, and made the way easier and brighter.

The Bishop family would proudly accept the honor of having Point Salines International Airport renamed Maurice Bishop International Airport, in honor of our beloved.

Nadia M. Bishop, Esq. (Daughter of Maurice Bishop)

INTRODUCTION

The Grenada Forum has embarked on a national campaign to rename the Point Salines international airport the Maurice Bishop International Airport. The Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement initiated this renaming campaign in 1985. We want to heighten this campaign. The Forum's new thrust is a drive to collect ten thousand (10,000) signatures to be handed over to the Grenadian government. Likewise, we are encouraging all individuals, organizations and friends of Grenada to join this campaign.

Legitimate questions that can be asked are: "What is in a name?" "Why Maurice Bishop?" "How would renaming the airport Maurice Bishop International Airport contribute to Grenada's development?" These are questions we hope will be addressed in this booklet and in the ensuing discussion that will surely emerge as this renaming campaign develops. We want to state from the onset, without any reservation, that Maurice Bishop is the name of no ordinary person and

that the construction of the international airport in Grenada was no ordinary feat.

To most people Maurice Bishop is the symbol of the March 13, 1979 Grenada Revolution. Maurice Bishop, the Revolution and the airport represent a national political and economic 'lift off'. The people's Revolution under Maurice's leadership built the International Airport – a dream proposed and procrastinated upon by seven administrations and for over a quarter of a century. The popular Revolution made this airport a living reality in its four and a half years of national transformation. Indeed, the greatest show of Caribbean and internationalist solidarity towards the Grenada Revolution found expression in this Point Salines airport construction project. This is fitting and quite natural because Maurice Bishop's life and ideology were best characterized by alliance, internationalism and solidarity.

The March 13 Revolution led by the brilliant, charismatic Maurice Bishop took Grenada to its highest heights of national development. The airport at Point Salines was the

largest project undertaken by the Revolution, indeed, in the history of Grenada. The project garnered the highest attention and largest resource of Maurice Bishop's People's Revolutionary Government ("PRG"). The PRG saw the Point Salines airport as organic to the Revolution and to Grenada's future development. Our airport, as seen by Maurice Bishop and the other leaders of the Revolution, was tantamount to what the opening of the American railroads meant to the United States' industrial transformation.

Conversely, this airport was the foremost target of the United States administrations of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan in their efforts to reverse the Revolution. This aggression against the Revolution culminated in the invasion of the airport site on October 25, 1983.

Before his tragic death, Maurice Bishop practically opened the Point Salines International Airport by being the first person to fly out of it in September of 1983. The Point Salines International Airport cannot be complete without recognition and tribute to its foremost visionary and most

valiant crusader. Renaming our airport the Maurice Bishop International Airport would help the legacy of one of the Caribbean's greatest sons to live on forever. Circulating or lending your name to this petition is a concrete manner in which we can all contribute to finally completing our international airport. After all, one of the major lessons of the Grenada Revolution and of the construction of the airport itself is that in cooperation and unity we can literally move rocks and mountains.

HISTORY

To understand the importance of this campaign to rename Point Salines International Airport in Maurice Bishop's name, it is important to briefly review the struggle to build an international airport in Grenada, and Maurice Bishop's leadership in fulfilling this long and elusive dream.

In December of 1979, merely 9 months after the Maurice Bishop-led PRG came to power in Grenada, work began on transforming a barren, rocky patch of land at the

southernmost point of the island into a modern international airport. Prior to this project, the Point Salines peninsula had been best known for a salt pond and its juxtaposed black and white sand beaches. This area also has great historical and symbolic significance as the sight of the earliest known Amerindian settlement. Point Salines continues to be historically significant. The international airport project was the single most important initiative undertaken in the history of Grenada, both economically and symbolically. The PRG envisioned this international airport as essential to the development of the country and a web that would link all other development initiatives. While Maurice Bishop and the PRG saw the Point Salines airport as the vehicle to take Grenada into the twenty-first century, the US government unfortunately preferred to view the project from a cold-war perspective.

Traditionally, international airports in the Caribbean were built for military rather than for economic reasons. Most of the airports in the English-speaking Caribbean were constructed during World War II and were specifically for

colonial officials' defensive retreat in case of German nazi aggression in the region.¹ In the post-war period, these airport strips were extended to support the tourist industry and to handle the growing international cargo trade.

In Grenada's case, the Pearls strip – opened on January 16, 1943 – was intended for the evacuation of the British Governor, his family and other colonial officials during the war. The land on which the Pearls airport was built was purchased as a favor to the aristocratic DeGale family. This site was not one of the better sites of the World War II colonial airport projects. It was situated in Grenada's longest valley and was battered by crosswinds. Pearls was very short – even by regional standards. The strip was extended to 5250 feet in the 1972-1973 renovation. It was regarded as only marginally suitable for flying in daylight under good weather conditions. The airport fell short of three major International Civil Aviation Organization's safety standards and night and instrument landings were impossible there.² Pearls could not accept jet landings under any condition. Scientific studies did not consider it a good candidate for

¹Thom Rovert, "Airport '83 Reagan's Target Grenada's Triumph," *Everybody's Magazine*, March 1983, p. 9

tarmac extension as was later done in many Caribbean territories to accommodate the newer and larger jets in the post-war period.

The lack of a modern airport seriously affected Grenada's development. The limitations of Pearls retarded the growth of the tourist industry. A 1980 report derived from a European Tourism Demand Study found that while Grenada was considered the most desired tourist destination of 26 Caribbean islands, it was categorized as 'touristically' disadvantaged because of the accessibility problem.³ Long distance air passengers bound for Grenada had to change aircraft in Barbados or Trinidad, which usually involved overnight stay in these neighboring territories.⁴ In 1982, it was estimated that this inconvenience cost the Grenadian economy US \$1.3 million annually. In addition, the lack of an international airport worsened the huge import/export imbalance by further limiting the export options of the Grenadian economy.

³*Caribbean Geography* "The Changing Caribbean: Grenada's New International Airport", Dec. 1986, p.151
⁴Tony Thomdike. "Grenada: Politics, Economics and Society" (London: Frances Pinter Publishers). 1982. p.125

British economists first proposed the idea of an international airport for Grenada in 1954. Subsequently, several colonial era studies done by the British and the World Bank confirmed the need for a new airport. All of these studies regarded Point Salines as the best site. In 1960, the then Federal Government of the West Indies appointed a commission to report on civil aviation in the region. This study also favored the Point Salines site, rather than an expansion of Pearls. The commissioners recommended that "construction be started as soon as possible."⁵ In 1967, a Canadian development study for a joint airport for Grenada and St. Vincent went a lot further. This report was the first to propose the would-be controversial 9,000-ft runway for the site. It suggested a three-phase stage evolution for the runway with the airport in partial operation.⁶

Nevertheless, of the seven (7) general elections that took place between 1954 – when the Point Salines idea was first

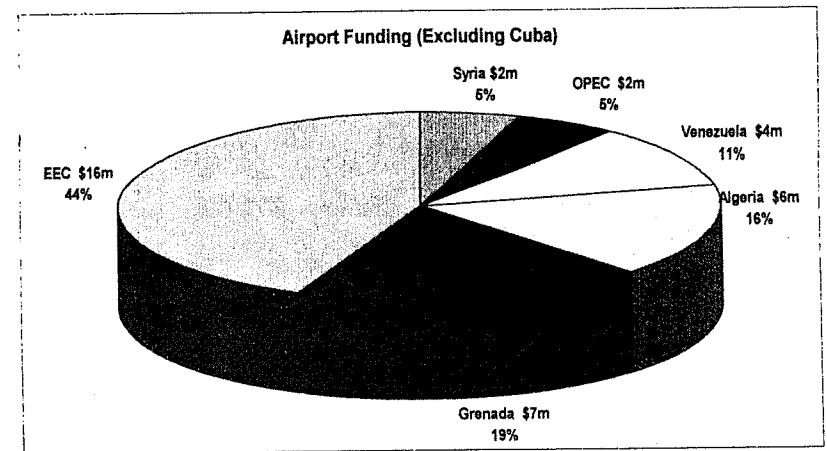
⁵There were several disincentives related to this kind of transit: i) travel agencies were leery of this arrangement because of the logistic details. As such, interested visitors were often advised of other destinations, and, ii) the aircraft's providing service to Grenada were very small and uncomfortable. As Maurice Bishop often joked "it was literally a labor of love to visit Grenada through Pearls Airport".

⁶Bernard Coard, "International Airport Project." Address given by the Minister of Finance at the Brussels Co-financing Conference,

introduced – and 1979, when the Maurice Bishop government took office, no initiative was taken to embark on the project. The administrations during these twenty-five years included 5 GULP and 2 GNP governments.

A TIME FOR ACTION

Only a few weeks after the NJM and the Maurice Bishop led PRG took office, governments and international agencies were approached regarding funding possibilities for the project. The USA was the first foreign government approached for assistance. Frank Ortiz, then US Ambassador to the Eastern Caribbean, remarked, "that is not the kind of project the US can pay for."⁷



Undiscouraged, the PRG began an organized international campaign to seek funding in September 1979. The government approached European, Arab, and Caribbean countries.⁸ Initially the project was estimated to cost US \$75 million (EC \$190 million), however, more money was allocated. In solidarity, Cuba gave a project startup boost providing technical expertise, skilled labor, construction equipment, and essential materials such as cement and steel. In total, Cuba contributed 85 pieces of heavy equipment, 250 technical workers, and \$33.6 million of the

April 1981.

⁸*Caribbean Geography* "The Changing Caribbean: Grenada's New International Airport", Dec, 1986, p.153.

⁷*Everybody's Magazine*, Thom Rovert, "Airport '83 Reagan's Target Grenada's Triumph," March 1983, p. 3

overall costs. The UK granted a loan of EC \$33 million to help cover the cost of contracting the British company, Plessey Airport Ltd. Finland loaned EC \$10.5 million for the work of Finland's Metex Corporation. Venezuela contributed 10,000 barrels of diesel fuel.

Another very critical source of funding was an estimated EC \$1 million. Grenadians from all walks of life contributed approximately EC \$10 per person through the purchasing of "airport bonds."⁹

Being a part of the national initiative to build the international airport was extremely important to Grenadians. The airport campaign imbued a strong sense of patriotism among Grenadians, both at home and abroad. Many believed that the international airport would make Grenadian independence more meaningful. No longer would relatives and visitors have to depend on Trinidad or Barbados in their efforts to visit Grenada. The financial contributions and

hundreds of volunteered hours at the airport site demonstrated that Grenadians had claimed the airport project as their own.

The PRG always viewed the international airport as a people's project - with the full support of and participation by the Grenadian people at every stage. Grenadians were involved in every stage of the airport construction. Accordingly, the PRG's airport campaign slogan was "the airport unites and benefits all our people."¹⁰ A number of civic organizations passed a resolution stating in summary, "Recognizing the tremendous benefits and importance from an international airport, be it resolved that we, gathered here, wholeheartedly and fully support its construction."¹¹

On April 12, 1981, fifteen thousand people gathered at the Point Salines site to applaud and celebrate the progress being made on the airport. Local unions, civic, business and mass organizations all published releases to demonstrate

⁹EPICA Task Force. *Grenada: The Peaceful Revolution* (Washington, DC: EPICA Task Force, 1982), p.69.

⁹Because of the invasion, some of the financial accounting of the airport were either lost or handled carelessly. It is therefore difficult to tell the total amount Grenadians contributed through airport 'bonds.' Published figures are EC \$850,000 up to the end of 1981. My estimate of over \$ 1 million bond purchase is based on the fact that voluntary labor on the project organized and collected by mass organizations of the

revolution reached its peak by the end of 1982. It is expected that financial contributions, largely generated by these organizations, should have surpassed \$1 million by 1983.

¹⁰Maurice Bishop Speaks: *The Grenada Revolution, 1979-1983* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1984), p.189.

¹¹Hugh O'Shaughnessy, *Grenada: Revolution, Invasion and Aftermath* (London: Sphere Books Limited, 1984), p.89

support for the project. This was in response to a national speech and plea by Maurice Bishop for complete support for the airport project as United States propaganda escalated.¹²

The United States did not contribute to airport funding, neither under Jimmy Carter nor Ronald Reagan. Instead, both administrations channeled their energy into aggressively countering PRG funding efforts. Ronald Reagan's efforts to stymie the PRG funding campaign were clearly articulated in a nationally televised 'Star Wars' speech (seen and heard internationally). In his speech, the airport site was maliciously referred to as a Cuban/Soviet military base.¹³

The main argument in the US campaign was the length of the 9000-ft runway – a recommendation first made by Canadian specialists in 1967.¹⁴ Beyond the ridiculous

charges, the message was very clear: the US wanted to end international funding and cooperation for the Point Salines project. In fact, as far back as 1981, the Reagan administration dispatched an emissary in advance of a European Economic Commission (EEC) co-financing conference in Brussels, Belgium. Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard was scheduled to address the EEC conference regarding airport funding. The Reagan emissary intended to stop the conference and to discourage EEC members from funding the airport project. He failed on both counts.

In addition to the difficult political and diplomatic struggles, the project was a major physical challenge. Despite the superiority of the Point Salines area for building the new airport, the site was very difficult to transform. The Point Salines site was as much in the sea as on land. The runway traversed bays as much as 8 meters deep that had to be dredged and then filled with tons of solid materials. Five and a quarter million tons of hard volcanic rocks had to be loosened with explosives and cleared away with heavy

¹²EPICA Task Force, *Grenada: The Peaceful Revolution* (Washington, DC: EPICA Task Force, 1982), p.70

¹³In this famous broadcast President Reagan displayed aerial reconnaissance photographs of the airport strip under construction at a moment when heavy clouds were obscuring the airport terminal. This was clearly done to deceive viewers into believing his administration's 'proof' of a major secret military project. However as Maurice Bishop often pointed out, a spy plane was hardly necessary since Americans from a Florida-based multi-national dredging company was also employed at construction site. While the airport was being constructed, many tourists, including Americans, found the airport site a major visiting interest. Also part of this propaganda arsenal was a documentary film titled "Attack on the Americas" made by an American right-extremist group.

¹⁴As Bernard Coard pointed out in his address to the EEC conference, there are several major airports in the region which are of similar or greater length: Curacao 13,000 ft; Barbados 11,000 ft; Trinidad 10,000 ft; St. Lucia, Guadeloupe, Aruba, Antigua, St. Martin 9,000 ft; Jamaica 8,500 ft – Address given by the Minister of Finance at the Brussels Co-financing Conference, April 1981.

machinery. A part of the airport also had to be safeguarded from risk of the encroaching sea and from future flooding. As a result of this project Grenada grew a bit geographically. Remarkably, the pace of the airport project proceeded faster than scheduled. Cuban internationalist workers and Grenadians labored almost around the clock.¹⁵

The political and construction difficulties the PRG faced in carrying out the Point Salines project served as an apt metaphor for Maurice Bishop's determination to rapidly transform the country despite the difficulties. The project was a test of the organizational and leadership ability of the new government. Internationally, the PRG's challenge involved skillful diplomatic and political negotiations to out-manuever US economic sabotage. Locally, the collective energy of Grenadians was harnessed into a dedicated network to generate local funding. The magnitude of the task of building this airport is realized by recalling that when the PRG took over in 1979, the national treasury was completely depleted of funds.

¹⁵At its peak, the project employed about six hundred (600) Cubans and four hundred and fifty (450) Grenadians

PRIDE AND DISGRACE

The approach taken by the government to raise funds and to construct the Point Salines airport was revolutionary in many respects:

- Funding was sought from countries of diverse political and ideological orientation;
- It was the first time that an independent Caribbean country undertook building an international airport on its own initiative and from foundation;
- Capitalist multi-national corporations worked together with Cuban socialist work brigades at the project's site;¹⁶ and,
- Thousands of Grenadians, through the mass organizations of the revolution, as well as internationalists, **volunteered** evening and weekend work on the Project – a true 'maroon'¹⁷ in the traditional Grenadian sense.

¹⁶In conjunction with the PRG, the following construction units provided the major physical staff of the project: i) The Cuban Construction forces: UNECA, MICON and MITRANS; ii) Grenadian Construction Workers; iii) Layne Dredging Co. Inc. of the USA; iv) Plessey Airports Ltd. UK; v) METEX Industries of Finland; and vi) Janin Construction Ltd. of Canada/CIDA-- *INFLIGHT PSIA Anniversary Bulletin*, Vol.1 No. 1

¹⁷A maroon is a traditional Grenadian term for the African-derived custom of community or village 'self-help'

While the PRG won the political, economic and moral battle for the construction of the Point Salines international airport, the US won the military battle with its military attack on the construction site in the early morning of October 25, 1983. Twenty-four Cuban workers, 18 Grenadians and an undisclosed number of American marines fell in the battle at the Point Salines airport site. A number of Grenadians in other parts of the island were killed, including about 50 patients in the psychiatric hospital.

During the United States occupation following the invasion, the US government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), continued the work to complete the project. The United States belatedly gave US \$19 million to do the final touches to complete the project. At that point 75% of the earth works, and 50% of the work on the buildings and terminal were already completed. The US did most of the electric and lighting work on the airport. Point Salines International Airport was officially opened on October 28, 1984.

In his four and a half hours visit to Grenada in February of 1986, President Ronald Reagan conducted a ceremony at Point Salines International Airport to commemorate the invasion. A sizable monument was dedicated at the airport site to recognize the fallen American soldiers in the battle.¹⁸ No public recognition has been made, even up to present day, to Maurice Bishop, the leaders of the revolution, the Grenadian people, or the Cuban internationalist workers (belatedly, in August 1998, the Grenada government recognized Cuba's contribution while President Fidel Castro Ruz visited Grenada).

As the leader of the Grenadian Revolution, Maurice Bishop deserves much credit as one of the hardest workers of this monumental project. Because of his unique uniting leadership and charisma, Maurice Bishop generated much of the money locally and internationally for this project. Maurice's mother and sister were also very prominent activists in the Airport Development Committee.

¹⁸*NACLA Report on the Americas "Grenada: Revo in Reverse" Vol. XXIII, NO. 5 (February 1990)*

Today Point Salines International Airport stands as a glorious monument of a small nation's triumph against the circumstances of under-development. Many people in Grenada, as well as regionally and internationally, regard this airport as a fitting tribute to Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. His leadership, vision and imagination united a nation with scarce resources, and assisted with international solidarity to fight for the attainment of this passionate national dream. Fittingly, Prime Minister Maurice Bishop made history by practically opening the new airport – being the first person to fly out of it in September of 1983, one month before the invasion.

Though physically complete, Point Salines International Airport is only a shell of the original overall development plan envisioned by the PRG. Because of the abrupt end of the PRG, many of the plans to integrate the airport with the wider economy were aborted. The heavy machinery used on the airport was intended to further build the infrastructure of the country. Some international capitalist ventures were also sacrificed. For example, a Canadian company made a

commitment to build a US \$16 million hotel complex in the Point Salines vicinity.¹⁹ This was never done. There were plans to make amends for the additional regional economic and infrastructure imbalances caused by the abandonment of rural Pearls. Having witnessed the determination and leadership skills demonstrated through the airport building campaign, one can only speculate on the possibilities had Maurice Bishop and the PRG outlived the completion of the international airport.

Today the airport at Point Salines justifies its existence even in the absence of the Revolution. It is the major source of income for the Grenadian economy. In its first ten years of operation, 2,106,515 passengers shuffled through Point Salines at an average of 417 daily. This number continues to grow and by 1994 had almost doubled to 815 daily passengers. Whereas Airfreight of Perishable Goods was minimal at Pearls, Freight movement continues to increase at Point Salines with up to 2.24 million kilos in 1994.²⁰ The

¹⁹David E. Lewis, "From Revolutionary Solidarity To Military Defeat: The Foreign Policy of Grenada" in Scott MacDonald et al *The Caribbean After Grenada: Revolution, Conflict and Democracy* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p.32

²⁰INFLIGHT, PSIA Anniversary Bulletin Vol. 1 No.2, p.6

new airport directly employs 130 people. Aircraft movements average 12,000 annually.²¹

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The present Grenadian government has advanced one main argument in response to growing demands that the airport in Point Salines be renamed Maurice Bishop International Airport. The Keith Mitchell government has suggested that renaming the airport is a divisive issue and that it is better to keep the geographic reference of Point Salines.

However, all indications are that there is island-wide support for this initiative. For example, during President Fidel Castro Ruz's recent official visit to Grenada, placards were prominently displayed demonstrating the popularity of this issue. Many Grenadians already unofficially refer to the airport as Maurice Bishop International Airport.

On the contrary, there has been no mass display of opposition to the airport renaming issue. Only a few loud and influential Grenadians have expressed consternation to the name change. The positions espoused by these individuals are essentially personal.

It must be noted that opposition to the naming of a national monument after a particular individual is to be expected. Such is the diversity of opinion in a democracy. In fact, there was opposition to all the airports in our region that have been renamed. Nevertheless, many airports in the Caribbean region were renamed from their geographic references and named after national heroes of the respective countries. In no instance was a national referendum taken on these decisions.

In Grenada's case, Point Salines International Airport is not just being renamed after one of the most prominent figures in our history. Maurice Bishop was the principal visionary of the airport project and, as pointed out earlier, one of its most valiant crusaders. This distinguishes the Grenada airport

²¹Lingham Samuel, "Editor's Note" in *INFLIGHT*, PSIA Anniversary Bulletin, Vol. 1 No.2, p.1

renaming initiative from all such efforts in the history of the Caribbean.

Beyond our region, one can point to JFK International Airport as an example where partisan consideration was superseded in 1970 to name that airport after a Democratic president.

It is fitting to end with a quote from Maurice Bishop regarding the importance of the airport. We should also consider this plea of Maurice Bishop in light of the airport renaming campaign:

Sisters and brothers, we owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our country, we owe it to future generations yet unborn to ensure that this project goes ahead. Further, we owe it to our friends around the world, those who have already rendered valuable assistance and ... who intend to make a contribution in the future, to continue the struggle for our airport.²²

²²Quotation from a National Broadcast by Maurice Bishop on R.F.G. on March 29, 1981, published in Maurice Bishop: Selected Speeches "Together We Shall Build Our Airport" (Havana: Casa de Las Americas Press) pp. 180-188

WHAT WAS ONCE ... IS ...

Dedicated to the *living memory* of Maurice Bishop and the Grenada Revolution

He that sleep
not to dream
but dream to change
to build anew
with his very sinew
a world that is different
a land that is abundant
a people militant
proud ... conscious
united and vigilant
a new day
a different way
to fly away
is honorable today and
everyday

* * * * *

What was once ...
dry and barren
emblazoned with wild
cactuses
amid rolling hills
juxtaposed black and white-
sand beaches
swampy salty cay
and gorgeous Hardy Bay
is ... today
a monument
not of some greedy
oversized
uncaring

lurking
foreign
bully
who unleashed its cold (war)
fury
pounced on a wounded
broken-hearted people
in the dark of night
using military might
to crush a people's fight
a nation's dream
a budding reality
born of centuries of ancestral
pain, labor & glory
showcase for all to see
a transformation
of a proud people
and their nation

What was once ...
a beacon

a lighthouse
on top a rock
a glimmer in a dark starry
night
next to a vast sea
yet empty
promises
by false prophets
of nothingness
hopelessness
is ... now
a towering monument
that captures every
struggling moment
from the first Carib
thro' Fedon, Butler and
Marryshow
folklore ... hero
those glorious attempts
to break the shackles
chains of subservience

to make a clean
incisive break
and undertake
a grand joyous leap
a liftoff
economic takeoff
leaving the decadent past
embracing the heart
of a nation's development
a permanent standing
commitment
for a future brighter
sweeter
newer
richer
Freer Grenada

What was once ...

a pond of rough
coarse salt

perched next to the rugged
coastline
of the Caribbean sea
is ... now
a symbol of beauty
of technology
man's ingenuity
a people's tenacity
transforming hopes
ancient dreams
to naked reality

What was once ...

the past

What was once ...

Point Salines

a dream

is ...

now!

the present

the future

the symbol of that national
dream
a living standing reality
a modern facility
a monument to a leader's
capacity

he say
she say
you say
we say
everybody say
loud and clear
M.B.I.A.
I vote
we vote
join the campaign and vote
for Maurice Bishop Int'l
Airport

What was Point Salines

yesterday

is ... today

a gateway

M.B.I.A.

I say

Bernard Bourne