

A Funny Kind Of Feeling

Monday the 9th of April. The bugle sounds. Military police and tanks converge on this bit of bocage, ironically preserved for decades by Vinci and the State. Far away from you, who are already breathing the first tear gas and getting the first grenade shrapnel, we are suffocating.

It's easy for us to say, several hundred kilometers away—yet we saw this eviction coming. We could tell from far away, but we turned our heads. Even though for weeks, discussions have focused around the ZAD and the state's strategy to divide you. The messy operation of "autonomously" clearing off the D281 and, despite everything, its success. The psychological war that preceded the military offensive. The friends that passed through told us about the problems on the zone, the divisions, the personal attacks.

This atmosphere made us uncertain. Should we come or not?

Yet, with the first navy blue van, the first news of destruction, it becomes glaringly obvious: our place is in the bocage, at your side. So we pack our bags and head off. Before us, capitalism, armed with the support of the state, reveals itself in all dimensions. This little corner of the countryside is such a source of problems that they are obliged to set into motion the mechanics of the war machine. For once, it's not diffuse. It stands before us with all its artifacts—lines of military police, tanks, forms, ultimatums, tear gas, drones, prefect, bulldozers, ministers, meetings for "negotiation." Helicopters... It makes its facets shine on all fronts. We see a sign that it isn't taking things lightly, that a *rapport de force* is already present and that the coming days will tell us in what imbalance it is constructed.

If the state is ready to unmask itself for a couple hundred acres, it's because it perceives the dangerousness of a space that creates its own possibilities, of lives that generate something truly beyond their control. They know the contagious power of such a movement. They want to destroy it, to destroy us. There is no doubt about that point. But it's not the cabins that are targeted so much as an imagination, an autonomous subjectivity. Neutralizing rather than demolishing.

Normalizing. Creating a generation that's repentant rather than enraged.

For several days, in the bocage, we do what we can. We run from barricade to barricade. Slowly, a vague feeling of powerlessness comes over us. And then we're overcome by the impression that we are part of a huge theater piece, that we're improvising a background scene while the others play their well-planned part.

It becomes more and more clear that the military operation is just an accessory maneuver to force negotiation. Because far more plays out in the opaque dialogue with the prefecture than in the fields.

Yet, we have only to see the enthusiasm of the prefect to congratulate "the great work" done by "the ZADistes" once they responded to the "demands of the government" to see that the *rapport de force* was actually in our favor. After ten days, the state seemed to already look for an honorable way out, or at least a weakness to exploit, to fracture the inhabitants of the zone a bit more.

April 16, a week after the beginning of the military operation, there was a rumor on the zone: the delegation was going to refuse to return to the negotiating table, a process made intolerable by the military occupation. It wasn't necessarily to break off all dialogue, but at minimum to impose some conditions, some limits. You would have to see the smiles that this ephemeral news imprinted onto people's faces to understand why everyone was there. Not to save a couple acres for a sustainable eco-friendly agriculture project, nor to add some weight to the balance of a process of negotiations with the state. We were here, we are here, to try to defend the possibility of creating our own spaces, geographic and temporal, outside of the framework imposed by capital and the state.

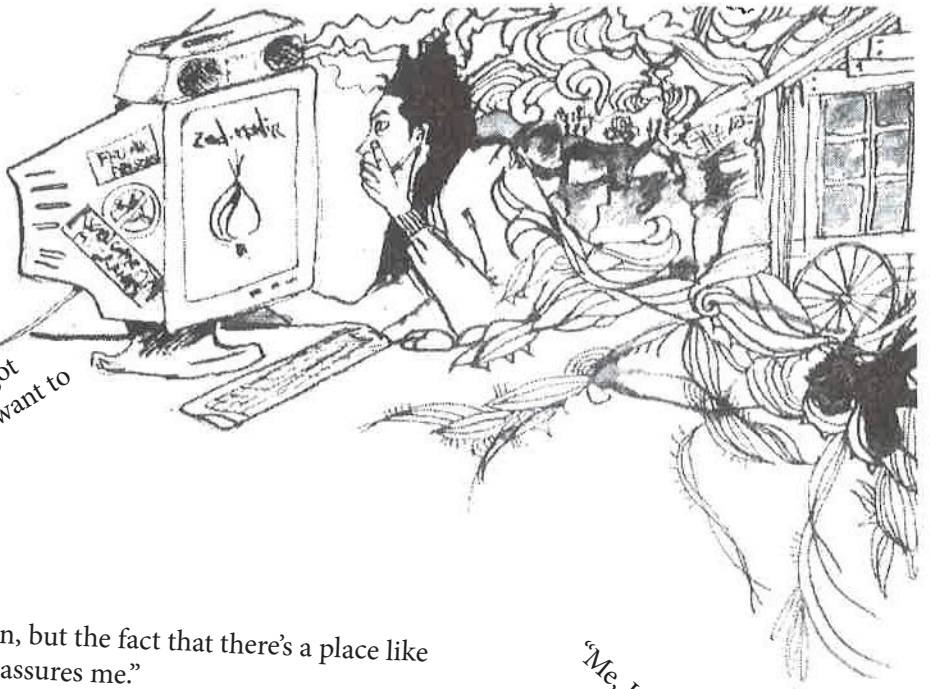
If we managed to push back the developers of the bocage, it's not to then let them develop our lives with norms, individual projects, forms, controls...

We have dreams, desires, utopias. We have no "projects" and we don't want them.



The ZAD evicted? 2500 cops?
Already 80 wounded? How many
houses destroyed?

It's not possible, I have to go, I feel
so powerless here... And there's too
much information, I need to under-
stand what's going on.



"I've been going for 5 years, I've got
lots of friends there and I don't want to
abandon them!"

"I've never been, but the fact that there's a place like
that existing reassures me."

"When I saw the cabins destroyed, the people injured, I
knew I couldn't just stay at home."

"Me, I love salamanders!"



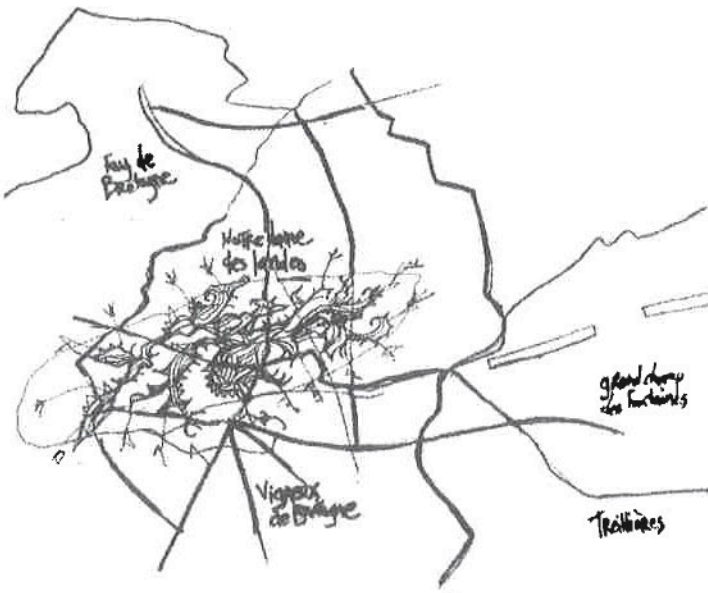
"I do agriculture with my friends; we decided not to microchip our
sheep, not to comply with the norms imposed by the government,
so the ZAD motivates us to hold strong facing the Agricultural
Bureau because we see that there, it's not registration that gives you
the right to farm the land!"

"We were there in 2012—we didn't give in
then and we won't now either!"

"The ZAD helped me find the energy to get
involved where I live, to create other
relationships than the ones society
proposes to us."

"My child is there..."

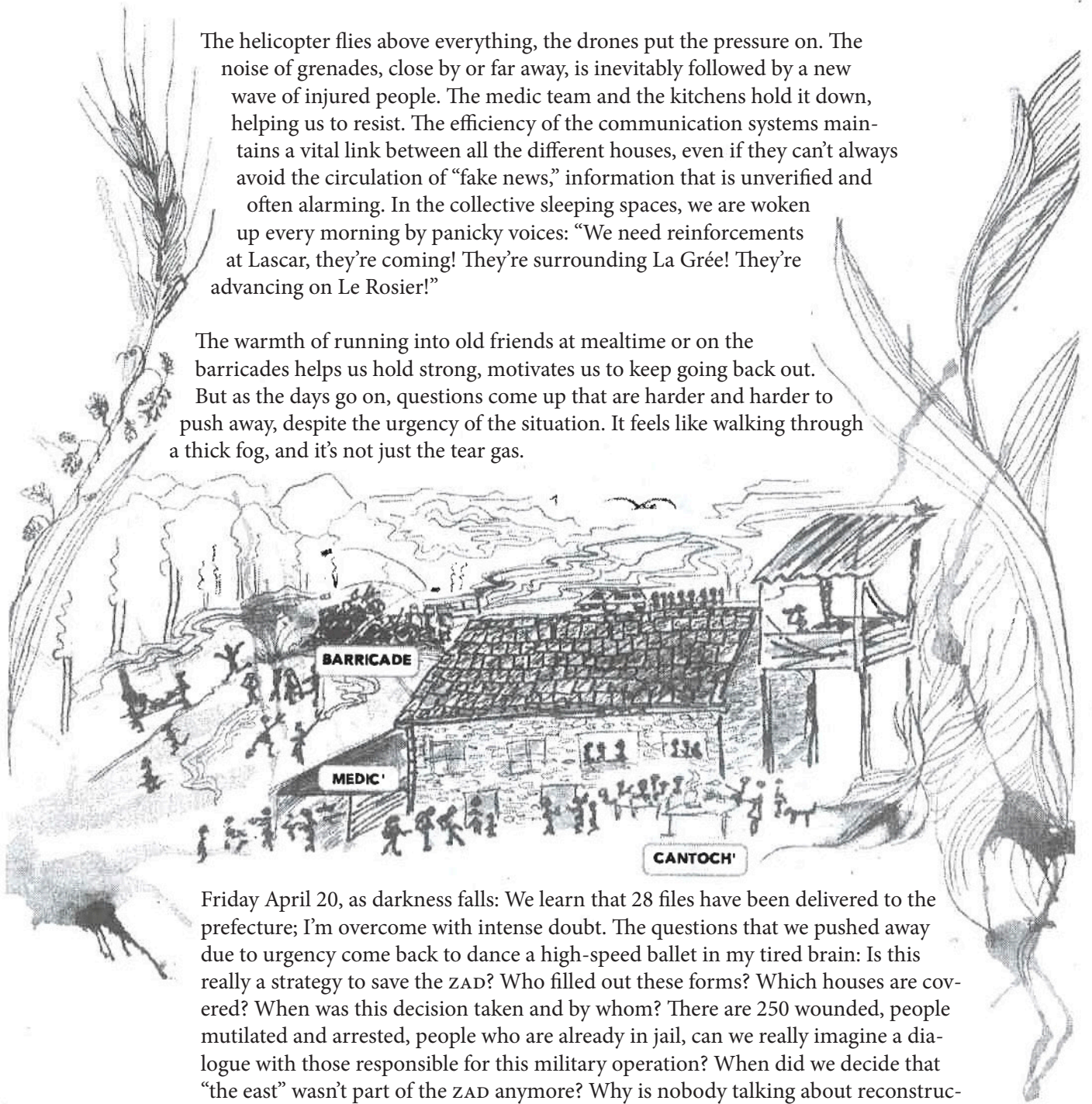
"It's only there that I don't feel
totally maladjusted to this world. Can
you imagine! The abandoning of the air-
port—that's not the victory! The victory
is that a zone for experimentation and
life can continue!"



Once I get there, I'm drawn in by the constant movement. Radio Klaxon: "It's kicking off at La Saulce! Need backup at La Grée! The tank is advancing on Lama Faché! Traffic info: The cops are at Les Ardilleres..."

The helicopter flies above everything, the drones put the pressure on. The noise of grenades, close by or far away, is inevitably followed by a new wave of injured people. The medic team and the kitchens hold it down, helping us to resist. The efficiency of the communication systems maintains a vital link between all the different houses, even if they can't always avoid the circulation of "fake news," information that is unverified and often alarming. In the collective sleeping spaces, we are woken up every morning by panicky voices: "We need reinforcements at Lascar, they're coming! They're surrounding La Grée! They're advancing on Le Rosier!"

The warmth of running into old friends at mealtime or on the barricades helps us hold strong, motivates us to keep going back out. But as the days go on, questions come up that are harder and harder to push away, despite the urgency of the situation. It feels like walking through a thick fog, and it's not just the tear gas.



Friday April 20, as darkness falls: We learn that 28 files have been delivered to the prefecture; I'm overcome with intense doubt. The questions that we pushed away due to urgency come back to dance a high-speed ballet in my tired brain: Is this really a strategy to save the ZAD? Who filled out these forms? Which houses are covered? When was this decision taken and by whom? There are 250 wounded, people mutilated and arrested, people who are already in jail, can we really imagine a dialogue with those responsible for this military operation? When did we decide that "the east" wasn't part of the ZAD anymore? Why is nobody talking about reconstruction? What does victory mean? And what's up with ACIPA and COPAIN? If the 100 Names occupation hadn't been evicted, would there have been even one "vigilant tractor" on the zone? Who imagines it is possible to discuss with the state as equals?

We only need to compare our weapons and our losses to understand that there is a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship. We no longer have a hold on the territory, or the calendar; how can we take proper decisions in this imposed urgency? People are leaving, others say they won't come back to defend it... Who are the CMDO? What is their strategy? Since when does "collective agricultural project" rhyme with "normalization"? In the name of what am I ready to risk my physical safety?

With the cops, I have the strange feeling of having something in common: we are pawns. Our respective deployments allow others to negotiate somewhere else. I'm sweating under my balaclava, the chessboard is too big, the war is elsewhere.

I'm ready and willing to participate in a *rapport de force*, but not to lose an eye for a standardized farm project. It seems like the trap the state opened with the "victory" and the clearing of the D281 is starting to close on us.

How can we leave a negotiation with our heads high if we arrive internally divided?

Isn't the goal of this whole normalization process just to fracture all the connections the ZAD has made in the course of its existence? To set the "composants" against each other? Radicals vs. Negotiators? East vs. West?



The ZAD can't be counted in acres; it's unmeasurable. It's thanks to all that's living here that thousands of people found the courage to confront the absurdity of this world on a daily basis, by taking land, taking time with which to try to live something other than the artificially

flavored soup we're ordinarily served in this society. If it's true that all movements are made to die, then the questions are—when do we let them go, and how do we rebuild on their ashes.