

NATIONAL PRIDE BY MOST, RUNNING DOWN SVG BY SOME OTHERS

By

Unity Labour Party

THE ISSUE

On Sunday October 27, 2024, SVG celebrated the 45th anniversary of its reclamation of independence from the departing British colonialism. The centrepiece of this commemoration was the event on Sunday evening at Victoria Park which contained three central features: (i) The Parade headed by the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force, and other uniformed groups, including a contingent from the Grenada Police Force, and 38 Vincentians who are on active duty in the United Kingdom Navy; (ii) the National Independence Address by the Prime Minister; and (iii) a splendid cultural performance of nearly three hours.

The turnout at Victoria Park by the general public was massive, the largest ever in our history. Nationals and residents of all classes, ages, and political affiliations swarmed the event, most of whom were decked out in one or more of our national colours. Victoria Park was bursting at its seams; thousands were stranded outside; there was no space for them inside — not even standing room; and large numbers who were stuck in the traffic simply went home to watch the event on television.

There was an unprecedented outpouring of national pride in our country and its institutions; people were celebrating, too, our sterling achievements since 1979 and particularly the amazing accomplishments over the last 23 years, since the dawn of the 21st century. There was an upbeat mood that the country was on the right track, despite our challenges, weaknesses, and limitations; we were celebrating our good works, our strengths, and our possibilities; we were enveloped in bountiful faith, hope, love, and dreams for our future. All this was the overwhelming mood, feeling, and expression at the 45th anniversary of our coming home to ourselves and our history.

Still, there were the minority of permanently disgruntled persons who are possessed of an ingrained obsession to run-down SVG, to denigrate the huge achievements of the last 23 years, to see nothing good in our land of immense progress, and to bad-mouth the efforts of those who sacrifice daily to lift SVG higher. This disgruntled minority are simply unable to read and know the times, and act accordingly. This lot is poisoned by opposition politics, by the lived,

unfulfilled experiences of their nearly 25 years of vaunted ambition, and hunger for power, not satisfied. This poisoned obsession of “running down” is laced with bile, anger, and lies; it is marinated by an insatiable reach for that which is clearly unattainable by them. One feels sorry for those NDP supporters who blindly follow their leaders into this quagmire of ignominy, their spiteful divisiveness, and their backwardness.

HUGE REPRESENTATION OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENT

Some 25 countries were represented by their diplomatic representatives. The Republic of China (Taiwan) was represented by its distinguished Foreign Minister who came specifically as the personal envoy of his President.

In the build-up to the massive event at Victoria Park, Prime Minister Dr. Ralph E. Gonsalves held bilateral discussions with fifteen of these foreign dignitaries who requested formal one-on-one engagements; these discussions were held between Friday and Sunday afternoon. Our Foreign Minister was not in SVG to share the Comrade’s load; he was in Samoa, in the Pacific, representing SVG at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

Every single foreign representative/diplomat reported to the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or to the Ministers of Government that they were exceedingly impressed with the parade, the Prime Minister’s address, the cultural performances, and all the relevant arrangements for the celebration/commemoration of our reclamation of independence. They all gushed about the phenomenal strides SVG has made, and is making, and the exciting plans for the future. They commented on the massive turnout as an expression of people’s confidence in their country and leaders.

Several of the foreign dignitaries commented on the boorishness of one or more members (three of them in all) of the parliamentary opposition who were seated in the VIP area with the diplomats. At one juncture in the Prime Minister’s speech, one of the opposition members started to boo loudly in displeasure; at one or two occasions in the PM’s address, one or more of the opposition shouted: “Rubbish”. And as the Prime Minister was detailing his 17 special announcements, one of the NDP’s leaders was heard to mumble, sounding deflated: “None of this or that will save you from defeat next time.” Well, we have heard that story before!

The foreign dignitaries/diplomats were most offended by the behaviour of the opposition members present — their leader, Lorraine Friday, was absent as usual. It would have irritated the opposition abundantly when they saw the

foreign diplomats applauding lustily the Prime Minister’s address. When will the NDP stop their anger, bile, divisiveness, and plain rudeness? Would they ever learn?

ACTIVITIES GALORE

There was an abundance of activities in the period of celebrations for the reclamation of independence, 45th year. Among some of the major activities sponsored by the government were: (i) The flag-raising ceremony and fireworks at the Cruise-ship Terminal area on October 21st, the memorial day of the 1935 anti-colonial uprising, led by George Augustus Mc Intosh, which opened the gates for the ongoing social democratic revolution in SVG; (ii) the Schools’ Independence Rally on October 24th, at which were announced 104 national awards, including 32 national scholarships, and numerous national exhibitions, special awards, and bursaries for university education for students who sat CAPE and Associate Degree Exams — a new phenomenal record; (iii) the launch of a public consultation on Thursday October 24th for the construction of a \$4 million bridge at London (Sandy Bay), and two others for Overland and Noel in North Windward — the base of the indigenous people and National Hero, Joseph Chatoyer; (iv) the ground-breaking of the historic US \$78.7 million Acute Care Hospital at Arnos Vale on Saturday October 26th, at which the Foreign Minister of Taiwan spoke warmly and eloquently of Taiwan-SVG ties, which the NDP promises to dismantle; (v) two evenings of “Night Market” held by Invest SVG and the business community; and on Tuesday October 29th, Parliament was convened and passed unanimously two vital Bills: (a) The Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 2 of 2024, authorising \$154 million to continue the Modern Port Project (\$100 million), and to start-up the Acute Care Hospital (\$54 million).

On Monday October 28th, the people of North Windward, in conjunction with the government’s agencies, staged a highly successful, and massively attended, Madungo Festival of traditional foods and music.

Across the country, the private sector entities staged numerous entertainment events. The SVG Motor Club put on an impressive car racing event; and so on and so forth.

Independence 2024 was truly memorable, and it “hut up de head” of the opposition folks who continue to run-down SVG for no good reason; only their boorish partisan politics are on display.

2025 – TO – 2029

Comrade Ralph has already announced on radio that in early January 2025, a Strategy Committee on Independence Celebrations will be appointed to map out the celebrations/commemorations for the next five years 2025-to-2029, culminating in an epochal celebration for the 50th anniversary on October 27, 2029. This Committee will include the core leaders of the National Independence Committee (NIC).

The 2024 NIC performed exceedingly well. There was a bundle of innovations grounded in historical relevance and contemporary conditions. Superintendent of Police Junior Simmons, and the iconic Rodney Small provided extraordinary leadership in the NIC; but it was overall, truly a magnificent team effort.

Most of all, the unity and solidarity of our people shone through in Independence 2024. The ULP's leadership over the years is making a towering impact on our people's consciousness and sense of nationalism (without being chauvinistic) about the reclamation of our people's independence.

And the opposition cannot take all of this. They are going crazy. That is what happens when you are backward! NDP is not learning! In this mix, did you see the Comrade surrounded by three ladies singing "Goodness of God" while it was being performed on stage at Victoria Park? If not, look for it on the Comrade's Facebook page; it has so far garnered over 200,000 views. People are connecting with their Leader!

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