



A Bulletin issued by
The Breton Information Bureau

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Nr 57

SUMMER 1967

Subscription 10/.

Three series of events contributed particularly to draw attention to the situation in Brittany during the past 3 or 4 months: the violent farmers' demonstrations, the blowing up of electrical installations and the repercussions to General de Gaulle's intervention in Canadian affairs.

BRETON AGRICULTURE: a struggle for survival

The revolt of the Breton farmers shows that the Common Market in its present form is not benefitting Brittany. The most obvious reason is that there is nobody in Brussels and at other international economic conferences to defend the Breton interests. They also make it clear that the French Government is either unable or unwilling to take these interests into account in their negotiations with other States. This justifies the appeal by "L'Avenir de la Bretagne" : FARMERS, THERE REMAINS ONLY ONE SOLUTION : BRITTANY FOR THE BRETONS.

Redon, 26th June. 10,000 farmers, drawn from all over Brittany and from 4 adjacent departments gathered at Redon, South of Rennes, on June 26th, in protest against the concessions made at the G.A.T.T. meeting in Geneva (31-5-'67) to importers of Argentine beef, and also against decisions taken in Brussels on June 7th concerning the pig market in E.E.C. This region produces 22% of the French beef and 33% of the French pig meat. This is equivalent to the Dutch and Belgian productions. Like the chicken farmers who already rioted in Morlaix last Winter, the cattle and pig rearers are threatened in their livelihood by the two agreements.

The meeting was calm at first. At the end however, there were scuffles between demonstrators and the police: many were wounded, five of them seriously. The Kemper-Paris railway was blocked with logs, causing prolonged delays in train departures and arrivals. On the same day, a delegation from the Breton farmers went directly to present their case to the president of the EEC Commission in Brussels. They realise that it is there that agricultural prices are determined. They can also expect more understanding from the EEC Commission than from the centralist French government for their demand for a genuine regionalisation of economic planning. Regionalisation has become a keyword for the farmers' unions.

Dissatisfaction

Some concessions were won at Redon but they proved to be quite inadequate. In particular, the mean European price levels below which the EEC authorities would intervene are most likely to be too high for the Breton farmers: their cost prices being higher than those of their EEC Competitors due to the greater transport costs for foodstuffs and their sale prices being kept lower again because of the transport fares. The important European consumption centres are to the North of a line Rouen, Paris, Mulhouse, Nuremberg: they are far from Brittany.

The Breton farmers had hoped they could adapt themselves to EEC competition. The recent Brussels and Geneva decisions ruined this hope. They are faced with a permanent crisis, characterised by the fact that they will be getting sale prices lower than their cost prices. This would lead to the disappearance of Breton Agriculture altogether. The farmers have pointed out that they took the lead from the French Government and concentrated on animal productions. If they cannot earn a livelihood from these, they will have nothing left. They are already in debt. This explains their bitterness.

Kemper 2 October 1967.

The demonstrations which took place on October 2 were not confined to Brittany, nor even to the underdeveloped "West". They were decided by the French Federation of Farmers' Unions (FNSEA). Their aim was to show public opinion the nature and extent of the farmers' dissatisfaction, to insist on the need to raise the meat and milk prices and to intervene at regional level in the market prices, taking account of regional differences in production costs. The FNSEA leaders are satisfied enough with the present EEC agreements. They agreed to these demonstrations only to avoid a split in Brittany and Normandy.

The most violent demonstration took place in Kemper. 15,000 farmers, drawn from the Western half of Brittany, took part in it. After ransacking the local office of the UNR (Gaullist) party, they marched on the local government building (préfecture), there to be met by about 500 policemen. During a series of encounters in which the farmers used sticks and stones, and the policemen cudgels and tear gas grenades, 180 policemen and over 100 farmers were wounded, one of the latter grievously; much material damage was caused to police and private vehicles, the prefecture gatehouse was completely burned and about 50 windows of the prefecture, facing the river Odet, were smashed. The riot lasted about four hours. The above figures for the wounded are said to have been slanted so as to win sympathy for the police.

Some of the posters carried by the demonstrators read (in French): "I want to live in Brittany"; "Quebec libre = Bretagne Libre" (free Quebec = Free Brittany); "Che Guevarra en Bretagne?" "La Bretagne d'Abord, Quebec Apres" (Brittany before Quebec). There was also a wreath with the inscription: "To Mr. Pompidou, as a symbol of the death his policy is bringing to Brittany". It would have been more appropriate to address it to General de Gaulle.

Another important demonstration took place in Redon, South of Rennes. It was attended by 8000 farmers. It also ended with a riot around the local government building and a dozen wounded.

From the statements made by the leaders of the 3 Federations involved in the Kemper riot we have noted the following points:

Mr. Bléjean, Cotes-du-Nord: "We want a complete revision of the Brussels agreement concerning the relations between cereal and "animal" prices. If our cost prices are not competitive, it is not because of technical defects but because of the handicap of distance. Transport tariffs must be revised to give fair play to peripheral regions; the tax on cereal foodstuffs must be abolished; silos must be built in our harbours. Brittany must be industrialised (industries based on agriculture in particular), her infrastructure (basic equipment) must be modernised. We need help to increase our efficiency (credit for new buildings, regathering of scattered land parcels, rent to old farmers to enable them to hand over earlier)". Most of this was already in the 1962 Bill for a Law-Programme of Breton development.

Mr. Paugam, Morbihan: "We staged this demonstration so that Brittany may live. We don't reject the EEC, but the peripheral regions must be helped. For an equal production, an equal income! "

Mr. Hemery, Finistere: "Our first aim is to mobilise all the farmers of Brittany (they are its main force). We must present as early as possible a plan of regional development. Secondly, we must bring together all the live forces of Brittany (its different sectors of activity) to work out a solution to the region's problems, and press for the industrialisation of Brittany".

The Kemper population was rather antagonised by the damage caused to private property during the riot and blamed the farmers. The latter threw back the blame on the police. Hemery said: "The reactions of the population are understandable. But all must know that the future of the entire region is at stake".

In the view of the Finistere Federation, the agricultural problem must be solved in an overall Breton context. They were asking for the other Breton federations to put Brittany as an entity to the fore, even if the (French) National Federation did not wholly agree.

It is doubtful whether the FNSEA is sufficiently united and interested to support the claims of the Breton farmers. Fixed prices are already guaranteed for beet and cereals but not for meat and milk.

M.O.B. and Farmers Claims.

A statement by the political bureau of the Movement for the Organisation of Brittany (M.O.B.) points out that the slogans used in Kemper, such as "Brittany before Quebec", prove that more is at stake than "l'agriculture de l'Ouest". The M.O.B. warns that the demonstrations can only go on intensifying, that they are the consequences of the government-planned displacement of the Breton population. The only solution to the Breton problem must include self-government for Brittany, the opening of the Common Market to Britain, the setting up of federal Europe on the basis of nations and not of the present States.

That there must be a Breton solution is becoming clearer everyday to the Breton farmers' leaders. It was stated by the secretary general of the Young Farmers' Regional Committee (CRJA), A. Saoz, that there is no such thing as a "French national agriculture" but there are "des agricultures regionales".

In the Common Market, the real differences are between regions and not between States. It is the former which should be represented in Brussels. To defend regional interests, we cannot trust "national" ministers who represent obsolete and outmoded State forms, subsisting only thanks to police dictatorship, the préfets and the armed forces

After the Redondemonstrations on June 26th, the farmers' leader in Finistère, Mr. Hemery warned that "if to-morrow the Common Market is not organised on the basis of regional economies, it will disintegrate". The sending of a delegation of Breton farmers to Brussels is to be understood against this background. It was a political act: making it known that Brittany can no longer leave the defence of its interests to a government which is hostile or indifferent, and lost in its dreams of grandeur.

Brittany must continue to claim direct and permanent representation in Brussels, in spite of French opposition. After all, in many respects, Brittany is of the same order of importance as two or three of the countries which form the Common Market.

If the Bretons have a right to be represented in Brussels, their representatives would carry much more weight there if they were delegated by a regional government and parliament, now required by Breton public opinion. Why would the people who are elected to represent the Breton interests not immediately create these institutions? It would be illegal? But it is also illegal to send a Breton delegation to Brussels and still more so to occupy a sous-préfecture and stop trains. We have reached a point where we must no longer be afraid of illegality. It is only by multiplying illegal acts in all domains that Brittany will maintain her rights against an indifferent and hostile power. A people has only the rights which it takes: if it has the will and the courage to take them, right will be on its side". (quoted from Yann Fouéré's leading article, in L'Avenir de la Bretagne, 10th August).

B z h: A SUBVERSIVE SYMBOL

About 15 months ago, an elliptically shaped sticker with the letters Bzh (for Breizh, the Breton for Brittany) was commercially offered to motorists in Brittany. It soon became popular enough to disturb the French authorities: they saw in it a manifestation of autonomism. So the government commissars decreed it illegal. Gerard Verdeau, Gwened, refused to take it down. He was brought to court, and won: the sign could not lead to confusion with the internationally recognised national identification signs F, GB, D. etc. Its use spread again. This time, the French minister Ortoli intervened and passed a decree which, equivocally worded, was interpreted as prohibiting, not only the Bzh, but also the Europeanists'EUR - sign: from the 7th August on, these signs could no longer be stuck to the back of cars.

This was an arbitrary attempt to prevent people from "personalising" their cars or in the case of the Bretons to prevent them from expressing their attachment to their country. In July, Bzh stickers were on display on numerous cars all over Brittany and on sale in all souvenir shops. In August the demand for them was still increasing. Apparently, this time, people were not going to be intimidated, although some were preparing to remove the signs to the front, the side or the inside of their cars.

Electric Installations blown up.

In the night of 15-16 July, a P. & T. booster, connected with transatlantic cables, was blown up at Vigneux-de-Breyagne, 15 km North of Nantes. A large number

of lines (some say 300) were disrupted. The letters B z h were found painted on the wall of the building.

At midday on July 26 an E.S.B. radio-telephonic booster was also dynamited at Trefflean, near Gwened (Vannes). The cabin door was projected 20 yards away on to a motorway. The cabin (4 x 4 m) was wrecked, and electrical material was damaged. The B z h sign was stuck to a pole nearby.

There thus appears to be a connection between the banning of the Bzh and these acts of violence. Other demonstrations made it clear that the people were not accepting this arbitrary decision passively. At the big Festival of (Breton) Cornwall in Kemper (21-23 July) a large number of pipers and dancers carried on their hats and lapels a small leaflet, of which hundreds of thousands had been printed, reading: "Bretagne Zone Heureuse (Brittany a Happy Area) in United Federal Europe": the three underlined initials were in big letters which could be seen from a distance. At the international Bag pipe Festival in Brest (5-7 August), in which about a thousand pipers and 2000 other Kendalc'h members took part, the spectators were deeply impressed by all these young Bretons chanting. Bé Zed Ash ... (b-z-H) during the final parade through the streets of the city.

The interdiction of the Bzh-sign does not rest on any juridical basis. It shows that the French authorities are sensitive to the Breton situation. Their action has resulted in turning a touristic sign into a kind of national emblem, and cementing a little more firmly the collective sense of the Bretons.

The following episode illustrates the nervousness of the French rulers in Brittany. A 16-year old boy was cycling near Rennes on Sunday, 17th September when he was overtaken by a police car and stopped because there was a Bzh fixed underneath the bicycle saddle. A policeman shouted at him:

"You cracked fellow, will you take that down! " He politely refused. He had to give his name and address, and was subjected to a lot of abuse being repeatedly called "bingle" (cracked) when he in turn asked the gendarme to give his name. The latter quietened only when the young man hinted that he would take legal action against him.

This incident was made public in an open letter by the boy's father addressed to the League for the Protection of the Citizens' Rights and to Mr. Freville, MP and Mayor of Rennes. (L'Avenir 12 October).

The Association SKED which sells the Bzh-Stickers, has decided on legal advice to appeal to the French State Council against the Ortoli decree.

The "super-prefet of "Region Brittany" and the prefet of Finistere were transferred elsewhere during the Summer. The latter had made himself particularly unpopular. It was denied that their transfer was due to political reasons - such as their clumsy handling of the Bzh affair?

QUEBEC AND BRITTANY

Members of the Breton colony in Canada :- some of them in Breton costume - joined in the demonstrations which took place during De Gaulle's visit in the Province of Quebec. Alongside posters demanding freedom for Quebec there were therefore others demanding freedom for Brittany. Fearing offence to the French statesman, the Canadian authorities asked the Bretons to withdraw and eventually took a number of them into custody. It is reported that the police were friendly towards them and that they were given Radio interviews. Some French Canadians intervened also on their behalf, and assured them of their solidarity in a common struggle. In some cases however anti-Breton feelings were witnessed as in the case of a member of the association Breizh whose children were victimised in a French secondary school in Montreal on account of his Breton ideas.

There were many repercussions in Brittany to De Gaulle's speech in Montreal. The slogan "Quebec Libre = Bretagne Libre" was painted on walls and roads in many places. A comparison between the autonomous status of the Quebec province and the disastrous situation of Brittany was widely published and contributed to make the Breton Taxpayers critical of the economic help which the French government proposed to give Quebec: the Kemper riot had as a side effect the postponement of a French minister's visit to Montreal.

The Bretons are thankful to Mr. Gwynfor Evans, the Welsh nationalist M.P. for Carmarthen, and to the Welsh Liberal MPs, Mr. Emlyn Hooson and Mr. Eric Lubbock, for having publicly pointed out that de Gaulle's advocacy of freedom for Quebec would be more acceptable if his government were not pursuing at the same time a policy of economic and cultural oppression in Britany.

The two-faced cynical attitude of the French Government in this matter was summed up in a communique from the Celtic League: "Is President de Gaulle interested only in the rights of French-speakers? Or is he prepared to uphold the right of all ethical groups to live and develop?"

"In Quebec, French is officially recognised and taught in all schools. This cultural freedom is unknown in Brittany. Here the French State pursues unrelentlessly its policy of eradication of the Breton Language and remains deaf to all petitions in its favour, the latest of which has now gathered about 150,000 signatures.

"De Gaulle wants greater economic freedom for Quebec. But it was he himself who in 1963 vetoed the adoption of a Law-Programme for the development of Brittany although it had received the support of 80% of the Breton municipalities.

"De Gaulle finds it right to intervene in Canada's internal affairs. But in 1966, when the EEC Commission proposed to make a special study of the Breton economy prior to granting it financial help, the French Government refused on the ground that it would constitute meddling in French internal affairs.

— What is right for the French Canadians is also right for the Bretons.

Let the French Government put order in what they consider their own business before mixing in Canadian affairs. Or let them agree to self-government for Brittany! "

EXPO 67

Unvaniezh Bretoned ar C'Hanada, (the Union of the Bretons in Canada) sent a delegation to investigate to what extent Brittany was represented in the French pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal. On the floor devoted to the theme "France and the Frenchmen", the existence of the Bretons is not mentioned in any form whatever. In the "Equipment of the territory" Section, only the regions South-West, North and East are shown on a large luminous map: no Brittany. In the "Tourism" section, some views of the Breton coast were given in a film, but there were no other indications that Brittany is still incorporated to France!

The president of the Unvaniezh wrote to all the general councillors of Brittany to draw their attention to this policy of silence towards our country. Considering, he said, the place that Brittany occupies in the heart of Canadians, an opportunity had been missed to cultivate the good reputation of our country and develop tourism and commercial exchanges between it and Canada.

GOURSEZ in PENNPONT : MINIMUM CLAIMS: The Goursez is the Breton equivalent of the Welsh Gorsedd: in French it is the "College des Druides, Bardes et Ovates de Bretagne". Its members do not necessarily have to know the Breton language nor to write in it, although they are encouraged to do so.

At its annual Convention, held in Pennpont, Central Brittany, on August 20th, a chart setting out minimum claims for Brittany was submitted to the participants for approval. The Goursez has now invited other Breton associations to sign it, at the same time asking their leaders for comments.

The Goursez seems to shy away from the role of co-ordinating the replies, as it wants to remain a meeting ground for all those who work for Brittany. It asks the signatories to leave aside all the points on which they may differ and to form a common front for the defence of Brittany on the basis of this chart. This is necessary in view of the disastrous situation of Brittany, characterised by the low agricultural incomes, the increasing lag in basic equipment and industrial development, the massive emigration of the young; the catastrophic decline of the Breton language; the separation of the Nantes region from the rest of Brittany; the continuous failure of all attempts to obtain the means by which she could recover her personality and prosperity.

The claims are threefold :

Point I asks that in French legal texts the word nationality, now used in the sense of belonging to a sovereign State, be replaced by "citizenship"; and that every Breton be entitled to refer in official documents to his Breton nationality beside his French citizenship.

Point II asks for the teaching of Breton at all levels of education in Lower Brittany and from the secondary school level onwards in Upper Brittany; the teaching of Breton history in all the country; the setting up of an auxiliary educational service to advise the department of Education and to promote Breton cultural life.

Point III deems it urgent and necessary to set up a regional assembly composed of all the "general councillors" (equivalent of county councillors) of Brittany; a Breton Economic and Social Council; a Regional Executive endowed with genuine powers, particularly in matters of finance, and assisted by a Regional Commissar representing the French government.

The signatories of this chart would therefore recognise and respect French law in Brittany and be prepared to reserve to a higher authority the administration and management of all the interests common to Brittany and to other regions now under French jurisdiction. Their chief concern would be to obtain recognition of Brittany as a "moral, civic and political person and as an economic and human entity". L'Avenir de la Bretagne announces in its last issue (12th October) that the M.O.B. has agreed to sign the chart, while stressing that its realisation would only be a first step towards Breton freedom.

SUMMER COURSES: The 20th Interceltic "Camp for Breton Speakers" was held in St. Nikolaz-ar-Pelem from the 13th to the 29th July. It was necessary to advance the date this year because of the difficulty of getting accommodation in August. Although more people would have been free in August, there were 122 participants, 18 of which were less than 14 years old, and 66 aged between 14 and 35. As usual there were four-grade lessons in Breton, but in addition a course was given in pronunciation: this is very important for newcomers to the language who often are living in areas where little or no Breton is spoken ordinarily.

In future, participants will be required to have studied at least the 20 first lessons of the Ober correspondence course. An elementary knowledge of Breton is required for them to derive any benefit from the course. Only a few were allowed to submit for the Trec'h Kentañ examination as the organisers are anxious to keep its standard reasonably high.

There were many instructive lectures, as well as numerous entertainments. Singing, music, plays were recorded by a Radio-Rennes team.

The cultural organisation Kendalc'h held two courses in Kastell-Nevez-ar-Faou from the 7th to the 26 August; one for beginners, to give them a broad cultural and economic background knowledge and to train them in singing, dancing and playing Breton instruments; the other for advanced students, sub-divided in a practical and a theoretical course.

Seminars and summer schools were held during the summer by other organisations and associations: the M.O.B. (Plouezeg, 27 August - 3 September), Al Leur Nevez (practice of spoken Breton, Kemper 13-22 July), Breuriez St-Erwan (working camp, with exclusive use of Breton); Kelc'hs Debauvais (a summer school for Breton-speaking boys aged 11-16 in Menez Kamp, 16-27 August).

IS FRANCE A MEMBER OF UNESCO?

Eighteen months ago a Mixed Commission for Regional Teaching submitted proposals to the French Education Department concerning the teaching of Breton and other "regional" languages. There has been no reply since. The proposals were much the same as those adopted by a French parliamentary commission a few years ago. Half the members of the Mixed Commission were high civil servants belonging to the French Educational Services.

On the other hand, the Council for the Defence of the Regional Languages, which groups Bretons, Basques, Catalans and Occitans, has asked the minister of education to re-examine with them the question of adapting the school programmes to regional needs. One of the pretexts invoked by the opponents of the "regional" languages is that the curriculum is already so loaded that there could not be any room for their teaching during regular hours.

Guy Poulain, from Pipriag, near Redon, was released on October 7th from the Rennes Jail, where he had been detained since January for having refused in 1960 to serve in the French Army: this he had done because of his Breton nationalist convictions and because he would not fight against the Algerians. He had deserted and taken refuge in Switzerland, but came back a year ago because "his stand was causing trouble to his family".

THE BRETON LANGUAGE COUNCIL, in a letter to the Breton M.Ps. dated 21st May 1967, protested against the distortion of place-names or their replacement by ridiculous French forms; it asked them to take up the question and see to it that qualified scholars, knowing the Breton language and history, be put in charge of collecting and suitably transcribe these names. Here are a few examples of the ignorance of civil servants who are destroying the marks of our history and culture. Kersaoz (English town is transcribed Kersauce (something to do with "sauce"); Poull-Kannan (Washpond) becomes Poule Canard (Hen Drake!); Coh Grac'h (Kozh Gwrac'h?) becomes Corps Gras (Fat Matter). Whatever about the French civilising mission, this is a further step towards making the Bretons a rootless mass, that will be all the easier to shift around for the purpose of technorrats that it will have nothing left of its former characteristics as a people.
