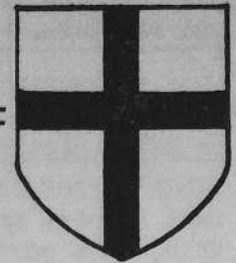


# BRETON NEWS



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"There is indisputable a Breton problem"  
Camille ERNST, Préfet of Rennes  
opening the Rennes Conference.

ECONOMIC CONFERENCE WITH DEBRÉ IN RENNES. Prime Minister DEBRÉ was back in the Breton capital on March 1st. The primary motive for this journey was to appease the farmers' unrest which, though shared by peasants all over the French territory, is most intense in Brittany. But the farmers' leaders, angered by the official inaction during the past months, decided to boycott the economic conference convened between the Minister and the Prefects on one side, the Breton agricultural federations and the Committee for Study and Coordination of Breton Interests (CELIB) on the other side. The Celib, while expressing complete solidarity with the peasants, decided to attend in the hope of making some progress in the realisation of its "Breton plan" elaborated 7 or 8 years ago.

The conference took place in an icy atmosphere. Debré recognised that a Breton problem existed, but breton interests, he said, could not be separated from the French problem (?). The Minister was surrounded by an impressive security force which served to avoid a repetition of the Amiens disturbances, but also perhaps to remind Bretons that their affairs were in strong hands. He kept referring to the State and its authority: "You are, here, France", he affirmed in his patriotic jargon. He dwelt on the need to maintain a stable currency, but never admitted that the threat to this stability comes chiefly from the Algerian war. He promised the CELIB that a certain number of projects would be realised within 5 years, but he proffered no immediate alleviation to the peasants. The latter, feeling cheated, are contemplating renewed demonstrations as soon as Khrushchev departs.

SMALL FARMERS TO BE SACRIFICED FOR DE GAULLE'S GRANDEUR. In a situation where they are daily becoming more involved in debt, merely to keep their farms going, Breton peasants could not be interested in DEBRÉ's promises of a special 5-year-plan for Brittany. When you face ruin, what will happen in 5 years does not matter.

Debré has declared that farms of 5 hectares (=10 acres) will not be economic in future. It means that French policy will be geared towards the grouping of small holdings in big farms or estates. It means that one 1/4 or 1/3 of the total Breton population will have to adapt themselves. Debré's 5-year-plan may provide a living for ten or twenty thousands at the very most. Are we going to assist in the emigration of several hundred thousands Bretons in the next few years?

WHAT BRETON ORGANISATIONS PROPOSE. CELIB, the movement for the Organisation of Brittany and the Nationalists all take the view that the country's agricultural difficulties cannot be solved satisfactorily unless such a solution is linked with an extensive industrialisation of Brittany. Much modernisation is certainly needed to make most farms yield the maximum, but a judicious organisation and pooling of equipment, coupled with the installation of industries using rural and marine products, could greatly reduce the exodus from the land. To give an example: for decades now, small farmers in the vicinity of Concarneau continued to exploit holdings of 2 - 5 acres while earning fairly decent wages in canning factories.

THEY ARE ALL FRENCH. The Editor of Barr Heol, an all-breton periodical writes in the March issue. Perhaps what all successive French governments, including De Gaulle's, want is a decrease in the rural population and an increase in the size of farms so as to replace men by machines. That would be easier than to try to maintain an agricultural system based on the family. What does it matter to the Government and to a General to see peasants flocking into towns? For them

they are all Frenchmen, good to be shifted anywhere like civil servants, policemen and soldiers.

SLOW SMOTHERING. "The Breton unrest is not caused by the difficulties of some nameless section of the French population. It expresses the anguish of a nation which is being slowly choked" (J.Y. Veillard, in Kaierou an Emsaver Yaouank, February).

DEBRE'S PROMISES. Among the projects which DEBRE promises to have realised in the next 5 years are: the construction of the famous (!) tidal power station near St-Malo, at a cost of 380 million new francs (instead of the previous 500 m.). If additional costs arise during the construction, the construction will be stopped, said Minister Jeanneney. (Ouest France, 2-3-60); 40 square miles of marsh land at the mouth of the river Vilaine to be reclaimed; 4 technical schools to be created or "decentralised" from Paris; a share in the distribution of the natural gas from Laeg; premiums to be offered for investments and purchase of equipment. A small nuclear station at Brennilis, in the Finistere département, (one wonders if by nuclear, the French mean only atomic?) Ouest-France 21-3-60).

At the Rennes Conference, a speaker said that 15,000 Bretons are now unemployed. 60,000 new jobs are needed in Brittany in the next 5 years. (La Croix de Br.)

TOO MANY CHILDREN IN BRITTANY. Tired from listening to the warnings of CELIB representatives that Brittany's existence was threatened, Debré exclaimed: "Your language is too pessimistic. Brittany's difficulties arise from having too many children". This caused some lively reactions. A Senator left, banging the door.

The Rennes Conference gave attention to the economic problems of 4 Breton départements, not of the whole of Brittany which includes the Loire-Atlantique with Nantes. It gave no attention to Brittany's cultural problems.

MUZZLING OF MINORITY PRESS. The Breton Information Bureau wishes to express its solidarity with the courageous Editor of "La Voix d'Alsace-Lorraine" in his appeal against the fine of 2000 francs imposed on him by a French court. La Voix d'A-L. had republished an article from the Swiss "Weltwoche" relating the experiences of a Swiss ex-member of the Foreign Legion in Algeria. The French authorities did not dare to penalise the internationally known Weltwoche which was allowed to sell unmolested in France. French justice has no such scruples with a publication which dares to fight against the Frenchification of Elsass-Lothringen. Proclaim that France is the home of freedom but ruin anybody who does not accept to "be a Frenchman like the others".

IN PRISON FOR REFUSING TO HELP REPRESSING ALGERIAN UPRISING. In the No. 12 of the French periodical "Esprit", we learn that a Breton, Lieut. Jean Le Meur was in Jail in Constantine for having refused to accept the command of a section fighting the FLN. "By accepting, he writes, I would contribute to repress a revolt which I understand too well, to tame rebels whose cause I cannot in conscience condemn. The misfortune is that too many Frenchmen have accepted to serve a cause which they know to be unjust".

MEETING OF THE BRETON BRANCH OF THE CELTIC CONGRESS AT KASTELLIN, on the 11th of February. The meeting was devoted mainly to the activity of the group "AL LIAMM". - and its publications. Apart from the publication every second month of a literary magazine of 60-80 pages, Al Liamm printed also a novel by Jarl Priel and a collection of short stories by Y. Olier. 1200 Breton books were sold. This year, Al Liamm will reprint 4000 copies of Roparz Hemon's "Elementary Course", and hope also to bring out a novel by the same author. Publicity for Al Liamm has been accepted by about a dozen periodicals, but the "provincial" French-inspired dailies and weeklies have in general refused it.

BIG PROFITS IN LORIENT. Lorient was formerly prosperous owing to her trade with the "Orient". That was at the time of Breton autonomy. To-day it is a military naval base and a fishing harbour. The arsenal, if it gives work locally is a costly State enterprise and gives no return. The fishing harbour is conceded to Parisian businessmen who invest the dividends resulting from 6 milliards transaction with the Banque des Pays-Bas; not a penny of the taxes on this income is left in Lorient.

A Breton Youth Hostel will be open at Kerroc'h, Moelan, near Kemperle, from the 5th to the 17th April. For the present the house, situated in an enchanting district, is being renovated. There is manual work to be done by participants, but also a series of lectures which will contribute to the formation of the young generation.

Ex-President PLEVEN. 800,000 Bretons have emigrated since the beginning of this century.

TALK OF DECENTRALISATION. In 1958, an extra 213,000 people came to live in the Paris area, 2/3 of the total increase of the French population.

Why did De Gaulle not propose to Khrushchev to visit Brittany, asks "l'Avenir": because France has here no remarkable achievement to show.