

## 7.7.2016 French government visit to Corsica. Just a quick trip, as expected

A full government team - Prime Minister, local authorities minister (Jean Michel Baylet), but also the minister for the budget, minister of housing and minister of national education - made the trip to Corsica to present the results of the working parties on the orders introduced following the election win for the nationalists in the Corsican Assembly. No major step forward, but no retreat either: the single Corsican authority is to be introduced in 2018, the rest – co-official status for the Corsican language, residency, constitutional recognition with an eye to a statute of autonomy, amnesty – remains to be won. As expected.

Only the matter of the Miot rulings departed from the status quo. While hitherto earlier Corsican Executives failed to find any give in the “Charasse line” backed by the Constitutional Council, negotiations with Manuel Valls on the regulations has made it possible to obtain a promise of an extension of the exemptions for Corsica from the common law on inheritance. This is clearly a significant success which massive demonstrations and unanimity in the Corsican Assembly under Camille de Rocca Serra and subsequently Paul Giacobbi, backed up by their lobbying as members of parliament, have never achieved. The success on the issue of the Miot rulings is a tangible sign that Corsican claims have taken on a new weight since the nationalist movement took control of the territorial institutions.

The working party on land and property has also issued a report with some interesting proposals building on the implementation of the PADDUC development plan. It also anticipates the land registration body GIRTEC and its funding being put on a permanent footing. Some progress to be noted on the Corsican language: the creation of a Corsican language teaching qualification, and of twenty jobs which will – at last! – make it possible to achieve the aim of a continuous bilingual pathway in all catchment areas.

On the issue of intercommunal bodies, the points of view may be coming closer together. Lastly, the definitive confirmation of the establishment of a single territorial authority in January 2018 and of the end of the departmental councillors, despite the clientelist hand-waving of the last few days, particularly in southern Corsica, is putting an end to a situation with a 40 year history which the nationalists have always contested. The division of the *département* of Corsica was the institutional reform of the “post Aleria” era, in 1976, a split chosen by the state to reinforce the clanism and contain the growth of the nationalist movement. That is now truly over, despite the hiccup of the failed referendum in 2003 when Emile Zuccarelli thought he had triumphed in the name of a “French and republican” Corsica. In January 2018, we will – at last – have turned a corner.

This assessment of the ministerial visit, described by the Femu a Corsica group as “patchy”, is not a surprise. The Valls government had neither the desire nor the capacity to go further via a change to the Constitution. There is no government majority for that, which suits them fine since they have no intention whatsoever of undertaking it. For the nationalist majority of the Corsican Assembly, elected for a short term, the balance of forces needed to achieve satisfaction in this respect can only come via new electoral success in the new single authority, to impose themselves over whoever, following the presidential and legislative elections in 2017, will be governing France.

Everybody in Paris, left and right, is speculating on an end to the “nationalist interruption” in January 2018. They hope to get rid of the problem quietly this way. Of course, everything has to be done to ensure that that is not how it goes.

Femu a Corsica holds the keys to this vital victory. It is up to us to do all we can to ensure that it has the organisational and training capacity, supporting the Executive currently at the helm, and to bring home a victory in January 2018 which is even more decisive which will definitively signify that the government of France, whoever it may be, has no option but to negotiate until Corsica achieves autonomy.