

The Revenge against the Commons

THE zad & THE GLOBAL CIVIL WAR

What is the zad ?

"It's like living in the playground you always dreamt of as a child."

-Camille, occupier of the zad.

The **zad**- A liberated territory against an airport and its world. The land has been occupied since 2009 and is part of a 50 year struggle 'against a major capitalist infrastructure project.

The zad is on 4000 acres of wetlands, fields and forests and 250 people in 80 different collectives live together without the state, occupying the land against the new airport project for the city of Nantes.

On January 17th 2018, the French prime minister cancelled the airport project but vowed to evict the laboratory of **Commoning** that is the ZAD. Politicians called it "a territory lost to the republic". The local farmers and villagers, activists and naturalists, squatters and trade unionists, who are part of the growing movement against the airport and its world, call it: **zone à défendre** – the zone to defend – the zad.

With its bakeries, pirate radio station, tractor repair workshop, brewery, banqueting hall, medicinal herb gardens, a rap studio, dairy, vegetable plots, weekly newspaper, flour mill, library and even a surrealist lighthouse, the zad has become a concrete experiment in taking back control of everyday life. In 2012 the French state's attempt to evict the zone was fiercely resisted and the police have not set foot there since. Every time the threats of eviction resurface, over 40,000 people take part in creative acts of disobedience to defend the zone.

Even with the airport project cancelled, the movement has agreed that the zad as a new commune for the 21st Century must remain, in all its diversity and with its land run outside of the state institutions.

The government's offensive against the **zad** is part of a global trend of neo-liberal ruling classes to crack down on people. 2,500 riot police, armored vehicles, helicopters, trucks, livestock trucks and a few hundred state security police in Nantes and Rennes as back-ups- France is at war from Monday, April 9. Against who ? Against some two hundred people living in a grove where they make their own bread, beer, have a farmers' market, tinker, discuss, read, come and go. The military apparatus of France, which intervenes in Mali, in Syria, in Iraq - without debates in Parliament, in contradiction to article 35 of the French Constitution -, has been deployed in the **zad of Notre-Dame-des-Landes**.

Any sensible being would consider the apparent logic of this operation a most acute manifestation of a great delusion : after giving in to a popular struggle to abandon the Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport project, the government wants to demonstrate its strength by expelling "**illegal occupiers**". The government despises procedures to rigorously supervise deportations, rejects without discussion the proposal for collective management of lands maintained for ten years by these occupants, and has no concrete project to use this ecologically unique area, which has been well preserved precisely thanks to those that Messieurs Macron (President of France), Philippe (Prime Minister), Collomb (interior minister) and Hulot (environment minister) want to drive out.

This brilliant quartet will, thanks to the images and commentary complacently relayed by the media of

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Messieurs Niel, Drahi, Bolloré, Dassault, Lagardère, Bouygues, and the other handful of billionaires that own French media, show the public what 'order' means and give the various social movements that are bubbling in the country an indication of what they can expect.

The mission of the 2,500 robocops is to destroy the possibility to live differently

But this is not the only political effect that Macron and his henchmen seek. The disproportionate response indicates that what is happening at the zad threatens the neo-liberal order : the possibility of existing differently, seeking cooperation rather than competition, organizing without hierarchy between people, settling conflicts without the police or judiciary, sharing the commons in harmony with nature, subsisting soberly, escaping the rule of money- Has this life become a reality at the zad ? It's hard to say. But they try and there are many examples that show that there is a wonderful alternative, an open window in the stifling wall of capitalism. The mission of the 2,500 robocops sent by the ex-banker president is to shoot down the opportunity to live differently.

We must go even further. What is happening in Notre-Dame-des-Landes is part of a general war waged by the oligarchy against the people. Recent news of the bewildering circumstances of ex-president Lula's imprisonment who was seen as a voice for the poor in Brazil, or how the Israeli state kills demonstrators and journalists in the Gaza Strip are just the latest outbursts of a continuing global wave of authoritarianism on the part of the ruling classes. Almost all of Latin America (Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Guatemala, ...) has come under harsh austerity to apply the neo-liberal recipe of rule. In China, President Xi Jinping has recently strengthened his power. In Russia, Putin reigns by stifling all opposition. In the United States, Trump continues his policy of financial and environmental deregulation without real checks and balances. In the Philippines, Poland, India, in dozens of countries, we find this combination of strong power, defending the interests of the oligarchy, and destroying the environment in the name of economic growth. More and more, Europe is moving towards this new model of authoritarian oligarchy. It is in fact a global civil war that is unfolding, a war waged by the ruling classes against people dazed by globalization, and against the factions that still manage to oppose the shock strategy of the capitalists.

80 tons of CO2 per year : the real criminals

One figure indicates what's at stake in what is not only a social struggle, but a war over the future of humanity on a planet beset by a historical ecological crisis : the members of the group of the richest 1% in the world emit an average of 80 t of CO2 each year, which is nine times more than the average of the world's population (6.2 t). In other words, the richest are the most polluting. And given the gravity of climate change and its predictable impacts, it can be said that these emitters of 80 t CO2 per year are truly criminals.

What the oligarchies promote is to maintain a system in which they undermine the public interest. The ecological crisis is at the heart of the public interest at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Its outcome will decide the conditions of humanity's existence. It is almost ironic that their current attack is aimed at a place where people seeks to find ways to - among other things - live in a way that does not alter the climate.

This is why Messieurs Macron, Philippe, Collomb and Hulot, who preserve the interests of the members of the 80-tons-a-year club, are also criminals. And that is why we must defend the zad.

-Hervé Kempf
reporterre.net



Posted on April 24, 2018 by zadforever:

This is part of a long read by one of the inhabitants of the zad, about the the fortnight rollercoaster of rural riots that has just taken place to evict the liberated territory of the zad. It's been incredibly intense and hard to find a moment to write, but we did our best. This is simply one viewpoint, there are over 1000 people on the zone at the moment and every one of them could tell a different story. Thank you for all the friends and comrades who helped by sharing their stories, rebel spirits and lemon juice against the tear gas.

"We must bring into being the world we want to defend. These cracks where people find each other to build a beautiful future are important. This is how the zad is a model."

-Naomi Klein

The police helicopter hovers above, its bone rattling clattering never seems to stop. At night its long godlike finger of light penetrates our cabins and farm houses. It has been so hard to sleep this last week. Even dreaming, it seems, is a crime on the zad. And that's the point: these 4000 acres of autonomous territory, this zone to defend (zad), has existed despite the state and capitalism for nearly a decade and no government can allow such a place to flourish. All territories that are inhabited by people who bridge the gap between dream and action have to be crushed before their hope begins to spread. This is why France's biggest police operation since May 1968, at a cost of 400,000 euros a day, has been trying to evict us

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