

BURE

# A BRIEF STORY OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CIGÉO



## Resistance takes root against the biggest nuclear dump in Europe.

*Bure, north-eastern France.*



A great sociological concept of spatial planning by the big companies, is the *acceptability*, or how you push the population you invade to accept the unacceptable. After a first period of violent reject in the 90's, when 10000 people walked in the streets of Bar-le-Duc and two-thirds of the department' inhabitants petitioned against the installation of a "simple study laboratory" of the Andra (the national agency in charge of the disposal of the radioactive waste), when angry farmers fired bales of straw in front of the construction site, arrived resignation and then fatalism.

For 15 years, the Andra has been profiting of a strong financial support from the Meuse departement GIP, an agency responsible for watering the two departements with loads of money, and buying the local politicians' sympathy with an "economical support", very difficult to refuse for a depopulated and impoverished post-industrial territory. Those who tried lost their township, have seen their municipal councillor change sides.

In parallel, peasants and inhabitants of Bure and its vicinity, up to a few tens of kilometers, have been offered sizeable amounts of money for their lands. The Andra progressively acquired a land reserve, by bartering lands and repurchases : "if you give me your land in Bure, you get another at 2kms and we add 30% at your former land rate". Finally, it's more than 1000 hectares of agricultural land and 2000 of forest and other non-agricultural lands that the Andra purchased, while the project Cigeo is supposed to need only 300 hectares on surface. This aggressive purchasing policy, combined with the threat of a future expropriation and repeated calls and visits from the Andra, overcame a lot of people and their illusions.

A fake public debate, seriously heckled in 2013, and an intensive propaganda in local newspapers, in schools and shops, was enough to impose in a few years in people's minds, the idea of the project's inevitability. Meanwhile the project of a laboratory became a project of storage of high-level radioactive waste, and on the top of that a project of surface disposal for low and intermediate level radioactive waste have been added. The pill is bitter for the Meuse department, which has been for a long time the poor, despised and deserted child of the region. If you add the preconceived ideas on the region, such as having a clay, rocky soil, without any charm or interest, the Andra doesn't need more to peacefully dig its nest in general indifference.



But today it's not just about burying the embarrassing waste of the nuclear industry negligence, first massively thrown into international waters along the Somalia's coast, then stored in the Siberian permafrost or in overloaded pools in La Hague. With the recent bankruptcy of Areva, its proven incompetence for the power plants projects of Flamanville (north of France) and in Finland, or with the decontamination of Chernobyl, with 17 nuclear power plants in France near the end of their lives, it is the whole nuclear branch which is in a bad way.

What is more appropriate than a depreciated and sparsely populated region like the Meuse, that we could move into a nuclear industry showcase, implementing a "center of excellence", a kind of Silicon Valley who'd go nuclear ? A Derichebourg' project of a nuclear reprocessing plant in Gudmont-Villiers, a nuclear laundry in Joinville, an assembly factory for pieces of power plants in St Dizier, another in Velaines : the nuclear colonisation of the territory has begun, without the inhabitants being aware of it, of course! The public consultation is generally just a moment of presentation for decisions and projects already well put together and decided behind the Parisian

scenes.

Acceptability rhymes with inevitability : like in Sivens, they bet on the harm already done to reach the no-turning-back point, the one of already irreversible damage. Ironic, when you think that Cigeo is based entirely on a law voted by 20 deputies on the 11th July at the parliament, which stipulates landfilling is feasible if it's possible to stop it, make the process reversible anytime during the 140 years of exploitation. But reversible doesn't mean recoverable : in Germany, the Asse mine can testify, casks lay in the mine salt, corroded, and release their radiations without us knowing how to remedy. The Andra and its colleagues strategy is to build as fast as possible, as much as possible, so that we don't realise soon enough that, beyond the enormous costs, technical and scientific means to ensure the most basic precautionary principle are not provided.

It is how you throw off the law to clear up an ill-gotten forest, at a 6am municipal council organised in 2015, without the Mandres village inhabitants knowing. 84 drillings in the Bois Lejuc justify 8 hectares cleared in June 2016, a 3km long fence under the watch of security guards equipped with pick handles, shields and helmets.



Cigeo is already well established, for a project that still has to get its creation permit in 2018, and still doesn't have the magical label of public interest (the right to deeply denature a territory with the argument of public necessity). These are not "preliminary works", of course, they're just geological surveys to determine the feasibility of the project. Meanwhile, the forest is cleared on 11 hectares, a 30cm-high, 10 to 15m-large and 3m-long backfill is dropped on a path around, and the Andra still claims everything is removable.

What is left to do when a forest is disappearing before you, except put yourself between the machines and what it supposed to destroy ? Mid-June, the Bois Lejuc is occupied by 250 people, around 60 people occupy it for 3 weeks, before a violent eviction by the police allows the Andra to strongly come back. A 2m concrete wall and planned on 3km is erected to "protect" against the violent spoilsport hordes. Only on the 1st august, an important part of the forest destroyed in spite of a partial reoccupation in mid-July, a court decision finds the clearing illegal and suspends the works. It's only two weeks later, after numerous actions against subcontractors, on the forest border, in front of the laboratory, between humour and offensiveness, laughs and anger, legality and secrecy, projectiles and tricks, that the police and security guards withdraw, leaving the forest to our joyful determination.



400 people destroy the wall, covering it with hundreds of funny, powerful, beautiful and revolutionary slogans. "the wall of Bure is down", the word spread everywhere in France and abroad, videos and pictures flow on social networks, on texts and websites. The national press itself is momentarily captured, traveling to Bure to watch the wall joyfully taken into pieces. The newspaper Liberation's runs "the nuclear failure" headline, announcing a 4 pages file severely taking stock of the nuclear industry collapse, other medias follow. Bure is in the spotlight as never in the previous 20 years : a 1,6 million euros sabotage doesn't go unnoticed for long !

The summer of emergency declared in June pays off : hundreds of people came for the two months that followed. the forest, the house of Resistance and the former station of Luméville, places of organisation and reception for the struggle, were full, inhabited by a furious and joyful determination, a powerful and contagious wind of resistance. A strong financial solidarity and a great self-management, sometimes a bit chaotic, worked wonders : exceeded by a mobilisation far beyond our expectations, we on the other hand strongly improved our possibilities for the struggle here.

For several years, the house of Resistance volunteers have seen some of them settle around, and bring Bure solidarities that slowly contributed to weave a network of activist, agricultural, artistic, logistic supports at 10, 30 or 60 kilometers. These precious supports make possible for several years to organise festivals, demonstrations that gather regularly up to a thousand of people.

This network and those who came after the anti-authoritarian camp in august 2015 greatly contributed to the success of this summer mobilisations : a precious alchemy between months and years of field work, and a strong closeness with numerous networks of social, antinuke, environmental, territorial or urban struggles.



An agricultural dynamic started during summer 2015, with meeting between peasants from Notre-Dame-des-Landes and Bure, which continued in the autumn with potatoes seeding in the abandoned fields of the Andra. This autumn, two brand new hectares have been ploughed with the complicity of our local peasant friends, a meeting and national training of the European network Reclaim the Fields have been held at the house of Resistance in November, and other projects are already on tracks, not

only to occupy, but also inhabit Bure and its surroundings.

In front of a project imposing by brute force, which gradually erase a territory its history to write its own, we rather want to inhabit it, let ourselves be inhabited by it and those who live in and lived there before us. We started to collect memories through the stories of its grand-mothers and fathers. A paper we are editing, the *Couarail*, got its name from the Lorraine region history : a meeting on the doorstep, to talk about this and that but especially not nothing. Like the presidios in the No-Tav valley, the Couarail is the social link that the Andra cunningly breaks by setting the inhabitants against the others. We don't pretend to build it again, but just to make it exist between us and those who accept us and bring us as much as we hope we're bringing to them by struggling, not for them but with them.

Soon, two new houses will be able to host those among us who settled in Bure at the end of the summer and for a few months. Projects of library, popular university, choir, bread oven and a lot more already come up through multiplying committees. A purchasing association is preparing to buy collectively and locally vegetables and dried that we are already financing with a part of our common money. Between the forest, the house and the station, a so-called "orbiting" assembly, those who live, come and orbit around Bure, determine weekly the agenda, expenses, collective life aspects, projects... A legal team carries our attacks against the projects, another anti-repression defend us from the legal criminal attacks we are suffering as an answer to our actions. The automedia team splits the responsibilities for public speeches, written and oral communication, radio, photos, videos... between us all, depending on the days and sensitivities. Numerous public and collective works are preparing for the whole year.



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