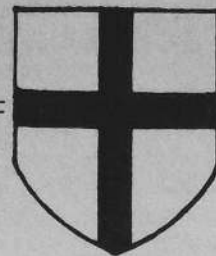


BRETON NEWS



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DUBLIN

November, 1963.

DEMONSTRATIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE HENBONT FOUNDRIES.

Breton News No. 42 reported about the struggle to save the Henbont foundries near Lorient.

Demonstrations were organised on October 25-26th in a number of Breton towns and in Paris in order to impress on the French government how concerned the whole Breton people are in this matter.

About 20,000 people, workers, farmers, tradesmen, were mobilised by their unions and the political parties and marched from Henbont to Lorient carrying posters among which, according to eye-witnesses, those of the Movement for the Organisation of Brittany were conspicuous.

In a resolution, they approved the action of the Committee for the Defense of the Foundries. They declared that the promised installation of new industries in the Lorient area would not solve the problem of readaptation of skilled metallurgical workers, nor provide enough jobs to solve the present unemployment problem in the area. Light industries would soon reach a point of saturation. To industrialise Brittany seriously a basic heavy industry of the Henbont type was necessary. They called for the creation of a joint commission representing the workers' interests and the government to discuss the future of the foundries.

Mr. Piriou, speaking on behalf of the Breton workers' unions (CFTC, CGT, FO.) said: "If we allow the closing of the foundries, it will mean that we cannot prevent the government from transforming all of Brittany into a reserve of cheap labour".

Mr. Pogam, representing the Farmers' Unions of Morbihan, said: "The Breton farmers want Brittany to be industrialised so that their sons can have work in their home country. Brittany will be saved only by a strong union of all the Bretons, at home and abroad".

(Ref. La Vie Bretonne, Nov. - Dec. 1963).

FRENCH COLONIALISM IN BRITTANY. Brittany is surrounded on 3 sides by a tariff wall preventing the entry of Polish and USA coal, English industrial products, iron from Labrador, Brazil and Africa, at a much lower cost than their French equivalents.

A 45 HP English Tractor worth £700 at St-Malo is sold £1500 to the farmer. But the Breton agricultural products meet on the French markets unhindered competition from Dutch eggs, butter and chickens, Italian early vegetables, Moroccan frozen fish.

Brittany exports her men as seasonal workers to Jersey and the Paris area, as farmers to Normandy and Aquitaine, as soldiers and seamen to the French forces, as labour to the Rouen and Paris factories, as dish washers to New York etc.

Her savings are spent in Bank Investments elsewhere, on high prices for electricity, coal, gas and petrol, on rents to absentee-landlords, on the education of young people who emigrate, on high transport tariffs (remember last year's railway battle), on profits for foreign chain stores ...

Among Brittany's useless imports are a public authority totally dependent on Paris, an ill-adapted and defective school system and equipment, a centralistic press, French political parties ...

Some figures

The real monthly income of a farmer in Tremel (near St-Brieg) in 1962 was £15, while that of the miners in Northern France was £39 when they went on strike with strong popular support.

An investigation in the Collinee area SE of St-Brieg showed that the income per active worker varied from £10 to £30 per month in farms of over 30 ha.

If 1 represents the average French income, the figure for Paris is 2 and for Morbihan (S.Brittany) 0.5.

In some areas of Brittany, there is a latent wish to return to serfdom. Even communist electors want big landowners to buy their land and they would become salaried workers.

In the Collinee area, the infantile mortality rate is 5.6% as against 2.2 for France. This revelation caused a scandal.

Numerous patients in psychiatric hospitals are farmers' wives who became mental cases because of their debts.

The Breton question is a social question. Our people is being smothered. The French straight-jacket must burst. Brittany needs self-government.

(Ar Vro, No. 21).

IS FRENCH PRESTIGE NOT AT STAKE IN BRITTANY?

An investigation by the INSEE Statistics Office revealed that in Brittany 40% of the dwelling-houses were overcrowded, 30% of the families live in one-room houses, 25% in 2-room, and 20% in 3-room houses. Only half of the families have running water, 17% have gas, 8% central heating, 80% have no baths; 7% have no electricity. Other points of comparison are: vacuum cleaners (15% in Brittany as against 32% in France); refrigerators (10% as against 30%); washing machines (11% - 27%).

AR VRO lists also radio and TV sets, but in view of the deleterious effect of the RTF on the Breton culture, one need not mind too much the discrepancy ... (AR VRO, No. 15)

OPEN LETTER TO MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Mr. Fouchet, Minister of French Education, got an agitated reception when he visited Brittany at the end of October. His inauguration of the new Science faculty in Rennes was boycotted by half the professors and students demonstrated because of the lack of teaching staff, lecture rooms, accommodation facilities. The intervention of special police (CRS) was necessary to disperse the students.

Following his visit, the Breton Cultural Foundation wrote to the Minister an open letter denouncing his department's hostility towards the Breton language. The letter listed the following facts:

- a) In 1961, the French Prime Minister opposed the tabling of a bill for the teaching of regional languages (Breton, etc.);
- b) A promise in November 1961 by the then Minister of Education to introduce a few measures to encourage the teaching of these languages was not held;
- c) The French UNESCO Commission ignored the appeal addressed to them by the "French" Council for the Defense of Regional Languages, an appeal based on a Scandinavian petition to UNESCO.
- d) Multiple petitions by Breton secondary school students (one signed this year by 1500) were turned down on the pretext that the programmes were too crowded;
- e) The department refused to hold a round-table conference with the above-mentioned Council.

"The young Bretons are fed-up with your administration's hostility and dodging ... The question is no longer a cultural one : it is now political".

The Breton Cultural Foundation was devoted until now to "purely" cultural action. It warns (!) the minister that its members are taking a new orientation.

(La Vie Bretonne, Nov. - Dec.)

The 5th Congress of the Movement for the Organisation of Brittany was held at Brest on November 17th. On the agenda were reports from the M.O.B. students and Youth Sections, and speeches about Brittany's place in the European economy, particularly in its agriculture.

The Breton literary magazine AL LIAMM celebrated the publication of its 100th issue on November 11. The event was commemorated by the Breton branch of the Celtic Congress at a dinner in Rennes. AL LIAMM is now in its 17th year and has withstood many pressures from "loyalist" quarters. It has published about 10,000 pages. It receives contributions from the best Breton writers.

AL LIAMM No. 99 contains a masterly adaptation by R. Hemon of fragments of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. R. Hemon uses a type of versification that was common in Middle Breton; the first, second and fourth verses rhyme with one another while the last syllable of the third verse rhymes with the last but one of the fourth. The verses themselves are alliterative. Notwithstanding this severe discipline the language remains extremely flexible.

However the university of Rennes ignores the modern Breton literature. And the French government pursues doggedly its policy of eradication of Breton.

PREDER No. 41-42, 170 pp. contains the lectures delivered in Breton and English at the Landreger Inter-Celtic Congress in 1962. The Breton texts are also given in English translation. Price £1. PREDER No. 45-46 publishes the Middle Welsh tales of the MABINOGION together with a Breton translation by Abeozen and a Cornish translation of the first two "branches" by Caradar. Price 18/6.

PLUNDERING OF BRETON WORKS OF ART.

Leputy P. Bourdellez protested in the French parliament against the plundering by an unknown "old stones gang" of the Breton monuments and works of art (calvaries, religious statues, crosses, etc.) some of which are priceless and attract tourists to Brittany.

(La Vie Bretonne, Nov. - Dec.)

Breton culture is officially despised, but highly valued by these gangsters.

The Association Skaoted Bleimor which represent Brittany in the Federation of European Scouts is expanding, but the Bishop of St-Brieg has forbidden the group which had been founded at the preparatory Seminary of Kintin. A teacher of the St-Joseph secondary school in Lanuon wrote to request an explanation from the Bishop, warning that this decision could be dangerous at a time when anti-clerical forces are beginning to take part in the defense of Breton interests. Bleimor trains its young members in a Breton and Christian spirit, in accordance with Papal Encyclicals such as "Pacem in Terris".

(L'Avenir, 16-11).

OUR NEXT ISSUE WILL BE PUBLISHED IN JANUARY 1964.