

BRO NEVEZ

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE
NEWSLETTER OF THE U.S. BRANCH



French only in France?

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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This newsletter can be sent as a PDF file attached to an e-mail instead of, or in addition to, the print version. Just let the Editor know how you would like to receive it.

Ideas expressed within this newsletter are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent ICDBL philosophy or policy.

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Editorial

In this issue of Bro Nevez you will read about the history of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. You will also learn about work on a European level to support minority languages and cultures, and some of the action in Brittany to defend and promote the Breton language. This issue comes out a bit later than anticipated because I wanted to include a review of three very interesting new books which present the history of linguistic policy in France and the challenges that continue to be faced by all the language communities of France.

40th Anniversary for the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language

The United States Branch of the ICDBL was founded in 1981 but this organization dates back in fact to 1975 when it was founded in Brussels, Belgium. The following overview was written for the 20th anniversary of the ICDBL in 1995. It gives a good idea of the work of this organization and the impact it has tried to have. This statement also clearly shows that much about France and its language policies have NOT changed.

20 Years of Lobbying in Defense of the Breton Language

The International committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (ICDBL) was founded in Brussels on 4 October 1975 by a dozen personalities, representing seven different nationalities – none of them Breton. The initiative was launched in response to the "Declaration of the Breton cultural movements" of 18 July that year, which had announced that a series of strikes and demonstrations would take place in October with the aim of obtaining effective teaching of Breton, official recognition of the language by the French State and its use in the media.

The cultural organizations, aware of the fact that the French government feared international exposure of its repressive policy with regard to the Breton language, had expressed the wish to see the creation of an international association to support the linguistic rights of the Breton people – an association which would expose and denounce the attitude of the French authorities on this issue.

Thanks to the unusual nature of its action, the contacts its members had at senior diplomatic levels, and its location in the international hub that is Brussels, the founding group soon developed into a world-wide network. As a result, the ICDBL is now present in 23 different countries [27 by mid 2000]. The various organizations which defend the language keep this lobby group informed of

events and developments. Each individual branch has a wide scope for undertaking its own initiatives. Open letters to French embassies, to the relevant French ministers, even to the President of the Republic – with publication in the national press in the country concerned – are the most often-used means of action. Certain specific initiatives have however marked ICDBL's history.

For example, on 5 May 1977, a letter was sent to all French Members of Parliament and of the Senate, highlighting the contempt shown by the French government with regard to these two assemblies when it refused yet again to put on the agenda a bill which, if adopted, would have given legal status to the regional languages of France.

At the international diplomatic level, the ICDBL wrote on 23 November 1978 to all the accredited ambassadors in the Kingdom of Belgium. This time it denounced the hypocrisy of the French state, which while it was prompt to recommend the upholding of the rights of linguistic minorities in other countries, opposed the implementation of those same principles on its own territory.

France's integration into the European Community – a model of respect for the identity and diversity of peoples – might have led us to hope that the ruling Parisian class would develop a more broad-minded outlook to this concept. The ICDBL hoped to encourage such an evolution when it submitted, on 16 May 1980, a "Memorandum on the process of elimination of the Breton Language" in their own language - to each Member of the European Parliament.

In spite of – in fact because of – the rigidity of the French government's stance, trapped in the dogma of the linguistic unity of the nation, the ICDBL has not relaxed the pressure. Nearly every year open letters have reminded senior French policy-makers that the intolerant attitude they continue to adopt on this issue projects a negative international image of the country.

The President of the Republic, Mr. Mitterrand, who did not keep the promises he made on this matter in his "56th Proposal for governing," as well as his Prime Minister, Mr. Mauroy, and his Minister of Education, Mr. Jospin, have all been challenged on this issue. On 17 March 1994 the ICDBL turned to the Prime Minister, Mr. Balladur, to denounce the highly significant refusal of the French government to ratify the European Charter on Regional Languages. Finally, on 23 September last year [1995], the founder of the USA branch of the ICDBL, Dr. Lois Kuter, was awarded the highest distinction in Brittany, the Order of the ermine, in recognition of her contribution through Bro Nevez, the quarterly information bulletin which she edits.

It is difficult to quantify the impact of the ICDBL's action and it would not wish to claim sole credit for the few

concessions which have been made in favor of the Breton language (public funding for the Diwan schools, creation of a university section in Breton studies) which have been achieved through the day-to-day struggle of all supporters of its cause.

Apart from obtaining the granting of a statute giving full recognition to the Breton language, the aims are to remove the remaining obstacles to more widespread teaching of the language and a greater use of it in the public domain and the media. In this respect an opinion poll conducted early in 1994 showed that 77% of the French people, more open-minded than their Parisian ruling class, support the idea of a statute for regional languages.

The tenet that French should be the only and exclusive language in France remains however the rule in the higher echelons of the State. The "interference" by a foreign pressure group like the ICDBL in support of the Breton language raises the hackles of the technocratic Parisian power structure. But international public opinion, whose influence has been demonstrated over the issue of French nuclear testing in the Pacific, can no longer be treated with contempt. And this simple fact is an incentive for the ICDBL to pursue, in its own small way, the action it launched 20 years ago in support of the respect of the cultural rights of the Breton people.

Monique Blaise, General Secretary
Claude Sterckx, President

And 20 years later – What future for the ICDBL

This June Lois Kuter had the opportunity to meet with Ivo Peeters, the current General Secretary of the ICDBL to discuss the ICDBL – its history and potential future directions.



It was wondered what the ICDBL would look like if it were founded today in 2015. Does it need a new mission statement?

Given changes in the make-up of the central committee in Brussels with a number retiring or simply no longer able to physically do the work they once undertook, the ICDBL has been challenged to continue its work as a "lobbying group." With the death of Henri Lecuyer in March 2015, **a founding member of the ICDBL who served as an important contact to the many branches of the ICDBL**, this network needs renewal.

Each "branch" – whether just an individual or a membership organization like the U.S. Branch – has acted in its own way to make the cause of the Breton

language better known. This hasn't always involved writing letters of protest to French government officials.

The need remains for international awareness of the challenges Breton speakers still face today in light of French government resistance to real changes. The need also remains for an international community to speak out in support of Bretons working for the future of their language and culture. How can the ICDBL best serve to support Bretons?

An Introduction (or Re-Introduction) to Two European Organizations Supporting Minority Languages and Cultures



**Federal Union of
European Nationalities**

From the website www.fuen.org the following is a presentation of this European federation of minorities which has been active for over 60 years.

FUEN, with around 90 member organisations in 32 European countries is the largest umbrella organisation of the autochthonous, national minorities / ethnic groups in Europe.

FUEN was founded in Paris in 1949 – in the same year as the Council of Europe.

FUEN adopted the Charter for the autochthonous, national minorities in Europe in 2006. The Charter forms the basis of the actions of FUEN.

FUEN represents the interests of the European minorities on regional, national and in particular on the European level. FUEN is committed to protect and promote the identity, language, culture, rights and own character of the European minorities.

FUEN is the voice of the minorities at the international organisations, notably at the European Union and the Council of Europe and also at the United Nations and the OSCE.

FUEN is also full member of the European Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism established by the European Commission, and Participant in the Fundamental Rights Platform

FUEN has participatory status at the Council of Europe and consultative status at the United Nations.

FUEN, in cooperation with the European Parliament, established the European Dialogue Forum.

FUEN's main projects are, besides representation of interests, to establish a forum of the European minorities, European linguistic diversity, the FUEN project Solidarity with the Roma and a European citizens' initiative of the minorities.

FUEN organises the largest congress of the autochthonous minorities in Europe every year – where 150-250 representatives of the European minorities meet each other.

FUEN issues press releases, resolutions, statements and publishes the “Fundamental Rights of the Minorities” from the FUEN Charter.

FUEN organises – in cooperation with its members – many different events. For example the EUROPEADA, the football championship of the European minorities, and the annual meetings of the German, Slavic and Turkic minorities.



**The Network to Promote
Linguistic Diversity**

From the website: <http://www.npld.eu/>

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) is a European wide network working in the field of language policy & planning for Constitutional, Regional and Small-State Languages (CRSS) across Europe. NPLD includes Governments both national and regional, Universities and Associations as its members.

NPLD's main goal is to raise awareness at a European level on the vital importance of linguistic diversity. NPLD also aims to facilitate the exchange of best practices among governments, policy makers, practitioners, researchers and experts from all over Europe.

Over the past 25 years the face of language planning in Europe has changed considerably. Many national and regional governments have established language boards or departments to promote their language, both at home and at a European level. As a result a new breed of language planning professional has developed bringing new expertise to the field. The NPLD will respond to this development by providing a forum for the professionals to share best practice, and create strong partnerships to move CRSS language planning forward.

NPLD works closely with European Commission, European Union, Parliament and Council of Europe, and during the years the Network has been active it has created strong links and partnerships with individuals, the Commissioner who has responsibility for language and

minority language, MEP's and others who are active in promoting minority languages.



Breujoù Breizh – A New Look at Education and the Breton Language and Culture

Breujoù Breizh was a one-day gathering of activists and experts to put together a slate of action to advance the teaching of Breton language and culture in the schools. Organized by Breizh-Impacte, Les Bonnets Rouges and Bretagne Réunie this was held on

April 25 in St Avé -Vannes.

Topics explored during morning half-hour presentations included bilingualism vs. multilingualism, orthography and pronunciation of Breton, a manifesto for Gallo, the exclusion of a knowledge of local culture and the natural environment in education, teacher training and licensing, economic considerations, and local vs. state decision-making in the transmission of language and culture. The afternoon included more reflections from cultural and linguistic activists and scholars as well as music. A display of books, magazines and CDs for children in Breton and Gallo were also on display.

An important outcome of the event was the definition of eight propositions to be put before politicians coming up for regional elections:

1. The Region should apply the propositions voted on by the Cultural Council of Brittany.
2. There should be more language immersion in the bilingual pre-schools and teaching should be available from the pre-school on.
3. A degree for "Bilingual Teaching" needs to be created.
4. Orthography needs to evolve.
5. Breton cultural activities need to be more generally available
6. More media in the languages of Brittany needs to be created for youth.
7. The Region of Brittany needs to have decision-making authority for languages.
8. The Region should sign the European Charter for Minority Languages

For more information see the website:
www.breizhimpacte.org



Protecting the Choice to Learn Regional Languages in the Middle Schools

On May 20 Paul Molac (Deputy from Morbihan, Union Démocratique Bretonne) and Armand Jung (Deputy from Bas Rhin, Parti Socialiste), co-presidents of the Study Group on Regional Languages of the French National Assembly, sent a letter to the Minister of Education to express concerns about recent reforms proposed for the middle school level of education in France.

Of primary concern is the fact that the possibility of continuing to learn regional languages after primary school seems to be missing. Stipulations for when regional languages may be learned are also of concern since the new regulations would require a gap in availability of classes. Concern was also expressed about funding dedicated to this teaching since new regulations make it easier to drop classes.

After years of efforts to open school doors to regional languages, it is important to insist that new regulations for schooling do not close the doors that took so long to unlock.



Action for the Breton Language
www.ai-ta.eu

Advancing a public presence for the Breton language has required both long and patient

efforts to engage decision-makers in planning for progress, as well as making sure it gets implemented. The organization Ai'ta has been at the forefront of action. The best way to present this group is to let it speak for itself. The following is from the Ai'ta website.

What is 'Ai'ta !'?



Ai'ta ! is a group whose primary objective is to defend and promote the Breton language, and ensure that it remains a living language in all areas of society. To achieve this it is vital that everybody be allowed to see, hear and speak Breton in public life... A language which cannot be used in day-to-day life is a language condemned to die. For this reason we demand that Breton, along with those who speak it, be respected everywhere in Brittany. To this end it is indispensable that our language be given official recognition.

Whilst waiting for that inevitable step on the road to the re-appropriation of the Breton language by the Breton people, the group lacks no imagination and organises numerous actions to inform the largest number of people, and develop the space given to Breton in society. However, and this is vitally important, our actions are

always guided by a sense of humour and playful spirit that in no way stop us from respecting or helping public service users. Indeed, Ai'ta ! has chosen non-violent direct action as a means of expression to ensure that we are heard.

Who are Ai'ta !



Created by young Breton speakers, the group Ai'ta ! was joined by numerous citizens concerned for the future of the Breton language. Young and not so young, we come from the 5 departments of Brittany, and we are organised into different local groups (Trégor, Léon, Pays Vannetais, Rennes...). During our actions, we are recognisable by our orange T-shirts with "Brezhoneg bev! – Brezhoneg ofisiel!" (Breton, a living language! Breton, an official language!) written on them.

What are Ai'ta !'s principles?

The actions of our group are based upon a certain number of principles and all those who wish to participate in our dynamic must adhere to them.

- The group is open to all who want to defend and promote the Breton language whether Breton speaker or not. The Breton language is the preferred language of communication within Ai'ta !, but efforts are made to welcome everyone.*
- Our group is decidedly non-violent and completely independent from any other organisation (political party, trade union, association, company...).*
- Ai'ta ! works on the bases of direct democracy: there is no president, leader or board of directors to take decisions! Everyone can take part at his/her level and decisions are taken collectively.*
- The work of Ai'ta ! is compatible with and inspired by the general respect of all languages and cultures. The values dear to Ai'ta ! are incompatible with all forms of racist, xenophobic, sexist or homophobic behaviour.*

Areas of action

Our group Ai'ta ! undertakes actions in different domains:

- The French postal service*
- The SNCF (trains and stations)*
- Breton roads (from country lanes to A-roads)*
- Local government bodies (town, departmental and regional councils)*

- Education (schools and establishments of higher education)*
- The media (television...)*
- Other*



Gouel Broadel ar Brezhoneg

To celebrate its 10 years Ai'ta gas organized a two-day festival celebrating the Breton language. This is a

re-launching of the Gouel Broadel ar Brezhoneg festival where Breton was not only celebrated, but was the language of the festival. Ai'ta has put its own mark on this festival by including not only music and dance, but also workshops on civil disobedience and action for the Breton language.

On Saturday May 23 the festival starts by engaging participants in the creation of Breton language signage for the town of Tremargad where the festival is held. This was followed by an Irish and Breton music Session at the Tremargad Kafe and an evening concert featuring Catalan Pirat's Sound Sistem from Barcelona – in the Catalan language.

On Sunday the 24th the day started with some traditional Breton games (boules bretonnes and palets sur planche) and festival goers could learn some Breton at the same time. At noon an apperatif was offered to the singing of Marsel Gwuilhou & Alan ar Rouz, and Bourdonnay & Le Panse. During the afternoon festival goers could learn the techniques of non-violent civil disobedience, enjoy music and games, films produced by Ai'ta, and food and drink. More formal presentations (in Breton with French translation) were made about civil disobedience and the actions of Ai'ta. An evening concert featured song in Breton with Barba Loutig (polyphonic song for dancing); Trouz an Noz (punk-rock); Brieg Guervenou (rock); El Maout (electro-bucal); Silwink (reggae), and Pirat's Sound Sistem (in Catalan). The festival closed with a fest-noz with the Le Bour-Bodros Quintet, War-Sav, Talek Tad ha merc'h, Cabaret-Gloaguen, Cabaret-Le Cras, Ar Vreudeur Morvan, Cornée-Le Panse, Bourdonnay-Olivier, and other singers and musicians of the area.

For more about Ai'ta check out their website: www.ai-ta.eu



Kampoù vakañsoù Vacation camps in Breton

www.ubapar.org

14 camps for young teens are being offered this summer where young people are immersed in the Breton language while playing sports, bicycling, focusing on art or cinema, creating a bagad, fishing, gardening, learning kan ha

diskan singing, horse-back riding or any number of other special activities. And you can even find a camp where you will learn all about the history of wolves in Brittany.

For more information see the website www.ubapar.org (Union Bretonne pour l'Animation des Pays Ruraux)

1st Harvard Breton Workshop

While the Celtic Studies Department of Harvard University has welcomed Breton scholars to its campus in the past, a formal relationship was established in 2013 with the Centre of Breton and Celtic Studies at the University Rennes 2. This May 11-14, 2015, the First Harvard Breton Workshop was held with five professors from Rennes presenting seminars and a "crash course" for Harvard graduate students to learn Breton. The lessons were given each morning of the 4-day workshop from 9:30 to 12:30 – certainly not enough time to master the Breton language, but a good start for students already familiar with other Celtic languages. From 2 to 4 each afternoon University Rennes 2 professors presented a variety of topics on Breton language and culture:

Identity and Hybridity, chaired by Erwan Hupel with Ronan Le Coadic giving an overview of "Breton Identity" and Yann Bevant speaking on "Cultural Cross-fertilization: Brittany and Intercelticism."

Languages and Contemporary Culture was chaired by Yann Bevant with Ronan Le Coadic speaking on "Contemporary Language Issues set in Perspective" and Stefan Moal presenting "Contemporary Breton Culture,"

Poetry and Theater was chaired by Stefan Moal with Gwendal Denis speaking on "Breton Poetry" and Erwan Hupel presenting "Breton Theatre."

Social Issues and Politics was chaired by Gwendal Denis with Ronan Le Coadic speaking on "Social Struggles in Brittany" and Yann Bevant presenting "Political Movements in Brittany."

The workshop closed with all five participating in a "Round Table: Brittany in the 21st Century."

While Celtic Studies departments in the United States and Europe have focused on early and medieval Celtic history, language and literature, Harvard has enabled students to learn Welsh, Scottish and Irish Gaelic ... and now an introduction to Breton. This workshop shows a new commitment to the study of contemporary language and the issues challenging the future of Celtic languages today.



Gouel Breizh

Fetedelabretagne.bzh

Gouel Breizh, Festival of Brittany, is in fact not just in Brittany where thousands participate in music, dance, theater and games to

celebrate Breton culture. But Bretons all over the world created events during this past May 16 to 25, 2015. The Breton communities of Paris and Havre have a long tradition of celebrating Breton culture, but this year activities could be found in Nancy, Saint-Paul (Island of Réunion) and Noumea. Breton associations in Pekin, Shanghai, Sibiu (Transylvania), Mexico, Bratislava and Ho Chi Minh city also joined in.

And of course, Bretons in America were not left out.



BZH New York

The Bretons of New York city organized days of events, starting with a Press conference featuring Jérôme Trehorel, General Manager of the Vieilles Charrues Festival. He presented the vast network of Festivals in Brittany and

the origins and development of the Vieilles Charrues festival, which in its 20 years has become one of the largest festivals of France. Jérôme Trehorel also did a business networking session to present the unique business model of the festival, the opportunities for partnership, and the economic benefits as well as social and cultural benefits to becoming a partner of one of the largest music festivals in France. A one-day Vieilles Charrues festival here in the States? Not impossible.



New York events also included performances by The Celtic Social Club who perform music from all Celtic regions:

(Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Wales, Galicia, Asturias, Cornwall and the Isle of Man). Some 70 people were able to be present at the live recording of a new album by the group. IC Will, a New York rapper who used to sing with The Celtic Social Club, was in Brooklyn shooting some video for an upcoming film "The Celtic Social Club in New York" He performed with the band during this live session.

"Brittany Day" was held at the M1-5 club where the Celtic Social Club and two other bands performed and guests had the opportunity to sample food specialties of Brittany.

You can see photos and hear samples of music on:
<http://bzh-ny.org/news/fete-de-la-bretagne-2015-souvenirs-2/>



BREIZH AMERIKA

As reported in the February/March issue of Bro Nevez, **Breizh Amerika** is a newer organization which also participated in the Gouel Breizh by organizing a May tour of the Breizh Amerika Collective called "Breizh on the Road". The musicians traveled to Rochester, Cleveland, Chicago, Santa Fe and Albuquerque to give concerts and foster a better awareness of Brittany.

For more about this, visit the site: <http://www.breizh-amerika.com/>



Festival Daniou – Another Brittany- America Initiative

The following is a slightly condensed e-mail I received from Simon Frisch, musician and contact for the Festival Daniou. In his e-mail he explains this initiative and its link to Brittany

Thank you for the Bro Nevez issue! It's really amazing to see the scope of activities around Breton language and culture ... I have quite a lot of Breton family in the Côtes d'Armor and Ille-et-Vilaine and have spent several years in the region – our festival launched last summer after a couple of years of preparation, and is now slated to expand over the next several years (and hopefully indefinitely!).

We function as a chamber music residency for my very talented young colleagues just entering their careers out of the Stateside conservatories Julliard and Curtis. Once installed in my town, La Ville Daniou (in the Rance valley of Brittany) we prepare programs of historical and contemporary repertoire to bring around the region in intimate performances of a few weeks. It's a fun way to engage with the area (for the community especially!), feature a high level of music making with worthy rarely-heard or new repertoire, and give young composers international exposure. The kind of work we do will be evident from this seasons' schedule of events:

www.festivaldaniou.com/schedule

A notice in Bro Nevez would be profoundly appreciated! It means so much to me (and is entirely the purpose of our

festival) that young composers and musicians, and our fans, invest in the Breton community, so all awareness and support has a strong effect on our efforts. There is also an element of discovery for me, coming from a Breton expat family and seeking to re-engage with the region my grandfather left for the States. Our events are free (or by-donation for the benefit of the host), and we welcome anyone in the region to come join us in the summer.

Starting in 2016, the commissioning of song cycles on Breton language texts will become an integral feature of the festival effort, the intention is that every year, a young composer has the chance and resources to delve into Breton literature (with guidance from a Breton scholar and old family friend who teaches in Rennes) and be performed here and in Brittany, thereby expanding awareness of the authors' work and the cultural legacy of the Breton community on the strength of the composer's and musicians' talent.

In fact, next year I'm kicking off that project by writing a song cycle on Anne of Brittany for a fascinating group of historical instrumentalists and singers to be performed around New York City and New Haven in January 2016, and then brought with the musicians to Brittany in August.

Yours musically and in gratitude,

Simon



New Books from Britany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

The three books reviewed below make an excellent trio of reading to bring to light French history and the political attitudes and policies which have stifled the languages and cultures of France. If you have wondered why the future of Breton language is threatened, these books will clearly show the role France has played.



Jean-Pierre Le Mat. *Ils ont fait la France - Contre-Enquête – De Clovis à Charles De Gaulle*. Editions Yoran. 2015. 293 pages. ISBN978-2-36747-005-4.

Jean-Pierre Le Mat takes a look at French history and some of its most beloved writers, politicians and

enlightened thinkers, to highlight some contradictions in their writings, to provide a different context to interpret their thinking, and add some new perspectives. Not lacking in sarcasm, Le Mat provides a large number of quotes from the eminent personalities he introduces to

help us see some of their less heroic traits and to definitely get a better grasp of the less glorious aspects of French history. He traces the perception of a "Divine destiny" for France to enlighten the world from the 8th century to the present, a perception that was certainly central to 19th century French colonization of Africa and Pacific islands.

Racism motivated the spread of "civilization" to the colonies (by whites) to the savages (blacks) who inhabited these lands. Savages were also to be found within France and the spread of public education where the French language was the means of civilizing little Breton children was a mission also undertaken in the 19th century. As Le Mat's presentation of the period leading to the French Revolution shows, the enlightened leaders of 18th century France and the heroes of the Revolution felt that making France "one and indivisible" required that French (and only French) was the language each citizen must use. Making Frenchmen out of the conquered inhabitants of Algeria and Polynesia also required the teaching of French. This brought them citizenship as well as enlightenment.

Threading through the centuries and the thoughts of many of the luminaries presented is anti-semitism. The Jews are considered a race apart interested only in financial gain, dirty, foreigners who are parasites. And the expression of anti-clericalism is certainly rife throughout this book – as important as it is to insuring loyalty to the Republic and the opportunity for rural populations to break away from the tyranny of the Catholic Church.

While American readers without a strong knowledge of French history might not be familiar with many of the names presented in this book – names the good citizens of France have been schooled to admire - you have perhaps seen streets named for them in a French town or city. Or you know of them from literature you have read or the little bit of French history you have had in school. Here are just some of the better known names Le Mat presents: Voltaire (1694-1778), Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), Jean-Paul Marat (1743-1793), Maximilien de Robespierre (1758-1794), Léon Gambetta (1838-1882), Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), Jules Ferry (1832-1893), Émile Zola (1840-1902), Emile Combes (1835-1921) and Charles De Gaulle. Le Mat spares no one, poking holes in a number of myths surrounding the heroes of the taking of the Bastille to the Communards of the 1870s, the Free Thinkers of the mid 19th to early 20th century, and the Resistants of World War II.

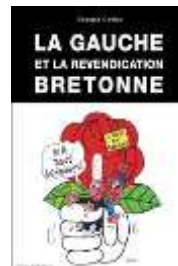
One name that will be familiar to American readers is Victor Hugo. In his works *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* he stands up for social justice. But as Le Mat notes and illustrates with ample quotes from Hugo, this author believed firmly in the superiority of the white race and disdained Africa, while believing that colonization would save it. In a speech in 1879 Hugo

states: "Africa only exists because the white man has touched it" and "In the 19th century the white man has made the black man a man; in the 20th century Europe will make Africa a world." (my translation).

It did not appear that Victor Hugo had much hope for the civilization of Brittany. His characterizations of Bretons as savages speaking a dead language are hardly flattering. Summed up by a biographer:

Brittany itself, in Hugo's Parisian view of the country, was an antediluvian land inhabited by hairy, tattooed peasants, squatting in their cottages or holes in the ground, surviving on milk and chestnuts, fanatically loyal to King and Church, their worldview bounded by the horizons of the ancient forests in which they hid, bristling with Druidic superstition and mindless animosity -- a contrast, in Hugo's personal mythology, to the mountain-born genius. Only the 'wash-basin' of the Atlantic Ocean was equal to the filth of Brittany, he wrote on a visit in 1836. From: Chapter 1 of Victor Hugo, by Graham Robb. (W.W. Norton & Co. 1998)

Le Mat's revelation of the less lovable side of French heroes and thinkers and his de-glorification of French history is likely to provoke some anger. But, the book is effective in showing that some humility is needed in looking at France and the French language as the epitome of greatness. And the book will remind us all that our own histories are full of heroes and great men and women who have been guided by racism, anti-semitism, greed, and arrogance.



Georges Cadiou. La Gauche et la Revendication Bretonne. Yoran Embanner. 2015210 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-80-1.

This book goes nicely in pair with Le Mat's *Ils ont fait la France* in that it presents many of the same actors in French history but in this case the focus is on politicians of the Left and their relation to what the author calls the "idea of Brittany" and the call for respect for Brittany and promotion of its language and culture.

For those not familiar with French politics Cadiou starts off with a very helpful explanation of what "Left" and "Right" political stances mean in France. Starting in 1789 in the National Assembly of France, one was Right if you defended the veto power of the king and the monarchy, and one was left (literally in seating) if you supported less executive power and a determining role for the Parliament. While Left and Right also implied a more liberal vs. conservative approach (as it does here in the U.S.) things are more complex than that. Through time parties of the Left (socialists, communists ...) could be very centralist in supporting Paris or more inclined to

support decentralization of government powers. With the ultimate goal of supporting the working classes – farmers and industrial workers – political parties of the Left may not have seen the support of regional languages like Breton as being central to their mission.

This book is not a history of the Left nor of the Breton Movement, but focuses on changes over time on the part of specific political parties and their leaders in terms of their support of the Breton cause. And in looking at Brittany, the author also brings in interesting comparisons with the perspectives taken on other regions of France – Alsace-Lorraine, Corsica, Occitania, etc. Also influential in changing perspectives is the de-colonization of Algeria and the continued occupation of New Caledonia, Guyana, Reunion and other islands of the DOMTOM.

Moving chronologically from the 19th century to the present Cadiou presents and analyses the role of particular parties and particular political leaders in their support – or not – of the rights of regional languages and cultures. Like Le Mat he explores the thoughts of particular individuals – Breton and non-Breton - and how they influenced political attitudes of their time, starting with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and including Lenin, Stalin, Rosa Luxembourg and Jules Guesde who introduced Marxism to France. Also presented are Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Jean Jaurès, Gustave Hervé, Charles Brunellière, Emile Masson, Yann Sohier, Marcel Cachin, and others who appear through the decades and influence shifting approaches to the demands of minority peoples in and outside France.

It is interesting to note that in presenting Jean Jaurès (1859-1914) a prominent socialist of his day, Cadiou notes that Jaurès was fond of his native Occitan and could speak it, while not much believing in its future. He was in favor of its being taught in the schools, but mostly to help children better master French. Jaurès also expressed an admiration for the Breton language in political speeches he made in Brittany. In his book, *Le Mat* presents a slightly different but not inconsistent side of things. In speaking about French colonies in North Africa, Jaurès is confident of the beneficial role France can play in bringing its enlightenment to its colonies. And he urges the socialists to take a leading role in insuring that these conquered peoples are treated humanely. He emphasizes the importance of creating more schools to teach French to Arabs who will take on administrative and military roles for France.

Cadiou supplies ample references to further reading and sources for more information as he summarizes the different periods of Leftist thought and action and he makes it clear that there is much more to be explored. He also makes it clear that the Left has been friend and foe to Breton interests, and that words have not always lead to action. In bringing things up to the present day, he leaves us to wonder where current political leaders will

take France and Brittany, and he urges readers to ask future election candidates to consider action on the reunification of Brittany, the ratification (and not just signing) of the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, and further decentralization of decision-making powers to enable economic and cultural development.



Thierry Kranzer. *Langues Régionales – Au bord du gouffre? – De l'utilité de « nationaliser » les langues régionales.* Yoran Embanner. 2015. 28 pages. ISBN 978-2-36747-009-2.

Press release from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13124&LangID=E>

GENEVA (12 March 2013) – *The United Nations Independent Expert on minority issues, Rita Izsák, today warned that half of the world's estimated 6,000 plus languages will likely die out by the end of the century, and urged world governments to take significant and urgent efforts to protect both minority communities and their language heritage.*

"Some groups are vulnerable to factors beyond their control, such as policies of assimilation that promote dominant national or official languages, the impact of conflict, or forced displacement from their traditional lands," Ms. Izsák said during the presentation of her latest report to the UN Human Rights Council. "Some countries have aggressively promoted a single national language as a means of reinforcing sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity."*

The human rights expert noted that minority language rights and language use have frequently been a source of tensions, both between and within States. "Proponents of linguistic rights have sometimes been associated with secessionist movements or have been seen as a threat to the integrity or unity of a State," she said.

Can you think of a country that has "aggressively promoted a single national language as a means of reinforcing sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity." Or one that has viewed proponents of linguistic rights as a threat to national unity? Hmmm ... yes, there have been proponents of "English Only" here in the U.S., but our constitution does not pronounce "the language of the United States of America is English." But this new book by Thierry Kranzer definitely shows how France fits this description.

75 languages have been identified on the French territory. 54 are in overseas territories – Kanak languages of New Caledonia, Amerindian and Creole language of Guyana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Reunion, and a number of languages in French Polynesia. On the French “mainland” are the German dialects of Alsace and Moselle, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Flemish, Franco-Provençal and Occitan (which includes a number of variations by region). Other languages are considered dialects of French (a langue d’oil) – including Franc-Comtois, Wallon, Picard, Normand, and Gallo. And then there are dialects of Arabic, Berber, Yiddish, Romani Chib, and Armenian. The future of all of these languages has been impacted – negatively – by French policies and laws.

While the author starts us with the French Revolution and notes the colonial attitudes of 19th century Frenchmen out to civilize and make good citizens for other language speakers within France as well as in French colonies, the strength of this book is its focus on more recent history. You will read of the broken election promises of French leaders, the many unsuccessful efforts by representatives to the National Assembly and Senate to introduce discussion of legislation for regional and minority languages of France, and the still unratified European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

France signed the Charter in 1999 restricting its application to just 39 of 52 measures judged to be in line with the French Constitution (of a total of 98 total in the Charter). Article 2 of the Constitution reads “The language of the republic is French.” This was interpreted by the Constitutional Council and the Conseil d’Etat to mean that immersion schools like Diwan could not be part of France public service – squelching the 2001 decision by the Minister of National Education Jack Lang to make Diwan part of the public school system. Operating public schools without tuition fees, Diwan fought hard for this recognition which would have brought financial relief.

In 2008 an amendment was added to the Constitution stating “the regional languages belong to its [the republic’s] patrimony.” This does not add much teeth to demands for legal recognition. The ratification of the Charter is yet to come although the author optimistically notes that in February 2014 a resounding majority of the French National Assembly adopted a law which could lead to a revision of the Constitution so that it could no longer be used to block ratification. Once again French President François Hollande has proclaimed he will back ratification of the European Charter, but no one is holding their breath ...

Kranzer does an excellent job of outlining the politics and legal challenges which threaten the languages of France – and the book focuses on the “regional languages” –

Breton, Basque, Corsican, Catalan, Flemish, Franco-Provençal and Occitan, and the German language of Alsace and Moselle. He gives a summary of the situation of each language but weaves information about specific issues throughout the book. Woven in also is work on the European level and on the part of the United Nations to protect and strengthen minority languages. While much of the book describes how France has been out of compliance with European and international norms, not all is negative. The author makes a number of propositions on measures that can be taken – if France has the political will – especially in strengthening the presence of immersive schooling.

While readers of Bro Nevez should not need to be convinced that bi- and tri- lingualism are healthy things, it can be hoped that others less convinced who might read this book will recognize the importance of strengthening the place of regional languages of France. And this should no longer be the herculean efforts of these language speakers themselves fighting laws and policies that block all rational efforts to create a place for languages in schools, the media and public places.

Thierry Kranzer makes the interesting point that the health of regional languages and cultures is important in insuring the prosperity of France and its international prestige. He notes that it has been those with strong roots in a regional language and culture who are often the best ambassadors for France, and for the French language! He speaks from experience in New York City where he has lived since 2001 and where he has seen the positive role played by Alsatian, Breton, Corsican and Basque communities there in giving a positive image of France to Americans, even during the strong anti-French feelings sparked in 2003 when France opposed American intervention in Iraq (remember “freedom fries”?).* Kranzer has defended the French language a part of the Comité des associations françaises de New York, the organization Souvenir Français and the Association culturelle francophone of the United Nations. He presides the Union Alsacienne, the oldest still active French group of New York. Strongly anti the politics which have demanded French citizens to be monolingual, no one could accuse Thierry Kranzer of being anti-French.

* As presented on the BZH-NY website, on June 15, BZH-New York with the Union Alsacienne and Corses de NY sponsored the following presentation:

“Regional Languages: Beyond the Myths and Cliches”

Hosted by United Nations Officer Thierry Kranzer, this conference will address the hot-button issue of the role — past, present, and future — of regional languages in France. The discussion will center around the politics, socio-economic impact, and perception of these regional languages, with a focus on dispelling popular

misconceptions about the vast linguistic diversity in modern-day France. Refreshments, including Alsatian wine and Breton pastries, will be served following the conference.

An Account from 1902: Bretons under Siege

Editor's Note: I am departing a little from the usual "travel accounts" written by English or American tourists in the past decades and centuries. The following account written in 1902 provides a first and second-hand view (by an ardent defender of Catholicism) of the turmoil in Brittany caused by French laws enacted at that period to close Catholic schools and evict nuns from those institutions.

Emile Combes (1835-1921) served as president of the French Council from June 1902 to January 1905. During this time he ordered the closure of thousands of Catholic schools – some 15,000 – leading to the departure of thousands of clerics from France. His 1904 law stated, "It is forbidden for any religious community to carry on educational activities in France." Separation of Church and State, combined with a near fanatical anti-clericalism, made Combes infamous for his radical steps to "free" French citizens from the tyrannical grip of Catholic clergy.

"The Recent Evictions in Brittany," by the Comtesse de Courson. The Catholic World Vol. 76, no. 453, December 1902.

During the last weeks of August the inhabitants of Brittany proved themselves worthy of their ancient reputation.

For days and weeks together, unmindful of their own interest, the true-hearted Breton peasants gave themselves up heart and soul to what was in their eyes a sacred duty: the defense of the nuns against whom the iniquitous French government is waging war.

Our American readers have surely followed this disgraceful campaign. They know how, in defiance of all justice and legality, M. Combes, an ex-abbé, brutally closed over 150 schools directed by nuns. Most of these schools were established in houses belonging to private individuals, whose rights were shamefully ignored. The most elementary rules of justice have been trampled under foot, and the iniquity of the whole proceeding is aggravated by the fact that the situation of the evicted religious was, judicially and legally, perfectly regular; also that, as official statistics prove, the government schools in France are full to overflowing; it is therefore materially impossible for them to receive the thousands of children whose teachers have been thrown upon the world.

So great indeed is the injustice, brutality, and tyranny of the whole proceeding that even semi-official papers like

the Temps are obliged to reprove M. Combes' line of action. But, alas! The destiny of France is at the present moment in the hands of a handful of Freemasons and free-thinkers - men utterly unscrupulous, who have resolved to stamp out religion in the country.

It would take us too long to examine the causes that have, by slow degrees, led to this result. One of them is doubtless the lack of energy of the Catholic and Conservative party, its petty quarrels and unworthy differences, when a common peril should have instead banded together the souls of all true believers. Be the cause what it may, the result is only too clear and, in the eyes of even the most optimistic of her children, France is going through a political and religious crisis whose gravity it would be difficult to exaggerate.

Happily, however, the violent evictions that have taken place this last summer seem to have moved a class of people who, unless their personal interests are at stake, are inclined to condone the worst acts of the government. In the Vosges, in Savoy, in the west and centre of France – nay, in Paris itself – an indignant protest has arisen from the peasantry and working classes, from those in fact who, absorbed by a dreary round of daily labor, have neither the leisure nor the desire to study politics. These ignorant but honest souls realized at last, perhaps for the first time, the sectarian tendencies of the men who govern the country, and their indignation was swift and deep.

It was more particularly so in Brittany, where religion still keeps a firm hold over nature as rugged and as strong as their own rock-bound coast, and the scenes that have lately taken place in Breton villages are worth recording. For many weeks the country seemed in a state of siege; the peasants deserted their fields and left the harvest to take care of itself. "Our crops may be lost for all we care," they said; 'we have another and more important duty to perform.' Armed with sticks, they stolidly kept guard, for days and weeks, night and day, round the schools, whose inmates were threatened with eviction at the hands of the government.

The schemes of resistance was organized in a manner that proved the twentieth century Breton peasants to be the worthy descendants of the "Chouans" of old; scouts were sent in every direction to watch the movements of the police, and it was arranged that, on the approach of the enemy, an alarm bell should ring from every village steeple to summon the defenders of the nuns to their post. The excitement was greatest in the "département" of Finistère, at the very extremity of the Breton peninsula, around Roscoff, a small sea-side place, where Mary Stuart, then a mere child, landed when she came to France to marry the Dauphin. In thanksgiving for her safe passage the young Scottish queen erected a chapel, which is now only a ruin, on the Roscoff coast. Here, nearly two centuries later, in 1746 her hapless

descendant, Charles Edward Stuart, the young Pretender, landed on October 10, after his disastrous attempt to recover his ancestral throne.

A few miles out at sea, in sight of Roscoff, is the island of Batz; it has about eleven hundred inhabitants. The men being exclusively employed in fishing, the women cultivate the soil.

For many weeks the good people of Roscoff had been in a state of violent excitement; for it was well known that the government intended to close the school where the children of the poor were educated, and to expel the



nuns. Count Albert de Mun, who is “depute” for Roscoff, was among them; using his influence and eloquence to encourage their just and legitimate indignation, and at the same time endeavoring to prevent any useless acts of violence. His task was no easy one; he filled it with a tact, courage, and disinterestedness that must add to the

honor in which he is held by his friends and foes.

On the 11th of August a grand demonstration took place before the convent; many strangers and visitors, who were staying at Roscoff for the bathing season, joined in it. It was generally felt that a crisis was at hand, a universal feeling of excitement prevailed, vague rumors were abroad, predicting that the authorities had decided that the eviction of the nuns should take place next day.

On the evening of that memorable day the quaint Breton town presented an unusual appearance. A large number of women of all ranks and ages; ladies from the neighboring “châteaux”; peasants with the snow-white Roscoff “coiffe” framing their sunburnt faces, assembled near the convent. Some entered and spent the night on their knees with the nuns who the next day were to be turned out of their home; others remained outside, sitting, standing, or kneeling, as the case might be, under the starlit sky. A number of young men, with their bicycles, kept guard in the neighborhood, carefully watching the roads where the enemy might appear.

Towards three in the morning, on the 12th, the Roscoff railway station was lighted up and the watchers learnt that a special train was expected to arrive, bringing a detachment of troops, while, at the same time, a number of “gendarmes” approached the convent by the country roads.

Immediately the sound of trumpets, horns, whistles was heard in every direction; at a given signal the islanders of Batz crossed the narrow strait that separates them from the mainland, and soon over three thousand persons, forming a compact mass, assembled in front of the convent school.

The women were nearest the wall, pale, resolute, with a strange light in their blue eyes; then the men, with bent brows and clinched hands; in front stood Monsieur de Mun, the champion of justice, his tricolor sash well in view; close to him the Comte de Guébriant, a leading landowner of the district; and behind them a few other friends.

The enemy came forward: first two “commissaires de police,” by whose side walked a man with downcast eyes and the demeanor of a condemned criminal; it was the locksmith who was to force open the door. Behind these were the troops from Morlaix, under the command of two captains; officers and men being evidently ill at ease, hating the work they were compelled to do; then followed the “gendarmes.”

There was something ludicrous as well as tragic in this imposing display of forces arrayed against a few harmless women.

In a loud voice the Count de Mun protested against the iniquity and injustice of the proceedings; the crowd behind him answering by a loud cry: “Vive la liberté! Vivent les Soeurs!” that rang through the chill morning air.

The “commissaires” then requested Monsieur de Mun to open the door of the school; this he refused to do. “We will only yield to violence.”

Three times, according to the provisions of French law, the summons was repeated, but the answer was an eloquent and conclusive one as it burst from the loyal Breton hearts: “Vive la liberté! Vivent les Soeurs!”

Then came a moment of intense suspense. The crowd stood absolutely still; not a sign of yielding could be detected on the resolute faces of those Breton Catholics; the “commissaires” looked at each other helplessly; the soldiers, bound to their post by military discipline, evidently sympathized with the defenders of the nuns.

Suddenly the “sous préfet” of Morlaix made his appearance. He took in at a glance the gravity of the situation, and approached the Comte de Mun to entreat him to use his influence to prevent a collision that might cause bloodshed and even loss of life.

As Monsieur de Mun justly observed, when relating this episode, what respect can be felt for a government whose representative is reduced to implore the mediation of its own opponents?

The attitude of the crowd was such that the Catholic leader felt that his task was no easy one. He realized that a collision must take place should the situation be prolonged; yet it hurt him to check the ardor of those whose cause, after all, was that of right and justice.

From a sense of duty, however, he addressed the crowd and pointed out the terrible dilemma in which the soldiers would be placed if ordered to advance: "We will never move; we will resist to the end; we want liberty, we want to keep the Sisters!" answered three thousand voices. Monsieur de Guébriant spoke to enforce his friend's meaning. "We will not move," replied the crowd.

At last the Comte de Mun persuaded the "sous préfet" to send away the "gendarmes," whose presence had an irritating effect upon the people; whereas the soldiers, as he well knew, would, even in this case, appeal to the sympathy of the crowd.

When, instead of the objectionable "gendarmes," the peasants found themselves close to the pale, troubled faces of the soldiers, a cry of "Vive l'armée!" arose. With sad eyes the soldiers, some of them mere lads, watched the people whose feelings were one with theirs, although the stern necessities of military discipline brought them face to face as enemies.

Monsieur de Mun afterwards confessed that the moment was one of extreme tension. The excitement of the crowd was on the increase; the women, clinging frantically to the door, cried: "We will not open; we wish to die here, we are ready to die."

At last he contrived to send a message to the superioress inside the convent, advising her to open, for the sake of the women whose lives were in peril, and also of the government agents, whose safety it became every moment more difficult to insure.

The good nun bowed to his advice, and, accompanied by Monsier de Mun, the "commissaire" was permitted to enter. To the decree expelling her from her convent home the superioress replied by a dignified protest, stipulating that she yielded to violence, and that neither she nor her nuns had ever in any way violated the laws of the country.

Then the convent door opened; supported by the Comtesse de Guébriant, the superioress appeared, followed by her community and surrounded by her friends. The shriek that went up from the crowd was such that even the government official instinctively bared his head; "Vivent les Soeurs! Vive la liberté!" A peasant woman, seizing a tricolor flag with a crêpe streamer, led the way; after her came the nuns, their defenders, their pupils, gentlemen and peasants, old people and little children, weeping and crying "Vive la liberté! Vivent les Soeurs!"

The procession passed along the quaint streets, in sight of the blue sea, under the glorious sunshine of that August day, rending the air with shouts of protestation against the tyranny of the God-hating government that is crushing the real heart of France.

On reaching the church the people sang the "Miserere" and the "Parce Domine"; after which the Comte de Mun, standing on the cemetery wall, implored his hearers to keep the faith alive in spite of oppression and violence. His last words were words of hope as he bade the sisters, not adieu but "Au revoir."

Scenes no less stirring and impressive took place, a few days later, in the same département of Finistère. Within a short distance from each other are three localities: Le Folgoët, Plondaniel, and St. Méen, each of which possesses a school directed by nuns. It was well known in the district that the authorities intended to expel the nuns; and here also, for many weeks, peasants armed with thick sticks kept watch night and day.



... Like the peasants near Roscoff, those of Le Folgoët forgot their own interests in their desire to defend the sisters. Across the roads they built barricades, which were made of carts, attached together by

wire work; round the convent of Plondaniel they dug deep trenches filled with water. The fields were deserted, the crops uncared for; at the entrance of every village were men armed with heavy sticks, whose iron spikes made them formidable weapons. Peasant boys acted as scouts, and either on horseback or on their bicycles kept a sharp lookout on the roads; in some cases even the women were employed in the same work.

When any suspicious character, resembling a spy, a "gendarme," or an official in disguise, made his appearance, a cry of alarm was raised; it echoed from one village to another, and nothing, says a witness, "can describe the weird effect of the sound in the darkness of the night."

The month of August was cold and wet, and at night the peasants kindled large fires in the open; around these they gathered, ever resolute and watchful, but when the Angelus sounded from the neighboring church it was touching to see them bare their heads, their dark faces suddenly softening as the words of prayer passed their lips.

At last the end came. On the 18th of August three hundred soldiers and twenty "Gendarmes" laid siege to the convent school of Plondaniel. Over a thousand Breton Catholics were there. They had watched over the nuns during sixteen hours without a moment's rest; it had rained heavily, and all, delicate women, young girls, children, were drenched to the skin. After a brave defense the convent opened its doors, but not until the

infuriated peasants had poured pails of muddy water upon the “gendarmes” and other officials.

At Le Folgoët the door of the convent was broken to pieces; the Bretons were on their knees before it, and thus kneeling they formed an impenetrable wall; the expulsion here lasted three hours.



At St. Méen, a neighboring village, blood was shed. The women and children were clinging to the gateway, and to the summons addressed to them they replied by the cry: “Vive les Soeurs! Vive la liberté!” The

“sous préfet” seems to have lost all self-control, and ordered he mounted “gendarmes” to charge against the human barrier that opposed their progress. In the fray many young girls and women were roughly handled; the peasants attacked the “gendarmes” with their pointed sticks; several fell to the ground and were trampled under foot. At last, a portion of the wall that enclosed the convent having been thrown down, an entrance was effected.

Here, as elsewhere, the sisters were on their knees praying for their friends, and also for their foes; when they, for the last time, crossed the threshold of their convent home. It was noticed that the superioress, perceiving a “gendarme” whose hand was bleeding, promptly tore up her apron and bandaged the wounded limb – true to the last to her instincts of charity. Then, followed by the crowds, she and her sisters proceeded to the village church, the haven and home where the oppressed and afflicted find a safe shelter.

Such are the events that, during the last weeks of August, made Brittany a battle-field, where the untaught peasants bravely fought for the helpless victims of M. Combes tyranny. ...



Deep Inside a Breton Skull 45 – In the Shadow of Saint Judicaël

Jean Pierre Le Mat

I am not sure that the brain, in a Breton skull, is purely Breton.

I am not sure that what I see, here and now in Brittany, is really here and now.

I suspect wide connections in space and time.

I had a strange experience last time I went to Broceliande.

I wandered around a garden that nestles in the countryside, near the lake of Paimpont. The place is called the oratory of Saint Judicaël. It cannot be found easily. It is not like the masterful monuments of the cities. It does not compel you to bow down or even to make the sign of the cross. It only invites you to meditation and peace, between the high trees. The little stream that borders the place leads gently, without much noise, to the quiet banks of the lake.

There was there three brothers.

Joseph had come from Jerusalem. He worshipped God in the mosque of Omar, on the slopes of Golgotha, and against the Wailing Wall. He had been in communion with the supreme unity. He studied there the sacred books, and they all delivered the message of the One.

Glen was returning from Iceland. There he learnt that the austere truths can be iridescent. They can intermingle in colorful farandoles. There, the fire flashed from ice and water geysers sprang skyward. After a night which lasted several months, Glen had attended the feast of the god Thor.

Max was coming back from everywhere. His job brought him to all the major cities of the world. His experience of men and things was great. He travelled through New York, Shanghai, Lagos, Rio, Paris, London. He lived in luxury hotels. There was not a single wall, not a single weed that could exist out of the absolute will of man. Imperfections were only due to inattention.

I could feel the pleasure of their meeting. But what to say? Speaking about the past? They were not troubled by it. They didn't look for any reparation. Speaking about the present life, their achievements, their projects? But could they, here in a quiet place connected with eternity, hide their highest concerns under a trivial haughtiness?

I heard Max speaking :

- Here in Broceliande, I feel deeply that at the beginning of Time was the Material. This initial Material was endowed with infinite properties. Shape, color, consistency, everything was about to flourish. In the beginning of Time, the primordial explosion was an incomparable feast of the Material. Stars and planets were shaped in the great opera of the cosmos. On Earth, in the heart of the primitive ocean, atoms met. Under the gigantic lightning and the roar of volcanoes, material bubbles were organized

Over time, the reactions became more subtle. Living beings appeared. They were small and fragile in the

immensity of the world. The cell unceasingly sought his path. Centuries passed, and millennia. It invented new ways to multiply, to change, to connect, giving birth to higher beings.

Planets, cells, men, all are interdependent. We are part in the adventure of the Material.

- I do not know if, in the beginning of Time, was the Material, continued Joseph. But at the beginning was a Word, and this Word was God. When we contemplate the harmony around us, we cannot imagine that the Word was a dry order, a kind of command. When obeying to orders, men create geometric cities of brick and concrete.

When the artist is painting or the blacksmith working iron, they sing or speak of their future creation. Their words carry their dream, and the dream becomes the soul of the material. The Word that created our beautiful world, when He conceived the stars, the sea or the mountains, could only be an unmatchable sacred song. He was alternately soft and tumultuous, in turn melodious and varied. He smiled with the design of the poppy flower. He whistled gently while creating the purple heather. And that sacred song was a love song. For only love begets life, and fills all things with life.

- I do not know if, at the beginning of Time, were the Material or the Word, Glen said. But I learned that, at the beginning, was Action. It is through movement, confrontations, transfers that, from inactive and uniform Nothingness, came Reality. The smells, colors, shapes, all the differences that we perceive create the existence.

Ancient people told us that several deities emerged from the chaos. They created existence through actions. They created the history of our world through meetings, alliances, wars or splits. They created nations and made multicolored flags flying in the seven winds. We must celebrate the multiplicity, because each element participates in the great shifting equilibrium, the great adventure of Humanity.

All three were silent, enjoying their fraternity, and also their differences. The flight of a bird distracted them.

- Oh my brothers ! We all three can surround the reality of things. We can enlighten it, each in our own way. Can we, all together, trap it?

- I am afraid we can't, replied another. If we are too close, the reality escapes our trap. If we hold hands, hoping to encircle it, it disappears. A pity, isn't it?

- That is true, added the third. If we are too close, we lose the view of true knowledge. And if we move away, we lose the will to achieve it. That is it, my brothers, my

equals. Only our differences reveal the reality. Maybe we create it when we are together?

The three men smiled. In the silence of those smiles, I realized that I was somewhat misguided. Actually, the words spoken that day were not exactly the ones I have just related. My version is too modern, although the direction of the debate is actually this one.

It would not be surprising that this meeting was that of three famous Nordic gods, Loki, Odin and Baldur.

Where the gods establish harmony, Loki objectified the material reality. He is the champion of the Material powers. Odin is the leader of the gods, and also their poet. Baldur is this young deity who will know that rare ancient world. He will resurrect the dead after the great battle of Ragnarök, unique and bright, like the sun on a new world.

But I digress. The three men who were smiling, near the oratory of Saint Judicaël, were not Nordic people... Obviously, their tanned complexion, their brown mustache, all in their faces indicates that they come from the Maghreb, Egypt, or Asia Minor.

Yes, that's right, Asia Minor ... Probably Bythinia. Their words had in turn the sweetness of honey and the bitterness of colocynth. I think they are part of a discrete Sufi brotherhood.

Men of Bythinia ... The decor itself pushes me to this idea. What I first imagine to be the oratory of Saint Judicaël looks very much like a garden in the small town of Iznik. The colors of the day and the heat from the air are convincing.



... Iznik, Iznik... formerly called Nicaea ... Ah! My Breton mind is too full of preconceptions, and my Breton eyes dare not see things in front of them. I imagined without any reason that these men are contemporary. Come

on! They are here to participate to the great Council of the year 325. The nearby city is in turmoil, I can feel it. And the three men, here, are about to debate an issue that stirs all Christendom. It concerns the divine nature, and the future of religion depends of it. The dogma of the Trinity will be proposed for approval to them.

Yes, that's it ... This is sure... But did I stop too quickly on my way? Some centuries earlier, three men were here, in this very garden...

The first was obviously a citizen of Ephesus, the holy city of the goddess Artemis. To him and his brothers, Paul sent this exhortation: "There is one body and one Spirit, one hope. One Lord, one faith, one baptism"

The second came from Lystra. He had seen the apostle cure a crippled man. With the enthusiastic crowd, he had believed that Paul was the God Hermes coming back. The third came from Colossi. He was a scholar and a philosopher. Paul had sent a warm letter to his community: "Put to death what inside yourself belongs to the Earth"

The air was soft and fragrant. The three men left the garden, and I lost sight of them. My Breton soul was in peace and my Breton mind was slightly troubled. I walked along the lake and I returned to the village, bathed in sunlight.



BRETON COSTUMES - BRO BY BRO # 5



Bro Lorient and Bro Gwened: the airplanes

Natalie Novik

If you know the cartoon character

"Becassine", you know what the Gwened costume (from the area of Vannes) looked like at the turn of the 20th century. In the meantime, the coiffe has become airier, is worn higher, and has become more horizontal. The same goes for the Lorient coiffe, which has also become villages, including Auray and most of the Morbihan gulf.

The men's outfit

The black or very dark costume worn by the men in both regions is quite similar, except for the kramailhon or short vest worn in the Vannes region. In Lorient, it is common for men to serve at the local Navy base, so they are often seen in their uniform. The brim of the hat is rather short, with the buckle in the back.



The women's outfit



The feminine costume in both areas is characterized first by an almost flat coiffe worn at the back of the head, and only lightly framing the face, and a very large apron, either of black velvet or bright silk (usually red, purple, pink, sometimes blue or green) with a V shape front on the chest, going all the way to the shoulders. The coiffes are called "airplanes" because they look like they are about to take off. In Lorient, the coiffe is a flat oval, with a very elegant lace pattern and a discreet band of lace around the collar. In Vannes, the coiffe is a layer of very fine tulle, folded in two and creased on top of the head, while the collar is also minimal in the front, but with a larger rectangle of lace in the back. The coiffe used to be falling on each side of the head, but with the years, it has become shorter and flatter.



In all cases, the apron is richly embroidered with floral motives, particularly in the front and on the bottom corners. The sleeves are wide, sometimes embroidered, but usually featuring layers of lace at the wrists.

Heard of, but not heard – 31 New Recordings from Brittany

Information for these short notes was drawn from *Musique Bretonne* 242 (Jan-Feb. Mar 2015) & 243 Apr-May-Jun 2015), *Ar Men* 204 (Jan-Feb 2015), 205 (Mar-Apr 2015) & 206 (May-Jun 2015). Information was also drawn from the Coop Breizh website (coop-breizh.fr) and a variety of other web resources for musicians and singers. A search of the internet will bring you samples of music from recordings in many cases.

Simone Alves & Yann Gourvil. *Astrakan Project*.

Singer Simone Alves and oud and fiddle player Yann Gourvil draw from their experience at the Kreiz Breizh Akademi where modal music from around the world (and from Brittany)



was explored. Both acoustic and electric instrumental arrangements add to the unique sound of this duo.



Dan ar Braz. *Cornouailles Soundtrack.*

Master guitarist (electric and acoustic) Dan ar Braz performs and sings 15 songs on this new CD. The majority are in English and are his own

compositions. Included are "Moon River" and "O Shenandoah" in what must be interesting arrangements of these oh-so-familiar songs for us in America. Ar Braz is accompanied by Bernard le Dreau, Yannick Hardouin, Patrick Peron, Jacques Pellen, Jérôme Kerihuel and Clarisse Lavanant on guitars, keyboards, bass, percussion and vocal back-up. www.danarbraz.com

Hoëla Barbedette. *Cerisier – harpe solo.*

This Celtic harp player arranges traditional Breton, Scottish, Irish, Swedish and Greek music, including as well a number of compositions. The double CD includes 21 selections in all. The style is improvisational, modal, and exploratory. Invited guests include Anne Auffret and Eric Menneteau on song and Patrick Molard with uilleann pipes.

www.hoelabarbedette.eu



Berig. *Aires à danser du Pays Vannetais.*

Beatrice and Eric Cabedoc perform ten traditional dances from the Vannetais area including hanter dro, kas abarh, ridée, laridé, pilé menu and others – set

to song in both Breton and French with accordion from this tradition.

Dimitri Boekhoorn. *Harpe insolite.*

This CD features harp player Dimitri Boekhoorn with a selection of early Celtic tunes as well as five of his own compositions. Two traditional Breton melodies are included as well as Scottish and Irish (and on Galician) airs and tunes. Not only is this an interesting mix of music, but Boekhoorn plays 11 different early, Celtic and hybrid harps. www.harpes-dimitri.eu



Bro Dreger XII – *Dañs plinn, biniou-bombarde #2*

The cultural center of Lannion (Kreizenn Sevenadurel Lannuon) has produced a long series of recordings focusing on different instruments, themes or dances

of north central Brittany. This CD focuses on the paired playing of biniou and bombard and the dance plinn highlighting the various interpretive styles of the "sonneurs" featured. The pairs included are

Launay/Savidan, Moal/Chaplain, Castel/Galopin, Berthou/Philippe, Le Féon/Menguy, Le Goff/Kerjean, Léhart/Messenger and Philippe/Léhart.



Arnaud Ciapolino. *Serenita.*

This CD features 14 instrumental compositions by Arnaud Ciapolino. Besides a variety of flutes he brings to each composition the improvisational style is supported by 10 other

musicians who bring electric and acoustic guitars, fiddle, keyboard, percussion, accordion, trombone, bagpipes, bombards and whistles to the musical mix.

Dañs er Jeko. *Heol gor.*

This CD includes 9 song texts in Breton set to music from the Breton tradition but also with flavors and swing of Brazil, Jamaica, and the Canary Islands. Musicians are Janlug er Mouel on vocals, pandeiro and kalimba, Tibo Niobé on guitars, Gwylan Menghin on bass, and Marcelo Costa on percussions. Another example of a worldly presence for Breton language song.



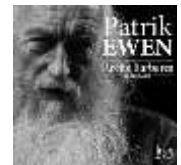
Deus'ta. *Nevez.*

This is a well-loved fest noz band with a new CD featuring 15 selections of Breton dances – gavotte, hander dro, plinn, laride, kas-a-barh, scottishe The group includes Thierry Beuze on

accordion, Mari Stervinou with vocals, Bernard Bizien with guitar, Frank Fagon on clarinet and sax, and Bruno Rivoal with percussions. Singer Klervi Rivière is an invited guest for the CD.

Patrick Ewen. *Récits barbares.*

This DVD of songs and stories by singer/musician Patrick Ewen broaches a number of topics – serious and humorous, drawn from Breton tradition and life stories. Ewen's song and story-telling is supported by Alain Rouquett on piano, Éric Liorzou on guitar and Yann Guéguen on percussions. A booklet accompanies the DVD to provide texts.



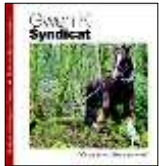
Sylvain GirO. *Le Lac d'Eugénie.*

This CD includes ten selections of songs recorded at a live performances of GirO's composition of stories and song. GirO provides vocals and fiddle and is joined by a number of musicians:

Julien Padovani (organ, accordion, harmonium ...), Erwan Martinerie (electric and acoustic cello), Jean-Marie Nivaigne (percussion) as well as Erwan Hamon (flute) and Laurent Rousseau (electric guitar).

Jean-Charles Guichen. *Elipseenn*.

Since the electrifying performance of the group Ar Re Yaouank in the 1990s, guitarist Jean-Charles Guichen has had a very successful solo career. Here he is joined by 5 musicians for a new composition of rock music. Guichen provides vocals and acoustic guitar, with Claire Mocquard with vocals and fiddle, Olivier Carole on bass, Mickaël Bourdois on drums, Jean-Marc Ilien on keyboard and Xavier Geronimi on electric guitar.



Gwen K Syndicat. *Ce que je vois dans mon verre*.

This is a Cd of 14 selections, including the title ballad « Ce que je vois dans mon verre, » two Breton marches and a variety of dances – jigs, reels, hornpipes from

Ireland and Scotland as well as Breton plinn, hanter dro and laride. Besides Gwenaël Kivijer (vocals, accordion and harmonica) who gives his name to the group, the band is made up of Tony Sauvion (guitar), Abderrahim Fathi (percussions), Loïc Blejean (uilleann pipes) and Frederick Bouley (fiddle).

Hamon Martin Quintet. *Les vies que l'on mène*.

This group performs 4 ballads – traditional and newly composed – and a variety of dances from eastern Brittany including avant deux, ronds, kost ar c'oad, ridees, etc. Well known on the fest noz circuit the group is composed of Mathieu Hamon (vocals), Erwan Hamon (bombard, flute and vocals), Janick Martin (accordion), Ronan Pellen (cistre) and Erwan Volant (bass). Invited guests for the CD are Prabhu Edouard on percussion and Sylvain Girault on vocals.



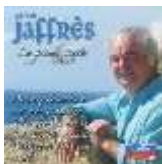
Sasha Hatala and Guenahel Denis. *Est en Ouest*.

One commonly finds bombard paired with organ but using this duo to accompany song is less common. On this CD Sasha Hatala and Guenahel

Denis perform traditional song in Breton (including seven cantiques) as well as five Slovakian songs in 15 selections from eastern Europe and western Brittany.

Gérard Jaffrès. *Ses grands succès, Volume 2*.

Jaffrès includes 20 of his most popular song compositions (in French) as well as a few new compositions on this second collection of "hits." Many songs have a maritime theme and have been performed by maritime groups, choral groups and dance bands.



Nolwenn Korbell. *Skeud ho roudoù*.

Nolwenn Korbell is well known for her innovative styles and composition of song in the Breton language. She presents 13 selections here with the accompaniment of Antonin Volson, Alexis Bocher, Jonathan Dour, Florian Le Pottier, and Dider Dreo on guitars, electronics, fiddles, and percussion.



Madeleine Le Breton. *Par une dimanche la matinée*.

At 83 Madeleine Le Breton is a master of traditional song of Gallo-Vannetais Brittany who has recorded her first CD of ballads, response style songs and

marches. She is accompanied by two of her sons, Guy and Patrick, and two grandsons, Tristan and Maxime, as well as a few other younger musicians and singers well versed in the traditions of this part of Brittany: Emmanuelle Bouthillier, Dylan James, Wenceslas Hervieux and Anne-Gaëlle Normand. From Louisiana singer Megan Brown provides her version of a song also found in the Breton repertoire.

Éric Liorzou and Thomas Boucher. *Sekret*. CD LB03

This duo pairs flute and guitar (and voice) for a selection of 14 songs (in Breton and French) and dances from across Brittany. Both musicians have a long history on the fest noz scene.



Outside Duo. *Le Celtic Two-Men-Show*.

This duo is made up of Antoine Solmiac and Julien Grignon who perform primarily Irish inspired music and song (in English and French) in a

show of musicianship and good humor. This CD and DVD gives a good idea of their showmanship with 15 selections (13 on the CD).

Guy Pen'du. *Harmonica*.

An interesting mix of very familiar pop tunes and Breton songs played on harmonica by Guy Pen'du (with guitar, keyboard and electronic accompaniment by Julien Jaffrès. Songs include "The house of the rising sun," "Summertime," "Mack the knife," "Killing me softly," and "Isn't she lovely," as well as some Breton titles like "Bugel kollet," "Kenavo, and "Pen'du blues."





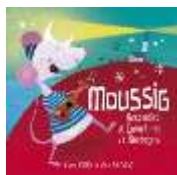
Denez Prigent. *Ul liorzh vurzhudus.*

One of Brittany's masters of traditional Breton language song, Denez Prigent here presents 12 songs in Breton (and two in English). He is accompanied by an interesting mix of musicians who use

percussion from nearly every corner of the world, the classical sound of violin and cello, a jazzy flavor with sax and unusual combinations of bombard and biniou, guitars and accordion. Musicians are Cyrille Bonneau, Jonathan Dour, Alain Pennec, Antoine Lehay, Jérôme Seguin, Thomas Ostrowiecki, and François Verly.

Yves Ribis and Arz Nevez. *Moussig.*

This is a selection of 12 songs, lullabies and sayings in Breton for children performed by Yves Ribis with the Arz Nevez ensemble.



Rhum et eau. *100% pur port*

This duo of singers, Guillaume Yaouank and Vincent Le Grumelec, present 14 maritime selections – some very well known, others less so, and some of their own compositions.

Ruz Réor. *Pladenn galet.*

This group was founded in 2033 and is well known to fest noz dancers. This CD includes 14 selections of dances from all corners of Brittany. Members of the group are: Alain Le Grevellec (accordion), Nicolas Cariou (percussion), Dominique Le Pochat (guitars), Richard Le Gac (sax), Alain Pensec (bombard) and Jean Charles Guillemot (bass guitar).



Startijenn. *Skeud.* Paker Productions.

This is the 5th recording by the group Startijenn which was founded in 1997. The group includes Tangui Oilo on guitars, Youenn Roue on bombards, Lionel Le Page on biniou and uilleann

pipes, Kaou Gwenn on percussions, Tangui Le Gall-Carre on button accordion and Julien Stevenin on bass. This CD includes 12 selections – 11 of which are compositions by the groups. While traditional Breton dances like the an dro, fisel, rond de Loudia and ridee are featured the style ranges from rock to jazz to a more traditional swing. www.startijenn.bzh



Syz-Denis. *Deziradell.*

Nicholas Syz and Nicolas Denis have been a “couple” – bombard and biniou, that is – since 2007 based in the Lorient area. On this CD they are joined by Gwylan

Meneghin and Glen Le Merdy on percussions, Thomas Moissan on accordion and Youenn Le Cam on

keyboards, as well as vocals by Morwenn Le Normand and Jean-Paul Runigo.

Rozenn Talec & Yannig Noguét. *Gali Galant.*

The voice of Rozenn Talec pulls from the Breton tradition as well as new compositions in the Breton language. She performs in duet with accordion player Yannig Noguét who provides an Argentinian swing, the beat of Parisian dance halls, the rhythm of the Breton fest noz, or the free movement of a Breton gwerz.



An Tri Dipop. *Mari-Louise.*

This is the first recording from a young quartet including Anjela Lorho-Pascal (vocals), Tristan Le Breton (guitar), Dylan James (bass fiddle) and Brian Ruellan (trumpet).

Included in the 14 selections is one song in Breton and 13 dances from eastern Brittany including laridé, pile menu, rond paludier, hanter dro, ridee and rond de Loudeac..



Clotilde Trouillaud. *Lune bleue.*

This is the second album by this harpist. Most of the selections on this CD are compositions by Clotilde Trouillaud, but a few traditional songs and dances of Gallo Brittany are also found.

Jo Van Bouwel. *Hag avel on.*

Jo Van Bouwel sings in Flemish, Breton and English on this CD of 12 selections of traditional and composed song. She also plays harp, guitar and flute and is joined by a large cast of well-seasoned Breton musicians: Yves Berthou (small pipes and low whistle), Tangi Bouluc (bass fiddle and guitar), Sylvain Koeller (piano), Karl Gouriou (saxes), Gurvan Louroux (percussions), Yvon Riou (guitar), Erwan Tanguy (accordion), Karine St.-Louis-Augustin and Suzon Tempéreau (vocals).



Ysa Trio. *Maouez an div zremm.*

This trio presents 10 selections – traditional or newly composed songs in Breton, French, English and even Gaelic. The style is a fusion of traditional, folk, jazz, pop and reggae.

Ysa provides the vocals and electro-harp and the trio also includes Vincent Chassagne on bass and Xavier Garavedian on percussions.

An Introduction to the U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)

The Breton language is spoken by an estimated 175,000 to 200,000 people in Brittany, but it is threatened with extinction as older speakers are not replaced by younger ones. The Breton language is no longer forbidden in schools or totally hidden from public view, but France continues to withhold the resources necessary for its development as a healthy living language, despite demands from an ever widening Breton population for its support and growth in the schools, media, and public life.

Who are the Members of the ICDBL?

Some U.S. ICDBL members are of Breton heritage, but the U.S. ICDBL is intended to be a group of “anyone and everyone” showing support for the Breton language rather than an organization for Breton-Americans like so many other “ethnic” organizations in the U.S. We do have quite a few members with Irish, Scottish or Welsh heritage, so there is a strong inter-Celtic element to our work. Most of our members speak neither Breton nor French and most have never been to Brittany. But we all have some reason to help fight for the survival of the Breton language.

What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?

With Members of the U.S. ICDBL dispersed throughout the U.S. --from Maine to Florida, from Alaska to California, and lots of states in between—we do not hold meetings or have the ability to carry out many projects as a group.

Quarterly Newsletter for Members and Subscribers

Our central activity is the publication of a quarterly newsletter called **Bro Nevez** (“new country” in the Breton language). It’s not slick and glossy, but includes 15-20 pages of current information about what is going on in Brittany related to the Breton language, and short articles on a range of topics, from music and dance, to sports, travel, the economy, or history. In November 2006 we published our 100th issue.

In the 3,000+ pages of Bro Nevez produced so far, over 800 books from Brittany have been reviewed or noted, and over 300 Breton music recordings have been reviewed and an additional 800 new releases briefly described.

The newsletter can be e-mailed as a PDF file you can share with others, and back issues can be found on our

website. We are happy to send complimentary copies (ideally by e-mail) to organizations and individuals in Brittany active in work for their language and culture.

The U.S. ICDBL Web Site:
www.icdbl.org

On our website we have published a guide to Breton music (updated in 2006), a guide to learning materials for the Breton language, an introduction to and map of the Celtic languages, a presentation of the Diwan Breton language immersion schools, and two documents presenting the Breton language and why it is endangered and what is being done about it. Bretons themselves have created many great websites to present their country and its culture, and we provide links to a large number of excellent and reliable sites created by Bretons themselves.

Other Action

We assist people from the U.S. and all over the world with requests for information about the Breton language and culture. ICDBL Members throughout the U.S. have been ambassadors for the cause of the Breton language by distributing information at Celtic cultural events and music festivals or concerts, and by simply discussing their concerns with friends and acquaintances.

As is the case for all branches of the ICDBL, our support of the Breton language is mostly symbolic—the fact that outsiders care at all offers encouragement to people in Brittany who are working to sustain the Breton language and find new and creative ways to use it. And we know that this has been noticed and much appreciated in Brittany.

PLEASE JOIN US. YOUR SUPPORT SHOWS THE PEOPLE OF BRITTANY THAT THEIR LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT TO THE WORLD

A yearly membership (including subscription to our newsletter) is just \$20. If you would simply like to subscribe to our newsletter, without becoming a Member, that is also \$20. Make out a check to “**U.S. ICDBL**” and mail it to the address below.

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For more information please check out our website:
www.icdbl.org

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