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TAIWAN: OUR DEAR FRIEND AND ALLY

FORTY-FOUR YEARS OF EXEMPLARY SOLIDARITY

Almost forty-four years ago, in August 1981, SVG and the Republic of China (Taiwan) established diplomatic relations. Since then, both countries have developed excellent bonds of friendship, exemplified by strong solidarity with, and support for, each other.

Four successive Prime Ministers in SVG have led governments which maintained and developed the ties that bind with Taiwan: Milton Cato's SVG Labour Party, 1981 to 1984; James Mitchell's NDP, 1984 to 2000; Arnhim Eustace's NDP, 2000 to 2001; Ralph Gonsalves' ULP, 2001 to 2025. SVG's relations with Taiwan have been a bedrock, a major cornerstone, of our country's foreign policy.

This consensus between the two main political parties in SVG existed until 2017 when Arnhim Eustace, then leader of the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) announced, out-of-the-blue, that his party, if returned to office, would promptly break relations with ROC (Taiwan) and establish formal ties with mainland China, the People's Republic of China (PRC). Eustace's successor as the NDP's leader, Lorraine Friday, has repeatedly reaffirmed this stance of the NDP. Indeed, the NDP's links with operatives out of mainland China have been deepened and broadened, combining diplomatic support for the PRC and the promised joinder of selling our country's passports and citizenship; these twin policy initiatives of the NDP have delivered monies for the NDP's political campaigns, against the interests of the people of SVG. These two policy stances of the NDP constitute together the proverbial albatross around its political neck: Both policies are very unpopular, but the NDP doubles-down on them because of the money which flows into the NDP coffers from PRC operatives and the wannabe passport-sellers from Europe and mainland China.

Eustace, Friday, and the rest of the NDP leadership used to say, pre-2017, that the ties between Taiwan and SVG are unbreakable because these links were not just state-to-state, but more like FAMILY! Now the NDP sings a disreputable tune, contrary to our people's interest.

The NDP now parrots the line of mainland China that there is one China, the PRC, and Taiwan is a province of mainland China.

PREPOSTEROUS ONE-CHINA POLICY

This one-China policy of mainland China is preposterous, just like the one-China rhetoric of the Kuomintang (KMT) government in Taiwan between 1949 and 2000. The KMT in Taiwan absurdly asserted that it represented the whole of China and was the legitimate government of all China. Mainland China is 3.7 million square miles in area with 1.4 billion people, today; and Taiwan covers 13,826 miles in area with 24 million people.

But, during the entire 20th century Taiwan was under the rule of mainland China for only 3 ½ years (1945 to 1949) when the KMT formed the “nationalist government” in China. Before 1945, Taiwan was under Japanese colonialism for 50 years; and since 1949, it has been governed by its own government and essentially as an independent country even before its first competitive democratic presidential election in March 1996. Since then, Taiwan has evolved as a mature, robust democracy functioning under its own popularly-elected President and legislature, answerable to no other authority but the people of Taiwan. To assert that it is today part of mainland China is ridiculous. Indeed, for most of China's history, Taiwan was an island outpost left to itself. The Taiwanese almost unanimously do not want to be ruled by mainland China. Clearly, the inviolable principle of self-determination must be respected.

The government of SVG affirms that there is a One Chinese civilization — a magnificent one — in which different and separate legitimate political expressions, organised as individual states, are permissible and existential. This is the case, for example, of European, African, Caribbean, and Latin American civilisations. So,

our government asserts that there is a mainland Chinese state (the PRC) and the ROC (Taiwan). The government of SVG works well with the government of the PRC in the Caribbean Development Bank (PRC is a non-borrowing member; SVG is a borrowing member), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the Group of 77, and other multilateral entities. SVG holds no ill-will towards the PRC. To be sure, our two countries (PRC and SVG) have differences on many issues, globally, but to use the formulation of the PRC's founding father, Mao Tse Tung in his famous philosophical essay "On Contradictions", we in SVG consider that the contradictions between the PRC and SVG are "non-antagonistic", as distinct from "antagonistic". Non-antagonistic contradictions are solvable through ongoing peaceful dialogues, building consensus, and are characterized by non-interference and non-intervention in each other's internal affairs.

SVG, and all humanity, ought to strive always for peace across the Taiwan straits. Open conflict will result in a terrible global conflagration and a potential nuclear Armageddon involving the USA and its allies (Europe, Japan, South Korea, Philippines, Australia and others) on the one hand, and China and its allies (Russia, North Korea, Belarus, Iran, and others) on the other hand. "Strategic ambiguity" on the part of the USA on the China-Taiwan issue has, since the 1970s, helped to maintain the peace, despite multiple provocations and contradictions in the extant condition.

PREDISPOSING AND INDUCING FACTORS FOR SVG-TAIWAN TIES

A bundle of factors pre-dispose SVG-Taiwan linkages, among which are the following: Island states with climate change vulnerabilities; a sharing of democratic values; an ethos of peaceful coexistence and non-bullying conduct; a quest for a global order resting on uplifting universal values, including the right of a people to self-determination and their chosen way of life, living, and production; and the overweening presence of a powerful neighbour with which our respective countries must of necessity, and desirability, interact, but

without being subjected to imperial domination, hegemonic conduct, or bullying.

Factors which induce SVG and Taiwan to foster strong bonds of friendship and solidarity include: Material, technological, educational, health, and trade benefit to be gained by SVG; mutually-beneficial cultural, social, and security exchanges and supports; SVG's advocacy for Taiwan's participation in the specialized agencies of the United Nations and the multilateral bodies of relevance, including those touching and concerning health, air and sea transport, climate change, oceans, land degradation, and biodiversity; global policing against terrorism, human trafficking, trade in illegal drugs; and actively cooperating on global peace, security, and the quest for inclusive prosperity.

The government of SVG does not accept direction from any country as to which state it ought to establish diplomatic relations. We consider it unreasonable and unacceptable that the PRC sets a pre-condition of breaking relations with Taiwan in order to establish relations with mainland China.

TAIWAN'S FOOTPRINT IN SVG

Under the NDP administration (July 1984 to March 2001), Taiwan's major footprints in SVG centred on its Agricultural Mission, the construction of the Union Island airport, the financing of the construction of the Central Market in Kingstown (a terrible project in its implementation) and bits and pieces of support in the social sector.

During the era of the ULP administrations (March 29, 2001, to the present time), the impact of Taiwan's contribution to our development has been phenomenal, including: The construction of the historic and iconic Rabacca Bridge (a grant); the huge contribution (grants and loans) towards the building of the Argyle International Airport; almost 300 university scholarships to Taiwan between 2004 and now (a grant); grant supports for students at secondary schools and SVGCC; the grant funding of the YES, SET, and ON-SITE; the grant of US\$7 million to build the National Library;

a grant of US\$1.1 for the educational centre in Park Hill; the strengthening of the Agricultural Mission; the grant funding in support of equipment and information technology systems for the police, the health sector, and education; the US\$63 million soft-loan for the Modern Port; the US\$125 million soft-loan for the Acute Care Hospital at Arnos Vale and related health infrastructure support; the US \$45 million secondary roads construction; the US\$50 million soft-loan towards the government's equity (in partnership with Jamaican investors) in the soon-to-be-built Marriott Hotel (US\$150 plus million hotel project at Peter's Hope); and several other support programmes in the social and cultural spheres, including for women's empowerment and assorted non-governmental organisations.

The NDP's pre-2017 mantra was right: SVG-Taiwan relations are not only state-to-state; they are like "FAMILY". Now, the NDP is wrong, wrong, wrong, in wanting to break relations with Taiwan and shift to mainland China.

IF NDP WINS ELECTION, WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

If in the unlikely event that the NDP were to win the general elections, their break with Taiwan would immediately have the following results:

- (1) The over 100 university students currently in Taiwan would be stranded. Few, if any, of the parents of these students would have the resources to pay for them in Taiwan. One option would be for them to start over in mainland China, if the PRC so decides. Would our students want to start-over on mainland China? The other likely option is for the students to return to SVG with an incomplete university education.
- (2) The hundreds of millions owed to Taiwan by SVG would immediately come due to be paid. Who would pay these debts? Mainland China?
- (3) The following vital projects, among others, would crash immediately:

- i. The Acute Care Hospital at Arnos Vale would be stopped.
- ii. The building of the Marriott Hotel in Central Leeward would not happen.
- iii. YES, SET, and ON-SITE programmes would come to an end.
- iv. A further negotiated loan for building our secondary roads would be cancelled.
- v. The annual university scholarship programme would be halted.
- vi. The Agricultural Mission would close.
- vii. Vital cooperation on security and cultural matters would end.

As everyone knows, the PRC does not have anywhere as good a record with assisting its allies as Taiwan does. Go on the internet and read the authoritative stories about China in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere in the Caribbean? NDP wants to trade the bone of Taiwan for the shadow of the bone in the waters around mainland China. The NDP is concerned mainly about its financing for elections, not the financing for the people of SVG.

TAIWAN IS STRONG

The mainland China's advocates scream that the PRC is the second largest economy in the world with a nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$19.2 trillion: but this is spread across 1.4 billion people, its average annual per capita GDP is US\$13,678 which places it 79th in the world; and the PRC's Human Development Index (HDI) places it 78th, globally. While much of China is developed and rich, large areas are underdeveloped and poor.

By contrast, Taiwan's GDP of US\$865 billion (21st in global rankings) is spread over nearly 24 million people; so, the average annual per capita GDP is US\$34,426 (20th in the world); or in other words, the average Taiwanese is almost-three times better off than the average mainland Chinese. And Taiwan's HDI is very high at 19th place in the world. Taiwan is thus a country of great economic substance. Further, its technological advances especially in the manufacture of computer chips is huge.

SUMMATION

Taiwan has a lot of time for SVG. Comrade Ralph has visited Taiwan 12 times since 2001. On each occasion, he has had discussions at the highest level, including with the President (Presidents Chen, Ma, Tsai, and Lai Ching-te). Presidents Chen, Ma, and Tsai have paid state visits to SVG.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taiwan, there is a special Desk for SVG within its Caribbean Department. SVG gets special attention.

Comrade Ralph is a highly-regarded leader in Taiwan. His advice is repeatedly being sought on a range of regional, hemispheric, and global issues. The Comrade has been accorded Taiwan's highest civilian honour, "The Order of the Brilliant Star with Special Grand Cordon".

It is to be noted that SVG's foreign policy under the Comrade has been able to chart a path of non-alignment, anti-imperialism, regionalism, internationalist solidarity and multilateralism consistent with the interest and values of our Caribbean civilization and its glorious Vincentian component. We are friends of all, and we strive for a better world. Noteworthy is the fact that countries with diverse ideological or political systems have honoured the Comrade with their highest honours. These counties include Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Argentina, Ecuador, Guyana, Japan, and Taiwan.

The Comrade and the ULP look out for SVG. Friday and the NDP are focused on their Chinese “take-away” food.