

# BRETON NEWS



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## FRENCH STATE VICTIMIZES FAMILY FOR TEACHING BRETON TO THEIR CHILDREN.

Dr. and Mrs. ETIENNE are living in the small country town of Chateaulin, in the Breton-speaking part of Brittany. Dr. ETIENNE is an M.D. and Mrs. ETIENNE works at home, looking after their five children. The eldest is 7 years old, the youngest 7 months. They have a maid who lives with them.

Breton is the only language used in the home, and the children cannot at the moment speak any other language. The maid is also a Breton-speaker. And we stress the fact that Breton is the language of the country around.

The two eldest children are of school-age. There are quite a number of schools in Chateaulin. These are either state-schools, or Catholic schools controlled by the Bishop under an agreement with the state. In none of these schools is Breton taught nor is one Breton word pronounced from one end of the year to the other. That is the reason why Dr. and Mrs. ETIENNE decided to give tuition to their children at home. French law authorises the teaching of children at home, provided the tuition is open to control by the Education Authorities. Education, it must be stressed, is here a state-service and teachers are civil-servants.

From September 1961 to June 1962, the elder child spent his first school-year at home, received due education there, and no problem at all arose. In September 1962, the second child, a daughter, reached school-age and she also was educated at home. The Inspector of Education visited them, gave favourable reports and furnished them with school-certificates testifying that their education was up to standard. He even said that in his opinion the children were well above the average.

Family allowances are not paid for children of school-age if these children do not go to school and so, in order to get their allowances, parents have to produce school-certificates. In the case of children educated at home, school-certificates signed by the responsible Education-Authority must be produced every month (114 SS, July 2nd, 1951). Allowances are paid by a special service called Caisse d'Allocations Familiales, - which is a state-institution - out of funds provided both by employers and employees. The Allowances form a not unimportant part of families' incomes. For instance, for a family of five children, whose mother works at home, they amount to 5,271 Francs per year, a good <sup>deal</sup> more than the minimum wage rate called SMIG which amounts to 3524 per year.

On January 1st 1963 the payment of family allowances to the family of Dr. ETIENNE was stopped. No payment at all has been made since, not even for the 3 children who are not of school-age, nor for the mother who, earning no wages, is entitled to a special allowance. Payments were stopped because the Education Inspector for the Academy in Quimper refused to issue a school-certificate, and will refuse it as long as the children will be taught in Breton. Here is the translation of the letter which Dr. ETIENNE received from the Education Authorities in Quimper. (A photo-copy of the original can be seen at the Breton Information Bureau.)

March 13th 1963.

Sir,

I have the honour of acknowledging receipt of your letter of March 5th inst. about the schooling of your children.

Answering a question which I had put to him, the Minister for National Education directed that school-certificates should be refused, since teaching when performed at home, should be given in such a way that it can be controlled by the Academy's Inspection Services. (Law of March 28th, 1882, modified on August 11th, 1936, paragraph 16).

According to this answer it is obvious that the teaching must be given in French so that it can be effectively controlled by the Inspector of Primary Schools.

Therefore I shall no longer be able to furnish you with school-certificates if you persist in giving education in Breton.

With my regrets, I am, etc.

Signed : the Inspector of Education for the  
Academy of Finistere.

From this we conclude that:

1. The French Minister of Education considers that the School-Inspectors which he himself appoints in Breton-speaking areas are not fit to control education given in the language of these areas.

2. When Breton-speaking families living in the Breton-speaking area wish to educate their children in the mother tongue, the French state seeks to compel them to give up that right by depriving them of other important social rights. In this case, a family is deprived by the state of substantial allowances-from a fund to which its head is contributing, in spite of the fact that the teaching given was open to public control, and has even been recognised to be up to standard.

3. This victimization is part of the French assimilation policy aiming at the destruction of the Breton language. It is in open defiance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### CULTURAL GENOCIDE:

The case of Dr. Etienne's home school shows that the French State is as determined as ever to eradicate the Breton language. As the French scholar Jullian said: "Not to teach a language amounts to killing it."

There seems to be no way to save the Breton language except by recourse to the most radical means.

Moderate, "reasonable" means have been tried.

. On the eve of last war, a majority of the municipalities of the Breton-speaking area had demanded the teaching of an hour a week of Breton. Nothing was done until the Germans came. From 1941 to 1944, Breton was taught in schools by those teachers who had prepared themselves to teach it.

This modest concession to the democratically-expressed Breton will was withdrawn at the "Liberation" in 1945.

In 1951, while a Breton, R. PLEVEN, was Prime-Minister in France, a law was passed as if by surprise, allowing again 1 hr./week of Breton and other "regional" languages after the normal classes.

The French administration saw to it during the following 10 years, that this sin against French Unity be properly purged. Today only a few unrewarded really dedicated teachers manage to keep voluntary children, while the others are out playing, in Breton classes from which no benefit can be obtained for examinations.

In 1957 a pilot bilingual school had been opened at Plouezeg. It was a Catholic school, not directly controlled by the State. Its director managed to give 7-8 hrs. of Breton tuition a week. Then a contract was passed between the State and the Catholic Schools, which gave control of the curriculum to the former. The Plouezeg school had to conform, and was reduced to 1 hr./week of Breton, like the others if they wanted. There is equality if not liberty.

In 1960-61 a parliamentary move was made to get a new law for the teaching of "regional" languages. A law bill was carefully prepared by concerted action of Bretons, Basques and Occitans. When everything pointed that the French Assembly could adopt it, the Government vetoed its tabling as anti-constitutional. Now, deputies are again stirring. Has there been a change of constitution? Not as regards France's commitment to impose her language wherever she rules. The question has been asked: why do the Bretons not set up their own schools? This is ignoring the dictatorial powers which the French administration enjoys. There seemed to be a loop-hole in the French law in 1957 when Fr. Calvez opened the Plouezeg School. The State stopped it. Dr. Etienne found another loophole, and used it at great personal inconvenience. The State could have waited to see how many would go to the same trouble. But, this danger to "national" unity could not be tolerated. Resorting to one of many ways of exerting pressure, they have given a first turn of the screw. Does it not hurt enough? We had the case of the Goarnigs who get no children allowances for 5 of their children because their Breton names are unacceptable to the French unifiers. Financial penalties are the first to be used against delinquents.

Measures have been taken to inform international opinion of the victimization of Dr. Etienne's family. A request will be made to the Celtic League, which federates the national movements of all Celtic countries, to send protests to international instances.

In small countries like Finland and Switzerland the State protects languages like Lappish and Rhetoroman which are spoken by a few thousand or tens of thousand people. In those countries freedom exists. In Brittany, the State ostracises the Breton language spoken by 1 million and robs those who fight for it. To talk here of the free world one needs a solid dose of cynicism.

POLICE ACTIVITY. 2 police services, DST and Renseignements Generaux, are very interested at the moment in the Breton Movement. Not a week passes without their visit to prominent members of the M.O.B.

WATCH ON CORRESPONDENCE? Unexplained delays are more and more frequent in the delivery of mail to some members of the Breton Movement. Thus a few letters posted in Paris on February 7 reached Brest only on March 8.