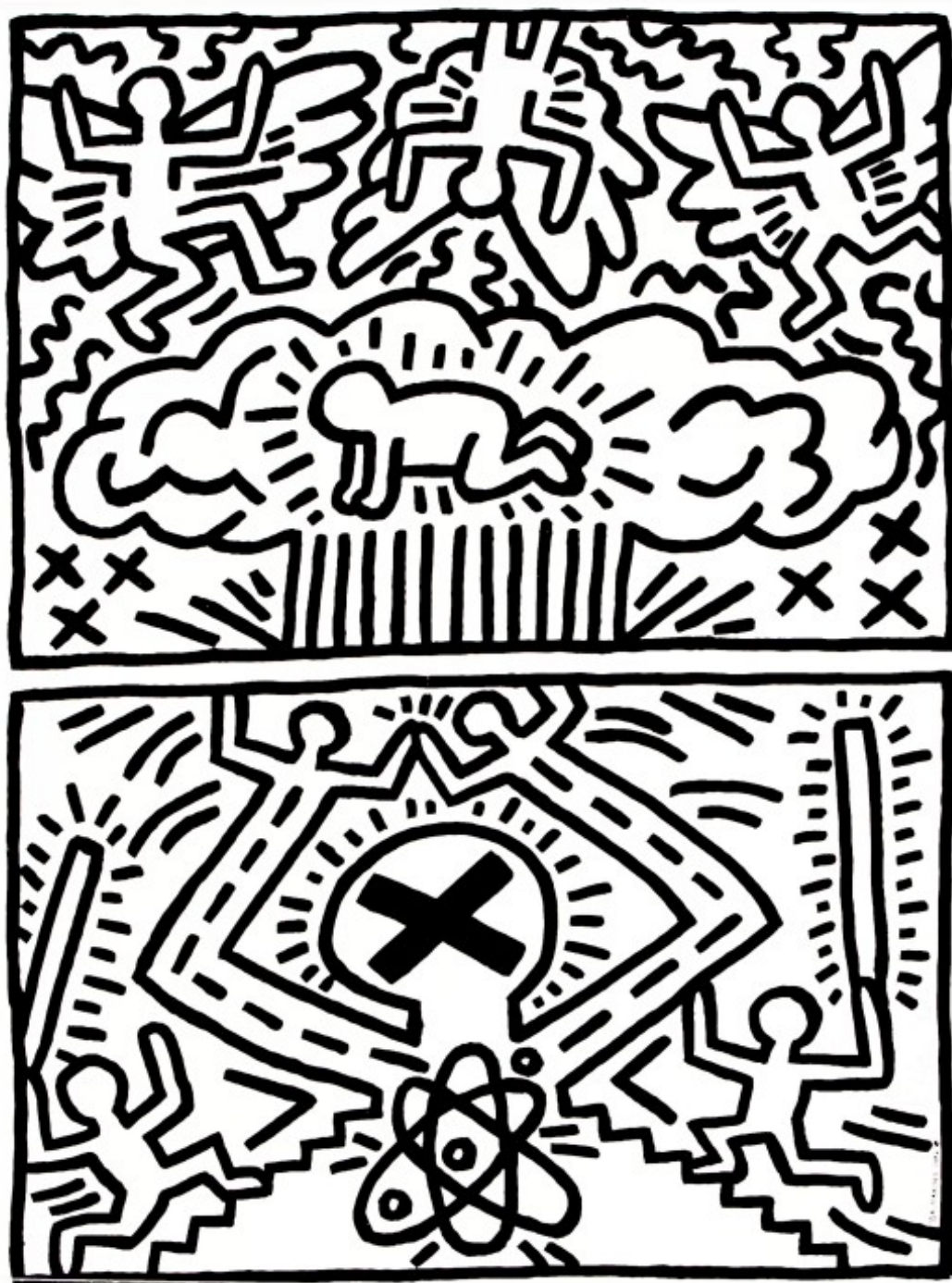


How we struggle in Bure

A SUMMARY OF AN ANTINUCLEAR STRUGGLE



JULY 2026

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Introduction

This rather short leaflet is neither exhaustive nor impartial. It presents a personal and partial view of events to give to those newly interested in the Bure struggle an overview of the various dynamics currently at play. The focus is particularly on local life in the area surrounding Bure. For further information, please refer to the annotated bibliography at the end of the brochure.

Important Terminology

ANDRA : The National Agency for Radioactive Waste Management is simultaneously a pro-nuclear communications agency, a corrupting agent that buys its right to pollute the land, and a

scientific-industrial enterprise seeking to carry out one of the most outlandish projects of the 21st century.

CIGEO : the outlandish project in question. If we are to believe the sorcerer's apprentices of ANDRA, this construction project is expected to last 135 years and cost tens of billions of euros in order to bury the ultimate radioactive waste of the current and future nuclear industry in 300 km of tunnels at a depth of 500 m. The digging of new tunnels is supposed to take place while others are being filled with waste...

GIP : the Public Interest Group is a structure that has allowed ANDRA to drizzle the Meuse and Haute-Marne departments with public money in order to buy public support and silence opposition. Several tens of millions of euros have already been spent in this context.

1. A brief history of the struggle

The French government has been planning to store the most highly radioactive waste deep underground since the late 1980s, and it was in the early 1990s that the Bure site was chosen to host a research laboratory. Anti-nuclear opposition arose from the outset. People have been fighting against the nuclear waste project in Bure for over 30 years. Between 1987 and 2015, numerous actions, demonstrations, petitions, and anti-nuclear initiatives took place, the precise history of which will not be recounted in this brochure. We will focus on the last ten years, between 2015 and 2025, to highlight the recent dynamics of the struggle in Bure.

We have also chosen to focus on a few key dates in the struggle rather than on the administrative timeline of the ANDRA laboratory, which will become the nuclear waste dump if the project is completed. Throughout these years, numerous administrative acts have been carried out to enable the CIGEO

project, using administrative procedures that makes it difficult to challenge the project's substance legally. This includes the countless public inquiries held regularly across the region - a parody of democracy where the local population's opinion is merely a pretense - the DUP, Declaration of Public Utility (filed in 2020 and validated in 2023), and the DAC, Application for Authorization to Create (filed in 2023 and still under review), among other things.

August 2015 : VMC Camp

In connection with the mobilizations against large-scale, unnecessary projects, particularly at the ZAD (Zone To Defend) of Notre-Dame-des-Landes, a self-managed, anti-capitalist, and anti-authoritarian camp was organized in Bure. The VMC camp brought together over a thousand people for 10 days. The camp's preparation and the camp itself raised awareness of the struggle within the autonomous movement and ZAD community, and many new people began to get involved in the struggle in Bure.

2016-2018 : Occupations of the Bois Lejuc (Wood)

The Lejuc Wood is essential to the CIGEO project : ANDRA wants to clear and level it to install ventilation shafts. This ventilation would be used to vent the explosive hydrogen produced continuously by radioactive waste from the storage galleries. To prevent this destructive project, three occupations of the Bois Lejuc took place between 2016 and 2019. From June 19 to July 7, 2016, the first occupation prevented work from being carried out in the Bois Lejuc. Following the eviction, ANDRA began building a wall that was intended to completely surround the forest. Activists then tore down the wall in August 2016 before beginning the second occupation of the wood in September 2016.

This occupation lasted 18 months, until February 22, 2018, during which both the struggle and the repression intensified. In the summer of 2017, the first edition of the Bure'lesques festival, an

informative festival aimed at residents among others, was a great success. On August 15, 2017, the gendarmes attacked a demonstration of 700 people, injuring around thirty, two of them seriously (one person suffered lasting foot injuries). A third occupation in July 2019 lasted only a few days and demonstrated that, despite the repression (see below), it was still possible to organize and challenge the nuclear state.



2018-2020 : Searches and Trials

Trials were frequent at the Bar-le-Duc court, with entire sessions reserved for the "anti-Bure" movement. This strategy of judicial harassment culminated on June 20, 2018, with the simultaneous search of 11 locations used for housing and organizing the struggle, marking the beginning of a trial for conspiracy. As part of the conspiracy investigation, 10 activists opposed to the CIGEO project were prohibited from seeing or contacting each other for almost three years. After seven years of legal proceedings, all those involved were acquitted.

2019-2020 : Atomic Bombs and Bure'lesques

Despite the fierce state repression and the resulting trauma, various events rekindled hope in the area. In the summer of 2019, 3500 people attended the second edition of Bure'lesques festival.

Shortly after, in September 2019, the Atomic Bombs collective organized a weekend in choosen mixity without cis men, which brought together 500 people. The momentum generated by the Atomic Bombs collective fostered a strong queer dynamic within the struggle in Bure for a long time to come.

2021 : 1-2-3 Trials and the Rayonnantes camp

A festive gathering of around one hundred people met in front of the Bar-le-Duc courthouse on June 1, 2, and 3, 2021, to support those involved in the criminal conspiracy.

More than 500 people came to the Rayonnantes camp from August 16 to 26, where discussions focused on decolonial, feminist, anti-nuclear, and other struggles. On August 21, a demonstration inspired by the Ende Gelände movement set off from the camp in several marches, and the combined efforts of different activist groups led to the sabotage of a future ANDRA railway depot.



La Gare (the old Luméville station) during the Rayonnantes camp in 2021

2022 : Construction Sites and Barricade Festival at La Gare

Several weeks of construction work and the Barricade Festival in 2022 at the Luméville train station foreshadowed one of the future key moments of the struggle : the expropriation of land needed to build the future railway line that will transport radioactive waste and lead to the eviction of La Gare. That same summer, the third edition of the Bure'lesques festival was once again a resounding success with local residents and activists.

In parallel, the “ Rencontres Nomades” of activist choirs in the summer of 2022 brought together more than 400 people for a week of song sharing and a demonstration in front of the ANDRA laboratory.

In March 2022, two comrades were arrested in Savoie as part of a judicial investigation into the sabotage of cable cars in the Alps against the POMA company. These acts of sabotage are in response to the call for decentralized actions "Let's bury POMA"¹.

2023 : The Bestiales and the gatherings of peasant and rural struggles

The dynamics of organizing thematic events to create links between anti-nuclear struggles and other struggles continue. Thus, an anti-speciesist gathering, Les Bestiales, is organized in the winter of 2023 (and later in 2025).

Around « Les Semeuses », a market gardeners' collective formed in 2020, a summer gathering brought together several hundred people around peasant and rural struggles from here and elsewhere.

These thematic gatherings echo other gatherings that took place in previous and subsequent years on various themes : an anti-prison week, a medical training week...

1 This web page details POMA's role in the CIGEO project and lists decentralized actions against this company : <https://bureburebure.info/en/enfouissons-poma-appel-a-actions2/>

2024 : Start of Expropriations and Anti-Nuclear Week

The year 2024 marked the beginning of the expropriation phase for the construction of the railway line between Gondrecourt and the laboratory, a process still underway today. Alongside the opposition to the expropriations, the Maison de Résistance (House of Resistance) hosted spring gatherings against nuclear power, and the Bure'lesques festival continued their momentum with their 4th edition. Following on from the previous event, a second "Festival of the Barricades" brought together various struggles around practical workshops and strategic discussions.

2025-2026 : End of the Expropriation Phase

The Septembre Infini (Infinite September) camp lasted a full month. The legal proceedings related to the expropriations concluded in the fall of 2025. La Gare then became subject to eviction, and a resistance movement organized on-site to occupy the place. The occupiers were evicted in April 2026.

In the future

With the gradual start of work related to CIGEO (drilling, logging in the Lejuc Wood, construction of the railway), the territory will gradually transform into a construction zone and the struggle will have no other choice than to continue opposing it legally and on the ground to derail the nuclear state.

2. Territory and the struggle

A) The places belonging to Andra

The ANDRA laboratory

In 1998, the Haute-Marne and Meuse departments were selected for the construction of an "underground geological research laboratory" managed by ANDRA, thanks in particular to the efforts of local elected officials such as Gérard Longuet, a member of parliament for Meuse and former member of the GUD, a violent fascist group. Other departments had been considered, but too much opposition prevented the project there. The construction of the laboratory began in Bure in 2000. Petitions and demonstrations continued unabated. In 2006, the French government approved the underground storage facility in Bure and entrusted ANDRA with the design and implementation of the CIGEO project, slated for completion by 2025. The project has already fallen several years behind schedule. Today, the ANDRA laboratory is a small industrial zone in the Meuse/Haute-Marne countryside, monitored since the summer of 2017 by a squadron of mobile gendarmes permanently stationed inside the laboratory. The laboratory notably includes a shaft with 2 km of test galleries at a depth of 500 m. This small town also comprises a technology center, a hotel-restaurant, a grocery store, a gas station, the « Écothèque », and the EDF archives.

The Bois Lejuc (Lejuc Wood)

In the CIGEO project, the Lejuc Wood play a significant role : after clearing, it is intended to house the wells that will ventilate the underground galleries filled with radioactive waste. In July 2015, the Mandres-en-Barrois municipal council voted in favor of exchanging the communal forest of the Bois Lejuc for the Bois de la Caisse, owned by ANDRA. This was despite local opposition.

Following a complaint of conflict of interest and an undeclared secret ballot, this vote was repeated in May 2017.

In the summer of 2016, ANDRA was about to begin clearing the Bois Lejuc illegally, as it had not been authorized. The "endless picnic" of June 19, 2016, marked the beginning of the first occupation. ANDRA fences were torn down during this event. After three weeks of occupation, the forest was evicted at 6am on July 7, 2016. To prevent access to the Bois Lejuc, ANDRA erected a concrete perimeter wall, again without a building permit. It was subsequently convicted for this illegal construction. On August 15, 2016, a demonstration began and, noticing the absence of police, decided to tear down the wall. In the following weeks, the forest was occupied again. To bolster this occupation, legal proceedings challenged ANDRA's legal ownership of Bois Lejuc. On February 22, 2018, at 6am, the Bois Lejuc was evicted once more. That same day, the Maison de Résistance was raided by the police. In July 2019, a three-day reoccupation was quickly dispersed. Since then, access to the woods has been prohibited and monitored by cameras and police patrols.

La Gare (the old Luméville train station)

The former Luméville-en-Ornois train station was purchased in 2007 by a group of activists and opponents who recognized the strategic importance of this approximately 8-hectare site. In nearly 20 years, La Gare has become a significant hub of activism. Initially in ruins, the building has been gradually renovated and was at the end a comfortable space with two dormitories, a library, and a kitchen.

La Gare has hosted numerous festive and political events : the Hippie Pest in 2010, the VMC camp in 2015, the Spring of Peasant Struggles in 2016, the Rayonnates Camp in 2021, countless workcamps, medical training sessions, and more. It served as a resource center, organizing space, and welcoming place for collectives, activists, and anyone curious to learn more, offering year-round living opportunities.

La Gare was expropriated in 2025, a period of occupation ensued, until its eviction in April 2026².

Land and Andra

These three examples – the laboratory, the Bois Lejuc, and La Gare – are just three symbols of ANDRA's land holdings. Indeed, to carry out a project costing tens of billions of euros, ANDRA needs a great deal of land.

To acquire it, ANDRA has used numerous strategies, including intimidation and harassment of landowners to force them to sell or agree to exchanges. It is also through SAFER (Land Development and Rural Settlement Company) that ANDRA has progressively seized more than 3000 hectares of land, including 1000 hectares of farmland and 2000 hectares of forest, increasing land prices and complicating agricultural development.

Today, the CIGEO project has been declared of Public Utility. ANDRA is therefore using the courts to expropriate landowners and reclaim the land it lacks. More than 300 owners were affected by the first wave of expropriation in January 2025. Further waves of expropriation are expected to follow to recover other land that ANDRA needs for the CIGEO project (for example to build the railway line between Gondrecourt-le-château and Ligny-en-barrois).

B) The locations of the opposition

The Maison de Résistance (House of Resistance)

In 2004, anti-nuclear activists from France and Germany created the Bure Zone Libre (BZL) association. The following year, together with the « Sortir Du Nucléaire » network, they purchased an old farmhouse in need of renovation in the heart of Bure. This became the "House of Resistance to the Nuclear Waste Dump." The house serves as a hub for counter-information about the CIGEO

² The news about La Gare on this web page : <https://bureburebure.info/en/lutte-a-la-gare-lumeville/>

nuclear waste project and for organizing the resistance. Today, the house is inhabited year-round and is open to everyone.

The Affranchie

Purchased in 2018, the Affranchie is a property in Mandres-en-Barrois without running water or electricity. A legal action initiated by ANDRA, via SAFER, attempted to preemptively purchase this farmhouse, but the two opposing owners prevailed in court. The Affranchie will therefore remain a place of the opponents, and numerous renovations have taken place in recent years to make it more comfortable (including work on its roof).

The Augustine

Purchased by activists, the Augustine became a collective space in 2019. The feminist and anti-nuclear collective, Les Bombes Atomiques, took over the space, notably by regularly organizing gatherings in gender-chosen mixity and inviting many other collectives to join them in bringing the Augustine to life. The Augustine hosts numerous collectives such as the bread group (and its oven), the Matmouth (a mutual equipment lending group that lends event equipment on a free-price basis), The Germeuses (a market gardening collective that succeeded Les Semeuses, created in 2020), the bar-restaurant "Le Bois Le Jus," and more. Currently, a mobile sauna, built during a construction project in 2023, sits in the Augustine's garden, serving as a reminder that to fight for the long haul, we must take care of ourselves!

The Augustine is unique in that it is a space dedicated to activities and has no inhabitants.

3. Some strategies of struggle

This presentation is obviously biased and incomplete, but it gives an idea of some initiatives on the ground.

A) Towards material self-sufficiency

Many collectives are trying to build alternatives to achieve autonomy from industrial capitalism. These initiatives are obviously imperfect, but they allow us to limit our dependence. Examples include the various collectives present at the Augustine site, as well as the numerous weeks of « chantiers » where a particular emphasis is placed on knowledge sharing.

All the collective spaces in the area are heated with wood cut from the forests through the « affouage » system. Through this system, residents of the cities in the Meuse region are allocated plots of land in the communal forests each year to cut trees selected by the ONF (National Forestry Office) and process these trees into firewood.

B) The legal battle

Numerous associations, such as Burestop and the « Sortir du Nucléaire » network, support the struggle and are challenging every legal hurdle in the CIGEO project. These legal battles buy time and have already yielded significant victories, such as the cancellation of the transfer of the Lejuc forest to ANDRA in 2017, which helped legitimize the occupation of the forest. This legal struggle is part of a broader movement against CIGEO : a coalition of associations and unions, a legal front, an educational front, and so on.

C) Direct action on the ground

Choosing to live in the Meuse region, land that the State wants to transform into a nuclear waste dump, is already an act of resistance. But it's far from the only one taking place here. The brochure "In the Night of..."³ recounts a history of all the direct actions that have been carried out against the CIGEO nuclear waste project. Examples include the fire at the construction site of the new gendarmerie in Gondrecourt in May 2023, the sabotage of fiber optic cables on July 30, 2024, in Contrisson as part of the mobilization against the Olympic Games, and the construction in November 2024 of a 25m², 6-ton wall along the route of the future railway line in memory of anti-nuclear activist Sébastien Briat, killed during a blockade of a CASTOR train.

D) Communication and events

Numerous events and camps are organized in Bure on a variety of topics, allowing a wide range of people to discover the struggle against the CIGEO project and to create strong links between Bure and different struggles. This is made possible in particular by the many resources available locally (event equipment, numerous places owned by opponents, shared organizational experience, etc.). The large summer camps have been an annual event in the Meuse region for hundreds of activists since 2015 : the VMC camp in 2015, the occupation of the wood in 2016, the four editions of Bure'lesques festival (2017, 2019, 2022, and 2024), the Rayonnantes camp in 2021, the Peasant and Rural Struggles in 2023, the Festival of Barricades in 2024, and Infinite September in 2025.

But it's not only in the summer that these sites of struggle host gatherings : events are organized throughout the year. Examples include Bestiales 1 and 2 in February 2023 and 2025, the anti-nuclear weeks of 2021 and 2024, the anti-prison week of 2020, and so on.

3 In french, here : https://infokiosques.net/IMG/pdf/dans_la_nuit_du_antიცgeo-cahier-28pa4-mars2024.pdf

Communication also relies on independent media, which regularly updates the website bureburebure.info and the « Petit journal contre CIGEO » (little newspaper against CIGEO) – published six times since September 2024 – and on community organizations such as the « Sortir du Nucléaire » network, the Burestop association, and others. During the occupation of the wood, another type of newsletter, « Hiboux Express » (Owls Express), shared the latest news about the occupation of the wood and the communal spaces. Numerous local initiatives also strive to connect with the residents of South Meuse, such as the Augustine bar-restaurant, which has been open every Thursday evening since 2023, and the distribution of the « Petit journal contre CIGEO » to many residents' mailboxes. Other community projects contribute to making life in South Meuse even more vibrant, such as the Bar des 3 Vallées (Three Valleys Bar) in the city of Tréveray, renowned throughout the Meuse region for its karaoke nights.

Annotated Bibliography

The old station of Luméville : a juridical and physical barrier to CIGEO - A 2024 brochure focusing on La Gare, one of the collective living spaces that have been evicted by ANDRA.

Story and context of the struggle in Bure - A 2021 brochure which goes into more detail, particularly on the struggle before 2015.

Bure summer 2016 - fall 2017 - Video of several actions during this period which describes rather well the atmosphere during the occupation of the Bois Lejuc.

The videos and brochures above are available on the bureburebure.info website along with many other resources on the fight.



BURE - SUMMARY

The struggle in Bure has been going on for over 30 years ! And to ensure its longevity, the struggle regularly reinvents itself with new people and new dynamics. This brochure focuses on the most recent period of the struggle, from the VMC camp in 2015 to the occupation of the Lejuc Wood. Today, the struggle in Bure encompasses a wide variety of tactics, ranging from legal action to direct action, as well as the organization of numerous events to introduce the anti-nuclear movement and the Meuse region to as many people as possible.

