“Come and get food, Motherfuckers!”

The call, in a slight accent, echoes down the marble steps of the squat—the daily common meal is ready. In many ways this call for food encapsulates the nature of squatting in Greece. There is a complex relationship between squatters, a familiarity born of a shared life and a shared enemy. There is also a challenge, and slight but perceptible pressure to maintain relentless social contestation, always working, pushing towards the Idea. The results can take multiple forms, actions, demos, art, theater. A number of the squatters use art as a weapon. They paint, they build installations, they alter and manipulate the urban environment—joyfully. They plot, they plan actions, they look for openings in the armor of the Social Enemy to strike and cause harm. They speak of love and hatred, with no embarrassment. There is camaraderie, days spent talking, laughing, shadow-boxing, spray-painting or wheat-pasting on the walls of the squat. One of my most profound memories is hearing laughter ringing through the building as the younger squatters horse around late at night. Finally there is a fierce and abiding loyalty—made of living, working, fighting together. I knew, once accepted
into the squat, that whatever happened no one there would ever de-
liberately let harm come to me, and my Comrades knew that I was
committed to them in the same manner. This, of all things, proves
the worth of living in common, in Commune. Physical, emotional,
spiritual safety in the world is a joke perpetrated directly by the So-
cial Enemy—how much better do anarchists do it! Face to face, the
commitment becomes real—a material thing, not some nightmare
uniformed asshole threatening prison, parole and degradation. I’ll
take the threat of several black clad figures in the middle of night
acting on conscience to help a Comrade over a cop loaded with laws
and punishments. Some of the squatters are guests, visiting from
almost every point on Earth, though during my time—primarily Eu-
rope, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and the USA. Others are long-
term, mostly Greek, and the occasional American.
Almost everyone takes turns prepping food, and sitting an early
morning defense shift, the only two real "chores" at the squat. Ev-
erything else is pretty much left to chance, cleaning the toilets,
sweeping and mopping common areas, emptying ashtrays, occa-
sionally standing outside on the street when things in Exarcheia
get tense, and making tea or sweets for the Assembly. This arrange-
ment overburdens some folks, and it underburdens others, which
is the nature of non-coercive social relations. Something to be ac-
cepted, not denied, nor decried. It’s the way things are.
The squat I found myself in is considered one of the “blackest,”
meaning that most of the explicitly political squatters are either an-
archist individualists or nihilists. Other squats tend to be less black,
more red—meaning anarcho-communist, syndicalist or some stripe
of collectivist. Some of the finer points of theory are abandoned in
favor of an all-out coordinated effort at defending the community
from police incursion. Even the authorities registered surprise in
the main stream media after the night of rioting, going so far as to
authorize a few patrols near Exarcheia Square by cops in armored
jeeps. This presence was quickly curtailed, the authorities realiz-
ing that the provocation was hardly worth the potential backlash.
In fact only one squat bowed out from the defense of Exarcheia—
and it came under criticism for what was seen as a real inability to
play well with others.
“Motherfuckers! I said food!”
The reminder, this time registered with some anger by the cook,
is greeted with muted derision and groaning by the residents. It’s
early by squatter’s time—1pm—and those left in the building are
sleeping. I drag myself out of bed, force down a coffee and make a
plate of food. It’s good— potatoes, rice, salad and some kind of fried
meat. Could be seafood—eel maybe.
I talked to the cook later that day and asked about the meat, she
said,” Sheep cheeks and tongue...good right?”
I smiled and said,” Really good, thanks.”
Like the meal, living in commune is like that. The more you try
new stuff, the better it gets.