

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 OPR-02 A-01 SY-10

OC-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15

SAM-01 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 HEW-08 NIC-01

SCSE-00 SCA-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AGR-20 DRC-01 /193 W

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P 191500Z FEB 74

FM AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1483

COMCARISBSEAFRON UPRIORITY UNN

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY

AMCONSUL CURACAO PRIORITY

UNCLAS MARTINIQUE 0071

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINS, ELAB, MB

SUBJECT: GENERAL STRIKE IN MARTINIQUE

REF: MARTINIQUE 0068 AND PREVIOUS.

1. AFTER CLASHES BETWEEN STRIKERS AND GENDARMES REPORTED REFTEL, SITUATION BECAME LESS TENSE. POLICE REINFORCEMENTS CONSISTING OF ELEMENTS OF GARDE MOBILE OF GENDARMERIE HAD ARRIVED FROM GUADELOUPE, FROM FRENCH GUIANA AND FROM METROPOLITAN FRANCEM THEY BEGAN PATROLLING COUNTRYSIDE WITHOUT SERIOUS INCIDENT. IN FORT-DE-FRANCE NO INCIDENTS OCCURED SERIOUS ENOUGH TO CAUSE POLICE TO RESORT ONCE AGAIN TO TEARGAS AND BILLY CLUBS.

2. NEVERTHELESS, WEEK ENDED WITH ECONOMY STILL LARGELY PARALYZED. ON SUNDAY TRACTS APPEARED CLAIMING THAT CORPSE JUST DISCOVERED NEAR TOWN WHERE LAST WEEK S FATAL CLASH HAD OCCURED BORE MARKS OF HAVING BEEN TORTURED BY POLICE. PROMPT AUTOPSY BY THREE DOCTORS INCLUDING ONE WHO IS HIGH OFFICIAL OF MARTINIQUE PROGRESSIVE

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PARTY (PPM) LAID THESE RUMORS TO REST.

3. ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18 SIGNS OF A RETURN TO WORK WERE EVIDENT. SOME GARBAGE COLLECTORS BEGAN ATTACKING MOUNTAINS OF GARBAGE WHICH HAD ACCUMULATED DURING PAST WEEK AND MOST STORES FORT-DE-FRANCE WERE OPEN. HOWEVER, SITUATION WAS STILL FAR FROM NORMAL: E.G., BREAD AND FRESH PRODUCE WERE STILL SCARCE, INSUFFICIENT CANE WAS BEING CUT TO ALLOW SUGAR FACTORIES OPERATE MORE THAN A FEW HOURS PER DAY, AND SO ON.

4. TUESDAY MORNING FEBRUARY 19, NEW DEMONSTRATIONS AND PARADES WERE HELD IN FORT-DE-FRANCE. STRIKE SITUATION VERY CONFUSED AS SOME ENTERPRISES RESUMED WORK WHILE WORKERS IN OTHERS(SUCH AS BANKS) FORMALLY VOTED GO ON STRIKE FOR FIRST TIME. NO NEW VIOLENCE REPORTED.

5. FRENCH AUTHORITIES DO NOT DISCOUNT WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH SKYROCKETING PRICES WHICH HAS CAUSED STRIKE TO BE LARGEST ONE IN MANY YEARS. AT SAME TIME THEY NOTE PRESENCE AGITATORS ARRIVING FROM METROPOLITAN FRANCE AND PUT MUCH OF BLAME FOR VIOLENCE WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE ON THESE INDIVIDUALS. IT NOTEWORTHY THAT CERTAIN ELEMENTS BOOED SECRETARY GENERAL VICTOR LAMON OF COMMUNIST TRADE UNION FEDERATION (CGTM) WHEN HE ADDRESSED MASS MEETING AT HEIGHT OF LAST WEEK S TENSION AND APPEALED FOR MODERATION.

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