

## Transcription of the documentary “Erdeven 1975 – The dune against the atom” (Yoakim Sigaud)

### **A voice**

Behind nuclear power, supposedly civilian and energy-supplying, well, beyond that, we must not forget that it is military, it's the bomb, it's death, it's destruction, it's war.

### **Narrator**

1974, the small town of Erdeven, nestled on the Morbihan coast in Brittany, suddenly becomes the center of an unprecedented mobilization. The government at the time launches a large nuclear program, the Messmer plan. Erdeven, with its wild landscapes and fine sandy beaches, is chosen to host one of these gigantic projects: the construction of a 5000-megawatt nuclear power plant. Very quickly, the announcement hits like a bomb. The inhabitants worry. What will become of the dunes, the marshes, the menhirs? What risks for health, for nature, for the future? Apart from a few elected officials, like the mayor of Belz, Mr. Roland, the refusal of the plant is unanimous.

From the end of 1974, an unprecedented protest movement is organized. A handful of people decide to create the CRIN, Regional Nuclear Information Committee, to inform the residents and mobilize the local population. Little by little, the mobilization grows and soon the whole region unites to say no to the nuclear plant.

**Jo Rio**, one of the founding members of the CRIN, with Michel Lecorvec, Serge Daniel, and Michel Politzer:

CRIN was a collective adventure. A collective adventure of people from Erdeven, Belz, Etel, Ploemel, all the coastal towns, roughly from Lorient to Quiberon.

So, a collective work of people who united in refusing nuclear power, from all social categories. There were farmers, oyster farmers who immediately joined the fight because they wondered about the damage this plant would cause to local production, both agricultural and oyster farming, especially in the Etel river, just at the entrance where the plant was to be built.

### **Christian Giquel:**

My name is Christian Giquel. At the time of the nuclear project in Erdeven, from 1974, I was secretary of the Quiberon fishing committee, son of a fisherman and had sailed with my father. I knew the sea well. Impact studies were carried out. Scientists from the University of Brest asked me to find a fishing boat from Portivy to study currents and plankton near the Etel river. For months, from April to July 1976, they did those studies. The report showed that the area had very weak currents. Hot water from the plant would have raised temperatures by 3 to 4 degrees and flowed into the Etel river, causing death to oysters and fish nurseries.

### **Jo Rio:**

Among those people, there were also workers, men and women in local businesses, teachers, artists, etc. We were a core group that quickly understood the importance of the project and came together in the CRIN. From the end of 1974 until around 1980–81, until the Plogoff struggle, until the central government's "no" under Mitterrand, we were constantly on the ground.

### **Roger Gallet:**

My name is Roger Gallet, I was in the CRIN from the start. At that time, I worked in sales and traveled all over Brittany, which allowed me to connect with other places where local nuclear information committees had formed. I went to Quimper and other places. People came to the meetings on their own.

**Colette Gallet and Jacquy Le Mignan**, former CRIN members:

The meetings drew a crowd. The halls were full, the cinema was packed. Yes, everywhere. Yes, yes, we filled the room. People were curious. The halls were full everywhere. There was a desire to know. Also, a lot of worry. Here, many people were fishermen or oyster farmers. They said: this threatens our work tools. What will become of us if the sea heats up by even a few degrees, since the water would be discharged into the sea? It's dramatic for our jobs. So people were naturally worried and against the plant.

**Alain Bonnac**, ecological activist and former president of "Eau et Rivières de Bretagne":

We can name him – Mr. Roland, mayor of Belz back then. He was interviewed by Mr. Le Vaillant, journalist at *Le Nouvel Observateur*. This is from January 1975. He said: "I must tell you, I am an authority. Kind of the brain of the canton. The intellectual poverty here is catastrophic. What is happening because of the plant is abominable. And I'm a bit offended, I didn't think my region was so stupid."

He said the CRIN was doing terrible work. That the informers had no education and were moved only by lousy motives. He saw the benefits of the plant in energy needs and financial returns for the town. He said: "I'm the finance commission's reporter for the department, so I'm interested in money." And he talked about an "ethnic mutation" – welcoming polytechnic engineers to raise the intellectual level.

When I left, he told me: "At first, 90% were against me. Now I'm sure 55% are with me."

**Colette Gallet:**

He was wrong... because the people kicked him out at the next election.

**Dominique Baudel**, historian and author of *Erdeven, a history of the Breton resistance to nuclear*:

The group they created was called CRIN – Regional Nuclear Information Committee. The first ones I met were Annie and Michel Politzer, two founders. They insisted on the "I" for Information. "Our weapon was information and humor." Not like militant leftists wanting to fight. No, their idea was an information fight. They believed people weren't against nuclear because they didn't know about it. So their role was to inform – about nuclear energy and local impacts. Like how the water leaving the plant would be 7°C hotter, ending up at +3°C after dilution – enough to disrupt the ecosystem and kill oysters and fish.

They held meetings every 2–3 days with 200 to 400 people. EDF and the government used ignorance to impose projects. So they said: we will inform.

**Jo Rio:**

That group first looked for information for itself. In Brittany, we knew military nuclear first – since 1958, with De Gaulle's goal of nuclear weapons. The nuclear plant for power was new. We had to learn. Some were scientists, others not at all intellectuals. We learned from people in Chinon, Fessenheim, etc. And over the years, we talked, we resisted. The collective worked well, even

though politically, it was mixed – left, right, center. But political differences never blocked the group.

**Roger Gallet**, former CRIN member:

We held meetings in Lorient, and other places. We worked with Brice Lannonce. Brice joined us quickly – after a few months. Someone very well-known, but who is now ill and not present, was **Michel Politzer**, and his wife **Annie**. Michel's father was shot by the Germans, he was a famous philosopher. So the name Politzer caught the attention of intellectuals in Paris — journalists and others. They called Michel and asked, "Are you really Politzer's son?" That intellectual link helped. Thanks to them, our fight gained a lot of attention. It helped us a lot.

**Jo Cado and Jakez Pasco**, former CRIN members:

In 1975, I was in the army, so I couldn't join CRIN right away. Once I left the army, I joined the anti-nuclear committee.

Same for me, but in 1974. I was at the Bagad in Lann-Bihoué, so I couldn't be part of the very beginning. I knew what was happening, it was near us, but I wasn't active yet.

**Narrator**

What interested you in this fight? Why did you want to join the movement?

**Jo Cado and Jakez Pasco**

At the beginning, when we heard there would be a nuclear plant in Erdeven, like everyone, we didn't believe it. We thought it was a joke. Yes, really. We read it in the newspapers. But dunes? A nuclear plant? It was shocking. So we said, we can't let this happen. Even though we didn't understand nuclear energy yet — like others said — we didn't just shout in anger. We created CRIN to learn. We didn't know this technology. We just felt it wasn't something clean. That's all. Then, little by little, we informed ourselves with atomic specialists.

I, and a friend, Pierre-Éric (who has passed away), we ran an anti-nuclear stand. With this stand, we went all over Brittany. Festivals, village fairs, anywhere — we were there. Even markets — we set up our booth.

**Narrator**

And what did you do at the stand?

**Jo Cado and Jakez Pasco**

We sold stickers, posters... We met people from Alsace. They talked to us about the Pluton missiles — nuclear missiles. I said, "If your missiles can only fall on France or Germany, what's the point?" There were many debates like that. Back then, people weren't so informed about nuclear dangers. But they joined our fight quickly. In Lorient, Quimper, we had 500 people at events.

From October on, we worked a lot — many meetings, maybe thirty between October and December. In all the nearby towns, and also in Lorient, we did a lot.

Later, there were the "nuclear signs," the pilgrim, the hydrographer, and so on. They wanted to install centers. They were saying: we must not give up — even a small weakness could be dangerous.

## **Roger Gallet**

We did a lot. Since I worked in construction, I organized a meeting of local craftsmen — carpenters, etc. Out of about 100 people, 99 signed against the plant. Only one carpenter supported it. That was his right.

At the time, we didn't realize how big the impact was. One day, for my work, I went to Plogoff — before it became a nuclear site. I met the mayor. He told me: "We fight in Plogoff because you made so much noise in Erdeven." So it followed on.

We were invited to several congresses — in Paris, Michel Politzer went. I also did an exhibition where singer Gilles Servat performed, by the way.

Then came the famous Erdeven festival at Easter 1975, with about 15,000 people. That made a big noise. It brought people from all over Brittany, where nuclear sites were planned. That was the idea of the festival: to see how much support we had.

People came even from Narbonne — they stayed at my house. I didn't know them. Also from Paris and elsewhere.

## **Dominique Baudel :**

It was a Breton festival — with *fest-noz*, music, games... People who were young then told me it was joyful. A real celebration. People were happy to be together.

They burned a cardboard nuclear plant at the end and unveiled the Green Hand monument — which has recently been restored.

## **Narrator**

And there was the famous atomic clown?

## **Dominique Baudel:**

I read articles about him when writing my book. He said his career started there. His thing was to make people laugh about politics — but not like Coluche. More like with simple, common-sense humor. He criticized the powerful, the lack of democracy — with peasant-style good sense. Later he became the **unemployed clown**. That shows where he stood — with the people.

## **Jo Cado and Jakez Pasco:**

The first time I saw him was on the beach at Kerilliau — the atomic clown. He used odd stuff from trash, junkyards. He had an old purple hearse, with tassels — like the old days. He decorated it.

Jean — when he removed his makeup — was just a guy eating next to you. Very serious, good talker. He was a real performer — excellent. One time, after his act in Etel, we were all at Michel Corvec's. He sat across from me. I almost asked him, "What do you think of the atomic clown?" I didn't know it was him — he was unmasked!

## **Narrator**

Faced with massive protest, the nuclear plant project was finally cancelled by the French State in 1975. Erdeven remains a symbol of a big citizen victory. Here, the people's fight worked. Against a project forced by the State, collective mobilization, solidarity and determination protected a territory, a coast, and a way of life.

Today, 50 years later, a giant green hand stands on the village dunes, in memory of the movement.  
But the fight against nuclear is not over. The association Stop Nucléaire 56 continues the struggle.