

General ideas of the intervention of Evelyne BOURNER at the Assembly of the European Union against Air Transport Nuisances (UECNA)

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SOME FACTS AND HISTORY ABOUT ORLY AIRPORT

In the sixties the epic of the beautiful years of aviation reached its peak among the general public. Mermoz, Saint Exupéry and the myth of Aéropostale were still present in the minds and popular culture, as well as the exploits of the airmen of the two world wars.

Families came to admire the large white birds synonymous with freedom, travel and discovery of the outer world. In other words a dream, impossible to achieve for the vast majority of people because reserved to the wealthy elite. A famous singer at the time put this fact in a song : "a Sunday in Orly". The concept of environmental protection was not yet present in the glorious thirties when everything seemed open and possible. For cities near the airport this activity represented jobs, wealth and taxes (although concentrated and poorly distributed).

The beautiful dream began to crack with the increase of traffic, the vogue of mass tourism, in other words the access of the popular classes to air travel. The democratization of air travel allowed many more people to travel far, but was the beginning of the end of the beautiful dream : the planes became more numerous, bigger and the conditions of the trip much less pleasant.

The transport industry then began its uninterrupted boom towards our time. From the end of the 70's, the disadvantages became obvious for residents and nearby municipalities : noise (no one has forgotten the Caravelles ..) and a new disturbing fact : chemical pollution of the air.

At the end of the 1970's, Orly development projects (construction of a new east-west runway and commercial use of runway 2 north-south involving the overflight of densely urbanized cities in the north of Essonne) provoked large protest movements and mass demonstrations (1981 : blocking access to the airport). The insertion of Orly and its development in the middle of a very populated area became then a real problem for the neighbour towns becoming in fact disadvantaged, places of social segregation and in deficit of attractiveness. Nobody wants to live under the planes. The curfew (night flight ban : 1968) and the capping of the number of movements (1993) appeared as necessities translated into the Law by the Government.

The great struggles of local residents and their associations to defend their living environment began in Orly in 1981-1982. Since that time they have not stopped considering the huge growth of the airline industry. The proximity of Orly Airport to Paris (14km) is considered as an asset by the actors of the air business. But its location in the middle of a very densely urbanized area makes it an element of environmental degradation and depreciation in a vast region of southern Paris.

With the awareness of the damage caused to the planet by human activities, it appeared that the air transport which developed without any limit and without any obstacle had to respect the same constraints as the other means of transport including the taxation of the kerosene (subject to International post-war regulations 1944 OACI Chicago : no tax on kerosene. IATA : 1946). The subject remains hot news as taxation agreement at international level will be hard to obtain. The powerful and influential air industry lobby will be reluctant, despite the

explosion of traffic, to submit to the constraints imposed on land transport although it rejects in the air large amounts of toxic particles dangerous to public health.

The arrival of the low-cost and the wild competition caused damage to the existing companies, and has increased the nuisance for residents. Jobs (long an excuse to justify the increase in traffic) have been drastically reduced (automation of tasks) and residents of the towns close to Orly have suffered deterioration of the environment in their area, depreciation of their property and real estate value, due to spread of noise and pollution.

So the fight continues ... even more so. The growth of air traffic is exploding and all figures are rising. The air industry lobby accepts no limit to its expansion although with concerns over climate change, it will be from now on under strong pressure to respect the environment.

This is a new fact for this sector of industry and transport which has always been protected and enjoyed considerable privileges with the complicity of the State and often elected officials and local authorities, anxious to guarantee the jobs in the aviation industry and financial windfall of tourism. Not to mention unfair competition vs. other means of transport subject locally to environmental constraints and taxes on energy. The chemical pollution caused by air transport has been so far very largely underestimated. It can be feared that the air transport industry lobby will fiercely fight to keep the business expanding and profitable with the less possible constraints and limitations. It will be strengthened in its ambitions by the desire of travel of the populations in constant increase whatever the damages caused to the planet by uncontrollable mass tourism expansion.

However, can this crazy expansion go on without limits ? it is not certain...
Indeed, every plane ends up going down on earth one day !!

Some figures for Orly:

1965 : 6 million passengers. 2017 : 32 million passengers.
1974 : 150,000 aircraft movements. 2017 : 242,000 aircraft movements.
2017 : in the world : over 100 000 aircraft movements each day.

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