

Klinika: Struggle for autonomous space in Prague

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Czech republic is a country of „political stability“. In despite of general disillusionment in capitalism no social movements haven't emerged yet. Whereas in other countries social protests and demonstrations underway at least, in the Czech republic demonstrations against neoliberal austerity can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Moreover even the radical left, anarchist and anti-authoritarian activities were in decline after anti-IMF and anti-NATO summit protests at the beginning of 2000's and squatting practically disappeared.



The situation began to change slowly after the eviction the last squat in Prague in 2009. In the next years the squatting has become important repertoire of action of the small radical and autonomous milieu in Prague. In despite of police repression and quick evictions of the squats, activists used the squatting as a tool in struggle against real estate speculations, and as a symbolic challenge the dogma of private property as one of the cornerstone of capitalist ideology in the Czech republic. After 2012 only one squat (Cibulka) remained, but squatters brought attention to the issues of speculations. Besides this symbolic struggle there was long-term effort in autonomous milieu to open squatted social center as autonomous space for radical and anticapitalists politics.

At the end of November 2014 squatters occupied a building of a former clinic that belongs to the state and which had been empty for more than six years. Functioning as a transit place for drug-users, the clinic was perceived as risk place by the locals. In addition, the clinic is located in the Žižkov neighborhood, Prague 3, a municipal district with a number of relatively active citizen initiatives and with a strong, although oppositional, position of the Green Party in the local municipality, which openly support the squatting. During ten days the squat held regular program of Autonomous social center Klinika attended by many people from different environments, as well as by residents from the surrounding area. Squatters assemblies organized every evening were visited by increasing numbers of people, attracting up to seventy people. Squatters also managed to gain positive framing of their effort even by the mainstream media and also obtained a support from several famous actors, musicians, from small NGO's, citizen initiatives, unions and ordinary people.



After ten day the riot police evicted the squatted social center Klinika, but the public support increased. After eviction spontaneous demonstrations, protest and happenings followed. Five days after the eviction squatters organized a demonstration to support Klinika which was attended by almost one thousand people, making it one of the biggest demonstrations in Prague in 2014. After the end of the demonstration riot police arrived and attacked and arrested the squatters' spokesman, attracting more media attention and raising public support for Klinika.

After three months of the struggle with demonstrations, happenings, cultural events and negotiations squatters gained free agreement for one year. But the future of Klinika is uncertain because the General Inspection of Security Forces wants the building. Moreover at the end of April the police launched the operation against left terrorism with big media publicity. According to police alleged threat of the left terrorism is due to contention about social center Klinika. Klinika has inspired and mobilised a lot of people. Squatting is currently enjoying an unprecedented attention of the society and has become a hot topic. It is a hope that after years of decline the radical left autonomous politics could draw breath. The future is open.

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