Of the twelve essays in this book, four are concerned with the internal dynamics of the Grenada Revolution, five deal with a variety of issues raised by the American invasion, and three deal with postrevolutionary Grenada. Several stand out: Sir Shridath Ramphal provides a fascinating, if self-serving, eye-witness account of the tensions that the U.S. invasion of Grenada caused within the Commonwealth. If he is to be believed, Ramphal alone orchestrated the debate so that the leaders of the Caribbean nations who supported the American invasion were shielded from “the seething anger of the African countries [that] was unleashed over what they considered to be the cover that Caribbean countries had given to the United States” (p. 192). Patsy Lewis revisits her eviscerating of Edward Seaga’s attempt to justify that intervention, describing the latter as “a Cold War warrior, long after the Cold War has ended” (p. 145). Jermaine O. McCalpin details the many inadequacies of the Grenada Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As he points out, its creation was widely understood in Grenada as a political ploy on the part of Prime Minister Keith Mitchell. But he also shows that the Commission itself did little to counter this perception, thereby undermining any chance that its report could serve to promote reconciliation. The contribution by Howard Tumber demonstrates the lengths to which the American military went to deny the press access to the military intervention, a level of censorship that he believes is no longer possible because modern communications technology has created “multiple channels allowing users to generate and distribute content” (p. 176).

Nicole Phillip-Dowe’s contribution addresses the important but often overlooked subject of the extent to which the Revolution included a feminist agenda. She makes a point of crediting the People’s Revolutionary Government with gains in that regard. But she also quotes numerous informants who describe its shortcomings. Most damaging were reports that the men in the leadership of the ruling party demanded sexual favors in exchange for advancement within the government. In this regard, she cites an important male figure saying that “some women were penalized for not acquiescing” (p. 65). Less dramatically, she cites complaints that no alternative arrangements were made to look after children when party meetings were held, though “women were expected to come to meetings without their children” (p. 61). More generally, as she puts it, although “women were allowed to head ministries like education and women’s affairs … the type of portfolios they held remained
unchanged. The woman as minister was limited to her traditional role as social worker and teacher” (p. 74).

Pride of place in this collection goes to Merle Collins’s paper, “What Happened?”—an evocatively written answer to a high school student who had posed that question to her at the conclusion of the 2013 Caribbean Studies Association conference. Collins acknowledges that even at the end, “people worked in broad support of the revolution’s aims to develop education and tend to the social needs of the population” (p. 29). But then she adds that as early as 1982 “there was a growing sense of unease certainly present in the country … not with one faction or the other, but with the party as a whole, its leadership of the revolution and what seemed to be the party’s constant fear of ‘counter-revolutionary’ activity” (p. 29).

Collins vividly recounts the events of October 19 when Maurice Bishop, Jacqueline Creft, Norris Bain, Unison Whiteman, and numerous unnamed others were lined up against a wall and executed. She affirms that Bishop had reneged on his agreement to share power with Bernard Coard and that Bishop himself was the source of the rumor that Coard sought his assassination. Nevertheless, she is unsparing in condemning those responsible for the executions. Bishop was the face of the Revolution and the leader with whom the Grenadian people identified. As she puts it, “the country could not comprehend that the prime minister had been or could be arrested” (p. 32). Her condemnation of the Coard faction’s action is astringent: “had the party remembered its own teachings about the power of the people … things might have turned out differently. As wrong as party adherents may have thought the people were, they had spoken” (p. 32).

Collins testifies that Grenadians were traumatized by the Revolution’s violent self-destruction. She adds that “some accounts suggest that members of the party too were traumatized by the ways in which they felt moved to confront each other on that fateful day” (p. 34). But the negative reaction to what had occurred was so deep that “it must be acknowledged that even today many Grenadians are not sympathetic to any trauma supposedly felt by party members” (p. 34). The sad truth is that reconciliation still has not occurred in Grenada.

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