

The following text is an attempt by some of the people that were involved in the occupied Casa Cantoniera to analyse the eviction of our space and reflect on the past years of our presence in this part of the border.

Now, more than ever we want to call everyone to come to the border in order to show that the eviction of our spaces, the repression of people on the move and people in solidarity with them, will not stop us from expressing and exercising our resistance. We are trying to regroup and organize presence in the border. We don't know yet which form this will take, because it depends on what is going to happen in the next days and weeks. If you are interested and want to stay updated, write an email to chezjesoulx@riseup.net (pgp key on request).

In the early morning of March 23rd, the cops along with firefighters and certain NGOs evicted the occupied Casa Cantoniera in Oulx, a small village at the Italian-French border where thousands of people have transited in the recent years. The 13 comrades that were present in the house during the eviction have been accused of occupation, while over 60 people in passage have been forcibly tested for coronavirus, identified, fingerprinted, and then transported to different structures.

The way this eviction has been executed demonstrates once again all the contradictions of the European* migration policy. The repression of free movement is only possible with the complicity of so-called «humanitarian» institutions. While the cops are the visible face of state repression, humanitarian organizations are used (and complacently so) as the friendly face of this repression.

The Red Cross and the association «Rainbow 4 Africa» have provided the infrastructure of transport and processing for the over 60 people in passage without consent that were present in the house during the eviction, shipping them off in different directions while backtracking them away from the border. The firefighters assisted the cops with breaking the barricades of the house and enabled them to sneak into the house from the roof windows using their equipment. Without the help of these institutions, the eviction of the Casa Cantoniera would have been much more difficult and time-consuming (and, thus, visible to the public.)

It is not the first time that the Red Cross has collaborated with the police - at this border or in other places. There have been various occasions in which its members were repeatedly present on the border, trying (in vain) to persuade people in passage not to cross instead of providing something useful or allowing them to decide for themselves. They often were accomplices to police intervention, aiding them to carry out pushbacks. On several occasions the Red Cross has consciously exploited people's trust in their institution while openly collaborating with the police.

The association Rainbow 4 Africa has a long history of trying to collaborate with social centres and have repeatedly tried to force their presence on the Casa Cantoniera, while at the same time supporting the CPR of Torino with medical staff (in which the neglect of the physical well-being of people imprisoned is daily routine) and providing medical infrastructure for the eviction of the house. When the protest on eviction day arrived at the dormitory of the Salesiani in order to bring solidarity to the families that were brought there, we realized that the main gate of the structure has been locked since their arrival, preventing them from exiting. This shows once again that their perception of the people they are directing their “services” to is not one of equal free individuals but of manageable and confinable objects.

For over two years the Casa Cantoniera has attempted to create a space of practical solidarity and resistance against the border and the oppression and violence that comes with it. A space that refused to participate in the «management» of migration, where those on whose backs our privileges and wealth

are built are not treated as objects, as dangerous delinquents nor infantilized victims, but as individual subjects that are able to make their own decisions.

The border is evidently permeable to the continuous passage of money, tourism and commerce, but not to people lacking the “adequate” piece of paper. Our aim was never to provide a service to people but to build an inclusive struggle with people that are oppressed by the system of capitalism and state in different ways.

A lot of people who passed by the Casa Cantoniera participated actively in the management of daily tasks. The fact that this house has been open to people without pause for 828 days was only possible because we collectively compiled our knowledge and skills, maximizing possibilities by adapting and appreciating the differences in our capabilities. Sharing through our anger and frustration in common but also passing moments of affection and joy helped us to get stronger and more determined in our opposition against the violent reality of this world.

In the occupied house people have shared their stories, dreams and struggles among each other, finding strength in not being alone. Sometimes these moments consisted of simply sharing a coffee in the morning, passing a platter of something delicious and fried to share during discussions, dancing to pop music from all over the world while preparing a collective meal, four different people offering their last respective filter, paper, tobacco, or lighter for a much needed cigarette...

This opposition that is created, is not merely in contrast to the systemic oppression of the border - parallel to it, it seeks to build an alternative reality.

That house has been a place where we confronted many forms of oppression:

There was a self-organized garden, to rethink our way of relating to food and nature with regards to consumerism.

There was a space reserved for women and non-binary/gender nonconforming individuals, because the system of patriarchy is dismantled in part by validating and giving space.

There was a library with books and self-published texts in various languages, from comic books and novels to self care and DIY, aiming for a radical** alternative which demands constant reflection, self-criticism and expansion of knowledge.

While we have on some occasions accepted material support from institutions and NGOs, we have never subjected ourselves to conform to their paradigms and we have always tried to self-sustain the house with the financial and material support of people that share or support our ideas.

Obviously, in a world that is based on violence and in which all of us have internalized dynamics of oppression and certain stereotypes, it is impossible to not make mistakes. Many people that have passed the house have survived trauma and loss. We don't want to deny that the house has seen episodes of violence and that we have made mistakes in certain situations, but in order to create something outside of the logic of profit and domination, we have to practice and learn from the mistakes that have been done in the past, although we have not always succeeded in doing so.

We are disgusted by the way these episodes have been used as a way to gut an alternative approach, as if to prove that another world is not possible; in fact it is brutally ironic that these episodes of violence are a direct result of the oppressive systems that the nation states are so keenly upholding.

From the beginning of the project, lots of speculation and misinformation has been spread about this house. Right after the eviction had been carried out, photos of inside the house (which obviously was in a terrible state post bombardment) had been shared, instrumentalizing it in order to confirm their narrative of the « dirty squatters and wrong doers ». We refuse to speak with journalists, because we

don't want to be portrayed according to the stereotyped idea of the « anarchist », instrumentalized for making profit out of sensationalism.

So now this tiny space of autodetermination which gave us the possibility to breathe for a moment submerged in a world of harsh policies and racialized laws, is gone...

The eviction of the Casa Cantoniera is just a part of global repression against freedom of movement, solidarity structures and occupied free spaces in general. All over europe* long existing occupied spaces have been evicted in the last years, while attempts of creating new spaces and struggles are instantly met with the full force of repressive state organs. The militarization of borders and the normalization of push backs at internal and external european* borders only feeds ever growing racist sentiments and the fascization of society. At the same time those who refuse to buy into this logic and continue to support people on the move are continuously being attacked.

In Calais food distribution has been illegalized, in other places people are prevented from practicing their solidarity individually and are being forced to register with an NGO, in hungary* all forms of support for people on the move have been illegalized since years. The aim is on the one hand to create conditions that will make migration as difficult as possible, and act as a deterrent to prevent others from trying to make the journey. On the other hand, it is sending the message that humanity and support is only possible when herded into a state-approved method and context.

However, the repression of solidarity structures and the fortification of borders will not prevent people from exercising their will and need to migrate. Migration is as old as humanity and as long as this world is divided into parts of those that are exploited and those that are profiting from this exploitation- as long as wars and conflicts are fuelled by the need of capitalism to produce profit and the need of nation states to expand their power and influence- people will continue to migrate from one place to another. And as long as this inequality exists between the 'global south and the global north' of the world, people will continue to try to come to europe*. And as long as europe's* wealth is built on this inequality, its nation states and institutions can't give another answer to migration than militarization and violence.

The eviction and repression of the Casa Cantoniera will not stop people to pass this part of the border. It will only lead to them being forced to use ever more dangerous routes, to more people desperate, and to the arrival of smugglers that make profit off the misery of other people.

They can take our spaces, they can criminalize and imprison us, but they cannot bury our ideas and they cannot silence the truth, and that truth is this:

As long as the world is organized according to the principle of domination -of nature by humans, or of one kind of human over the other, or of an economic system based on the exploitation of resources and human lives- we cannot be free. We need and we will find other ways of expressing our opposition, of building and fighting for spaces where we can learn, create, live in freedom.

**names of states are left without capital letter on purpose*

*** we use the word radical in its original sense, meaning that we want to get to the "root" of the problem instead of just reforming what we believe to be fundamentally dysfunctional.*