

BRETON NEWS



A Bulletin issued by **The Breton Information Bureau**

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D U B L I N

Summer, 1964.

Courses and Camps.

The Interceltic Camp for Breton Speakers will be opened at Lokronan, N.W. of Brest on July 29. It will last till August 15th. Its attendance has been increasing every year. Among those who are coming this Summer are Bretons from Canada, Algeria, Tunisia, as well as people from Wales, Cornwall and Ireland. Lokronan Catholic schools will provide accommodation. There will be Breton classes for all grades from children and beginners to secondary school level. "Trec'h" examinations will be held at the end. A holiday atmosphere will be maintained as usual by means of discussions, entertainments, excursions. Write to Mrs. V. de Bellaing, K.E.A.V., Ecole Notre-Dame de Liesse, St-Renan, Nd-Finistere (only for the duration of the camp).

(KEAV Communiqué).

The St-Erwan Brotherhood is organising a working camp at Plougraz (Treger) from the 2nd to the 16th of August for young Breton speakers (minimum age 18) who want to become more proficient in their language. Time will be divided between paid work on farms and studies-discussions with the cooperation of Fr. Bourdellez and Fr. A. Kalvez (editor of SKOL). The organiser is Yann Talbot, teacher at the St-Joseph Secondary School, Lannuon. (Cotes-du-Nord).

(L'Avenir, 4-7'64).

The voluntary work to renovate the Menez-Kamp country-house which will be used as a Breton cultural centre, at Spezed, is continuing throughout the summer.

The Association Al Leur Nevez (The New Ground) is holding its first Breton Summer course at Gwezeg between the 15th and the 25th of July. The stress is being laid on speaking the language.

(Breizh, July).

A BRETON ACADEMY has been constituted in order to bring together all those who are devoting themselves actively to the development of the Celtic culture of Brittany. Its aims are also to make the Breton literature better known and to coordinate the work, which has been going on for the past 40-50 years, of adapting the Breton language to modern needs. The Academy will be composed of active members, honorary members, and correspondents. It will be controlled by a Central Committee. Active members will have accomplished important works of literature or taken an important part in the development of the Breton language and culture. They will have to abide by the rules of the Academy.

(Communiqué).

The Breton Secondary School by Correspondence (S.A.D.E.D.) has published its curriculum for 1964-65. There will be eight courses of 10 lessons each: Modern Breton (2), Middle Breton, History, Geography, Physics (2), Chemistry. They will begin on Sept. 1 and finish on April 22, 1965. Each course costs 15 F. Two sets of courses have already been carried out.

(Mission Bretonne, 10/7).

Irish and Welsh can now be learned through the medium of Breton thanks to the correspondence school "OBER", now in its 31st year. Following the end of a certain ostracism caused by the use of the unified spelling, publicity for OBER has spread to numerous Breton publications, and has brought a considerable increase in the number of its students.

More Breton on the air. Since last May, the small Kimerc'h station (W. Brittany) is daily broadcasting 5 minutes of Breton in addition to the weekly 40 mn. This gain has been obtained after a great deal of humble petitioning by the association Kevredigezh ar Selaouerien. Like the 10 mn increase in the Sunday broadcasts, it has been made since the appointment of a Breton, Mr. Cunff, to the post of director of the Rennes RTF-station.

The newly constituted dramatic society "Les Comédiens Bretons" composed of professional actors will present two plays at a festival to be held at Lokronan (Br. Cornwall) from the 5th to the 9th of August. They are Gurvan by Tangi Malmanche and Nomenoe-Oe by Jakez Riou. Their action centres around Breton leaders of the time when Brittany was a kingdom (9th and 10th centuries). The two plays, written in Breton, are to be shown in French translations. Gurvan was presented already last year by the same group in the setting of the medieval Lokronan church and main square.

Asked why he was not presenting the plays in the original, the group leader Yann Mogn stated that there were practical difficulties such as to find Breton-speaking professional actors. He hopes however in 2 years to include a Breton performance in the festival. At Lokronan the aim is to prepare the ground for a new development in the cultural movement.

"We want to demonstrate the existence of a Breton cultural will; we shall continue our action in October when we start cultural centres in a number of towns, around which other activities will develop. We shall show that there are new ways for the artistic expression of the Breton personality, without jingoism. We are in touch with another company "La Comedie de l'Ouest": they understand our will to foster the renaissance Breton culture. Our wish is to organise tours in Brittany during the coming season (school matinees and evening performances), with plays, songs, mimes, all in a Breton perspective. Our principle is that the artist is to be integrated with society in the same way as the engineer and the scientist. We are committed.

(Le peuple Breton, No. 7)

C.E.L.I.B. General Assembly. Breton News has reported at the beginning of the year how C.E.L.I.B. has been hampered in its Defense of the Breton Interests by the fact that the majority of its parliamentary Commission is made up of unconditional supporters of the Gaullist government, who enabled the latter to push through its 1964 budget and then to scoff at CELIB's attempts to obtain the Law-Programme for underdeveloped areas. CELIB itself came under fire from those yes-men when it decided to launch its campaign of information throughout Brittany. last winter. (B.N. 44).

At Brest on June 13th, the General Assembly of CELIB was confronted with a choice between Professor Philipponneau's conclusion that nothing more can be expected from the Gaullist regime and that CELIB should lead Brittany in the struggle to overthrow the present French government on the one hand; and Mr. Martray's conception that the organisation should continue in its role as an uncommitted pressure-group, on the other hand.

Prof. Philipponneau who presides the CELIB Commission for Economic Expansion and did most of the work for the preparation of Breton Plans during the past 10-12 years, advocated therefore a boycott of the very official "Regional Commission for Economic Expansion" which was newly created, in order "to bring to heel CELIB and other genuine Breton forces" (Peuple Breton, No. 7). Mr. Martray, while noting the (latest) breach of trust which the French Government has committed towards the Bretons by illegally refusing to adopt a legally binding Programme for the Underdeveloped Areas, considers it possible for CELIB to influence the work of the new commission. His resolution asking all Breton representatives to unite in order to press further for an effective law-programme -- if necessary, only for Brittany -- was adopted by the Assembly. He thus preserved from a split the organisation of which he has been the architect.

Prof. Philipponneau was prevailed upon .

to withdraw his resolution, on the ground that it would lead to the disruption of CELIB.

It was the Breton demonstration that regional plans of economic development could be worked out which led the French government to indicate how the investments provided for by the 1964 Budget would be distributed regionally (see B.N. No. 44): this is a trick which now allows the government to give the impression that it is serious about regional developments. It is therefore intended to repeat the procedure in detailing out the 5th French Plan of Development and it is even officially admitted that local bodies should be consulted. Actually, instructions have been sent out to the Regional Commissions for Economic Expansion requesting them to take part in preparations for the regionalisation of the Plan. But one of them, the CELIB Commission presided by Prof. Philipponneau, is being excluded from the consultation. The reason appears to be that the French prestige policy is bound to result in a considerable discrepancy between the credits needed by and those granted to Brittany, a discrepancy which could be concealed only by excluding independent bodies from preparations.

Prof. Philipponneau thinks nonetheless that CELIB must start immediately to gather all the information which could help to establish a sound Breton Plan and hold it ready for official use. The French government will thus bear full responsibility if it fails to satisfy Brittany's needs.

(cf. L'Avenir, 4/7; La Vie Bretonne, May)

At the same time, he is urging the Bretons to concentrate on overthrowing the Gaullist regime. In conversations with De Gaulle's rival for the next presidential elections, G. Defferre, he got promises and hints of a new orientation in French politics which could be less unfavourable to Breton development. He recognises however, that other solutions, involving changes in the "structure of Brittany" must also be studied, and the one most likely to be effective should be retained

(Le Peuple Breton, July).

By compromising with the Gaullists, CELIB has gained a new lease of existence and sham unity at the cost of its freedom of action. There is a divorce between the dynamic CELIB Commission for Economic Expansion which represents life forces in Brittany and its Parliamentary Commission with its majority of parasitic Gaullists. So long as the latter can exert their veto, CELIB will be unable to give a lead to the Breton resistance as it did in 1962.

It is not enough to change the regime in France however. To save Brittany, her representatives must accept to put the Breton interests before the French ones.

(L'Avenir, 4/7).

THE M.O.B. clarifies its policy. From accounts of the M.O.B. Council meeting in Kemper (18-19/4) it appears that a firmer, less compromising line of action is being adopted by the Movement. The task undertaken by the MOB of informing the Breton people of their systematic exploitation by their French rulers is well under way. A second phase of struggle and achievements now starting will determine the future of our home country, its existence as a nation bringing its original contribution to Europe and the world, or its full assimilation by and definitive subjection to the French centralistic State.

Brittany will be saved only if the present structure of the French State is overthrown, and self-government within a Federation of the European Peoples established. We are conscious of being a distinct nation. The French frame is at the same time too big for us -- it deprives us of the possibility of organising our national life according to our needs -- and too small because our economy depends on links with other countries, even outside the present Common Market. (Avenir, 16/5).

The aim of the M.O.B. is to obtain for Brittany a political and juridical status within a European Federation. The powers now exerted by the French State would be attributed partly to the Federal Authority (Defense, Communications, Transports) while the other matters would be the responsibility of the Breton government. The M.O.B. wishes to constitute the Breton section of the political instrument which in cooperation with the other European peoples, will take power in Europe.

(Avenir, 2/5)

The 109th Course organised by the International Centre for European Formation (CIFE) brought many people of various nationalities together in Paris, from April 1 to Apr. 6. Yann Talbot (Lannuon) took part as a Breton national. The theme was: what action must be taken to ensure that Europe will be built on a federal basis and that equality will exist between its ethnical components. The Frisians, Bavarians, Westfalians, Italians, Flemings, Walloons, Swiss, all agreed that their countries' problems were best solved by the federal solution. For one of the organisers, the Breton problem was comparable to the Irish problem before 1919. Asked if he thought that Brittany could constitute one of the future European "Länder", Prof. Mouskhely (Strasbourg) said that our country had all the characteristics required but it was for the Bretons themselves to assert their will for an autonomous status in Europe. Another lecturer Mr. Humblet (Brussels) said that the only way for the Bretons to avoid being deprived of their share of the European wealth was to constitute a State within a European Federation. Mr. Gouzy, CIFE manager and Editor of "L'Europe en Formation", when asked what attitude a Federal Europe would take towards minority nations like Brittany, replied that the Bretons must now organise politically and take part in preparatory Commission work if they want to ensure the recognition of their rights on the day Europe will federate.

(L'Avenir, 2/5)

France and Quebec. French papers are full of understanding for Quebec's claims to self-government and independence. It does not appear to them that those French Canadians could be traitors to their country. Yet if only the same special freedoms which they already enjoy in Canada were recognised to the Bretons, a large number of Frenchmen would be amazed. One cannot expect French intellectuals and journalists to concede that what is right for the French speakers in Canada could also be right for the Breton, Flemish, Basque and German speakers in the French Hexagon.

(L'Avenir, 20/6)

FRENCH ECONOMIC NATIONALISM disastrous to Brittany

The French economic policy is characterised by distrust towards international co-operation as evidenced by the limitations to foreign investments, disagreements with other Common Market countries, bilateral instead of multilateral trade arrangements with other countries, reluctance to seek aid from the European Investment Bank for underdeveloped regions. Economic progress in France is slower than in the remainder of the C.M.; the deficit in her trade balance is expected to increase; there are inflationary disturbances in spite of the official price stabilisation; internal prices are stabilised only in appearance (manipulation of indices). The annual rhythm in building is the weakest in all of (Little) Europe. Alarm at the opposite tendencies of the French and the German industrial productions is now frequently expressed in the French papers.

"If Germany keeps winning the competition, the French economy will feel more and more endangered. Those regions in France which for many years have enjoyed State aid will be able to hold, but what of others, particularly if their geographical position in a Common Market which excludes Great-Britain is disadvantageous?"

France's protectionism is presented as a vital reflex against the American economic imperialism. But only a united Europe, organically built, can compete with America. France by preventing European unity puts Europe in a weak position which will be felt most in its weak regions, more than elsewhere in Brittany.

It is in France's interest to renounce its economic nationalism. It is also in Brittany's interest. (La Vie Bretonne, May).

Industrialisation? State aid to industrialisation in Brittany is to be substantially reduced (Journal Officiel 26/5). Until now subsidies for the extension of old factories and the installation of new ones could not be less than 10% of the total investment. Henceforth the premium will not exceed 10% in the first case and 5% in the second, Brest and Lorient being exceptions as before. To qualify for aid, new enterprises will have to employ at least 30 workers (instead of 20) and established ones at least 100 (instead of 20) (La Vie Bretonne, May).

The Society Alstom which was to employ 1000 workers, thereby absorbing some of those who have become redundant at the Henbont foundries, has cancelled its plan to install a factory at Lorient. Local credits had been made available. But Lorient has now got the promise of a Renault factory.

The chairmen and reporters of the 30 commissions entrusted with the preparation of the 5th French Plan represent hardly 5% of the active population in France. Their list does not include a single representative of the workers and farmers unions. (Le Peuple Breton, April).

The French economy under De Gaulle remains capitalist. The talk of regionalisation and development of regional metropolises serves as a smoke-screen to the continued underdevelopment of countries like Brittany. The main thing is "the free circulation of the workers", i.e. their availability for deportation towards areas where the French or European capitalists need them" (Le Peuple Breton, July).

The last M.O.B. poster pictures a young man leaving Brittany with scanty baggage and walking in the direction shown by a signpost: Paris, Ruhr. The poster says: NO TO DEPORTATION.

Military if not social security! The Brest aeronaval base has opened a new depot at Gwennegad. An old sea-fort at Roskanvel has been given over to the army for the training of commandoes. The Centre for combined sea-land operations, withdrawn from Arzew (Algeria) will be installed at Lorient and in the nearby Kiberen peninsula (Le Peuple Breton, June and July). An electronic centre for the French army will be opened at Rennes in 1967 -- The annual big French military manoeuvres will take place in October around the Koatkidan Camp in Brittany. General De Gaulle will attend. (Missio n Bretonne).

A LANDMARK IN BRETON PHILOLOGY. The Librairie Klincksieck, Paris, has now published two master works by Leon Fleuriot: a Dictionnaire des Gloses en Vieux-Breton and an Etude Linguistique du Vieux-Breton. We have received only the first, but we understand that the second is of even greater importance: following his discoveries, L. Fleuriot was able to reconstitute a great deal of the grammar of Breton, as it existed in the period from the 8th to the 11th century. This had not been done before.

In the Dictionary, (372 pp. 11 x 8½") he has gathered all the known old-Breton words (leaving out names of places and persons) and those which he discovered (about half the terms listed) by examining a thousand manuscripts (original and microfilms.) Much remains to be explored (in Italian, Spanish, etc. libraries), a work which should be carried out in teams.

The main cause for the dispersion of the sources was the total occupation of Brittany by Norsemen from 914 to 935, the resulting exodus of the leading classes, the destruction of most manuscripts and the removal of others towards the Loire Valley from where they wandered as far as Rome, Bern, Gotha, Leyden.

The notes about the manuscripts and the degree of kinship between Welsh, Cornish and Breton in the 11th century show that close contacts were maintained by the Bretons with the other Celts until that time. Fleuriot adduces proofs of the existence of a continuous written tradition in Breton from earliest times. This literature could blossom because of a favourable situation in the political, military and social domain: no other Celtic country possessed such a strong organisation as Brittany under Salaun or Alan Veur, when kings and archbishops spoke Breton. At that time Breton was not divided in dialects, nor did it admit borrowing from (Old) French. Constant relations with the other Celts across the sea contributed to maintaining its vitality, and the strength of the Breton culture.

This stopped when Brittany turned from the North to the East, when its less independent leaders started marrying in French families and brought French into their country.; at the same time Breton began its process of dialectisation (from the 11th century onwards).

The examination of the old Breton words, given here with the Latin words which they expounded, includes comparisons with kindred words in the other Celtic languages, as well as etymological notes which are not meant to be exhaustive.

According to a Breton scholar, these two works are the most important to be published in the field of Breton philology for a long time. We understand that they incidentally "knock the bottom off" the already shaky thesis about the Gaulish origins of Breton propounded by the Lecturer for Celtic at the University of Rennes.

Dr. N. Bothorel::

CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE BRETON'S SOCIAL INADAPTATION A Doctor's thesis presented to the Faculty of Medicine, Paris, 26-11-'63. Extract published by AR VRO No 25 (June). Requests for copy will be transmitted. Some people, who have not given much thought to the problem or who belong to the "ethnic majorities", consider that the small nations stand to gain by accepting assimilation by their larger neighbours. That it is not so is shown by Dr. Bothorel's observations and conclusions: they, constitute implicitly one of the severest indictments of France's policy in Brittany and of its Breton agents as well. Under pretence of civilising them, the Bretons are subjected to a process which is leading to their disintegration, individually and as a community. What else is genocide? B. N. Editor)

It was impressed on all the Bretons that to be good French citizens they must abdicate their "particularism". This led to a lack of initiative, underdevelopment, emigration of the young, weakening of productive potentialities. It is nearly a crime to claim the right to work in our home country. (Cf. Prime Minister Pompidou: "The Bretons must understand that they will have to go where there is work for them, in the East, the North, Paris, C.F. also Gaullist deputies at CELIB Assembly in Brest unwilling to ask for a special Breton Plan for fear of disturbing French unity. B.N. Editor).

Emigrants have developed this mentality: earn enough abroad to come back and live your old days in peace: earn an early pension; don't take risks.

Mental diseases During World War II, Breton psychiatric hospitals were practically empty. In 1960, 0.3% of the Breton population were mental patients as against 0.2% of the French. At Kemper 60%, at Gwened 80% of these cases were due to alcoholism. A very large majority of them came from Frenchified districts.

Alcoholism. When Brittany was annexed, the consumption of alcohol was negligible. 100 years later it had quintupled. In 1914 it was still less in Brittany than in wine-producing France. To-day, BBrittany is far "ahead". The aim is intoxication, not the pleasure of drinking: drinkers seek the 14° Algerian wines, heavier than the French ones.

French-speaking Upper Brittany and the Frenchified districts of Lower Brittany are much more alcoholized than the Breton-speaking area. There is therefore a causal relation between this social scourge and the process of Frenchification. Many wine importers are politicians and hold a singular conception of the French culture.

Social disintegration. Brittany used to be a land of "pardons" (festive pilgrimages), big feasts on such occasions as christenings, weddings, harvesting etc. Frenchification tends to suppress these customs which correspond to an ethnic necessity without replacing them by anything similar. The resulting uneasiness (malaise) often expresses itself in alcoholism. This is also observed among the Breton students who fall a prey to boredom and loneliness in Frenchified Rennes. Through this rupture of his communal life the individual no longer fulfils his need to feel as a member of a stable community which itself acts as a normaliser of his behaviour.

The diseased Breton community is disintegrating under the effect of powerful external forces. Integration in another community, based on different cultural models, would require the individuals to change their personality.

The Breton shield. The Bretons who are best adapted to modern life are not those who have tried to liken themselves to the French cultural standard. It is symptomatic that the Breton reawakening and economic effort started in Breton-speaking areas. (Leon, Pont-'n Abad): a new "elite" which believes in its ethnic characters is now trying to impart its dynamism to all of Brittany; it is operating original reforms to solve their country's particular economic problems. (cooperatives adapted to the Breton character, for example.) Remember also that Brittany is the only region in the French Hexagon to have worked out very detailed Plans of development, which for their execution unfortunately depend on governmental power; Brittany pays directly 85% of the costs for its road system, whereas the corresponding figure is even less than 50% in the "rest of France". CELIB has now asked the Breton "county Councils" to grant the financial means which would allow them to appoint permanently in London a

"Commercial Advisor for Brittany" who would prospect the British market, coordinate publicity for Breton products and advise exporters. (Vie Bretonne, June-July).

However, the areas of Brittany which are most Frenchified remain generally passive. The distinction appears there between adaptation to the modern world and adaptation to the French culture.

Decline in demographic potential. Until now the birth rate is sufficient to compensate for the 25,000 who emigrate yearly. But the high proportion of the young among the latter means that the country is losing rapidly its life-transmitting element: the birthrate is now below the death rate in 7 Breton cantons.

But for emigration over the last 100 years, Brittany would have 6 million people instead of barely 3 millions now.

A small matter: 155 billion Francs are spent yearly to educate those who later emigrate.

Emigration from Brittany is compulsory: you must go where there is work. No choice.

Among emigrants, the signs of non-integration in their environment: lack of initiative, alcoholism, nostalgia, depression, mental alienation, are still more frequent than at home.

The evasiveness of patients towards doctors who don't belong to their "ethnie" (race) together with the repressive attitude towards the Breton language and culture causes them to be classified as mentally defective. Yet this defect is rare among Bretons. (Intelligence tests carried out by the psychological Services of the French Army among recruits and giving a total maximum mark of 20 made it possible to draw a map which shows Finistere (W. Brittany) on top with the three departements centred around Paris, Lyon and Nancy (average mark between 12.6 and 14.3. The rest of Brittany comes out well too. These results are all the more satisfactory that our schooling facilities have been considerably neglected.

Cf. Breizh, Vie Bretonne, May).

The mental level of the Breton girls coming to work in Paris is also quite satisfactory, but the difference of conception in Brittany and in France concerning the status of the servant-maid -- there one of respect, here of contempt, (the prototype of Breton women as seen by Parisian cartoonists is the silly Becassine) explains the high rate of mentally-diseased among our female emigrants. Another striking effect of the process of Frenchification is shown by prostitution statistics.

Conflicts

Tensions result from the fact that emigration is not by choice but by necessity (right to work in home country not recognised). The Breton word droug-hirnez (litt. expectation-illness) describes better than homesickness, Heimweh, the emigrants situation. The schools persistently aimed at isolating them from their natural community and conditioning them to the French culture: but their assimilation generally does not go beyond the concept. They fail to "live" the French community; they cannot find in it the necessary minimum of self-esteem.

They seek one another's company. There are 102 Breton associations in Paris, 200 in all of France. But those who do not find the atmosphere of home in those somewhat artificial groups have to fall back on their families. If single (a high proportion), they sink into isolation, a highly pathogenic condition.

In spite of French conditioning, the Bretons carry with them their nation's cultural models. But it has been impressed on them that the latter are inferior (a further evidence of this: the economic underdevelopment!). So a conflict arises between the seduction of the French cultural models, presented as reasonable, and the instinctive resistance to alienation, (sum of natural tendencies). This conflict expresses itself in anxiety, mother of mental disturbances.

WILL BRETON BE USED IN CATHOLIC LITURGY. Up to 1943 the Catholic Association BLEUN-BRUG struggled under the leadership of Fr. Perrot to uphold our language in the life of the Catholic Church in Brittany. That year, Fr. Perrot was assassinated by a French partisan and ever since BLEUN-BRUG has been in the hands of docile "cultural regionalists". Their present chaplain, Canon Meveleg regrets but does not expect that the Edumenical Council reform concerning the use of the vernacular will benefit the Breton language "because of the extent to which it has receded". (Bleun-Brug, Jan-Febr.)

Yet there are numerous parishes where it is the daily language of the people, where most of the children however Frenchified understand it well. There are many areas where it is the home language. Canon Meveleg himself recognises that preachers use it at home gatherings but hardly dare to do so in the churches.

Breton is excluded from the churches because of pressure by a few denizens and foreign squires who have enough influence to get the clergy to sacrifice the Breton speakers. We know cases of blackmail, e.g. a former Gaullist-resistant who threatened to withdraw support from the parish mission if it was not preached in French: the church there is the only place where French is usually spoken.

Canon Meveleg's attempts to justify this betrayal (not a strong term if Dr. Bothorel's conclusions are correct!) are refuted in GAIW AR VRO (May). The clergy carries a large share of the responsibility for the Frenchification of the Breton-speaking area.