

# France: the battle of Notre-Dame-des-Landes against a new airport - A community in struggle has come into being

Thursday 18 January 2018, by [Collectif Mauvaise Troupe](#) (Date first published: 22 October 2016).

**Editorial by the Mauvaise Troupe Collective [1] published in *Le Monde* in October 2016 (uncut version) [2].**

## UNCONDITIONAL VALLS VS. THE ZAD



As we write, the noise of helicopters tries to interfere with our concentration. Every day now, for some time, they have been circling around, high up where the airplanes don't fly, recreating the sights and sounds of war and the threat of another conquest. Ceasar [3] is lying in wait and trying to make his presence felt. Sometimes he stays slightly on the sidelines, the better to observe us. Is he surprised by the tractors unloading bales of hay on the crossroads the last few days? By the support committees arriving to repair the most strategic spots or to build barricades? By the squads of more than a hundred people each that show up on weekends to prepare for the announced evacuation? Or maybe what is more surprising are all the other day-to-day activities that continue uninterrupted. Sylvie and Marcel caring for their herd, the harvesting of the buckwheat crop, a Breton festival celebrating the potato harvest, eighty carpenters building the timber frame for a gigantic hangar or the recently inaugurated library. When he surveys the 2000 hectares of the zad, can his gaze take in all the richness of the life of its inhabitants? The life he has announced he will destroy in the coming months. . .

The preparations for a new operation bent on occupying and destroying this farming region seven months from the presidential election have something unreal about them. After a strike-filled spring marked by economic blockages and street altercations against the labor law—all this taking place in the midst of a state of emergency—what are the stakes in transforming this little corner of the countryside but also the city of Nantes into veritable powder kegs? It is definitely not just about building one more airport and thereby honoring the “public/private agreement” the state forged with the multinational corporation, Vinci. If it has become so crucial for the political classes to crush the zad, it is because the zad constitutes an insolent demonstration of a life that is possible without them. A better life. At a moment when the only political opening that is offered us is the act of choosing, while holding our noses, the least worse of the wheeler-dealers in order to beat the National Front (all the while adopting its program), the rising up of a territory outside of and against the very principle of government is intolerable for them.



Here where we are, the expression “lawless zone,” which they intend to be frightening, has taken on a radically positive set of associations. For unlike what takes place in the streets of “well-policed” cities, in the zad no one sleeps outside and everyone eats their fill. Large dormitories greet visitors, a weekly “non-market” offers vegetables, flour, milk, bread and cheese made here, without a price determining their value. In numerous collective infrastructures, but also in exchanges or collective projects, relations are based on mutual confidence and making common, as opposed to logics derived from suspicion and individualism. What cynics from all sides deem to be an unrealizable utopia can be felt and experienced here in acts, gestures and materials. Even the absence of the police and the judiciary—police have not entered the zone since 2013—has not produced the chaos that others might have imagined or even wished for. We who oppose the airport have demonstrated that we are capable of living together without any administrative supervision hanging over us. A community in struggle has thus patiently come into being, weaving together the strands and strengths necessary to resist attack as well as decay. Obviously, all this does not happen completely smoothly, given how unaccustomed we are at deciding our destiny by and for ourselves. We are learning it again, we are learning, and nothing is more joyous and engrossing than this dive into the unknown.

For these reasons the zad represents a truly revolutionary experiment—one of those that radically reconfigures the lines of conflict of an era. The anti-airport movement is expanding today into social sectors habitually more responsive to labor blackmail and economic crisis than to the defense of a small farming region. Vinci’s employees, but also workers at the existing airport as well, have clearly expressed through their CGT sections, that they are joining the fight and will never be “mercenaries.” Similarly, high school and university students who have been mobilized in the course of the movement against the labor law are ready to block their campuses if troops arrive. Too many hopes are gathered here for us to be defeated—our future, our possibilities for emancipation are at stake. Many of us have a premonition of the battle of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, if it takes place, being transformed into a veritable popular insurrection, capable of humbling the arrogance of a State that thinks it can get away with breaking the lives of workers, reducing the whole population to economic uncertainty, mutilating demonstrators, killing Remy Fraisse, Adama Traoré and so many others, giving carte-blanche to its police and continuing blithely its pursuit of migrants.



In the face of their semi-lethal guns, their armored tanks, we will have the secular weapons of resistance: our bodies, stones, tractors and Molotov cocktails, but most of all our incredible solidarity. It matters little that it is an uneven fight. It was just as uneven in 2012, when, after weeks in the mud, behind barricades, we finally got them to take to their heels. Already several weeks ago, as the general assembly of the movement was nearing its end under the hangar of the Vacherit, a man in his eighties stood up, a look of malice in his eyes and his arms filled with cartons. He proudly unwrapped the thousands of slingshots he had made with a few accomplices to shoot paintballs.

Everybody laughed, but they were testing the rubber bands as they laughed. Because if we have to be on the warpath again to defend this corner of the countryside, we will be doing it in large numbers, here, elsewhere, everywhere. This is what we all promised during the big demonstration on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Brandishing our sticks, we made a pact: we will defend this territory like we defend our skin; police, soldiers, politicians, you can come to tear down our houses, kill our animals, destroy the pastures and the forests, but don't be mistaken: the end of your term in office will not be enough to put out what you will have set ablaze in Notre-Dame-des-Landes.

### **Collectif Mauvaise Troupe**



---

### **P.S.**

\* "UNCONDITIONAL VALLS VS. THE ZAD". October 22, 2016 :  
<https://labofii.wordpress.com/2016/10/22/unconditional-valls-vs-the-zad/>

---

### **Footnotes**

[1] <https://constellations.boum.org>

[2] Their little book about the zad can be found here:  
<https://labofii.wordpress.com/2016/02/09/defending-the-zad-a-new-little-book-about-the-struggle-against-the-airport-and-its-world/>

[3] "Operation Ceasar" was the name given to the attempt to militarily evacuate the zad in 2012. In mid-October 2016 Manuel Valls, the French prime minister, reiterated his decree that the zad would be evacuated.