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[ed. – Report on last year's rebellion on the Pacific archipelago known to some indigenous independence fighters as Kanaky, and to the French colonial regime ruling it for 172 years as 'New Caledonia'. Triggers – as well as the extractivist ones detailed below, including French hopes to install nuclear plants locally – include a (suspended) bill by France to adjust the electoral system so that 10-year residents could vote; broadly seen as an attempt to weaken the position of the Kanak relative to the settler population, to thwart independence moves given French interests to be defended in a region China and the US vie to dominate. A state of emergency was declared for a prolonged period, with French troops and cops deployed to beat, shoot and rape. Factories, 300 vehicles at a dealership, a great many schools (closed during the uprising) and a data centre were razed by the flames, and 35 settlers (mainly mainland French) in Kaméré were evacuated by sea after their residences were looted then torched. Around 90 cells were ransacked and burned during a failed prison-break with guards taken hostage, on top of a large proportion of the transnational supermarkets (whose Kanaky franchises are

held by a handful of elite families) and banks looted and sent up in flames. Settler militias roamed and killed, and the president of the South Province (leader of the Loyalists, an anti-independence group) openly called for formal apartheid between Kanaks and Europeans, shut down medical aid and subjected the famously-rebellious Saint-Louis tribal area to a months-long police blockade reminiscent of the 1887 Indigenous Code confining the Kanak to infertile reserves. In an inversion of Kanaky's 19th Century role as a prison colony (see Return Fire vol.5 pg49), detainees were sent to other French Pacific colonies or even to France to isolate them from kinfolk.]

Despite ongoing repression and the French colonial authorities' announcements of a return to normal, the situation in New Caledonia is far from being resolved. Four weeks after the outbreak of the insurrection on part of Kanak youth [in early May], La Tontouta international airport remains closed "until further notice" *[ed. – in order to give priority to the military, cops and administration]*. Only the Magenta aerodrome has been open again since June 5th for internal flights within New towards Lifou, Ouvéa and Maré, and nearly 500 French tourists have been stranded for three weeks on the archipelago of 270,000 inhabitants. The curfew (18h-6h) will continue at least until June 17th *[ed. – riots continued past this date]*, and the requisition of petrol stations for the exclusive use of cops and military has just been lifted on June 8th. As for the north of New Caledonia, it is the army which is directly responsible for supplying (and therefore rationing) the stores, by managing the containers which arrive by barge to Koné.

Despite the pressure of 3,500 cops and soldiers sent to the islands, some of the roadblocks are still put back in place by Kanak insurgents after being dismantled, in the districts of Nouméa or along the 50 kilometer road which leads to the airport, without sometimes forgetting to trap them with gas canisters or even pre-

is in the process of crushing the Kanak insurgents who have not yet lowered their hands (nor their weapons), to give it as much as possible. Out of solidarity, or quite simply out of hatred of one's own State.

Except that *boom*, in the middle of the night, part of the conveyor was set on fire, affecting around a hundred meters of the conveyor belt. As a result, the loaded ore carrier arrived safely one day late (June 4th), knowing that the Doniambo factory now needs to receive such a boat every three to four days to operate. Since then, the SLN has sent a second ore carrier, but this time much further north (towards the Tiébaghi mine, in Koumac), hoping that the young Kanaks would be less hostile to it.

In Houaïlou, a village on the east coast, the Mining and Quarrying Techniques Training Centre (CFTMC), located on the Poro mine, has been reduced to nothing: "All the training tools, mining machines, training rooms courses, driving simulators were ransacked, vandalized and burned." It trained young people wishing to work in the mining sector.

In Nouméa, on May 9th around 4am, the security guard positioned on the quay had been subdued by unknown persons, before the moorings of the Prony Express ferry dedicated to transporting employees of the Prony Resources factory were cut. The maritime launch then went adrift. Then in Goro, located in the south of the island an hour and a half by car from the capital, on May 23rd, the Prony Resources factory was directly attacked, and two vehicles were lost. Since then, it has been guarded day and night by 35 guards from the private security group Erys, but the industrial and mining complex is still far from being able to restart, and even triggered its "Special Intervention Plan" (PPI) on June 7th, *a program to enhance its security against external threats.* As it happens, "The current disruptions have forced us to stop our operations. We are facing an interruption in the supply of raw water from Lake Yaté but also, since June 4, we have no longer been supplied with electricity," said the industrial giant a few days ago, without daring to speak of sabotage…

For an insurrection not to die it needs to deepen and overcome its internal contradictions, but also oxygen, a lot of oxygen. It is up to everyone, here, within the French colonial metropolis which

pare some homemade surprises for the blues: on June 4th in Dumbéa, for example, a gendarme *[ed. – militarised police]* fell to the bottom of a manhole by walking on branches placed above in order to hide the opening. *"With a depth of 1.20m, concrete re-inforced irons 2mm in diameter had been positioned vertically at the bottom to create piles. The gendarme was impaled by one leg and a metal stake that had got in between his bullet-proof vest and body vest, which had pierced but without penetration thanks to the Kevlar plate."*

In total, 212 police officers and gendarmes have been injured since May 13th, but also a significant number of Kanaks whom the authorities *[ed. – or settlers, as of 2011 armed more easily]* officially refuse to count. Several insurgents have lost an eye or had facial bones shattered following police flash ball shooting, others have bullet wounds and are in a coma.

Two recent examples: on May 29th in Dumbéa around 8pm, during the attack on a roadblock by the cops, the latter were subject to numerous pelted stones but also a rifle shot. The GIGN *[ed. – French elite unit of the Gendarmerie, infamous in Kanaky]* responded and fired six times "towards" the shooter. An insurgent is seriously injured: "Despite surgical intervention, his vital prognosis is still in jeopardy, the medico-legal findings showing the presence of two projectiles, one in the thorax and the other in the shoulder".

Then on June 3rd around 4pm at the Col de la Pirogue, at the Saint-Laurent tribe dam, on the strategic road leading to the international airport, the gendarmes opened fire on Kanak insurgents (who according to the cops had shot first at their vehicle): one was shot in the shoulder, and another in the head. We learned on Saturday June 8th that the latter, Lionel Païta, had died in hospital, bringing the number of deaths in the territory to eight (five Kanaks *[ed. – including teenagers, shot in the back by loyalist settlers, or by a business manager whose warehouse was being looted of a vehicle, or by an off-duty cop attempting to breach a Kanak roadblock]*, including two from Canala, one from Maré, one from Poindimié, one from Païta, a *caldoche* [French settler] in Kaala-Gomen who had fired against

a [Kanak] roadblock, and two gendarmes; one of whom was killed by a colleague *[ed. – while preparing a machine-gun on an armoured vehicle for a mission]*).

Needless to say, in such a situation, wild rumours are swirling about the number of "disappeared" well beyond the 8 official deaths, while the prisons of Nouméa and Koné are filled to the brim *[ed. – server tracing 200 out on tag burned…]* and Kanak prisoners are deported to Polynesia and Fresnes, the official report announces 726 police custody, 115 referrals to court and 60 committal warrants since May 13th.

At the bottom of this insurrection of Kanak youth, in addition to colonization, racism, humiliation and hardship, is also the issue of nickel. To put it briefly, New Caledonia has a quarter of the world's nickel reserves, exploited in open-cast mines, to supply three pyro-metallurgical processing plants. The first two produce ferronickel, a lower-quality blend that is used for stainless steel, and the third is battery-grade nickel (primarily intended for Tesla[1] since 2021). While currently providing only 5% or world production, the pyrometallurgical factories which provide all the artificial wealth of the islands (90% of the archipelago's exports and 25% of jobs). These were already almost bankrupt or on standby before the uprising. Each of the three main factions – separatists, loyalists and the State – have possessed one of the major factories.

The first factory (Koniambo Nickel, KNS), the one in the hands of Kanak separatists in the north, has been shut down since the February 2024 withdrawal of its key shareholder, the Swiss raw materials trading giant Glencore *[ed. – see Return Fire vol.1 pg69]*. The activity has since been solely focused on maintaining the integrity of the furnaces (if the furnace of a metallurgical factory stops and is no longer supplied with ore or electricity, not only can it be permanently damaged if the shutdown is abrupt, but it also takes months to restart it).

[1] ed. – see 'Let's Destroy Everything That is Called Tesla!'

A request heard by members of the CCAT who due to lack of a plane to be able to return to the country, held a meeting at the CICP of Paris this same May 15th, during which Romuald Pidjot, deputy secretary of the Caledonian Union, specified that "the role of the CCAT will be to try to calm these young people down, but we will need the help of the State," while Rock Haocas (head of the USTKE union and general coordinator of the Labour Party, the other major component of the CCAT) could only deplore: "Urban warfare is not what we wanted, but young people have reached a stage that we can no longer control. We are in a phase of rupture, and it's not due to not having warned" *[ed. – in June Nouméa council didn't erect EU voting billboards, fearing use as barricades]*.

Since the start of the insurrection, we could legitimately wonder what the situation was with nickel mines and factories in terms of sabotage (or not). Outside of the capital Nouméa, dotted with looting and fires caused by young Kanak insurgents, what was it like "in the bush" and "in the tribe", where half of the Kanak population live? Even if we suspect that information has difficulty filtering through, it seems that it while it was the SLN (held by the State) which was mainly attacked, so was the Prony Resources factory (held by Loyalists).

In Thio, on the east coast, damage was caused to the conveyor belt which allows ore carriers to be loaded at the seaside. The Plateau and Camp des Sapins mines were also attacked, with looting and destruction.

In Kouaoua, still on the east coast, the 11-kilometre long ore conveyor to the bay loading dock, called "the serpent" *[ed. – subject for years to blockades, 1.5km arson of the belt and burning/stealing vehicles there]*, suffered its twelfth fire in ten days, on June 1st.

In Népoui, a village located in the centre of the west coast, an ore carrier arrived on June 2nd urgently, to load 19,000 tonnes of nickel to be brought back immediately to Nouméa, in order to supply the SLN factory in Doniambo which had finished its three weeks of stocks, and risked its ovens being "irreparably damaged".

worthy. To all the business leaders touched bodily, in their property, in their plans to make the country live, I bring them our full support, all our compassion and our great disapproval [for the revolt]. Work tools must be made safe."

Also on May 14th, Louis Mapou, a member of the second main independence party of the FLNKS, the Palika (Kanak Liberation Party), and president of the local government of New Caledonia since 2021, also called in a statement for "calm and reason" adding that "all the reasons for discontent, frustration and anger cannot justify hurting or destroying what the country has been able to build over decades and mortgaging the future."

Finally, let us add that even the traditional Kanak authorities then got involved, in vain, as the customary Senate chaired by Victor Gogny, which issued its solemn statement, in which he enjoined that "it is imperative that the youth show restraint and citizenship, and promote dialogue and cooperation to express their legitimate demands and aspirations." Quickly joined by the National Council of chiefs (Inaat ne Kanaky, created in 2022), again on May 14th after the first night of insurrection, which came in turn to "call the youth to calm, wisdom and respect for the instructions given by the officials".

And to conclude, it is directly the FLNKS (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) which released on May 15th its own position on the ongoing insurrection, which is at least explicit about its role as co-manager of the colony since the Matignon agreements (1988) then of Nouméa (1998): "The FLNKS, committed to the economic and social development of the country, deplores the actions perpetrated against companies and provides support to the business leaders and employees impacted… It calls for the lifting of barricades to allow free access of the population to products, services and basic needs. This appeal is also addressed to all the political authorities, customary of this country so that each one where he is, contributes to bring back serenity and calm to our populations."

The second, historic factory founded in 1880 belongs to SLN (Société Le Nickel), 56% owned by the French group Eramet, itself 27% owned by the French State. It is located in Doniambo, and was already in cessation of payments before the insurrection, kept artificially alive thanks to a state loan of 60 million Euros last February. Eramet wants to get rid of its metallurgical activities in New Caledonia, particularly since it operates the largest nickel mine in the world at Weda Bay, on the island of Halmahera (Indonesia), right in the middle of primal forests (Indonesia has in fact gone up from 0% to 55% of world nickel production) with Chinese capital, which has caused prices to collapse by almost 43% in 2023 alone, thanks to unbeatable labour and electricity prices.

In addition, it has just obtained gigantic lithium extraction concessions in Chile and Argentina. In Kanaky, this factory has been the object of several counter-insurgency operations by the French state – with all five mining sites that supplied it blocked for four weeks, while its stock of ore ended up running out, not to mention the riots taking place a few hundred meters from its factory.

As for the third factory, called the Southern one and located in Goro, it is owned by the Prony Resources consortium and is also in cessation of payments, only surviving thanks to a loan from the French State of 140 million Euros in March. Its key shareholder, the Swiss trader Trafigura, has wanted to resell its shares for months, and the famous "contract of the century" signed in 2021 with Tesla already far away. As with SLN, Prony Resources' activities at the mine and at the factory have been stopped since the start of the insurrection *[ed. – electrical transformer shot up]*, even if its hydrometallurgical process is different from that of the two other factories in the archipelago.

Faced with this, the State has been trying for months to straighten out a colony that it does not want to let go of at any cost, by trying to negotiate with the Caledonian government (made up of both loyalist and separatist parties, and led by the latter) a "Nickel Pact" to the tune of 200 million Euro in energy

subsidies, with several strings attached: that the factories would commit to supplying the European market with batteries for electric vehicles as a priority; that this local government sharply increases taxes; that it authorizes the export of much more raw ore; and that it temporarily restores jurisdiction over the mining code to the [French] State.

In short, this "Nickel Pact," which has undergone eight versions since November 2023 and has still not been signed, is a project aimed at intensifying the extraction of nickel for the metropolis, which would transform Kanaky into a purely mining territory, definitively embedded in a neo-colonial framework. This is unlike the famous Nouméa agreements of 1998, supposed to buy social peace, and which planned to use mining revenue to promote the development of New Caledonia until its possible independence (hence the three referendums on the latter from 2019 to 2021, the transfer of mines and a factory to the Kanak bourgeoisie, and the creation of a local government).

The "Nickel Pact" therefore offends both the Kanak politicians who were banking on this resource to found their economic independence (as in "the State wants to steal our nickel"), and the urbanized Kanak youth who were already denouncing the corrupt politicians who never see the colour of all the money dumped on the archipelago. It also offends the collectives of Kanak tribes, who increasingly see the devastation caused by the intensification of extractivism (pollution of rivers, health, landslides), and began to advocate an independence which would drive out not only the French state but also the mines *[ed. – June saw polling station arson/roadblock]*.

We therefore understand why the vote in the Senate on April 2nd and then in the Assembly on May 15th to thaw the New Caledonian electorate (blocked since 1998), having the consequence of numerically perpetuating the colonization of the archipelago, could have been the spark of an insurrection which methodically devastated the businesses and industries of the island's capital. Accord-

ing to the latest report from High Commissioner (Prefect) Louis Le Franc, made public on June 7th, 570 businesses were destroyed and more than 1.5 billion Euro in direct damage were caused.

When the situation exploded on Monday 13th of May on the occasion of the blockade of the greater Nouméa, after six months of mobilizations against the thaw of the electoral body (including demonstrations of 3,000 people in late November, 5,000 on 25th February, 15,000 on 28th March and 60,000 people on 13th April), the Kanak politicians quickly lost control, and not only called for calm, but also condemned the actions of the insurgents.

In the face of groups of mobile, autonomous, Kanak youth, looters and destroyers, it was on behalf of the CCAT (Field Action Coordination Cell) that Christian Tein launched a call for calm on 14th May on the independentist radio, Radio Djido: "I call on all of our young people to step back. To stay where they are, on the side of the road, organized, structured. The CCAT never called for looting stores," while also soliciting parents to "not let [the youth] run wild." A line that will not vary, so that on May 15th in a statement, this cell will specify "our fight for free Kanaky will be long and fraught with obstacles, so the CCAT calls on all citizens mobilized on the ground for appeasement and respect for the instructions", and again on May 31st, adding that "the CCAT has never called for violence, looting or harming people… [It] does not condone acts of vandalism. These acts must not tarnish our struggle for the good of all the citizens of Kanaky."

But getting back to May 14th, since that same day Daniel Goa, president of the main independence party of the FLNKS, the Caledonian Union (UC, besides at the origin of the creation of the CCAT in November 2023), also published his statement, in which he called "our youth to remain calm, to show patience and to stop all abuses, all looting that does not honour us. That's not dignity and freedom… The looting orchestrated this night is our dishonour and in no way serves our cause and our struggle, at worst they delay it… That is not the face of a Kanak. We do not rob our homes, we are