

London has one less pearl in the Caribbean



In Bridgetown, Barbados, November 30, 2021. © Reuters/Jonathan Brady

By: Roberto Morejón

In a memorable, even daring gesture, Barbados put an end to the British monarchy and officially became an independent republic, amidst the celebration of its people.

Coinciding with the 55th anniversary of the emancipation from colonial rule, the Caribbean island ceased to have Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, leaving the British crown and becoming the most fledgling republic on the planet.

At its head are women, since the president is Sandra Mason, lawyer, judge and until now governor general, and the prime minister and leader of the Labor Party is Mia Mottley.

Barbados thus ceased to be a member of the group of 16 nations that have the British monarch as Head of State, a path that other territories could take after centuries of influence of the European power.

As far as Barbados is concerned, it has overturned its constitutional order, although analysts predict that its political and economic relations will continue to be strongly linked to London and other capitals of the Old Continent, as well as to Washington.

This is an inheritance left by the former metropolis to the territory of some 285,000 inhabitants, which is now in the midst of an economic crisis, with 16 percent unemployment, essentially due to the impact of Covid-19.

Nevertheless, many Barbadians consider that the prevailing difficulties, in spite of being a paradisiacal place for tourism, also have links with the economic vulnerability of the Antillean territories.

There is NO First World relationship with small Caribbean nations that takes into account their fragility and scarcity of natural resources.

For Barbados, leaving behind the British crown also symbolizes a new look, not exempt of criticism, to the colonial past, since it was for 200 years a center for the slave trade.

In the opinion of many natives, the former metropolis benefited from slavery, for which they expect receptiveness to demands for economic reparations and even apologies.

The society of the new Republic requires concrete help, Barbadians demand, hence the insistence on these contributions.

In this direction, the promulgation of the independent Republic could be the first step towards the construction of a new project of nationhood, away from a tutelage that is too heavy for many.

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