

RG: I think it's good. Okay, please sir, I will start by asking you for your name and then your date and place of birth.

HO: so Hervé Ott, O, two T's

RG: yes

HO: I was born on March 7, 1949

RG: yes, or that?

HO: the place, La Londe-les-Maures, La Londe-les-Maures

RG: The Moors

HO: M AU RES

RG: M TO RES

HO: it's in the Var

RG: in the Var

HO: near Toulon

RG: yes okay, and, are there the mountains called the Moors or the hills?

HO: yes, that's it, it's the Massif des Maures

RG: there you go, and can you tell me something about your family, father, mother, etc.

HO: so my paternal family, are winegrowers

RG: yes

HO: who made wine, it was my grandfather who immigrated to the south of France to make wine. At the time we did not say organic but that was already his concern, it was wine, to make natural wine

RG: okay, but where did he immigrate from?

HO: from Paris because his parents had fled Alsace in 1872 after the German occupation

RG: yes, yes, so his family was originally from Paris and he is a winegrower

HO: uh so it's just my grandfather was born in ... no, my grandfather was born in Alsace

RG: yes

HO: and on the other hand his parents, and on the other hand his parents who had immigrated from Alsace to Paris, and he came to settle in the south of France, here, where were born my father, my uncles, etc. .

RG: ok

HO: and my family, finally in my family made a wine that was quite famous in the, in the south of France, s

RG: who is called

HO: Ott Domains

RG: Domaine Ott... and... and your mother?

HO: so my mother is of Lyon origin

RG: yes

HO: with some Swiss ancestry

RG: and ...

HO: and her father died in war in 14, in she was orphaned very early, at the age of 6 months

RG: where did she work?

HO: uh, no, no, she was, she raised her kids, we were six kids

RG: okay, six children

HO: here it is... I am the penultimate

RG: okay, and religion?

HO: Protestant origin

RG: Lutheran?

HO: reformed non-Calvinist,

RG: but the reformed Church existed

HO: The Church, the Reformed Church was constituted in 38 yes, but so it is the, the Calvinist branch, but with very little, my father was agnostic and my mother always had commitments in the church

RG: but, the people of Alsace are rather Lutherans

HO: yes but, then, but I think that... I don't know what was, what was the investment of my grandparents but I think that they did not have any, they did not have any religious investment

RG: yes, okay

HO: on the other hand, I have an uncle who was very involved in the Reformed Church, in Nice, that's it

RG: okay, as a pastor or?

HO: no, no, he was treasurer in the parish

RG: ok

HO: but on my mother's side I have, I believe, seven ancestors who were pastors, quite far away, quite a few generations ...

RG: yes in time

HO: quite far away yes

RG: yes okay, and politically they were?

HO: so, my father, my father was part of the French Social Party of La Rocque

RG: oh yes okay, PSF

HO: yes... and then he became a Gaullist when everyone became a Gaullist

RG: that is to say in 44?

HO: no, no, no, no in 52

RG: in 58

HO: yes in 58 yes when de Gaul came to power, he was always angry with Gaul for letting La Rocque die in prison

RG: was it his fault?

HO: ah ben de Gaulle refused to, refused to endorse La Rocque yes, La Rocque was arrested I believe

RG: yes he was arrested by the Germans

HO: yes and ...

RG: and then he came back and he was still in jail

HO: and he, it seems to me that there was, well I know that my father was angry with de Gaulle then. I believe that de Gaulle did not do what was necessary to free La Rocque yes

RG: ok

HO: and my father failed for a while - it was my mother who was telling this - my father wanted to respond to La Rocque's request to go and replace the German prisoners, he wanted to volunteer

RG: yes

HO: to go and replace the French prisoners in Germany, and my mother told her "if you do that I divorce"

RG: ok

HO: there you have it, he has always been very admiring of La Rocque

RG: yes

HO: and even, even for a very long time in the 60s, he continued to go to annual meetings of La Rocque alumni

RG: and how did he experience the occupation?

HO: then, I believe that my family was more or less in collaboration, more or less, in any case in the resistance

RG: yes

HO: finally I have an uncle who was mayor of the village of La Londe-les-Maures, at the request of the prefect of Var to stand up to the Vichy regime, from what I understood

RG: yes

HO: So the idea was to defend what we can defend

RG: yes ok

HO: but at the time of release, my father was put in two days, in prison for two days... because one of my uncles who had been pursued by the resistance fighters, had taken refuge in prison to protect himself. and we came to spit on him by treating him as a collaborator. I don't believe that, I don't believe that he really collaborated, but hey, they did not have a resistance position anyway. My parents took part in sending food parcels for French prisoners in Germany. And after the war, they took in German prisoners for one to two years. Some came back to see my parents a few years after the war.

RG: ok

HO: that's it

RG: ok

HO: and that I discovered very recently that there may be roots in the fact that my grandfather

RG: yes

HO: was an adulterous child, from a union between my great-grandmother and a Franco-German musician

RG: oh yes

RG: we are talking about the occupation....

HO: in Alsace

RG: after ...

HO: in 1870

RG: after 1870 agree

HO: there you go, my great-grandmother, who was a musician, was a great friend of Nietzsche

RG: your great-grandmother?

HO: yes, yes

RG: yes

HO: and I, I retrieved and recently had all his correspondence with Nietzsche translated

RG: oh yes ok

HO: which I knew existed but I did not know at all who was, so there is ...

RG: what was her name?

HO: Louise Ott

RG: yes ok

HO: Louise Ott, she was an artist and she had a lot of connections with, she knew, she knew, she has, she had a salon in Paris after 1972, she invited artists and all that. Well, but I think there must be, there must be some troubled things between Germany and France in this family history which I inherited since I did a good part of my studies in Germany

RG: ah okay

HO: and I have a lot of connection with Germany myself

RG: yes but there are several ways of, of, of having relations with Germany

HO: there you go, yes (RG laughs) yes but I have always been attracted to Germany as if there was something that ...

RG: in the blood (laughs)

HO: who worked me, who worked me ...

RG: So tell us a bit about your studies

HO: So my father was, my father was a farmer, he had, all his brothers, well they were five brothers, there are three who worked together and he worked with them until the end of the war. And then in 50 he decided to stand on his own feet, he didn't want to work with his brothers anymore.

RG: yes

HO: but my father - because my father had tried at the time, and that will have consequences for me - he had tried, he was very influenced by community systems, he wanted to create a community between the bosses (him and one of his brothers) and the workers

RG: oh yes ok

HO: there you go. It was pretty amazing, my dad had ideas of, the far right, although it wasn't at all ... uh we never had a racist expression or stuff like that, or hey. ... but there was a little bit that we were part of the elite

RG: yes

HO: very small rural bourgeoisie but we were part of the elite, and ... But he had, he really had a social fiber which was everything that was around, community life, community systems rather. It wasn't community life, uh and he made a point of making his own bread, and we ate home-made bread for years, he was one of the pioneers of organic farming developed by Lemaire Stopper

RG: yes

HO: we treated ourselves with homeopathy, here I have, all, everything that is very fashionable today, all that I already knew at the time

RG: but there was one, the partons / workers ratios were, did you have farm workers?

HO: on the farm with his brothers, yes. There were agricultural workers and therefore my father wanted, wanted to create a system of workers' profit-sharing. Okay, but his brothers didn't agree ...

RG: oh yes ok ...

HO: and suddenly he had to stop

RG: that's why he left ...

HO: here he left, and he then with the inheritance, his share of the inheritance, he bought a property, but he continued to be in touch with his brothers because he sold his grapes to these brothers who were wine

RG: ok

HO: he didn't have a cellar, it would have been his dream to make his wine, he couldn't

RG: ok

HO: and then it's a dream that my older brother tried to take back but it didn't happen either since the property was too small

RG: ok

HO: there you go, so I have lived all my life up to the baccalaureate in the countryside. We lived 10km from the nearest town, and I went to school at Hyères high school

RG: yes

HO: education a little, always limited, limit what, I was drafted at the last moment (laughter from HO and RG)

RG: ok

HO: I was deeply bored in high school. I was doing it because I had to do it but really, it wasn't the skills that I lacked but I ...

RG: So you got, high school was, was, when were you in high school?

HO: so it was 61 to 68

RG: yes, and you passed the baccalaureate?

HO: I passed the baccalaureate in 68 yes, so I got it thanks to that, no doubt. Because I only had oral so that allowed me to pass it

RG: ah okay, (HO laughs) you are better at speaking

HO: well in any case there was such a climate that the subjects weren't too difficult (RG laughs). But I still stumbled upon, on subjects that I knew by heart, there were things that I knew

RG: ok

HO: but I think that in writing I would not have, I would not have succeeded

RG: okay. And after you have completed higher education?

HO: and then afterwards, so what demotivated me a lot during my schooling was that I didn't know what I wanted to do, at least I knew it but I, I didn't dare say it, he didn't there was no information for that, and at the end of my first year, I went to Germany where I met French people including one who, who was in a preparatory school for theology near Lyon, what interested me in fact was to do theology

RG: yes

HO: but there was this idea that was completely wrong and that my mother and I had not even verified, we believed that you had to have done Latin to do such studies. So we have to do Greek and Hebrew, but we can start them in faculty or in this preparatory school.

RG: oh yes

HO: we hadn't even thought of asking the pastor of our parish, good, and so when I learned that in Germany within 24 hours I said 'well, it's good, I'm doing theology'

RG: ok

HO: and so I signed up tentatively, pending, pending. Finally, a friend advised me to go to Lyon because there was near Lyon this preparatory school of theology for what we called late vocations, that is to say people who had not the bac and who wanted to study theology. So there they could redo a school course from the third

RG: yes but you did not have, you did not have a late vocation

HO: I had it, I had the bac

RG: yes

HO: but it was to do Greek and Hebrew

RG: oh yes ok

HO: because I was told the hardest part for the first year is Greek and Hebrew

RG: ok

HO: that's it

RG: ok

HO: so I did a year in Lyon, uh I had an initiation to Greek and Hebrew

RG: yes

HO: and then I returned to the Faculty of Theology of Montpellier

RG: in 69?

HO: so it was in 69 here, at the start of the 69th school year. Well I did two years in Montpellier and afterwards I received a scholarship to go to Germany, to Heidelberg

RG: yes

HO: yes I stayed 3 years, because there was no other candidate so

RG: so 71-...

HO: from 71 to 74

RG: ok

HO: So, there I was already starting to ask myself questions that were structuring for me. It is because my brother, one of my brothers, the one who was just before me, had met a teacher at the University of Aix-en-Provence, who was a friend of Lanza del Vasto

RG: oh yes ok

HO: and therefore my brother had been quite won over by the ideas of this friend who was called Pierre Souyris

RG: how is that written?

HO: SOUYR IS

RG: yes

HO: who was a Christian and who convinced my brother that there was an incompatibility between the Gospel and the weapons... There you are, and so I often had discussions with my brother about it

RG: yes

HO: and in 1968 my brother was an objector, it was a period when it was difficult for objectors in France

RG: yes

HO: they had a status that had been torn away by a hunger strike by Louis Lecoin, an anarchist

RG: yes, yes

HO: and, but they were obliged to work first for civil security,

RG: yes

HO: there, it was downright in the army

RG: yes

HO: and then afterwards they were assigned to hospitals in Paris but they did not agree so they resigned, they went on a hunger strike

RG: when?

HO: in 68, it was in, in November, November December 68

RG: I did not quite understand because you said that Souyris had convinced your, your

HO: my brother

RG: had convinced your brother that there was

HO: that's it

RG: compatibility or incompatibility

HO: incompatibility

RG: incompatibility between the Gospel and the weapons ...

HO: There you go, so my brother faced with compulsory military service

RG: ok

HO: decided to be an objector. My parents got a little crazy but hey, our parents were enough, liberal enough to say 'well it's you who chose eh'

RG: ok

HO: and so he ended up in prison in Lyon, he was locked up in Lyon

RG: yes, how long?

HO: for desertion, three weeks

RG: yes

HO: and I was in Lyon at that time and there I felt that I was choosing, I had to position myself

RG: ok

HO: I couldn't stay neutral, since I was completely concerned with the gospel. I couldn't say 'yes but we need national defense and all that'

RG: ok

HO: and at the same time I discovered Dietrich Bonhoeffer

RG: yes

HO: and so it was a bit of a click for me, there I said 'well it's clear I choose the objection too'

RG: and you must have ...

HO: in conscience

RG: and you must have done your military service at some point?

HO: so there you go, so I had a reprieve to do my theology studies, to finish

RG: yes

HO: and I returned in November 74 to France to carry out my civil service as an objector, I had been recognized as an objector

RG: ok

HO: except that, at the time, I thought that as I was summoned to do my service in November 74, I returned for November 74, finally here

RG: yes

HO: but I wasn't summoned until 6 months later, because there was still a time lag between the official start and ...

RG: ok

HO: and so there I - as I had six months to wait when I realized it - I said to the Church 'well if you could give me a job in a parish because I, I don't want to stay on my parents 'hook'. And so the church sent me to Meyrueis, it's a small town 40 km from here

RG: yes

HO: So I have

RG: as?

HO: as an associate pastor ... so I lived from January 15th to June 15th there, and

RG: in 75

HO: in 75 there you have it, and this is where the Larzac affair has become very present for me again, the Larzac struggle which has become very present again

RG: Because you, you, you have it, you have it?

HO: because I had heard about it

RG: yes

HO: when I was, when I was a student in Montpellier in 71

RG: yes

HO: I was in touch with, I had created a group of objectors. So my activist commitments started, not in 71, they started in 69 in Montpellier

RG: ok

HO: there I created a group of objectors ...

RG: what kind of people and what for?

HO: there were students of theology, for, for... how to say, to make known conscientious objection because at the time the law allowed the objection but prohibited the information.

RG: yes ok

HO: what they called propaganda

RG: yes

HO: in fact, Debré, who was defense minister at the time, was very afraid that a political party would use the objection law to demoralize

RG: yes

HO: that's it

RG: because the objection law dated back to when, do you have any idea?

HO: then the law on objection in France dated from 1963

RG: after the, after the Algerian war

HO: there you go. De Gaulle had promised that there would be a law on objection but he wanted to wait until the end of the war.

RG: ok

HO: and as the promise did not come true, Louis Lecoin went on a hunger strike

RG: ok

HO: and he got it

RG: uh I, to go back a bit

Oh yes

RG: you said that your brother knew or heard of Lanza del Vasto

Oh yes

RG: you too?

HO: and me too, when I was still at home, so my year of the bac

RG: yes

HO: I attended three Lanza del Vasto conferences... that's it

RG: near here?

HO: In Toulon, in Toulon. It was friends from Toulon who, who had invited him, so I was both seduced by the ideas, and, and a little suspicious of the character

RG: yes because he is a character....

HO: very

RG: curious ...

HO: yes ... very seductive

RG: tall, bearded ...

HO: there you go, very seductive

RG: eccentric

HO: very closed, ah no eccentric no. Well, it depends on what we call eccentric, but he was dressed with his, with woolen clothes that he had woven himself etc., it was beautiful as, it was ...

RG: Was it a bit, was it a Christian?

HO: yes, ah yes absolutely

RG: well but ...

HO: yes, yes he was a Christian

RG: he was open to kinds of beliefs...

HO: and he did a big job of, he did a, he tried to make a syncretism with Hinduism

RG: yes

HO: because he went to India he met Gandhi and actually. He wanted, he wanted to create in France, he created in France the equivalent of the Gandhian ashrams

RG: ok

HO: in a community of L'Arche whose mother house is 50km from here

RG: yes

HO: south of Larzac

RG: it's in Lunas, not this parent company

HO: near, near, yes between Bedarieux, Lodève and Joncels, near Joncels

RG: ok

HO: it's on the foothills of Larzac, the Black Mountain ...

RG: So he seduced you and ...

HO: so from the point of view of ideas, his biblical reading seemed very correct to me

RG: yes

HO: the character was too seductive for me, too manipulative

RG: yes ok, yes

HO: well, that was already my problem

RG: okay, okay

HO: (laughs) there you go

RG: and so you came to the Larzac when, well, you were in Meyrueis

HO: there you have it, and so in Meyrueis I had agreed ... my brother had found a place for me to do my civil service as an objector near Marseille because he was him, so he himself was, in the meantime he was became responsible for an Emmaus community

RG: yes

HO: Emmaus community which takes care of wandering people and all that eh

RG: yes

HO: and so he found a place for me to do civilian service as an objector

RG: in Marseille

Oh yes

RG: what sort of work?

HO: social

RG: yes

HO: rag picker, we called it ragpicker, picking up metals, furniture, and living with people who are wandering, uh. But when in Meyrueis I attended a session, a film, the screening of a film on the Larzac problem

RG: yes

HO: there, I was so seduced to hear about peasants, non-violence and all that that I immediately said 'well, that's where I have to go'. So because when I was in Montpellier, I had heard about the Larzac affair

RG: yes

HO: and then I went to Germany so I had more contact but I heard, I continued to hear about the Larzac affair

RG: yes

HO: and when I saw this film, when I saw this film on the, on the struggle of Larzac, I said 'well I have to lend a hand'. There you have it, and then I made contact and, one thing leading to another, after a few meetings there is someone who lived in Saint-Martin, a Franciscan, who lived in Saint-Martin and who was in charge of the construction site. construction of the Blaqui re sheepfold

RG: Was it Father Roussel?

HO: Pirault, Pirault, Robert Pirault

RG: Pirault, oh yes that's it

HO: Pirault, he said to me 'well listen, you can live here' - there were other objectors who lived with him 'you can live here for three months after you get out of business'. There you have it, and because there was already the idea, I came up with a very old idea, which was to take care of activities, young people, create a reception center, etc.

RG: yes

HO: and then on the Larzac the first day I arrive, they tell me 'there are army houses to occupy, there are empty houses, they must be occupied'. And I say 'well here it is, it's a project that falls from the sky what' (laugh). It's kind of how I saw it at the time, now I see it more like that, but ...

RG: Was it his idea or the idea of the movement to occupy these empty houses?

HO: It was Larzac, it's because the Truels farm had been occupied a few months earlier

RG: ok

HO: and me therefore I, I said to myself 'well we have to create a group of objectors - since there were a certain number of them on the Larzac - that we create a specific objector project' ... therefore

RG: for, to occupy another farm?

HO: to occupy a farm here

RG: and which farm was it?

HO: The Cun

RG: The Cun

HO: the Cun farm

RG: So it was a, a farm that was, that had been bought by the army or

HO: so it was a farm that had been bought by a, a Parisian doctor and he had bought two farms

RG: yes

HO: and 180 hectares, two ruins, let's say two large ruins that he restored, summarily but it was habitable

RG: yes

HO: it was closed, there was a good roof and, but that he had done before the extension of the camp and he sold them to the army

RG: yes

HO: probably by saying to yourself 'it is better that I sell them now at a good price rather than being expropriated'. And they were in the south of the plateau, in the south of the extension perimeter

RG: yes

HO: there you have it, and so very quickly I proposed this project to the farmers, it seduced them. So I think I had the aura of the pastor as well, I had to defend myself against it at the time but... there you are, for them it was a reinforcement

RG: because you were ordained at one point?

Oh no

RG: no?

HO: no, I was not ordered

RG: well how is it in the Church?

HO: normally, normally we are ordained but 68 had been there, and there were lots of pastors who said 'I don't see the point of ordination'. And myself when I asked the question, I was told 'if you want it yes, but it is not necessary to be in the Church'. here

RG: ah okay

HO: and as anyway I did not intend to become a pastor, it did not work more than that

RG: yes but you were known as a pastor

HO: because I was in Meyrueis as pastor

RG: yes ok

HO: that's it

RG: ok

HO: and that, and that I was obliged to say where I came from and that therefore I was immediately introduced as the pastor, here it is, it is Robert Pirault above all who introduced me like that

RG: ok

HO: it reassured, suddenly it reassured people a lot. For me it was a good start

RG: because it's ...

HO: vis-à-vis the peasants

RG: Okay, because there were tensions between the peasants on the plateau and then the people who came from outside?

HO: we can't say that but, but we had to prove ourselves in any case

RG: yes

HO: there you go, that's clear, you had to prove yourself. So a priori we were well received but after there was an unsaid passing exam. And I took my passing exam while doing the hay, I had to move ten thousand bales of hay and straw that summer, I was going to work with the peasants

RG: it was the summer of ...

HO: 75

RG: 75

HO: that's it

RG: yes

HO: I was going to work for some, for others to give a helping hand and that's how I earned my living, since, since I was more employed by the Church

RG: okay, but you, you have also been able to prove yourself by an action like the occupation of the farm

HO: after

RG: after, that, so that is ...

HO: this is during the summer of 75

RG: yes

HO: and the occupation of the farm that was in October 1975

RG: ok

HO: there you go. In any case, the peasants told me very quickly, 'this project interests us but it is not before autumn because we have to harvest the harvest'. Finally

RG: ok

HO: it's in the fall that we're available

RG: so what happened?

HO: well, we have, first there was tension in our team of objectors because not everyone was in agreement on the project. There are those who wanted to do a peasant thing, a farm and all that. The house we had chosen there was no land, and I said 'well if you want to make a farm, make a farm, I would go elsewhere, I would choose something else but that's not it. project that interests me "

RG: ok

HO: there you go, so they said 'well no, we agree with you'. But actually there was no deal so it broke later

RG: So they left the others?

HO: so there was, then we have, we kept occupying this farm for a year with all the support of Larzac and all that for a year, we started to develop activities

RG: yes

HO: we did restoration work, development and all that, to create it, to transform it into a reception center. During the summer, in the spring and in the summer 76 we welcomed

RG: yes

HO: but in June, end of June, beginning of July 76 we found ourselves in prison, three ...

RG: yes, that is the business of the occupation ...

HO: there you go, from the military camp

RG: from the military camp

HO: there you go, so on, out of five members, there were four of us in prison. There was only the woman of us who wasn't, the woman who was part of our team who wasn't in jail, well so that kinda rocked things a bit, and then in fact we were expelled on October 24, 76 ...

RG: yes

HO: There was the eviction because there was just before a military parade that had been disrupted in Millau, it was at the time of the occupation of another farm, if you want there is, in fall, in October 74-75-and 76 there are three occupations of farms

RG: yes the Truels

HO: there are Truels in 74, Le Cun in 75 and Cavaillès in 76

RG: Cavaillès

HO: there you have it, and so the army said to itself 'if this continues we will no longer be able to control the terrain. So they kicked us out, except the Truels because it was a peasant project, it was more difficult to access, the peasants were organized and then it was in the north of the plateau where the peasants were much more active with Burguière, Tarlier and anyway

RG: ok

HO: while in the south we were with more fearful peasants

RG: ok

HO: much less militant, but it was our choice to try to strengthen this place a little

RG: And what happened after?

HO: So at that point the first team broke

RG: yes

HO: I found myself all alone

RG: yes

HO: and the day after the eviction I found a house to rent

RG: yes

HO: so I ended up in Saint-Martin first for a few days. And then there I found a house to rent, and so in January - there was still three months of uncertainty - and so in January I moved back to this house to continue the project

RG: in Saint-Martin

HO: no to the Blaquèrerie next to Cun, the house that I had found to rent with the idea of staying in the south... And I reconstituted another team of objectors, I launched an appeal and there are people who have come. So it was pff it was funny because it was half marginal among us and all that, well

RG: what was it, well what was it, what kind of people, from where?

HO: pff from anywhere. They had heard about Larzac, objectors so they came, gave a hand, that's it.

RG: yes

HO: there was among them a law student who came from Nancy and who had wanted to do, who still wanted to return to military service to contest inside and all that, to defend his country. And then he got reformed because he couldn't hold on

RG: ok

HO: but he still wanted to continue a period of service, for him it was important to do a period of service so he came to lend a hand for six months

RG: and, and ...

HO: good, and so there it continued. We worked for two and a half years. But as early as the month, from the spring, we discussed a new installation. We knew that our installation there would be precarious

RG: yes

HO: and so we worked on a new installation, I wanted to do an installation in the south, build

RG: yes

HO: but the peasants on our board of directors said no, we have to go back to the north and so by looking we ended up finding this land and we started to build here in the summer of 77, 1 August 77. But we was in a public utility zone so it was a construction without a permit ... illegal construction

RG: But it's, it's from here that you were kicked out before, right?

HO: no Le Cun is the name we gave to this place

RG: oh yes ok

HO: mas the first Cun is 30km from here

RG: ah okay

HO: it is in the south of the extension perimeter, I would have to find you ... a map

RG: no but I think I have a card there, an old card

HO: then the Cun is marked on it (RG and HO look at the card). Here is the Cavalry here, and the Cun farm, you have the Blaquèrerie here, this is where we lived for two and a half years

RG: yes

HO: and here between the two there this is the Salvetat, it is the other, the other farm that was with the one that is there, it is marked, no it is not marked, but there was the Cun farm which was here

RG: yes ok

HO: here, these two farms had been bought by this Parisian doctor

RG: ok

HO: so we were kicked out of here, we settled there temporarily

RG: yes

HO: and now we are here

RG: yes okay, well that's good

HO: well because the extension project was big enough, it went down, it went down to there, it arrived near the Couvertoirade and it left like that

RG: yes ok

HO: and like that

RG: it's huge yes

HO: there were 14 thousand hectares of expansion

RG: so you started to settle down and create a center

HO: so the idea was to build a place of training and reception. So we started to build and then there was of course a construction ban

RG: yes

HO: but at that time, there was a conflict within the group of peasants. That is to say that there was a great discussion around the negotiation, to negotiate or not to negotiate with the State

RG: yes

HO: good and, and somewhere but not only, we were somewhat the victims of the conflict between the peasants who were in the East and the peasants who were in the West, that is to say the leaders were on this side Tarlier, Burguière

RG: yes who were for no negotiation

HO: who were for the negotiation

RG: for, for, ah that is to say ...

HO: and yes ...

RG: for negotiation with the government to resolve the problem

HO: to negotiate and they said 'if we negotiate, we let go of a piece and what do we let go, we will let go in the east'

RG: yes ok

HO: but in the east there was José Bové, there were more traditional peasants and so they said there is no question of negotiating... that's it

RG: so what happened?

HO: and I made the big mistake when I announced this project, to say it's a project of 500 thousand francs

RG: yes

HO: you shouldn't talk about money in a peasant environment, that's it

RG: why?

HO: ah well because people, immediately there are people who suspected that the peasants who supported us were going to embezzle money for our benefit

RG: oh yes ok

HO: that's it

RG: but what did you do to finance the, the ...

HO: so we created a real estate company [SCI]

RG: yes

HO: and which by force was made up of 1800 people... I was inspired by the GFA Larzac

RG: yes

HO: saying we are going to make collective ownership, so people are going to give shares of 200 francs, at the time it was 200 francs in 77, that's it. And besides, we are going to do our general assembly there, on June 21, of the SCI, there is only one

RG: oh yes, okay, so it's people from, from all over the world who have contributed

HO: everywhere, in France, in Germany, who bought a part of SCI as some had bought a part of GFA

RG: yes

HO: except it was cheaper. And it is with this money that we were able to build and equip the whole Cun. There you have it, in 1977 we started to build, there was a ban on works, and at that time we could not violate the ban because the Larzac was divided.

RG: ok

HO: we could have done it if everyone was united but we didn't dare, and it came two years later

RG: yes

HO: that is to say that after, in June 79, we came to settle here in the tent, we organized all our training sessions in the tent, the library in the tent, the dining rooms and all it. And in the fall of '79 we built the first house in bales of straw

RG: yes

HO: so everyone liked that

RG: in bales of straw, does it hold?

HO: well you'll see, you'll visit (RG laughs), it's a process

RG: it's like the, it's like the three little pigs

HO: it's a process, that's what everyone thinks about, but it's a process that comes from the United States

RG: oh yes ok

HO: and that went through Canada, there are churches that are over 300 years old in the United States that are made in bales of straw in Arkansas yes

RG: oh yes ok

HO: and we got wind of this technique, of this process and we, we reinvented a process to build it. We were the first in Europe to build this

RG: ok

HO: after the war, because there was a house like that which dates from 1926 in Montargis

RG: yes ok

HO: and which still exists

RG: ok

HO: so this innovative construction, illegal of course also

RG: yes

HO: but which went very quickly to build, to remake the unity of the people around Cun

RG: ok

HO: in the meantime we had shown how we functioned, well less afraid, well there was all that

RG: you have, there was always a ban on building, on building?

HO: yes, yes but there, the prosecutor thought that it was not a house

RG: ah okay

HO: so he did not file a complaint but we had taken our precautions. This time we didn't build in stone, which is very long, we built in straw and in three days the house was built.

RG: ok

HO: that's it, because afterwards it's much more difficult to demolish, our idea was to live in it

RG: yes ok

HO: but the prosecutor gave it up. So we were able to start really settling down, spending the winter here etc., in 1980 we said to the peasants "Now we are fed up, life is too hard, we are not equipped, so either we can resume the stone construction to have more space

RG: yes

HO: either we stop the project because we can no longer get there, they said "okay to resume". There again all the peasants were in agreement to resume but it is ...

RG: and it happened, you had meetings ...

HO: ah well there were meetings every week

RG: meetings yes

HO: every Wednesday there was a meeting on the Larzac

RG: and in the same place, among ...

HO: It changed, in the sheepfolds, it changed a little each time. This is once fantastic in the fight of Larzac is that there was at least one meeting per week, often there were a lot more when it was necessary to prepare an event. And the peasants only voted twice, all the rest of the time it was in consensus

RG: Okay, and when were those two times?

HO: it was for or against the negotiation

RG: yes

HO: here, to go meet the prefect the first time, and another time I do not know on what occasion it was

RG: ok

HO: but I was not there, here, uh here, and from, and then we resumed construction, there were the presidential elections of 81 which were announced but we started to rebuild before the elections

RG: yes

HO: and then after with the results, we built more beautiful what

RG: ok

HO: there you have it, so in, in December 81 we had closed the premises of the big stone house which is there in fact, in part anyway, and there from there, we had the building permit we were able to regularize

RG: and you, you can tell me something about your center

HO: so, the idea was to create a place, already when we created Le Cun, the first Cun, since we are in the third here

RG: yes

HO: it was to create a place of training and research on the modes of resistance, of non-violent resistance, we said civil and popular, that's it

RG: yes

HO: since we were faced with a military system of national defense, we wanted to show that there are lots of possibilities to involve the civilian population in modes of non-violent resistance

RG: yes

HO: and at the time there was for example the international movement IFOR, that tells you something

RG: I-strong

HO: International Fellowship of Reconciliation

RG: yes

HO: there you have it, who published, of which I was a part, and who published small monographs of researchers like Galton, Theodore Herbert (?)

RG: yes

HO: Germans, Norwegian, uh on the, on, examples of civil resistance, in Czechoslovakia at the time of the invasion, in the Ruhr, when France occupied the Ruhr in 1923, uh what was it had there been? around Hungary there was a problem in Hungary I don't remember when, well there were lots of monographs of historical examples of civil resistance

RG: okay, yes

HO: and we wanted to promote that, so with a very ambitious project when I now look at me, it's funny but there was the idea of, to do something that could be, to have an authority like the Foundation for national defense studies ...

RG: yes ok but you did this research as a team, in the library or brought in people who had experience of certain struggles?

HO: our idea was to build a library, to bring people together but it never worked out, the library if

RG: yes

HO: but we had no way to constitute real research and all that and then we were not researchers ourselves

RG: ok

HO: we were the militants, well that was enough for us, that was a sufficient criterion. But by saying we can rely on studies by scientists, to synthesize, etc., there you have it. And next to that to do training. That is to say, to make activists aware of these modes of resistance and therefore to do internships on non-violence, on defense, etc. So at the time we had General de Bollardière among our friends

RG: yes

HO: you've heard of it eh?

RG: yes, but explain a little because it is a general who was against torture ...

HO: so it's a general who fought in the Indochina war

RG: yes

HO: who was one of the youngest generals in France at the time, who fought in the Indochina and Algeria war, uh he was part of the Legion. And in Algeria he spoke out publicly against torture

RG: yes

HO: So he was put in a fortress for two months by de Gaulle

RG: yes

HO: he was put into early retirement

RG: yes

HO: and there he started, in order to live, he began to do training. And he met people who claimed to be non-violent and he was very interested and suddenly he became a staunch defender of saying 'it's not with the army that we are going to solve The problems'. There you go, and then ...

RG: but how to explain, how to explain finally - that's another subject - but in two words how to explain his, his click, his, the fact that he became a soldier and then he rebelled against torture

HO: because he said with torture we are no longer in the defense of values

RG: yes

HO: he believed that the army made it possible to defend certain values, and certain systems etc.

RG: yes

HO: but with torture we went to a stage that was no longer human

RG: ok

HO: there you go, and that deeply shocked his values. And then no doubt that he had seen sufficiently everything that was happening in Algeria in particular, he was no longer ready to support a colonial army.

RG: yes ok, so he worked with you

HO: so he worked in circles that we were in contact with, it was the Movement for non-violent alternative (MAN) at the time

RG: yes

HO: and then we got in touch with another general, General Bécam, who had taught him at the Paris War School

RG: yes

HO: and who had a political approach saying, in principle we say 'this is how we are going to defend ourselves?' before asking 'what are we going to defend?'

RG: yes

HO: so obviously it is the means that determine the end, and he says 'no we have to take up the problem again, what do we want to defend in reality?'

RG: yes

HO: a political approach and at that moment we look at what are the means which are ... then there are probably military means but there are also civilian means and why not non-violent means

RG: ok

HO: he was a guy who was very open

RG: yes

HO: we sympathized a lot, he came to lead courses here, it was very, and then because of the Larzac fight, I got in touch with Admiral Sanguinetti

RG: yes

HO: which had been put on reserve by Giscard d'Estaing because he had ... Admiral Sanguinetti had denounced Giscard's plans to suppress the French fleet

RG: ok

HO: Sanguinetti was very Gaullist and he said 'this is too dangerous what is happening'. So Giscard retired him but suddenly he let him speak, and he started to be very, very critical of everything the army was doing while remaining a convinced soldier and all that.

RG: yes ok

HO: but he came to support the farmers of Larzac

RG: but he shared your ideas, he was ...

HO: not at all

RG: no?

HO: not at all but he said this camp extension project, it's a speculative project

RG: ok

HO: and so he brought us the background which understood us, which allowed us to interpret all the facts that we had. And indeed we had plenty of facts which proved that it was a speculative project, which had nothing to do with the needs of the military.

RG: ah okay, land speculation

HO: there you have it, that is to say that there are people who were close to power

RG: yes

HO: who came to buy land here and who pressured the government to decide on the extension of a military camp

RG: ok

HO: and he told us 'in 40 years of military career, there is not a project for a port, barracks, airfield, military camp that does not start from speculators'

RG: ok

HO: there you have it, so military as he was and he strongly defended himself against being anti-militarist

RG: yes

HO: and he told us 'be careful eh if you trap me, I make a clash and all'. We have always been very lawful, I said "no we are, we are still very lawful with you", and then he became a friend.

RG: yes?

HO: and it even happened at the time of the resumption of nuclear tests, to question the bomb

RG: ok

HO: there you have it, he had a very, very interesting journey, rubbing shoulders with us, respecting our differences but, and it's funny because, during the Larzac walk, when we walked up to Paris, when the peasants went up to Paris on foot

RG: yes

HO: in Orleans I led a meeting. There were 2,000 people, with Generals de Bollardière and Bécam and Admiral Sanguinetti

RG: ha ok

HO: (laughs) it was a big political blow there

RG: but that was in ...

HO: that was in 78 yes

RG: ok

HO: December 78... but Sanguinetti is still on the reserve. But I told him 'no we will not trap you, we promise, I guarantee we will not trap'. What created bonds of trust ...

RG: So before the center was built, finished, you had, you were ...

HO: we had already organized training courses, we already had this ... so that when we moved here, we ended up with weeks with 90 people

RG: ok

HO: that's it, and so we organized several courses at the same time, with outside trainers etc. It was a place, it was a very important militant place

RG: and you have welcomed people from, what sort of people have come?

HO: it was very much a public of teachers, of social workers. We realized that most of our audience was people who were in the relationship, who had a job related to the relationship

RG: yes

HO: there you go, and it was people who came from all over France, we had a lot of Germans too because I had links with Germany

RG: yes

HO: I maintained these links etc. with the Franco-German Youth Office and... so it all worked out well. So here, we had a community life, we shared goods, resources, and all that

RG: yes

HO: we did a whole research on food, on renewable energies that's why we are electrified with a wind turbine

RG: yes

HO: that was done in time here. We built cisterns to collect water, finally we wanted to be both a more coherent place

RG: yes

HO: saying that anyway the energy problems, the energy supply is a military problem too. We can see it even better now than at the time

RG: since we are also working on Germany, have there been equivalents in Germany of the Larzac wrestling or of training centers as you have done here?

HO: there you have it, then there is a German who was very interested in the fight of Larzac and who created a bit the equivalent of Cun in Gorleben

RG: yes

HO: in the great place of, where there is the continuing struggle of..., the storage of nuclear waste in the north of Germany, to the north of, to the east to the north-east of Hamburg

RG: yes, what's his name?

HO: his name is Gorleben

RG: is that the guy's name?

HO: ah no so the guy's name is Wolfgang Hertle

RG: yes

HO: and he wrote a book on the Larzac struggle that I have in the library there. And so he has a lot, and I continue to be in touch, I will undoubtedly meet him next week in Paris at the Salon des Initiatives de Paix, there is a big salon in Paris for Initiatives of Peace.

RG: yes ok

HO: at the end of the week ... so he created a place to meet, train, etc., which continues

RG: yes

HO: also with ups and downs because there you have it, these are militant things and there is often a lot of ambiguity in there

RG: And is that, because I would like to examine your perspective a little, if there was a convergence or a divergence of perspective because at the beginning the struggle of Larzac was to safeguard the land, the lands of peasants?

Oh yes

RG: and you, you had a much more international perspective, much more I will say not political but ...

HO: yes, if it was more political, but it was already there, the peasants had already in 1974 there was a great harvest

RG: yes

HO: and they gave the money to the Sahel, to the peasants of the Sahel, there were already lots of international movements that were present in the Larzac, there we did not invent anything there

RG: ok

HO: we just followed the movement, in 1974, in 1975. When we arrived, the movement was already extremely politicized, it was internationalized. Of course the peasants said 'here we defend land but we defend a certain lifestyle, a certain right to work, we defend working tools', etc. They had been very influenced by the Paysans Travailleurs de, by Bernard Lambert

RG: yes of course yes

HO: there you have it, so there was an ambient political discourse and, and all the reflection on the army and all that, it had already started long before us, with Father Jean Toula, with Jacques de Bollardière who had already come. who had gone before us. No, we only capitalized on the things that were there, that were present, so it interested them I think to see this crystallize a bit here

RG: yes

HO: au Cun

RG: yes

HO: that's it

RG: and since you are talking about lifestyle, have you seen a connection between your political and internationalist commitment and a certain way of living from day to day here?

HO: so here it was for us it was obvious

RG: yes

HO: it was obvious, especially since there were in our team, people who were part of the community of L'Arche de Lanza del Vasto

RG: ok

HO: so at the time, there were in non-violent movements, there were roughly three currents

RG: yes

HO: the oldest current that came from IFOR

RG: yes

HO: which was represented by the International Movement for Reconciliation and which had been very active in 1974 because his, his permanent had presented himself in the presidential election, against the atomic bomb, René Cruse, the pastor René Cruse had the 'time

RG: yes

HO: good, and then there was the movement of Lanza del Vasto

RG: yes

HO: The Arch of Lanza del Vasto which was quite important at the time. There were several communities, with an international influence, and then Lanza del Vasto was known as a poet, well he was really a character.

RG: yes

HO: some disciples have said so. And in 1974 there was the creation of the Movement for a Non-Violent Alternative which brought together lots of non-violent groups in France, there were about thirty of them.

RG: ok

HO: here, with people like Jean-Marie Muller, General de Bollardi re, other less known activists including a researcher who could interest you as a historian, it is Jacques Semelin

RG: oh yes, yes of course

HO: there you go, and he was part of that group at the time, and Jacques Semelin published some very interesting studies

RG: yes, yes I ...

HO: on forms of civil resistance and all that

RG: yes

HO: besides, he has just created a foundation, you heard that, a foundation for, those called Mass Violence on the problems of genocide

RG: oh yes okay yes yes that's it

HO: with the sponsorship of Simone Veil

RG: yes

HO: because he was very busy, interested in the problem of genocide

RG: so he came here?

HO: so he also came here at the time, he was a grassroots activist at the time, he was a psychologist

RG: yes

HO: he was not at all a historian, it is because of his work on non-violence etc., that he became interested in history in fact

RG: yes, okay

HO: that's it

RG: and therefore there is ...

HO: there are these three main currents and we, us, and I was both very interested in the MAN, in its political discourse, but I also had the Christian fiber of the MIR and the interest in the practice community

RG: yes, yes

HO: so we saw each other as the ones doing the synthesis because there was a lot of tension between, in any case between the MAN and L'Arche at the time, they were people who were very, very, very opposite

RG: for what reasons?

HO: leadership in my opinion

RG: ok

HO: their leaders were very antagonistic as often the leaders between them

RG: yes, Lanza

HO: Lanza and Jean-Marie Muller in particular

RG: ok

HO: that's it

RG: ok

HO: moreover two characters who are very similar but precisely that explains their opposition

RG: ok

HO: finally the MAN said 'we want a political non-violence' and Lanza del Vasto said 'political non-violence is, is to empty it, it is to empty non-violence of its spirituality, of the essential than to make it political, so no 'etc.

RG: ok

HO: and we say to ourselves 'politics and community, spirituality is not incompatible'. But we didn't develop the spiritual side, that's it

RG: here

HO: none, we haven't developed the spiritual side

RG: yes

HO: maybe it was a mistake but at the time, I was with people, I would have developed it well, but since I was with people who did not necessarily share it. I didn't want to do something too much that would perhaps have marginalized us a little more than we already were, well it's difficult, it's difficult to do ...

RG: ok

HO: so we immediately developed a community life

RG: yes

HO: there you go, with sharing of resources, goods and all that. But it was also linked to a subsistence economy, that is to say that we had so few means that the best way to have them is to share them. And immediately we were very connected to the problems of health, food, energy, here it is, my children were born at home, all my children, my three children

RG: yes

HO: were born at home. We have, we were, we had an essentially vegetarian diet, we ate meat, once a week

RG: yes

HO: there you go, and then we tried very quickly to have renewable energies etc. For us, that was, that was our political commitment, in addition to the links with the Third World, with foreign countries and all that. We said 'it's no use doing politics if we don't start with ourselves'

RG: okay yes, of course... and so when you speak of a community it is a community of how many people?

HO: so it varied between four and thirteen roughly

RG: ok

HO: there you go, at one point we were five couples, because the objectors who came to do their civil service with us brought their girlfriend back, and at one point there were five babies, good (laughs). And then after they left, there was a considerable "turn over"

RG: yes of course

HO: and there is only me who stayed well there are still two people who stayed five years, six years

RG: yes

HO: but, but with hindsight, the paradox is that, therefore, we wanted to work on non-violence, conflicts and all that, but that we were a machine to produce conflicts ... internally

RG: here?

HO: yes, in our community

RG: but small conflicts between people are not the same thing

HO: no but that's where it starts

RG: but what kind of conflicts?

HO: it starts around communication, it starts around ... I had a very ambiguous position at the time because at one very moment, as there were tensions in, well who makes the decisions, who directs, etc., we had organized ourselves on this

RG: yes

HO: and we have, we met a professional, his name was Charles Maccio from Lyon

RG: yes

HO: who introduced us to self-management, for us it was obvious that the extension of community life was self-management

RG: yes

HO: good, and so he gave us all the keys to organize ourselves in a self-management way

RG: yes

HO: and, and I had the possibility of implementing it, except for a function which was the coordination function, which was essential

RG: yes

HO: because if everyone is responsible, someone must not be more responsible than the others but assume the responsibility of coordinating everyone

RG: yes

HO: and I took as a pretext that I was the leader of the group and that therefore if I took this responsibility, I would accumulate all the powers

RG: yes

HO: which was actually a lie to myself. But that's how I experienced it. So this place was never taken because it was a shitty stick we will say. Anyone who took it was afraid to come into conflict with me since my power was occult as a leader.

RG: yes

HO: also occult, not only but also. And what means that, that we broke the figure from an economic point of view, we did not hold out from an economic point of view ... we got into debt, in debt, in debt with loans from friends and all that and then there was a moment when the internal tensions were too high

RG: yes

HO: and so I said okay well we stop because we can no longer get into debt now. We'll have to pay back, that was in 2001

RG: so there is no longer a community?

HO: so there is no more ...

RG: from 2001 ...

HO: No then, there was a slow evolution because our community system meant that we were on the fringe of legality for everything that was, salary declarations or income tax declarations and all that. And so from 1992 we brought in a person in the community who was responsible for managing the accounting stories and all that and who little by little brought our accounting up to standard but also said now we have to declare wages

RG: ok

HO: and then, and then there was, my wife, for example, was part of community life but afterwards she was no longer there. So we had couple situations that were quite complex or one was in the community, the other was not, so it was more livable. So we started we said good now we use salaries, so at the time it was salaries it was half the minimum wage

RG: yes

HO: that's it, but, but we still managed to live well because it was half the minimum wage, but there were other advantages. There were lots of advantages, lots of costs that we did not need to have personal cars since we had a car for the community. We didn't need to have newspaper subscriptions since they were in the community, it was, there are many, many advantages.

RG: yes

HO: but, but we were not able, there were very strong questions linked to the drop in attendance at our internships, linked to the reception method we did, there are questions that we did not know how to approach all together and there is no one to remind us that it was absolutely necessary to address these questions

RG: yes

HO: so we spent a lot of time dealing with ancillary issues but substantive issues we didn't tackle

RG: ok

HO: and we have, that's how we had to stop, so we stopped the activities of the association which managed the whole

RG: yes

HO: and we broke them up into several associations. I created, I took over all the training pole and I created my own structure

RG: this center, the name on the door?

HO: IECCC yes

RG: yes, and how is the name?

HO: Conflict Culture Cooperation, European Institute Conflict Culture Cooperation...
uh and then we looked for another association to, to resume reception and accommodation activities

RG: ok

HO: that's it, the idea was it's no longer a single association that oversees everything but it's different coordinated associations

RG: ok

HO: it was kind of in the idea of eco-villages and things like that, which at the time was starting to, although, it was an idea that was starting to spread but I was very suspicious because I saw so many late sixty-eight people in there it was ... The first meeting took place here but it was, I thought I was thirty years ago, it's impressive. Ideologists who had never lived in community and who described everything that had to be done what, to live in community

RG: you don't see yourself as a ...

HO: but I was also an ideologue, and yes (laughs)

RG: yes and even an old sixty-eight man

HO: uh

RG: don't you see yourself as such?

HO: no, no, I didn't have too much, I was at the same time a mixture of conservatism ... I am rather conservative in my lifestyle and all that

RG: yes

HO: well I was not at all was overwhelmed, overwhelmed hm, I was rather overwhelmed, but not attracted by the revolt of 68, for me it was a revolt

RG: yes

HO: it was not a revolution, ultimately so much the better because revolutions always end badly but hey

RG: but Cohn-Bendit does not say better. He says it's a revolt not a revolution

HO: there you have it, and I didn't believe in the possibility of revolution

RG: yes

HO: on the other hand, I believed in the possibility, I still believe in it, of working on a daily basis, it's, it's ... We are consumers, we are daily actors and well, that's not what changes the world but that's what gives us hold in the world anyway. After how we organize ourselves, how we do it is another dimension, and in any case I am convinced that we will not do anything good with violence, even if it is the engine of the story it is not with that that we change things

RG: yes

HO: we don't change we only repeat, violence only repeats itself

RG: And do you find that for example in South Africa, people have, well I'm not saying followed you but they ... you appreciated this way of resolving conflicts?

HO: what happened with the change

RG: how do you say it ...

HO: with Mandela

RG: with the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, the

HO: the reconciliation commissions are yes, except that it is very beautiful as a process except that it stopped, this process stopped when it implicated people of the government

RG: ok

HO: because it was the government that launched it, it is there, and it is there that we can clearly see that any reconciliation process, it must involve everyone, and if it cannot question even the actors of today and well that can not work what

RG: ok

HO: so I have, I was the initiator but it was a, it was a collective production. Afterwards, I initiated a meeting in Paris in 1989 because we were celebrating, there was a lot of stuff, 200 years of the Declaration of Human Rights.

RG: yes

HO: but I was saying, it's good to declare Human Rights but how do we defend them and how do we promote them? And that there are only non-violent methods that allow it to be done

RG: ok

HO: so at the time we brought together people from South Africa, from Palestine, it's impressive the testimonies therein

RG: yes

HO: because for a certain number, the situation has changed a lot...

RG: and you have the impression that people are listening to you or are you in a movement that is being listened to?

HO: so, I would say, compared to 68 we had, there was a whole time and it was the time of Larzac when the non-violent people were rather plague-stricken

RG: yes

HO: because there were a lot of leftist militants eh

RG: yes

HO: even a guy like Pierre Vuarin was at the GOP at the time

RG: yes

HO: Left Worker and Proletarian [= Peasant Woman]

RG: yes

HO: well, then there were links that were created. So that changed things, but the non-violent ones we had to keep our heads down, it was interesting if we were doing political non-violence but above all we shouldn't tell more

RG: yes

HO: and there everything has changed, in thirty years the struggle of Larzac has shown the effectiveness of non-violence. Lots of circles who practice non-violence without saying it, so there are many more people who believe in violence, in the effectiveness of violence as a tool for change. But, but still, we see that there are in a fringe of marginalized youth a little bit of people who say 'well pff this world is rotten

so it can not be worse if we make it fart'. So we could very well go back to a period when there is a breeding ground of people who are very, very revolted

RG: yes

HO: and it would be enough for a few ideologues to put it back a bit, so it could be far-right ideologues too, they are not necessarily far-left ideologues

RG: yes, finally to come back to that period

Oh yes

RG: Pierre Vuarin told me that there were certain people who were thinking of violence on the set but he did not want to talk so much about it and I myself, I, that's a question I ask myself a little, were there still people who thought they were resisting the army by violent means at the time, in the 1970s?

HO: then, from the point of view of Larzac, on the, from the point of view of the peasants of Larzac, no

RG: no

HO: because they were all Cathos, Conservatives and all that

RG: yes

HO: eh even Jean-Marie Burguière I do not know if he told you, but in 1968 he said to the cops "go and type go". Well, so they were immediately convinced, finally, the leaders were convinced by the speech of Lanza del Vasto

RG: yes, yes

HO: by saying 'you have violence, you are not going to do anything, the passivity will go away and in the middle you can achieve something with non-violence'

RG: yes

HO: so from the moment the peasants knew how to manage, knew how to have authority over the movement, they said our fight will be non-violent

RG: yes

HO: no way, we have, we will not accept anything that comes out of this

RG: yes

HO: here, there were a few attempts eh, there was an attack here, something there, one day they were even given a hundred kilos of explosives

RG: oh yes?

HO: yes, and a peasant said 'well, it can still be useful, we will hide it', the problem is that it has been found (laughs)

RG: ok

HO: after the Larzac fight it was found, and behind Le Cun. One day there is a journalist from Millau who calls me saying 'Hervé there is explosive which was found in a cave in Le Cun, do you know where it is?' I said 'what, what are you talking about?' And immediately I saw the thing, that's it Le Cun suspected of ...

RG: yes, yes

HO: so I warned a farmer who told me 'oh yes shit it's true we hadn't thought of solving this problem with the prefect'. He immediately calls the prefecture and the prefecture says 'no in fact it's, it's nothing serious, not much'. But there were about a hundred kilos of explosives which had been hidden in a cave and the peasant had said "there no one will ever find them"

RG: okay, the explosives ...

HO: speleologists found it anyway, from the construction site explosive

RG: yes ok

HO: but that ...

RG: but brought in by an outside activist or?

HO: yes, yes it is the far-left militants of Millau who stung him on a construction site, because there are some who have, who have always more or less dreamed of making something blow up

RG: yes

HO: it was more for fun than for reality, but here the peasants have always been very clear. So even the far-left militants knew that it would be against the peasants of Larzac

RG: yes

HO: and the peasants were very helpful in welcoming people from all walks of life since there was from the extreme right to the extreme left in 1974

RG: yes, yes

HO: but by saying 'everyone has the right to express themselves but it is us who decide, in the last resort it is us who decide', that's it. And that, that was, that was the condition for the success of Larzac because we also said, well the peasants said 'you are coming to lay your bombs here but tomorrow it is we who have the army on our backs. is not you

RG: yes

HO: you, you will be gone '

RG: yes ok

HO: there you go, so it was a very, very important regulation method. So here there are certainly people who have, who have imagined but pff, anyway it was not the army that was, the army was in command ... and then gradually these militants, with the links that 'they maintained and all that, saw that the problems arose differently

RG: yes

HO: that using violence turned against the peasants ... it was in Occitan circles a lot, the Occitan circles of the extreme right and the extreme left, there were people who were, who really wanted to fight, but hey so there was this debate in the, among the militants, there was the debate violence, non-violence

RG: yes

HO: but for the peasants it was a solved problem

RG: okay, okay

HO: with, some for pure opportunism

RG: yes

HO: for others out of sheer scare, but that was the consensus

RG: yes

HO: there you go, others by intelligence

RG: but it was also the brand image of Larzac

HO: that's it

RG: non-violence

HO: and that's what made it so crowded at the protests because people knew they were safe

RG: yes ok

HO: there you have it, and suddenly that, suddenly it squared the criteria of public power in the face, they made big mistakes eh, since even in, in 77 when there was the rally in the military camp, when the peasants say we are going to walk in the military camp

RG: yes

HO: the prefect "authorized" the demonstration

RG: ah okay

HO: he got slapped on the fingers, he was told you don't have to authorize him, you have to forbid him or have to say nothing but you don't have to authorize him
(laughter at RG and HO)

RG: in 77, what happened?

HO: well in 77, we went out, there had been 76 with the prison

RG: yes

HO: and there was this whole cloudy phase of negotiation, not negotiation etc.

RG: yes

HO: and so we had to hit hard because the army, we could see that the army was gaining ground. But in public opinion, there are people who said 'Larzac is over and all that, the army took care of ...'

RG: yes, yes

HO: so the peasants said 'you have to hit hard, and we are not going to redo gatherings like in 73-74'

RG: yes

HO: we have to do something different. So we're going to demonstrate in the military camp, that's it... and, and with a large gathering... how?

RG: how long did it last?

HO: it lasted two days

RG: two days

HO: but the gathering in the military camp was punctual was punctual, it lasted a few hours

RG: yes

HO: but there was a gathering of social struggles in France

RG: yes

HO: there you have it, with the anti-militarism struggles, at that time there were soldiers' committees, that is to say soldiers unionized in the army who came to testify, and then there was everything that France was counting on militancy what, the Larzac remained an extraordinary gathering place on this side

RG: yes, okay

HO: with forums, stuff like that, there you have it, and then there was a demonstration of 50,000 people in the military camp, which went very well, very calm, just a rally, where the army before removing as many shells as possible and stuff like that so that there is no accident

RG: yes

HO: there you go, good

RG: they didn't prevent you from coming back?

HO: no, no ah no, ah well they knew that if they prevented, they knew that it would be, it would be the disaster therefore

RG: ok

HO: they preferred to let in and out and the peasants each time negotiated very precisely

RG: yes ok

HO: 'you stay at home, we do the order service there will be no breakage and all that', that's it

RG: which month was 77 in?

HO: it was August 77, until 15 days after the catastrophic demonstration of Malville

RG: ok

HO: so we were very scared on the set, we were very scared that the same thing would happen, the audience was on edge, the gendarmerie was on edge, we listened to all the conversations of the gendarmes because we had friends who were in a good position to have devices

RG: remind me why this demonstration was a disaster ...

HO: in Creys-Malville it was the first major demonstration against the breeder plant launched by Giscard

RG: yes

HO: and, and there have been groups of all, it's a non-violent, non-violent anarchist group called La Gueule Ouverte

RG: oh yes

HO: the newspaper La Gueule Ouverte which launched the, and they launched a big meeting but without organization, so in fact there were thugs from all over who came and there was a militant killed

RG: yes

HO: a gendarme killed I believe, a mobile gendarme too, and a gendarme who had a hand torn off by a grenade or something like that. So that plagued the anti-nuclear movement for a long time

RG: yes ok

HO: it was catastrophic here, and Giscard had decided that he would pass at any cost. He was defending nuclear energy so it was important not to let go. They put all the necessary strength into it, but opposite the organizers were completely incompetent, there was no security service there was pff, no, and then there are people who deliberately wanted to go to ...

RG:... the counterexample

HO: ah it was a disaster, we paid for this thing for twenty years

RG: because the people of Larzac were not focused on nuclear power, the nuclear issue

HO: well they were sensitive to what had happened

RG: yes

HO: because in 1975 there were a lot of contacts with Fontevrault, with the Fontevrault activists who had created a GFA, and then after in 79-80 we went to Plogoff to support, and then there was, that is very interesting the Larzac influenced Fontevrault, Plogoff in the west, and then Fessenheim, there was resistance in Fessenheim in Alsace, Wyhl in Germany at the time, and up to Gorleben

RG: ok

HO: therefore Larzac had a considerable influence on the anti-nuclear movement

RG: yes

HO: eh, he was a bit of a precursor

RG: have you been active in other movements north of yours and near....

HO: no, no, so I was on the coordinating committee of the MAN for two years and then left it because it didn't suit me at all

RG: yes

HO: it was too much, too much air, and then I was at IFOR for a long time, on the other hand, on the coordination committee of IFOR France, the MIR

RG: yes

HO: I even directed the, finally at IFOR France, at the French MIR

RG: yes

HO: it was an even smaller group but hey, I was editor of the Reconciliation Notebooks

RG: yes

HO: at the time. And if not, the Larzac would take everything from me

RG: yes... well one last question on the impact of those years... it's a question, well... It's undoubtedly a very simple answer, we try to, to judge a little the impact of struggles of the 60s and 70s in the lives of people in the sequel, well at home it's quite obvious

HO: it was my life (RG laughs) and it represented a lot of people, the Larzac represented a very, very important period

RG: yes

HO: that's clear, then because, because there was a festive dimension here which was very important

RG: yes

HO: people came in the summer and then there were some who came in the winter and all that but in the summer the Larzac is magnificent, it is a very beautiful tourist place

RG: yes

HO: a lot of things were happening, they are still happening, much less fortunately, we lived 24 hours a day. It was a bit exhausting too. There was a lot of fraternity between people, that's from the moment, from the moment when all these ideas of violence, I mean that, of course we argued, of course that there were people conflicts and all that. But there was a bad conscience to have them, there was no legitimation what

RG: yes, yes

HO: and therefore there was not a lot of work that was done on the link, and in the winter we saw each other every Wednesday in meetings but in addition on Saturdays we danced together, well there were groups all the time who arrived and we often celebrated

RG: yes

HO: and that, and that I think, that's what made the strength of this fight. It was both tiring because the peasants worked all day and all that and in the evening they were in meetings. But the relational dimension was a fundamental dimension, in addition you had to spend a lot of time listening to yourself, agreeing, the practice of consensus meant that you had to spend a lot of time on that.

RG: yes

HO: and that, now in training I reinvest it completely and in all the training that I do I ... as well I work in a business school in Toulouse where last week I was in Rodez, I created a training of trainers, so during nine internships I will have the same people and we keep insisting on the relationship, the relationship, the relationship. It's good production but we are efficient, we have plenty of tools I can give you more and all that, but on the relationship they are incompetent what, if only to do a little exercise. I give them a quick decision-making exercise, there is a demo that's going to happen a racist attack, do you go to the demo and all that, and well all right then the banners, who goes and all that and then ask the question of the one who is afraid of demonstrations and all that. No, there isn't, so they block

RG: yes

HO: so we are going to pass in force, the group will break up, finally here it is

RG: ok

HO: the classic thing

RG: very interesting ... well I think we can stop here, thank you very much for your testimony

HO: but please

RG: Thank you.