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Reclaim the Streets in Brussels

CrimethInc.

October 17, 2006

One month and a half of full time meetings and action. The real activist way of life. One goal, and working on it. People who knew each other from before, or not. Different communities meeting up for a special event. Just because the word passed on. And mails and posters. And nightlife. And never-ending meetings. Discussions. Why. How. Where to, from there. Drawing and studying plans. Writings. Paintings. Four hours of sleep in a week. Yet not much exhaustion. Bad or no food. Changing clothes from time to time, to disguise. And some burning cars and buildings in the city to keep up the courage, for some guy who died in jail. Meetings. Not only plenary, but also just meetings: Beautiful people. A whole life in the game. Because *we're taking it*, this city. Faith, sometimes. And doubts. And not much time to think anyway. Coffee. Insomnia visions. The sight of death because of too much life. A different space/time. No house. Home everywhere. Everywhere where is our people. "Home is where the heart is." Tension, stress, fights also.

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And then D day. Didn't even see it come. Suddenly we've got to go to the place, it's time. From the squat we opened the week before (where now two hundred and fifty people live) we've got to walk four hundred meters down the boulevard. That's four hundred meters full of bullet-proof vans. Down to the place, it seems we're late. People are gathering there. Hundreds of them. Those we know and those we don't know. And the blue jeeps keep a bit aside. "Permanent street party—let's be uncontrollable," says a banner. The sound system gets on the park and starts out. "Brussels bastards," they sing to start off. Hip-hop beats and hardcore lyrics. And shoutings. Tension is there, liberating. Balkan instruments and samba bands on other sides. Then we start moving. With us, hundreds of anti-riot cops. And that's a party. So there we walk a hundred meters and we're encircled. Walls and walls of them. The same number of people on each side of the war. Three water canons and the helicopter, just above. Our beats are still stronger. But we can't walk anymore. They're just not listening. As someone is trying to talk, people dance, juggle, write chalk, screen-print, paint the walls, sing... But we've got to go back. They're sending us to the park we got out from. They're armed and we're not. It seems like they're more numerous than us. But, hey, we go to the right! So eventually they allow us to go up the boulevard, for five hundred meters. Back to the squat up there. Some people there have a speech and some strong hip-hop times. And we have to go down. The same way. Just a stupid come and go on the boulevard. That's what they give us. So let's go down. When we get there, more lines waiting for us... leading us back to the park. But, no, we're staying to the street.

"Rhythms of resistance" playing "Reclaim!"... And hell yeah, the door opens on the right, we're making it! A banner drops: "we're not counter-current swimmers; we're going out of the river: EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE." Teargas and sticks beating. Dozens of people fighting back. Five floors. An old restaurant downstairs. A sudden concert inside, and infoshop, and

paintings. Still hundreds of people outside. Reclaim the streets, reclaim the city, reclaim your life. Two squats on the same main boulevard. And we're inside. "Zero tolerance," they announced. We're inside and the helicopter's at the window. And everything: the water canons, at least eight hundred cops. And the captain crying. He disposed of his men so well, but didn't expect this. *Always have an idea in advance.* They're filming, that's all they can do.

Living together. Working on the house. See films about old struggles in Brussels and have great talks, together with people from the neighborhood, about resistance and its limits, about communities and conquests. About Autonomous movements from the 70s in Italy. About last year's experience in France. About how to be together and be more effective. Writing together on urbanism and how to take back our lives in the metropolis, which has only been built against us. And go walk around together. And talk. Love affairs. And still no sleep because we don't want, because life is too intense, too beautiful for it. And being together, for the good and for the bad. And plotting together. General assemblies. Many discussions. Other occupations ahead. Universities and houses. *Because there's not enough space.* And, yes, we're making it, this revolution. Only, Revolution is not good enough for us. We're building the world. We're building *worlds*. We're making History and destroying it. Tomorrow we'll probably be thrown away (this is written after half past five in the morning, the time they usually come, and still nothing moving in the streets), and we'll then be somewhere else: they cannot get rid of us. *There's something going on. Rebirths.*