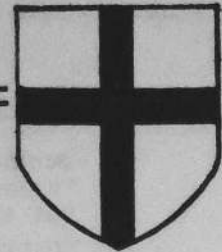


BRETON NEWS



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A Masterly contribution to Breton Historical Research.

At the beginning of the XIII century, the direct contact between Brittany and France, broken for 3 centuries by the Norsemen, the Normands and the Plantagenets, was renewed. Towards 1200, the French king found a good excuse to grab Normandy from John Lackland, and asserting an old, false claim to suzerainty over Brittany took control of this country as well. He was in a good position to assert his "right": the Breton dukes had lost all but a nominal authority in their country: Conan IV was a weakling, his heir a woman, to be succeeded by a young boy who was murdered in 1203 by the English king. Philippe Auguste of France arranged for the female successor to the Breton throne to marry a relative of his, Pierre de Dreux later nicknamed Mauclerc, the Bad Clerk. He trusted that Brittany would thus become his satellite.

Mauclerc is the subject of an admirable piece of research carried out by Jean-Loup Montigny: *Essai sur les Institutions de Duché de Bretagne a l'Epoque de Pierre Mauclerc (1213-1237)*, 216 pages, published in 1962.

The book gives no information about its author. We find him thorough and conscientious. Each page contains footnotes covering at times 1/3 and even 1/2 of the space, indicating the Breton, French and English sources and giving quotations. Among the historians of Brittany, we have the "Brittophiles" and the "Francophiles," those who present a national interpretation of our history, and those who put it in the context of a "necessary" rounding-off of the French territory. J. L. Montigny must be commended for his impartiality. His readers will be satisfied that the Bretons of the XIII century did not consider themselves French and wanted to be independent.

Mauclerc was a learned man, but above all a man of action. When he took over, he applied to the administration of Brittany the methods which had proved successful in putting order in the French kingdom. He thus brought Brittany under French influence. The high society became Frenchified, thus preparing for the defeat of 1488. It is significant that the Breton language receded considerably westwards during the XIII century.

Yet some Bretons - among the few who learn their history in spite of the French authorities -- consider that his reign was beneficial to Brittany. He brought to heel the barons and bishops who had taken advantage of the previous anarchy to increase their privileges, he won respect for the ducal authority within a few years. This he owed to his military qualities as well as to his diplomacy. He certainly could be a brutal partner whom repeated excommunications failed to intimidate. He attacked too many at a time and was finally defeated after attempts to secure Breton independence by allying first with Flanders and then with England. But he left to his successors a state machine which enabled them to build Brittany into a prosperous and effectively independent country during the 14 and the 15th centuries.

More than half of this book deals with the institutions of Brittany at the time, the ducal power assisted by a "curia ducis" which evolved during the next 2 centuries into a Parliament and the States-General, finances, justice, local administration, police; the military service; the Church. Mauclerc's conflicts with the bishops of Brittany make him still nowadays a controversial figure among the historians.

FOR SOLIDARITY OF SMALL NATIONS. On the 16-17th February, representatives of national and regional movements in Brittany, Catalonia, Euzkadi (Basques), Flanders, Wallony, etc., met in Paris to try and coordinate their action. In the new Europe, the small nations are threatened by the centralised super-state of the technocrats in the same way as they are by the artificial states, such as France and Spain, which are now trying to destroy their personality. The new political forms to be given to Europe must take account of the ethnical and human factors. Each nation (ethnical community) must have the right of self-determination or of administration of its own affairs by the application of internal federalism. The representatives of the different European peoples and nations should come together to ensure the realisation of this ideal. A permanent secretary was appointed and a study group was formed at the end of the meeting, in order to foster the proposed cooperation.

(L'Avenir, March 3.)

BOOKS. Mari-Vorgan, the new novel by Roparz Hemon, published by AL LIAMM, 2 Venelle Poullbriquen, Brest, 15 f. is acclaimed by all sections of the Breton reading public as a masterpiece. Like the seamen, we are spellbound by this mermaid story half-way between dream and reality. But the style is as limpid as ever. It would be a classic in any other country. But in Brittany, Breton is excluded from the classes. La Bretagne, by Giot, l'Helgoualc'h and Buard, published first in English, and now in French by Arthaud, 22.50 francs, is concerned with prehistory. A lesson to be drawn from it is "that the Breton soil has always developed particular cultures and that these blossomed whenever their bearers turned towards the sea for their relations with other peoples. Brittany's present decline follows her annexion to France, the subsequent ruin of her navy in the sixteenth century and her dependence on North-Eastern French energy sources since the last century. (Avenir, Feb.. 16).

SOLIDARITY. The Bretons are in full sympathy with the 16 Basques imprisoned in Spain because of their struggle for their motherland. They wish to assure the Basques of their solidarity, and are indignant at the collusion De Gaulle-Franco which results in Basque refugees from the South side of the Pyrenees being forbidden to stay among their countrymen on the North side. The Dublin branch of International AMNESTY has taken up the case of F. Arrieta who has been in jail for two years and subjected to torture by the Spanish police. The Celtic League is organising a wide publicity for the case, and has recently sent a letter to the Spanish minister for Justice asking for the release of the prisoner. Individual members of the League are requested to do so already. Details of the case can be obtained from Mrs. Meryl Farrington, 13 Anglesea St. Dublin.

Not a matter of Prestige. Because of the cold weather and the lack of coal, this Winter, classes in a number of secondary schools in Brittany had to be closed. In the Lanuon Grammar School for Girls, the boarders were unable to wash themselves properly for a fortnight, due to frozen water pipes. We have reported that the Commission in charge of the distribution of credits for school building and equipment in the Rennes Academy had refused to allocate the 112 million francs attributed because the sum represents only 56% of what is absolutely needed.

EUROPEAN FEDERALISM. At the Congress of the Young Members of the European Left held at Reims recently, the Breton branch of this movement was officially recognised. Its president is Gerard Toublan. It aims at promoting in Brittany the cause of a federated Europe within which our country could enjoy political cultural and economic freedom in conformity with the resolution adopted by the Council of Europe on July 27, 1961. (Avenir, 16-2).

GARLONE GOARNIG IN JAIL The Goarnigs are internationally known because of their stand for the right of the Bretons to give Breton names to their children: as a result of which 5 of the Goarnig children have no legal existence and get no children allowances.

We learn from a report dated 12-3 that 17-year old Garlone, the eldest daughter, "is being held in the Kemper jail for the past 10 days. She is "au secret", is not allowed any visit from her parents, solicitor or journalists. No charge has been brought against her. She is understood to be on hunger strike to protest against this arbitrary detention".

Is Brittany in the "free world"?

"5000 leaflets denouncing the arrest were distributed into letter-boxes in Kemper by night. During this operation, a brother of Garlone and another Breton were arrested and detained 24 hrs. - although no law forbids such distribution. On the same night, slogans "Free the Goarnigs" were painted in many places in spite of the chase organised by the police in radio cars.

The Préfet-governor of Kemper is an ex-police officer, rabidly opposed to Breton freedom".

We wonder if Garlone's arrest has anything to do with the account in AR VRO No.17 of the excellent reception which she and her brother recently got in Flanders? De Gaulle's recent decree, allowing imprisonment without charge, seems to receive here its first application to the Bretons.

DISCRIMINATIONALISTS "The French fascists grouped in the Rennes University under the name of "Federation des Etudiants Nationalistes" (Français) were able to cover, on successive nights, the walls of Rennes with pro-O.A.S. slogans. The police closed their eyes to it. But 2 M.O.B. members were arrested in the same town for putting up posters demanding a Breton Law-Programme and opposing the French Bomb". **LATEST NEWS:** F. ARRIETA, sentenced to 7 years imprisonment is now to be freed in 1964. (Communicated by Mrs. Farrington) Further efforts will be made by the Celtic League to secure his release.