

New Women



ADELA JOSEPH was born in 1948 and lives in Six Roads. She was a pioneer activist of the New Jewel Movement before the Revolution, and now works as a bus clerk for the Carriacou Bus Service.

'In the Gairy days it was rough for us and our parents. For education, very few of us could afford to send our children to secondary school. Even when a child pass the common entrance, we still couldn't afford the school fees and the books, so the child just didn't make it. There was hardly any employment, especially for women, and the women who have children but no husband often really suffered. Some parents couldn't really afford to give the children a proper meal to go to school or the right things to wear, so they just stayed home. Some women had to depend on family abroad to assist them with a little thing to survive, and some had

to do things which they don't really like to do to get a little work. They could only get a job sometimes by being friendly with some of the so-called 'big men'. It went on quite a lot in Carriacou, and everyone knew it happened in the police force.

Some men also used to brutalise the women, but that has changed now. And many men were unemployed so they couldn't afford to live with the women and children and support them. So they sometimes went to live by themselves, or went away from Carriacou to America or England. So the people had no hopes and faith and wasn't happy because things wasn't coming any better, it was grim, getting worse daily. People saying that soon in Carriacou we would be using sand for sugar and cement for flour! Supplies of food was bad, bad. Even in Trinidad where some people buy goods and come and sell, they had tightened up on things coming to Grenada and Carriacou. When I was in Trinidad then the people there saying that they ent sending food to Grenada again because we had elect Gairy in office again and we have to suffer and pay for that! This forced many people to take what we called a 'Ski Boat' to America, and a lot of the youth took this illegal way in there just to escape the life here. Things was so hard that the young people was desperate.

So we started an N.J.M. group here because we had had enough of all this. We organised meetings once a fortnight and we sold the paper. Some people were very interested but scared to buy the paper, because they had heard about the police brutality, particularly in Grenada. So we had to hide to sell the papers, and sell it quietly to them under cover, folding it up so the police couldn't know. The police never knew what we was doing, and right up until just before the Revolution they never caught us. Then we come out selling it openly when Maurice and the other comrades came up in February 1979. I remember I approach a police and ask him to buy a paper, and he said he didn't have change. So I told him I had change for him, and so he bought it.

Whenever we had meetings here the people came out in large numbers. We had a underground network of support but the people were not bold enough to come out in public, except in the meetings. We sticking up posters advertising the meetings and the police passing and pulling them down. Then when Gairy come the people was generally negative. I remember for one instance when he came to have a meeting and some people burst some rotten eggs at him in the Market Square. They never find the person and the meeting break up.

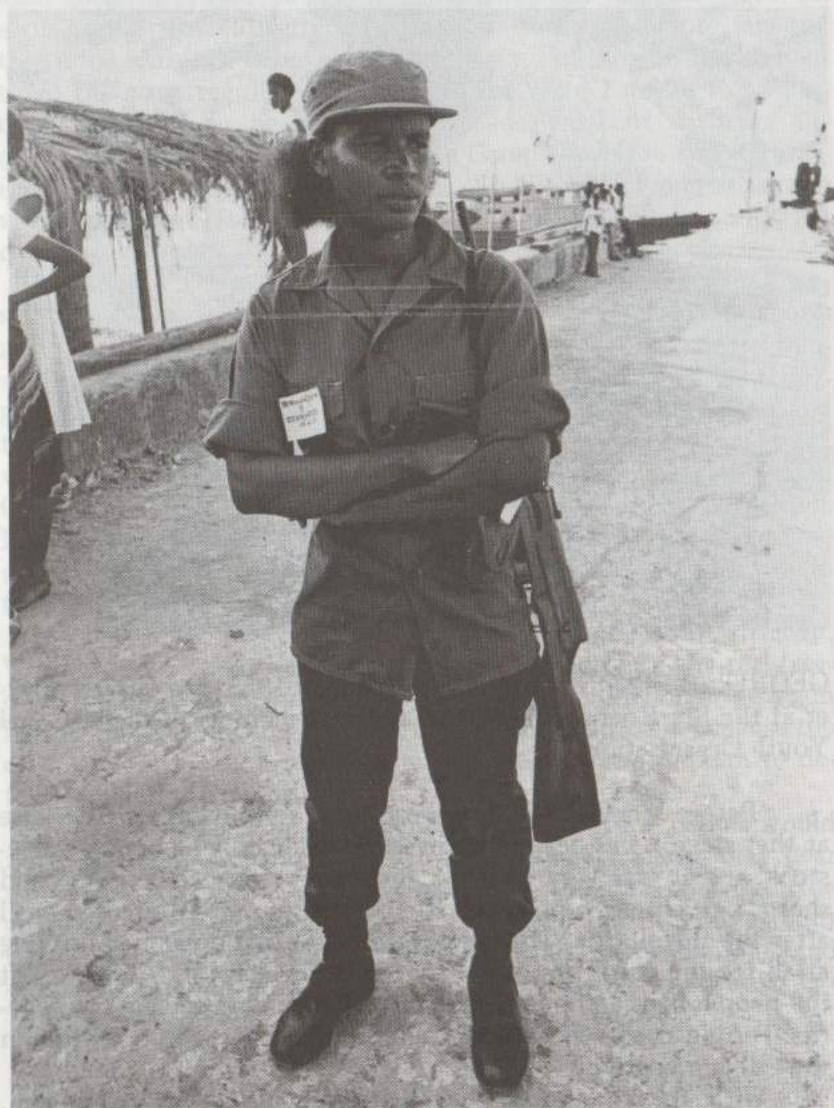
When I hear of the Revolution it was about eight thirty in the morning. The first news I hear is that the Gairy dictatorship over-

thrown. They repeat this twice, and I was so excited I sort of raise my hand and I pitch the radio on the ground and say, 'Lord! The news that I hear is too good to be true!' Then I call all the neighbours, tell them what I hear and I leave for town. On the way I meet some teachers and schoolchildren and they say it was a public holiday. In town we ask for the keys of the police station, post office and government trucks, and then we wait for Maurice to address the nation. Then suddenly I realise I wearing my night clothes, an old torn-up duster and my foot bare! So I come home and wash and change my clothes.

Now is all different in Carriacou. People have work and they is finding things to do. Up here in Six Roads we have the quarry and the sheep farm in Dumfries, and women too working in both projects. Work bring the people new hope. Then we have free secondary education, and that has helped the women a lot, especially those who don't have a husband — and they also have this programme where you can get free school books if the parents can't afford it. A lot of we here benefit from that. Free milk is good too, because the price of milk very high now. All these things have made life easier for women. The Maternity Leave Law makes her job safe, and she knows she wouldn't be exploited to have to get a next one, like in the past. Before there was nothing for women to do, except at home, but now they involved in N.W.O. and in the Party Support Group, assisting in the C.S.D.P. in teaching handicraft or singing — there was nothing like that before the Revolution. Our N.W.O. group raises money for the International Airport, for the children at school and for the campaign to get clothes for the people of El Salvador and Angola. They never knew where those places are before the Revolution, but they know now, and they know about the people's fight for justice in those places. The N.W.O. has brought out the majority of the women in Carriacou. We moved from one group to eleven groups inside a year and the rallies we have are all full with women. Before if something wasn't right they had to bear it in their mind, but now they have freedom of speech, they could say what they want to say and if they see something wrong they could say, 'no, this isn't the right way, it should be this way.' This is why women are joining the militia. They know they need to protect the Revolution. For if the Revolution turn back, they know all those gains and benefits would be finished with.

When we started the transport a lot of people come into the office and say that the bus should come their way. They had been used to very bad roads and no transport in the old days. The road was so bad here in Six Roads that the vehicles couldn't pass, and

they stopped a mile down the road. People just couldn't get around and they had to stay in their homes. But people feel they could say things now, it's all a part of the people's democracy we have, which I think is the most important thing about the Revolution. It's the freedom to give views and exchange ideas. In Gairy time I could never have dreamed that things would ever work out so good for us.'



Militia Member: Catherine Liverpool of L'Esterre.