



Saturday 21st December 2013

International demonstration

Start: 2 pm Rote Flora Hamburg

Defend Rote Flora - enforce Esso Houses! Against racist conditions - right of residence for all!

With an international demonstration in Hamburg on 21st December, we want to make clear that any attempt to evict the Rote Flora will lead to massive resistance. We focus on the current struggles for the Esso Houses, the right of residence for refugees and the radical criticism on repression and so-called danger zones (areas where the police have extended rights to arbitrarily control and arrest people).

In October of this year, the 24 year old squat Rote Flora has announced a campaign for its defence. Former owner Kretschmer and investor Gert Baer intend to end the squatting state of the former municipal building and to file a lawsuit against the current land development plan for the area. They have announced to develop the Flora into a 6-storey building including a concert hall for 2500 visitors, an integrated district cultural centre, commercial and office premises as well as a day-care centre and a 3-storey basement garage. For realisation, it is intended to found a limited company with international investors.

Remain incompatible!

Baer and Kretschmer are criticising publicly that the Hamburger Hafenstrasse was not evicted in the eighties and declaring the Rote Flora a contrary political model. According to their press release, the objective is demoralisation of the squatting scene and, by

smashing the Flora, not to offer a perspective for new squats any longer. Ideologically, their attack does not only target the Rote Flora as a single local project, but they understand their commitment as a political statement against squatting in general. In the meantime, Baer calls the multiple hundred users of the house a „criminal and terrorist organisation“.

Due to the concrete threat, in a plenary assembly it was called for countrywide and international solidarity action. Even before any money sources develop hope for profit maximisation, inter-regional headlines and deterrence shall create a negative image of the investor project and make clear that such a plan leads to damage rather than gain.

The Rote Flora will not rely on appeasement by policy or public institutions. Redevelopment as well as land development plans can change as well as positions of politicians and media. In addition, the Senate's approach primarily seems to aim at moving away from the line of fire. Inconvenient decisions are handled via the private economy through privatisation, while politicians wash their hands of responsibility. Not only does this remind of the Esso Houses at the Reeperbahn threatened by demolition, but also of the conflict regarding the Ungdomshuset in Copenhagen. It was always pointed out by the Rote Flora that the

actual conflict primarily is one about city and society itself. The argument is not only about the building at the Schulterblatt, but is part of and refers to the conditions surrounding it. We are fighting not only for the preservation of the house, but for the Flora as a political project and political idea. We are aware that we probably can prevent a potential eviction politically and in advance only - through broad solidarity and strong movements, moving not only from a defensive position, but originating from the change of circumstances.

Shut down fortress Europe!

The refugees' countrywide fight for a right of residence marked the last months and weeks. For weeks, spontaneous demonstrations and protests were taken to the streets of Hamburg, in order to stop racial controls preparing the deportation of the Lampedusa refugees. Through various forms of protest and action, in motion independently and uncontrolled, it was possible to temporarily push the state government on the defensive. In the meantime, an attempt is being made to split up the group of Lampedusa refugees by using the Church leadership as a lever for Senate politics. Therefore it is even more important that the entire protest range speaks out clearly and determined. Permanent stop of the racial controls is no object of negotiation in the conflict for a right of residence of the Lampedusa refugees. The right of residence is not a question of the country of origin or a case-by-case review representing a deportation on instalments. Permanent, unrestricted right of residence and freedom of movement for everybody - abolish Dublin II! While a lot of people showed their solidarity in Hamburg, Berlin and other cities, the last weeks saw a steady increase in racist mobilisations of residents and a series of arson attacks on accommodation facilities of refugees on the outskirts of cities as well as in rural areas. Racism still originates from the middle of society and state-run attacks on refugees support populist sentiments. Therefore an anti-fascist practice is and remains as essential as an anti-racist reference in urban political struggles.

Capitalist city development

Another example of how struggles in the city can refer to each other and connect are St. Pauli's Esso Houses. Over a hundred tenants are to be displaced to make way for a huge new building with luxury apartments. Existing clubs and shops shall close and be replaced

with high-priced business. An attempt is being made to play off tenants' interests against those of the residents. Policy has dropped every thinkable urban development alternative, in order to clear the way for the investor Bayrische Hausbau. First notices have been given for spring 2014.

All options for a preservation of the building or a redevelopment on behalf of the tenants and residents were blocked, all doors shut. Only broad protest and a resistance that's becoming radicalised seem to be able to overturn the allegedly hopeless situation. Although the composition of the resistance in St. Pauli is much more heterogeneous, the Rote Flora and the Esso Houses face an amazingly similar problem. The city is passing the conflict into private hands and acts as if uninvolved. As a result, massive protest and escalation seem to be the only perspective against a policy that is trying to enforce its political targets as capitalist practical necessities.

For expansion of the struggles

Worldwide, cities are places of political struggles which frequently refer to each other and connect. When people are demonstrating against gentrification, eviction and increasing rents in Istanbul, Athens, Barcelona, Frankfurt, Berlin, Amsterdam or Copenhagen, not only the issues and architectures of investors overlap but more and more often the experiences of protest and political goals as well. Political movements are newly created and evolve from the cities' social basis. The fight for Rote Flora's preservation is intersecting with struggles of other squats and urban district projects worldwide. There is tenants' resistance against revaluation and displacement, protest against privatisation of urban life, self-organisation and sabotage against repression and the inhuman system of deportation and sealing off borders.

The Rote Flora is only one of many places currently reflecting these conflicts in protest. For us, this is not about a single project, not only about the Rote Flora, the Esso Houses, the Centro Sociale or other contested spaces. It's about a radically different understanding of city and society. About trans-boundary solidarity, a practice of appropriation and socialisation of the existing, an attack against capitalist constraints and patriarchal norms.

Right to the City – Fight Capitalism! No Border - No Nation!

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