

BRETON NEWS



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THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENTS BANK granted a loan of 4 million Nf on November 15th, 1965 to the départements of Finistère and Cotes-du-Nord. Previous loans had been made for rural electrification, the modernisation of transport and the building of two factories in Brittany. The total loan amounts now to 25, millions. 24 millions have been granted by the E.I.B. to other underdeveloped areas of the French territory. Applications for such loans have been made already a few years ago by the Committee for the Study and Liaison of Breton Interests but delays were due to the difficulty of persuading the French government to allow this recourse to European community institutions.

Italy has received from the Bank the equivalent of 205 million Nf for her southern provinces because her government is not so concerned with prestige and is ready to cover the risks. The E.I.B. is quite willing to consider further loans to Brittany, and the help given to Finistère and Cotes-du-Nord could have been much greater, had the French government not refused to cover the risks. (Vie Bretonne, December-January)

STANDARD OF LIVING. In evaluating a country's standard of living, it is customary to calculate how many cars, refrigerators, T.V. sets they have per capita.

In the official "Bulletin de Conjoncture pour la Région Bretonne" Mr. Ph. Lievre compares Brittany, the West of France and all of France from this point of view. His analysis is based on figures for 1961.

According to him, 63% of the Breton households have neither cars, nor washing machines, nor refrigerators, nor TV, whereas in the West of France (including Brittany) the corresponding figure was 58% and for the whole French territory 48%.

This disproportion was not due to the more rural character of Brittany's population. It affected all classes of the population.

Mr. Lievre did not possess enough data for more recent years, but using those available, he concluded:

"Of course, in Brittany as in the rest of the country, a rapid improvement of living conditions is taking place, but the progression being equally if not more rapid elsewhere, it is doubtful whether Brittany can catch up with the other areas, at least in the near future."

Analysing the figures more closely, he actually calculated that the equipment of the three areas under consideration stood in proportion to 1 : 2 : 3

The Breton lag reflects a disparity of incomes. It is not clearly realised by the people themselves, who are often satisfied when they compare their position now with that of previous years. This complacency is dangerous, because it does not elicit the effort necessary for difficult changes. But the young people, who are better informed, are ill at ease in this situation and emigrate.

One of the tasks of the Bretons who want to save their country is to make their compatriots realise that their standard of living depends closely on their rate of economic growth and that there is no social progress if this rate is not rapid enough.

To stimulate them, they must be cautioned against an official campaign to persuade them that great improvements have already occurred, that they need only wait a few more years to see their living standard substantially raised and that the Breton problem will thus solve itself. (Vie Bretonne, December-January).

New Incentives to industrial decentralisation: Following the publication of the official Plan for the Development of the Paris area (see Breton News 51), the Committee for the Study and Liaison of Breton Interests (CELIB) asked the French government whether it was unavoidable that Paris should reach a population of 14 millions by the year 2000, and whether the incentives to industrialisation away from Paris were to be discontinued. In reply to this pressure the Commissioner in charge of applying the Paris Plan, Mr. Delouvrier, stated that the brake would have to be put on the growth of the French Capital.

In 1962-63, the government gave some impetus to a number of industrial firms to establish branches in (the East of) Brittany. In 1964, this movement was reversed. 1965, says R. Pleven, was disappointing. "I believe that 1966 begins under better signs. For the past few weeks, CELIB has received renewed enquiries and made contacts with industrialists in Paris or abroad who are interested in starting factories here" (session of the Cotes-du-Nord General Council, Jan. 1966). (La Vie Bretonne, Dec-Jan).

Decentralisation is no economic remedy; it is being used as a tranquilliser to prevent the patient becoming aware of his illness. It does not aim at a solution of the Breton problem; it tackles local troubles when they become too acute. It is an adaptation of the policy of "clearing Brittany". The only true solution is an integral one: a Breton Assembly endowed with genuine powers of decision. Let the Bretons become more aware of that, and they will have a chance of solving the problem".
(Peuple Breton, Febr.)

NORMATIVE PHILOLOGY. Much of the work carried out in the field of Breton studies is concerned with the modernisation of the language; this has been going on for the past 60 years. The practical purpose of those engaged in it is to guide the evolution of Breton in such a way that it will be fit for use in the new Breton society. This is normative philology.

Definite rules are being adopted in order to decide in which branches of knowledge it will be sufficient to transcribe international or foreign words, or to translate them by means of Breton roots, or in which branches it is necessary to adopt a terminology that will be characteristic of our language.

While Brittany was a Breton speaking State (till the 11th Century) the latter method prevailed. But when it became a romance-speaking State (Duchy), the Bretons were content with copying foreign ways of expression -- this lasted till the 19th century and the awakening of nationalism.

The modernisation of the vocabulary strictly speaking started only 50 years ago. And until recently a method consisting in giving for each foreign word a corresponding one in Breton prevailed. It was anathema to transcribe the foreign words: terms like dourgan and trenkgan (on the German model!) were preferred to hidrogen and oksigen, although there was little difference between this and literal translation from French to Breton.

The second method, dressing up the foreign semantic structure with Breton words without allowing for differences of interpretation and understanding corresponding to differences of experience (Erleben), and the third method, developing the semantic structure which corresponds to the experience of the Breton-speakers, were not much used, probably because according to Platonic philosophy semantic structures were considered as essential characteristics of the mind and not as existential properties of the different languages. It was assumed that the structure of French was identical with the structure of reality itself

The first method should be used for descriptive science, the second for experimental science and technology. The third one should be applied above all for the realm of ideas. This is the most important for us who care about our nation's destiny. In the structure of each language there is in germ a body of particular ideas which could not derive, for a large part, from any other language. Consider for instance modern philosophy which has sprung up from the structure of German. We don't propose to reject completely the structure of other languages. But comparing is not imitating. It will be fruitful for a philosopher to compare the verb "bout" (to be) and its different derivatives or forms in the Celtic languages and in German: it would be a great mistake to try and make the Celtic semantic structure conform to the German one.

We have started to think in our language without referring to foreign philosophies. We continue to say "oksigen" and "hidrogen", but we now create a semantic structure for which there is no exact equivalent in other languages. Need it be said that normative philology in Brittany is a contribution to the creation of a Breton State?
(Dr Etienne-Abanna, AR VRO Nr 34)

Comment: We have translated by "semantic structure" the word sterframm which the author defined as "particular structure of the language and, at the same time, basic structure of experience, for each people".

The Petition organised by the "Breton Cultural Foundation" asking for the teaching of Breton in schools and its use on Television had gathered about 42,000 signatures towards the beginning of March. Among the signatories there was recently a large number of town Councils.

THE BRETON BROADCASTS, on Sundays, are now taking place between 1255 and 1350 Greenwich time, on wavelength 440 m (they are just audible in Dublin). They are now an hour later than before.

The Association of Breton listeners has protested against this change: meal time is well over, it is reckoned that the number of listeners has dropped by more than half.

In reply to the protest, Mr. Kunv, the director of the Rennes station stated that he had acted on instructions from the general direction of French RTV: a standard time for all Sunday programmes devoted to popular culture had to be adopted. The decision affected therefore the Alsacians, the Basques and the people in Southern France who

speaking "l'angue d'oc". And listeners should be grateful since the time allowed for the broadcasts has increased from 40 to 55mm.

This is not the way the Association feels about it. In a communique issued on its behalf (Jan. 1966) we read:

"Of course, Mr. Kunv can do nothing without authorisation from Paris. We know that all French governments aim at uprooting the Breton language as soon as possible. To reverse that, we should stand up for its defense as the Flemings have done. Unfortunately, many Breton renegades are working hand in hand with the oppressors".

Mass in the Vernacular!! "It is amazing", the communique goes on, "to see for instance that nearly all the Breton priests have adopted French for Mass in Lower Brittany. Recently I went to a funeral in a small Tregor parish which is almost 100% Breton-speaking. The whole ceremony was in French, although the priest can speak Breton fluently. I was disgusted to hear "Kantik ar Baradoz" sung in French. The words in the foreign language do not agree at all with the music. It is a crime to kill in that way, as in so many others, a people's soul. A friend went afterwards to ask the priest why he got his parishioners to sing such beautiful Breton hymns in French. He replied: "Some people don't understand Breton". What an excuse!

It would be so easy, if required, to print a French translation beside the Breton text, as is done for Latin. What is Bleun-Brug (the loyalist Association for the defense of Faith and Breton traditions) doing to oppose the Frenchification of religious life in Lower Brittany?"

Systematic Refusal. The mass of St. Kaourantin in the Kemper Cathedral, said entirely in Breton, attracted an extremely numerous attendance of old and young people who took part more enthusiastically than ever in the liturgy. Yet, last Christmas when people in Kemper asked successively a number of Breton speaking priests to celebrate mid-might mass in Breton in a chapel which was at their disposal, they got a systematic refusal. (Breiz, January)

COMMENT: The language situation in Kemper is comparable to that in Dublin or Cork, in terms of percentages of population. In Cork, there are now 2 masses in Irish every Sunday. In Dublin, from March 13 onwards, there will be a mass in Irish in each of the 50 or 60 churches every Sun all other masses (3-6 in each) being in English. On what ground could the Breton hierarchy refuse at least one mass in Breton every Sunday where there is a community of Breton-speakers asking for it?

The "common people" ^{sometimes} who speak Breton by no choice of theirs, are too used to being downtrodden to stand up to such an excuse as given above. But the new generation, those who are Breton speakers by an act of choice and will, are entitled to at least the same consideration as the few in the rural areas who don't (or pretend not to) understand Breton). Let the priests be reminded of the sacred duty of which the theologian Fr. Danielou spoke at the Bleun-Brug Seminar last August (Breton News 51) and be warned that they are acting as the servants of the French State to-day. It is for all Catholics in the Breton movement, not only for the Bleun-Brug, to show that they are not spineless, but that they insist on their sacred right.

Meetings: Public discussions on European Federalism and the Multi-national State in relation to the problems of the Celtic peoples will take place on April 9th at 6, Harcourt Street, Dublin on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Celtic League. More information from the Breton Information Bureau.

The Annual Meeting of the Association for Secondary Education by Correspondence in Breton took place in Rennes on March 6.

The National Council of the Movement for the Organisation of Brittany (M.O.B.) was convened at St-Brieg on November 28.

The European Federalist Movement, Breton Branch, is planning to run an international camp for young Europeans (over 18) from July 17 to August 7, 1966, near Douarnenez and in Brest (for information: Melle M. Keruhel, 12 rue des Dames, Paris 17).

Preparations are being made for the 1966 Interceltic Summer School for Breton Speakers (write to Mme V. de Bellaing, 28 rue des 3 Freres Le Goff, Saint-Brieuc 22) To prepare for the camp, learn Breton by correspondence from Skol Ober, Melle M. Gourlaouen, 30 rue V. Hugo, 29-Douarnenez.

An International Week will be held by Comhlachas Daon-Scol (Irish Folk-School Movement) at "An Grianan", Irish Countrywomen's College, Termonfeckin, near Drogheda, from July 23 to July 30. Lectures mostly about Ireland, in English. Write to Dr. Noelle Davies, Coolagad, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.

NANTES IN BRITTANY: Nantes is the principal town of the departement of Loire-Atlantique which a 1961 reform separated administratively from the rest of Brittany. This would not have mattered much, when everything is so closely controlled by the French Government, but as explained at the time in Breton News, this "partition" of historic Brittany could have detrimental effects on our economic life. Socially also.

the co-ordination of the Breton Workers demands would carry more weight on a 5- than on a 4- departement basis.

Until early 1965, CELIB often acted as the prime agent of such co-ordination, but it limited itself to the framework of 4-departements set to it at the time when its official function was to advise the French Government on economic matters. Yet, a number of town-councils in Loire Atlantique would have liked to join the organization.

The Nantes Urban Council considered that the city belonged to Brittany but also to the "Val-de-Loire" region which includes other "poles of development" such as Le Mans and Angers. The past 5 years have proved however that there are no special economic bonds between Loire-Atlantique and the Eastern areas of Val-de-Loire where as the community of interests between the departement and the rest of Brittany has grown more and more evident. This had to be recognised by the Breton Communists when they started two years ago a Federation covering the 5 departements, as well as by the Gaullists when they founded a "Western" Group for Parliamentary Action (B.N. 49) last year.

A confirmation of this trend was given in 1965 by the election of the new mayor of Nantes, A. Morice. In pre-election talks he said he would strive to re-establish Breton unity, by helping in particular to co-ordinate social and economic claims. He was true to his word.

His ambition was to make of the Nantes-St-Nazaire conurbation the metropolis of the "West". This caused some worry to Rennes whose mayor, - not a Breton -- proposed that both agglomerations should form an "axis of development", much like Lyon and St-Etienne in S.E. France.

Gradually however, CELIB was able to establish links between the two parts of Brittany. A first important step was the creation of the BRETON CENTRE in London with the financial support of the 5 Breton departemental councils.

On November 1965, a meeting took place half-way between Nantes and Rennes between the mayor of Nantes and of a hundred other communes in Loire-Atlantique on the one hand, and representatives of CELIB and the mayor of Rennes on the other hand. A few hours later, the Nantes municipal council unanimously agreed to join the Committee for the Study and Liaison of Breton Interests, thereby expressedly stating that they belonged to Brittany.

What is the practical meaning of this reunification?

"We shall seek in particular to form a common front in order to bring the public authorities to adopt a genuine Atlantic policy and to enable us to create a coastal industrial complex from St-Malo to Nantes which will be based on import-export by sea. We must widen our horizon at a time when the development of the Paris area threatens to absorb the Breton manpower. Nantes needs Brittany, but Brittany also needs the industrial potential of Nantes-St-Nazaire to counterbalance Paris' attraction. We must promote heavy industries on our coasts in order to maintain our economic and demographic balance now threatened by the 5th French Plan. Should we fail to solve this problem by negotiations, we should not hesitate to call again, -- as in 1962-63 -- on the Breton people to join forces. The participation of the Nantes area in such an action would be of the greatest importance.

(La Vie Bretonne, June-July, and Novr. 1965.)

THE BRETON CENTRE, 196 Sloane Street, Dublin, S.W.1. is establishing a complete file of the Breton firms interested in exports to the British Market. The Centre proposes to display products and find agents for their sale, not only in Britain, but also in Commonwealth countries.

BOOKS: Les Chretientes Celtiques, by Olivier Loyer, publishers: Les Presses Universitaires de France; 140 p; 8 Nf. A work of vulgarisation, yet serious; shows that the Celts are fundamentally religious-minded, even if they don't practise any cult. Loyer gives an account of the ancient Celtic religious communities, their originality, the personality of their leaders; he analyses clearly the Christian behaviour of the Celts, in particular during the period from the 6th to the 12th century. An introduction to this book is given in Breton in PREDER, Nr 71.

Histoire Europeenne de l'Europe, by Yann Brekilien, editor of BREIZ. This first history of Europe in French shows that the Breton patriots, far from wishing to set up new barriers between peoples are hoping that Europe will prove a more favourable framework than the French State for the development of their country. Editions E.P.T., 6 rue de Mezieres, Paris 6. Price 33,20 Nf. 400 pages.

La France des Minorites, by Paul Serant. Publishers R. Laffont, Paris, 416 p.; 18,85 Nf. "Paul Serant has written this book in order to give Frenchmen a clearer image of the ethical reality underlying the French State. Being a Frenchman, he cannot be accused of bias. A third at least of the French citizens belong to alien groups which elsewhere would be recognised as minorities. P. Serant reviews the struggles and sufferings of the Bretons, Basques, Alsacians, Flemings, Corsicans and Occitans. He advocates a federal organisation to enable these peoples to live and contribute their share to European culture. (Avenir, 10 February).

HISTORY OF BRITTANY: "L'Histoire de Bretagne" by J. Chardonnet has now been republished (see B. News 49).

A 4th edition of Abbe H. Poisson's Histoire de Bretagne was also announced for February (available to subscribers, 20 Nf, from Abbe Poisson, 22 rue Brizeux, 35-Rennes).

Just published: ENEZ AR VERTUZ, a new novel by Youenn Olier, 165 pages (first volume) 15 Nf. Available from the author, 23 B, Boulevard Burloud, 35-Rennes. Action takes place in a distant future.

Ronan Huon, editor of Al Liamm, announces the publication, shortly, of his new collection of 13 short stories.

For Books: Librairie Celtique, 108 bis rue de Rennes, Paris 6.

REFLECTIONS ON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: For the French Presidential election (Dec. 5) the M.O.B. advised the Bretons to vote for the Centre candidate Lecanuet because he favoured the progressive establishment of Regional Parliaments, and of regional economic and social councils, as well as a federal organisation of Europe. The U.D.B. recommended to vote for F. Mitterand, because he represented the "left" wing and adopted Defferre's promise of regional reforms.

No specifically Breton organisation gave support to De Gaulle, contrarily to what happened in 1958 and 1962. In the second ballot, both MOB and UDB supported Mitterand.

The aim was to deprive De Gaulle of his previous majority in Brittany and help to bring him down. He lost this majority on the first turn in 3 out of 5 Breton departments. He secured it in all of them again on the second, because of issues related to catholicism and communism.

How could Brittany, underdeveloped and ill-treated as she was by the Gaullist regime, give a majority to De Gaulle? Le Peuple Breton, organ of the U.D.B. explains:

"There is a psychological conditioning of alien peoples, to be observed not only in Brittany, but also in Alsace, the Basque Country, Corsica. By nature it is similar to that of the remaining colonies (Comores, Polynesia, Caribbeans) where the subjects fear that they might be abandoned produces near-unanimity in favour of whoever happens to yield authority".

Subjection, conditioning, brainwashing, could that be undone under a socialist president of France? By entering into the French political game, the Breton organisations are getting their country further enmeshed in the "system". Taking part in French political contests will not help to break the spell, the "moral ties" of which BREIZ ATAO spoke in 1935 in the issue devoted to the 1916 insurrection in Ireland. The task of securing for Brittany the powers of decision which she needs has nothing to do with the choice between left and right, between Mitterand and De Gaulle. The purpose of bringing the people to reject De Gaulle was valid, but it should have extended to include the French State as well. This would have been achieved by urging the voters to return a ballot paper with BREIZH written across it. We believe that this appeal would have had far more positive results for the conversion of the Breton people than taking sides in French political issues. The weakness of the Breton political movement nowadays is that it does not stand four-square on its own ground and challenge unceasingly the people to choose between rejecting all French authority and going bankrupt.

Before gaining admission to Europe, Brittany must win her freedom and above all assert her freedom of mind.

The Old Generation. "Only the old ones speak Breton in the little town of Gwaien (Western Brittany). In the surrounding countryside, children and youngsters can speak it but they don't use it among themselves. Why did the language decline so fast in this district where nothing but Breton was spoken 50 years ago? Because of the contempt instilled in the people's minds by the French system for what it described as a peasant patois. Still to-day we come across monolingual Breton speakers who are shocked when they hear my children speaking Breton. This happened recently near Beg ar Raz (Pointe du Raz) when we met an old woman. She could not believe her ears, when she listened to our youngest. She went away, shaking her head: "All the same, bravoc'h eo ar galleg" (French is more beautiful).

In Gwaien, people are not so backward. In the quarter where we live, some are pleased and moved to hear my children speaking their native language. The wireless has done a lot to increase respect for Breton. Many of them enjoyed in particular a broadcast at the end of the year in which they recognised the voice of someone they knew.

During the summer school for Breton speakers at Rostrenen, we used to converse with the local inhabitants. We were in general well received; a few were against us, for political reasons apparently; but the others were pleased to meet young people from the cities speaking Breton, however different it may have been from their own dialect. The strangest thing was to witness aged people in Laniskad teasing the village children because they knew only one language (French). Yet who is to blame

- if not their generation and the following one for failing to transmit their language to these children?
(Youenn Olier, in Bar-Heol, Dec.)

Following the publication (17 January) by the English Government of a White Paper aiming at speeding up economic development in underdeveloped areas in Britain (in particular in Scotland), Mr Pleven, president of CELIB and of the "Breton" CODER has asked for a debate in the French National Assembly on the question whether the Government will adopt similar courageous extensive and efficacious measures for the realisation of the aims of the 5th French Plan in the "French West". He has also called the attention of the E.E.C. Commission on the White Paper and asked them to recommend to the Council of Ministers of the Six the adoption of similar measures for the outlying areas of the Common Market.

The total investments proposed for the programme of investments in Scotland (population 5.200.000) amount to 2 billion pounds. In 1962, CELIB asked 250 million pounds for the development of "Region Brittany" (2.400.000 people). This was rejected as much too high.
(Vie Bretonne, February).

Per Trepos, professor of Celtic at the Rennes University and Director of the Arts (University) College in Brest, died as a result of an accident in January. He was aged only 53. He achieved distinction in particular with a thesis of the Breton plural and another work on the farm vocabulary.

Mr. Leon Fleuriot, born in Montroulez, author of the recently published "Dictionary of Glosses in Old Breton" and of the "Elements of Old Breton Grammar" which throw considerable light on a rather unknown period in the history of our language, has been appointed professor of Celtic at the Rennes University. (Vie Bretonne, February).

The Breton writer Yeun Ar Go, author of "Ar Person Touer", "Iz ar Ger Villiget",.... died recently, aged 68. Dom Alexis Presse, who rebuilt the ancient abbey of Boken (South of Lambal) a Breton in the tradition of the monks who helped to found the Breton nation on the continent 14 centuries ago, died in November.

A PURELY TECHNICAL PROBLEM: A letter addressed in Breton to Konk-Leon (West of Brest) was returned to its sender, Tangi Laorans, because of its "incomplete address". Mr. Laorans then pointed out to the director of the P. and T. in Brest that usually his staff are very conscientious in forwarding letters with difficult addresses. Would the Post Office not establish a list of place-names in Breton to help the postmen, and could he continue to send letters with Breton addresses in Lower-Brittany?

The Director did not of course say this would not be accepted. He argued that it would mean an extra burden for his services. Sorting is done fast, and the staff does not have to know Breton. So please use French, and avoid difficulties....
(Ar Vro. Nr. 34)

In November 1965, the French National Assembly and Senate debated the 5th Plan of Development. Numerous Breton representatives voted against it. Among them was R. Pleven, president of CELIB and of the Advisory Economic Commission for Region Brittany (CODER). Their refusal was due to their distrust of the Government's intention to give Brittany her rightful share of economic development. There is no evidence in the Plan that the Breton CODER's recommendations have been heeded.