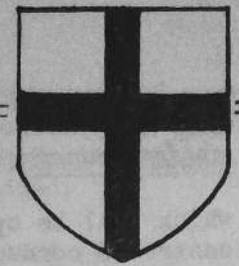


BRETON NEWS



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MEMORANDUM ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BRETON SPEAKERS SENT BY CELTIC LEAGUE TO COUNCIL OF EUROPE.

In a 5-page memorandum sent in the name of the Celtic League on June 18th, the attention of the European Commission of Human Rights was drawn on the discrimination practised by the French government against the Breton speakers, particularly against the families which educate their children in the mother tongue. A recent example of this discrimination is the refusal of the French authorities to pay family allowances to the Etienne family on the ground that the two eldest children are receiving their primary school education in Breton. Official evidence, provided by a letter from the Inspector of the Academy in Kemper, was submitted, alongside with the outline of Dr. Etienne's case (see B.N. 37). A short history of the efforts to obtain the teaching of Breton in the public schools since the beginning of this century should that the small concession made in 1951 has been rendered ineffective by regulations and that the French government by vetoing the discussion of a new bill of law as anti-constitutional left no hope of a revision of its assimilation policy.

Other reasons for appealing to the European Commission of Human Rights, were stated in the memorandum:

- 1) The right of parents to choose the type of education to be given to their children and the enjoyment of this right without discrimination on the ground of language is one of the fundamental rights which the Council of Europe aims at securing.
- 2) The Breton members of the Celtic League as a group are affected by the discrimination which excludes their language from the schools and thereby condemns it to extinction. A language being a social phenomenon they are particularly affected by the repressive measures taken against Dr. Etienne's family.
- 3) The other branches of the Celtic League - Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Cornish and Manx - consider this situation as a threat to the cultural values which they hold in common with the Breton members.

The signatories of the memorandum knew that France had not ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, but they suggested that, if France as a member of the Council of Europe accepted Article 3 of its Statute, it should be possible for the European Commission of Human Rights to act in a fact-finding and conciliating capacity in an effort to bring the French government to reconsider its discriminatory policy towards the Breton people.

The memorandum concluded :

"The exclusion of the Breton language from regular teaching is causing irreparable harm to the Bretons and constitutes a grievous injustice amounting to cultural genocide. The existence of a language spoken by one million people cannot be a danger to France. On the contrary, France can win the confidence of the small European nations and consolidate European unity by making it possible for the Bretons to maintain and develop their culture, in particular by enabling them to teach their language effectively."

In his reply (July 9), the Secretary of the European Commission of H.R. pointed out that the High Contracting Party against which the complaint was made had not recognised the competence of the Commission to receive such petitions: the latter could therefore not act in the manner suggested. Communiqué, Celtic League Secretariat.

SUPPORT ABROAD FOR ETIENNE FAMILY. Numerous press organs have sympathetically related the stand made by Dr. Etienne and the penalisation imposed on him by the French authorities. Letters of protest are still being sent to the French representatives in Ireland, Wales and England as well as to General De Gaulle, to the French Ministers of Education and Justice, to the Academy Inspector in Kemper.

In addition to the Celtic League petition, a protest was made to the French authorities by the Celtic Congress, which also sent details of the case to UNESCO. Further, on the request of 3 Breton organisations, the Federalist Union of European Nationalities decided to take up the matter. (Ar Vro 19)

In reply to a letter sent by a Welshman to the French Consul in Cardiff, the General Consul in Liverpool reminded him that France was not a "united Kingdom", but a nation with only one language. "We don't despise the old languages and regional dialects like Breton, Basque... These regional languages are still taught in some Universities, for historical and folkloric reasons, and valuable works are written in those dialects"...

The gist of the reply was : such is the LAW now, therefore things must stay as they are. (Ref. Barr-Heol, June).

SUMMER COURSES. The CENTRE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN BRETON will give its first oral lectures at the Interceltic Camp for Breton-speakers which will be open at Langonned from July 29 to August 14. The work of this centre is conducted chiefly by correspondence. Its aim is to throw the basis of the future Breton University, and to give the young Bretons an education which all other European peoples, except the Basques, the Catalans and the Alsacians can receive in their mother-tongue.

A series of lectures will be given at Lorient (August 26-31) under the title of "Universite Bretonne d'Ete". It is organised by the Catholic Association "Bleun-Brug", and its theme is : the Breton problems in their European context. It is intended especially for the teachers of the 5 Breton departments who wish to know more about the difficulties which Brittany has to face, and to take account of them in their teaching. The lectures appear to be all in French, although some will deal with the cultural aspect. About 20 speakers are listed. (L'Avenir, 6/7)

CELTIC STUDIES. 35 lectures were given at the 2nd International Congress of Celtic Studies at Cardiff (6-13/7/63). The thesis according to which the Celtic language of Gaul still survived in the Armorican peninsula at the time of the Breton immigration from Britain (5-7th Century) was expounded by Prof. Falc'hun (Rennes) with much self-assurance but no concrete facts were produced in support of it. This thesis has been used since the war to counteract the nationalist ideas, since it suggests that the Breton language belongs after all to the French inheritance.

Unfortunately, France has for many centuries had no use for such a legacy ... And if our information is correct, Prof. Falc'hun failed to convince his listeners in Cardiff.

A GLUT OF POTATOES While half the world population is badly fed, French mis-management compels the Breton vegetable growers to dump considerable amounts of their products every year. The slump in potato prices which occurred last month on the markets of St -Malo, Lezardrev, Pont-'n Abad was due in part only to an abundant harvest (100,000 tons more than last year). The farmers' associations had informed the French authorities well in time that a glut was expected. But no measures were taken to stop imports from Algeria, Spain, Greece, Egypt.

Disturbances started in Mid-June. A number of municipal councils resigned. Demonstrations took place in front of Government buildings. Loads of potatoes were dumped in streets and rendered useless.

Quickly, imports were stopped and a percentage bonus was offered to cover part of the transport costs over more than 300km. The farmers associations were asked to organise the market themselves : this they are quite willing to do. It will mean planning the production in terms of the demand. But can this be done without regional quotas being fixed?

AND A GLUT OF FISH In June also, many Breton fishermen were unable to dispose of their abundant catches, partly as a result of excessive imports. At Nantes, dockers refused to unload a cargo of sardines from Morocco. At Concarneau and Vannes, it was found possible to put some of the excess production in deep-freeze and use it for canning.

NO SIGN OF BRETON PLAN BEING ADOPTED. On June 18, 1962, the General Assembly of the Committee for the Study and Coordination of Breton Interests (CELIB), presided by Mr. R. PLEVEN, had voted a very comprehensive and detailed bill for a Breton Plan of Development. At the height of rural disturbances, the French Government promised to adopt such a Loi-programme for all underdeveloped areas during 1963.

Since the beginning of this year, government spokesmen and ministers have seriously damped the Breton hopes. Instead of a "law", which would be binding (?) and elaborate, officials propose a solution by means of another "notion" which is cryptically called "operational sections", but which amounts only to suggestions for investments (see Communist view over).

At a joint meeting of its Economic and Parliamentary Commissions at Rennes on June 17th, CELIB undertook to stick to the Breton Plan. They sat under a banner on which was written the historical Breton motto "Death Rather Than Dishonour".

CELIB was not consulted by the French government as to how to distribute the 1963 credits for Breton equipment : these are much inferior to those for previous years which were already derisive.

Attempts are made to divide the 4 "Breton" departements by admitting only two as being particularly in need.

At this meeting, A. Colin, honorary president of the French party M.R.P. said that Brittany's difficulties were due to the fact that she was an economic but not a juridical reality. He asked the Breton members of the French Parliament to act in the name of Brittany. "As for myself," he beautifully added, "I pledge to serve Brittany first."

Such a word in the mouth of a politician reveals a considerable change in the Bretons' attitude towards their own country over the past 25 years. He has his constituents in mind, at least.

An enormous distance exists between the representatives of the Breton people and the administrators who refuse to recognise the economic and psychological unity of Brittany, and spend their time reporting to Paris on the "psychological" climate here instead of tackling the problems.

Decisions are taken without consulting even the loyalist elements like Prof. Philipponneau, who by their work in the economic sphere are better qualified than prefects to brief the French government on Brittany's needs and proposals. In fact, the moderates who struggle for the survival of their "region" are as suspect of autonomism as those who are openly nationalist.

CELIB has lately come to the realisation that political reforms are needed to solve the Breton problem. This may be the reason why the French government is bypassing the Committee, and according to rumours, thinking of getting rid of some of its leaders. They may even suppress CELIB altogether and create instead of the truncated "Brittany" a new region with nothing in its name to remind the Bretons of their identity.

Ref. L'Avenir 6-7-'63.

COMMUNISTS ARE TAKING AN INTEREST IN THE BRETON QUESTION.

Since 1951, the Breton Members of Parliament with the notable exception of the Communists were able to short-circuit their Parisian headquarters and bridge their differences by gathering around CELIB - in its efforts to obtain a remedy to the Breton economic crisis.

There was a reluctance to take an interest in Brittany as such among other leftists too. They subscribed to the idea that Brittany was "a land of the past", and that its defenders were all reactionaries or "fascists".

Nowadays, the left parties realise their mistake in standing aside while the country is carried away in a movement of renovation and a struggle for its existence. They realise how deeply it reaches.

It appears that the Breton communists are now preparing a plan similar to that of CELIB, and that they are likely to claim for more drastic measures.

"The Communists are agreed with CELIB, or go even further, in their analysis of the present situation in Brittany": underdevelopment, specific character of the Breton problems, disproportion between her contribution to the French economy and the total income of her population, economic crisis and systematic impoverishment.

In its search for remunerative activities, the Breton agriculture has been engaged in a rush to produce foods which were much in demand and for which competition was not so acute. This would give relief for a few years. But other regions would follow in the track, with smaller production or marketing costs, and the result was a new crisis.

The Breton farmers would try another crop and the same happened again. After the potatoes, they went into vegetable growing, then chicken rearing. Here the critical point has been reached once more.

In spite of their dynamism, there was no progress, but a flight forward. Now the farmers want to organise the markets and to have regional quotas of production allocated by the State.

Not possible in Common Market. Such a distribution of production is not realisable, the Communists say, without a planned (socialist) economy. It is not possible in the capitalist economy, particularly if Brittany is incorporated in a Common Market which is bound to increase free competition.

The integration of the French market into a free European or world market is diametrically opposed to a market planning which would attribute quotas by regions.

In the Common Market, production will be regulated by a sharpening of the competition, profitable to the big enterprises, but ruinous to those like the Breton ones which are at a disadvantage for multiple reasons (lack of credits, poor transport system, distance from industrial areas).

Brittany is not in a position to compete in the Common Market, chiefly because of her poor equipment. Competition can have a stimulating effect when the means at its disposal are adequate. But in Brittany there is a crisis which requires reforms and the greatest precaution during the reconversion phase; the shock of competition can be fatal to small enterprise in such a situation. Brittany is entering the Common Market in a weakened state.

The Communists' proposals for the Breton agriculture include its cooperative organisation (particularly in view of the small size of most holdings), the

farmers' ownership of the land, the creation of new employment by developing agriculturally-based industries.

Criticism of CELIB's Plan. The Breton proposals, voted at Lorient last year, are not realisable within the French Fourth plan and capitalist regime. The communists don't say that the cost of the Breton Plan is excessive, but that it is not applicable unless credits are redistributed within the actual budget. (this can come only from curtailing military expenditures). Half-heartedly applied, it can help only the capitalists to orientate their investments.

The communists don't call on the Bretons to fight first for the advent of socialism : the immediacy and urgency of the Breton needs would deprive them of followers. When their plan comes out, it will probably be a blend of general doctrine and of Breton claims. Ref. Vie Bretonne June 1963).

AR VRO No. 18 contains articles by J. Ventura (a Catalan): the Theory of proletarian Nations; by Povl Skadegaard (a Dane): Report on the 12th FUEN Congress; by abAnna (the Catholic Church and the Breton Movement), by R. Peniarth (The right of languages in the new Europe).

No. 19 brings contributions from G. Toublane (Brittany's chance in European Integration), the Fleming Henri de Man (Language, the test of democracy), the Scotsman Oliver Brown (Ireland and Scotland), abAnna (the Second Stage of our Revolution)

These two issues contain many other articles, in particular the well documented Chronicle of the Nations which surveys the small nations' struggle for freedom all over the world (Celtic countries, Basque Country, Catalonia, Transylvania, Flanders, Quebec, Kurdistan, Martinique, etc.) The leading article in No. 19 draws attention to the example of Israel. Ar Vro interests therefore others than the Bretons.

Ar Vro is mainly in French. While LA VIE BRETONNE (monthly) maintains its regionalist outlook and puts the stress on economics, AR VRO views Brittany and the WORLD around from a purely Breton standpoint. Normal subscription rate 15 francs/annum; write to M. J. Desbordes, Bat. H. 4, Ker-Andon, Concarneau, Sud-Finistere, Brittany.

The deal with the German firm Giebel which would have saved the Henbont foundries near Lorient has not been brought off. 1500 workers and their dependents risk being soon deprived of their livelihood. The French government is refusing credits to save the only heavy industry existing now in Brittany : they propose instead to install some light industries in the area, leaving it to the workers to readapt themselves if they can. A large number of Breton organisations have promised to demonstrate in support of Henbont. The Government is treading slowly.

"FRANCE BROUGHT PROGRESS TO BRITTANY" Figures computed by the Company Unimarel concerning the use of electricity in the households of the Common Market countries put France third with the index 111, after the Netherlands (127) and West-Germany (113). Among the 21 French administrative regions, 12 have an index superior to 100, 7 others are above 90. Brittany comes last with 68.

(Vie Bretonne).

KER-VREIZH, the Breton cultural centre, 43 rue St-Placide, Paris 6, celebrated its 25th anniversary on June 8th. It was founded on the eve of the war by young Bretons living in Paris who wanted to remain in contact with the culture of Brittany, to practise its language and learn its history, as well as to have Breton entertainments (dances, music, songs).

During the repression of the Breton national movement in the Summer and Autumn of 1939 policemen raided and closed Ker-Vreizh and stole its library. The centre was reopened in the fifties and witnessed important events of the Breton national life.

Recently it has become the seat of - among others - the newly-founded "Association of Breton Actors", composed of professionals who are employed in Parisian theaters and want to devote themselves to making the Breton and Celtic dramas better known through high quality performances. This should also stimulate the creation of new plays and the search for an original Celtic expression on the stage.

The first performance by this group will be given at Lokronan near Kemper (W. Brittany) on August 11 - 12, when they will show Tangi Malmanch's masterpiece, GURVAN. This is the drama of the 10th century knight who goes out to fight the invaders, returns maimed and disfigured to his lady who does not recognise him -- until they meet again in eternity. A theme the symbolism of which has been understood by those who have devoted their life to Brittany. (L'Avenir 20-7).

The May-June issue of AL LIAMM is devoted to Catalonia. (80 pages). Previous issues of this periodical, which is all in Breton, have dealt with Wales, Friesland, Flanders, Israel. There are similarities between the Catalan and the Breton national struggles : the Catalans also have created a unified literary language in spite of the efforts of the Spaniards to foster the dialectal divisions, but their linguistic position is much safer than ours : in Barcelona for instance nearly all speak Catalan. No children publications are allowed, but about a hundred books are published every year.

(Al Liamm, 98)

When a young Breton takes part in our festivals, it is not for the show he is dancing, playing or wrestling for his own pleasure and for his countrymen's... At our more and more numerous winter "festoù", there are no tourists. Here is a vast movement of "return to the sources" affecting a whole people. It is not a survival of the past, but a renaissance.

(Bre's. July-August).