

BRETON NEWS



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POSTERS CAMPAIGN. On August 14th, 1500 young Bretons belonging mainly to cultural groups were out from dawn to dusk putting up posters in all towns and villages. There were different editions. CELIB posters called for the solidarity of all professions in demanding a special plan for Brittany. Posters signed by the Committee for Regional Action pointed out that milliards of francs were squandered everyday by the government in Africa, "all from our taxes". And for Brittany? "Nothing is done for our economy and Debre vetoes our language. IT IS TOO MUCH. WE WANT A SPECIAL PLAN FOR BRITTANY."

Clandestine leaflets in Breton and French bear the message: "IN TEN YEARS, BRITTANY WILL BE A FRENCH DESERT OR A FREE COUNTRY BRITTANY WANTS TO LIVE FREE". A.B.N. correspondent reports that in all the localities he visited "the posters were still up after 10 days. CELIB posters were to be seen stuck by shopkeepers on the inner side of their windows. The freedom of Brittany has become a frequent subject of discussion with its opponents much on the defensive."

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BRETONS UNITE AT PONTIVI. On August 19th, an important meeting took place at Pontivi, Central Brittany. It was organised by CELIB, the Committee for the Defense of Breton interests, in conjunction with the 5 Breton federations of farmers' unions. It was attended by 1500 delegates representing not only the rural workers but also professional groups, city workers' trade unions and cultural organisations. Among them were numerous mayors, members of parliament and other political personalities of different tendencies, from all parts of Brittany. The purpose of the meeting, which some Parisian papers called the "States-General of Brittany", was to demand from the French government the adoption of a special emergency law to deal with the present economic, social and cultural crisis in Brittany. Mr. Martray, the secretary of CELIB, stated: "Brittany is determined to survive at all costs", and a young farmers' leader said: "We shall have our Pontivi Plan or we shall become the fellaghas of Brittany." +

The delegates, considering that the prosperity of all the professional and social groups in Brittany was closely related to that of the farmers

- 1) stated their full solidarity with the latter in their struggle for a better standard of living;
- 2) noted that the French government had so far done nothing to meet the Breton demands;
- 3) called for urgent measures to stop the emigration caused by the notorious lack of public investments in the Breton economic, social and cultural domains;
- 4) demanded therefore the adoption of a plan to insure the harmonious development of all the Breton activities;
- 5) expressed unanimously their readiness to use all means to obtain satisfaction if official steps were not taken before Sept. 15th;
- 6) decided to form within CELIB a vigilance committee to maintain permanent co-ordination between all the Breton organisations.

(Avenir, Sept. 61)

+ not "of the metropole" as reported by Agence France Presse.

EVOLUTION OF THE BRETON PROBLEM: The dailies published in Brittany did not report the revolutionary declarations of rural leaders at Pontivi. They kept their public ignorant of the role of CELIB and MOB at the meeting.

Yet at Pontivi, personalities who had never expressed their Breton sentiments previously did so openly. This was in particular the case of A. Gourveneg, the young farmers' leader who was imprisoned after the occupation of the Morlaix sous-prefecture in June. "In Morlaix, he never pronounced the word "Brittany". Now he speaks of Breton solidarity, the defense of the regional interests, and demands a

special law for Brittany's development."

"--That is precisely what worries us most", said a police inspector present at Pontivi.

The proposal to set up a committee of vigilance and to fix a dead line for the 15th of September came from A. Gourveneg. It met with the disapproval of some participants who felt inhibited by their loyalty to France. They dropped their objections however after a M.O.B. leader, Mr. Poupinot, had spoken in support of Gourveneg.

(Ref. Avenir, Sept. 1961 and Rivarol, 31-8-61)

THE PREFECTS OF BRITTANY have been requested by the French Minister for Home Affairs to establish a report on the claims of the various Breton organisations, with recommendations for the minimum measures which could satisfy some of them. The M.O.B. has warned immediately the organisations concerned against this attempt to split their newly won unity. (Avenir, Sept. 61.)

A SECOND DENMARK. At Pontivi, Mr. Mevelleg, president of the Finistere Federation of Farmers Unions, refuted the old legend, accredited by French schools, of "Brittany a poor country incapable of further development". He gave some figures about the country's present agricultural production: "Brittany has 8% of the total cultivated land in France, but she earned 13% of the total earnings in agriculture in 1959. 12% of the milk are produced in Brittany, 40% of all vegetables for canning, 50% of the poultry, 75% of the potatoes. This should make the country a second Denmark." (Ouest-France, 21-8)

COLONIAL EXPLOITATION. "The young Breton farmers - most of them with small holdings - are in the vanguard of progress in vegetable production, poultry farming, pig rearing. Why such a crisis now? The young Bretons feel they are the victims of a criminal policy of internal colonisation on the part of the nation's ruling classes." (Information Agricole, No. 250)

...The June disturbances were started by the Breton farmers, but those who benefited from it were the big wheat growers who got a substantial increase in production prices. (Rivarol, 31-8)

Wheat is not a particularly important item of production in Brittany. The increase will work against the relatively numerous category of tenant-farmers in Brittany as their rents are determined by the wheat prices.

"BRETON IN TEACHING, ADMINISTRATION AND RADIO - T.V. SERVICES" This is the subject of the report⁺ presented last May by the Breton delegation to the F.U.E.N. Congress at Brugge. Its findings were confirmed by the veto which the French government opposed in July to the adoption of a new law for the teaching of Breton and other "regional" languages. Most of the facts have been given previously in BRETON NEWS (Nos. 1, 6, 8, 10, 16, 19). The main interest of the report is that it throws light on the methods by which the Department of Education has thwarted the application of the 1951-law.

There is new information, extracted from the lay teachers' bulletin "Ar Falz", about the number of schools which give Breton "grinds".

2 training colleges (presumably in Kemper and St-Brieg, for male teachers) out of 6 in the Breton-speaking area (tuition only for last-year students, in unfavourable conditions); a dozen secondary schools, classes attended by a few hundred students; a few dozens primary schools out of more than a thousand; lessons often not regular, devoted mainly to the reading of easy texts. About 1,000 pupils in equal parts from primary and secondary schools, take part every year in an easy competition organised by "Ar Falz".

The classes exist thanks to the devotion and courage of their teachers, they are only tolerated by the inspectors. The result of the 1951 concession is therefore, about 50 schools giving a rudimentary teaching of the daily language of a million people.

The interest taken by the pupils in the study of their language is beyond doubt. Once they have overcome the ideas previously instilled into them, that Breton is only a patois, of no use, good only for uncultivated peasants, they rapidly discover the remarkable riches of their language and become attached to it. But time-tables do not allow them to acquire a sound knowledge of it.

The report mentions the effects of this policy of cultural genocide which has gone on relentlessly for 5 generations. Alcoholism, the usual plague of people subjected to assimilation, is one of them; the spiritless acceptance of the rupture of the link

+ Available from "L'Avenir, B.P. 89, Brest, Brittany

between the old people and the children is another (it is considered "natural" for them not to understand one another).+

"The neglect of the Breton economic interests causes nowadays the most widespread discontent, ^{but} linguistic motives inspire the deepest resentment. More and more young people .. consider the decline of Breton as an intolerable injustice and come to judge the French State and France herself only in terms of this humiliating and anachronistic treatment of their language.

"The 1951-law satisfies the minimum requirements of France's membership of UNESCO:⁺ it cannot be said officially that France does not care for her citizens' mother-tongues. Yet the disappearance of the minority languages spoken on the French-controlled territory remains one of the objectives of the French Department of Education."

+ See in this respect BRETON NEWS, No. 12.

*+ France in Unesco: see B.N. 16

... All the pipe-bands and Celtic Circles of Upper Brittany took part in the parade organised at the end of the "Brug" Festival at Fougères (NE of Rennes) on Aug. 13th. They were watched by about 50,000 people, mainly farmers from surrounding districts. Breton flags were everywhere, in particular a huge "Gwenn ha Du" floated at the top of the famous XII. century castle. General Valery speaking before 30,000 people praised the memory of those who had died fighting for Brittany and called on workers and farmers to unite in order to recover Brittany's freedom.

(from an eye-witness).

LITERARY PRIZES: In BRETON NEWS No. 12, it was announced that prizes would be given by Emgleo Sevenadurel Breiz for unpublished manuscripts in Breton. There were 20 entrances. Awards were made on July 3rd. A prize of 500 Nf was given to J. PRIEL for a play, "Kazh ha Logodenn" (Cat and Mouse), the action of which takes place in Norway during the war. The work will soon be published in "AL LIAMM". An equal prize was given to L. Kergall, a newcomer to Breton literature, for a collection of short stories. There were 4 smaller awards, 3 of the prizes went to Treger writers, 2 others were won by writers whose first language was French.

BRETON STUDENTS CONGRESS. About a hundred students took part in the congress held at Lorient on the 9-10/9/61 by the Association of Breton Students. A series of discussions on Saturday dealt with the economic problems of Brittany, another series on Sunday treated the cultural problems. Among the numerous personalities who attended and contributed to the discussions were leading members of various Breton organisations. Mr. Martray, secretary of CELIB, announced amid applause that a telegram had just been sent to the French Prime Minister reminding him of the 15th-of-September deadline. "The Committee of Vigilance will be heard of". A young farmer from NW. Brittany expressed the determination of the Breton rural youth to pursue to the end the struggle started 3 months ago. The discussion on Sunday expressed impatience with the Government for failing to take account of the Bretons' cultural aspirations: these were as worthy as their material needs. In the draft for the Breton emergency law which the Breton organisations were preparing, there will be a cultural section providing for the teaching of Breton in the schools. Professional organisations were being asked to throw in their weight in support of the Breton cultural claims.

... A number of young men walked out from a reception given on the occasion of the Bagpipe Festival at Brest, on the 5-6 of August, when following the Breton national anthem the Mayor proposed to sing the Marseillaise.

... The Celtic Congress held this year in Galway (14-19/8) elected Mr. P. Denez, Breton writer and editor of Ar Vro, as its new president.

... A young girl, Selwenn Rouault, was attacked by four men described as French agents provocateurs while she was distributing Breton leaflets at the Festival of Cornwall in Kemper (23-7). They grabbed the leaflets, twisted her arms and knocked her on the head.
