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Antilles

Martinique and Guadeloupe thrown into chaos by the French state

- IV Online magazine - 2021 - IV563 - December 2021 -

Publication date: Thursday 9 December 2021

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For several weeks, Martinique and Guadeloupe have been in turmoil. A major social crisis that had simmered for a long time exploded in reaction, initially, to the health obligations that the state wanted to impose on a population to whom France can only speak the language of repression.

The caricatural image of late colonialism that plagues Martinique, Guadeloupe and Guyana, is represented — by chance or necessity? — by the Minister for the Colonies, a certain Lecornu. This individual landed in Guadeloupe, preceded by his armada (GIGN, RAID), which has not yet restored the “order” that the minister said would be a condition for his visit. [1]

A “republic with variable geometry

As soon as he got out of his tank, the imperial envoy met the police and thumped his chest in a threatening press conference. He made a surreal demand: discussion with the trade unions is conditional on the unions denouncing the nocturnal violence taking place on the margins of the conflict.

The conflict has a starting point: rejection of obligatory vaccination and the health pass by a clear majority of the population in both Guadeloupe and Martinique. This refusal is largely a collateral effect of colonialism. The people’s mistrust goes back a long way. The outrage over the chlordecone scandal is only the most prominent example of recent decades. Faced with this massive rejection, the colonial regime has found only one answer: the “law of the Republic” must apply throughout the “national territory”. Derogations were good when it came to the supposed ban on sowing the poison of chlordecone. They are unthinkable for obligatory vaccination!

Complex situations

In Guadeloupe, a profound, unitary mobilization, under the aegis of the trade union movement, is regularly bringing thousands of demonstrators and roadblocks in the streets throughout the country.

In Martinique, the situation is more complex. The partially observed general strikes sometimes comes into conflict with the blockades which also hinder the movement of activists during the almost daily calls for rallying at the union headquarters. Some young people are angry both at obligatory vaccination obligation and at the social disaster that is eating away at the country. On the margins, there is destruction, looting, fires sometimes affecting facilities that the people need (high schools, training centres, medical practices, pharmacies, local post offices and so on). The recent attack on a gendarmerie, in such a context, takes on a particular significance.

The requirements of the moment

The state, the elected representatives and the authorities in general are unable to organize a way out of the crisis through real negotiation. A great responsibility now rests on an cross-sectoral trade union coordination, particularly in

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health: strengthening the cohesion and unity of these structures, ensuring the coordination of those in struggle, forcing progressive elected representatives to rise to the level the situation requires. These are the tasks that our comrades are working on. The solidarity of the workers' movement in France is a necessity to avoid the worst and pave the way for real progress.

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[1] GIGN and RAID are the elite tactical units of the French National Gendarmerie and Police respectively.