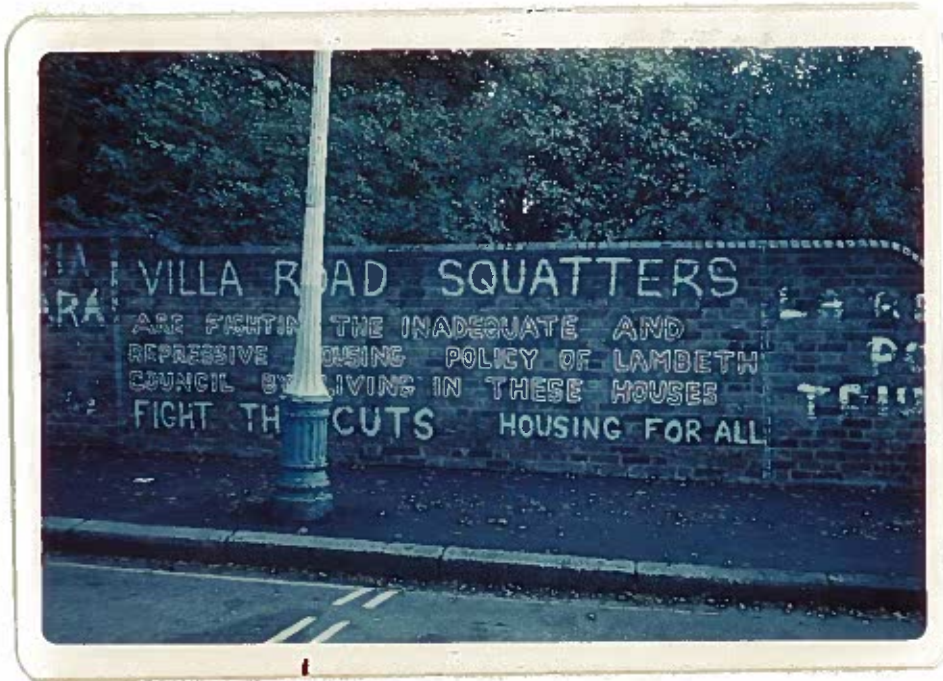


DIALOGUE ON THE SQUATTERS' MOVEMENT

Assembled and Edited

by

Tom Burrows



LONDON - ENGLAND

NICK WATES AND

CAROLINE LEWIN, ARCHITECTS

C.L.

Squatting in England is really unique in terms of the legal status of the squatter, because it is not a criminal offence - not a criminal act. Squatting has been protected by a law that came into force in 1381, as a result of the Enclosures Act, which caused a great deal of poverty amongst small land owners. They had been deprived of their land and, therefore, unable to live. There was a tremendous amount of unoccupied land lying all around them, which they could have used to earn their livelihood. Therefore, that Act was introduced to protect that land and enable them to survive and it remained more or less unchanged apart from small procedural changes in the law.

The Councils have waiting lists for their own homes, homes which they own and, in many cases, the waiting lists may be 13,000 long. Thirteen thousand people on the waiting list and yet the Council will only be rehousing 500 of them each year, which means you have to wait for 26 years before you can get a flat.

N.W.

The Squatters' Movement in 1968 began because, at that time, there were thousands of people who were either completely homeless, i.e. sleeping out, sleeping rough or sleeping in old cars or they were in care in temporary accommodation in hostel accommodation of the local authorities. There were thousands of houses just left empty for a whole variety of reasons, because they were in areas which were



Nick Wates - continued

zoned for redevelopment or because landlords, spec-owners would leave their houses empty because it was more profitable to leave them empty than to fill them up. In fact, there was a government census in 1971 that said that there were 100,000 empty houses in London alone and over a half a million in the whole country, which is really quite phenomenal. And at the same time, there was this pressure on housing. The Squatting Movement started by a group of activists who had been taking direct action to attain better conditions in hostels for homeless people.

By 1974, 1975, five years after the movement had started, authorities estimated that there were 30,000 people squatting in London and about 50,000 in the country as a whole.

C.L. One thing that I'd like to mention is how squatting affects political consciousness in the individuals involved. For moral people, the act of breaking into a house for the first time really contravenes all the beliefs and principles they have been brought up with and particularly if they've come from middle class backgrounds to whose parents the idea of private property is sacred and the homes are very sacred places. The act of breaking and entering a house is one of the first steps in politicizing(those) individuals who become squatters and I think this has led to the growth of a political awareness that is seen among the very strong squatting communities in the country which previously did not exist.

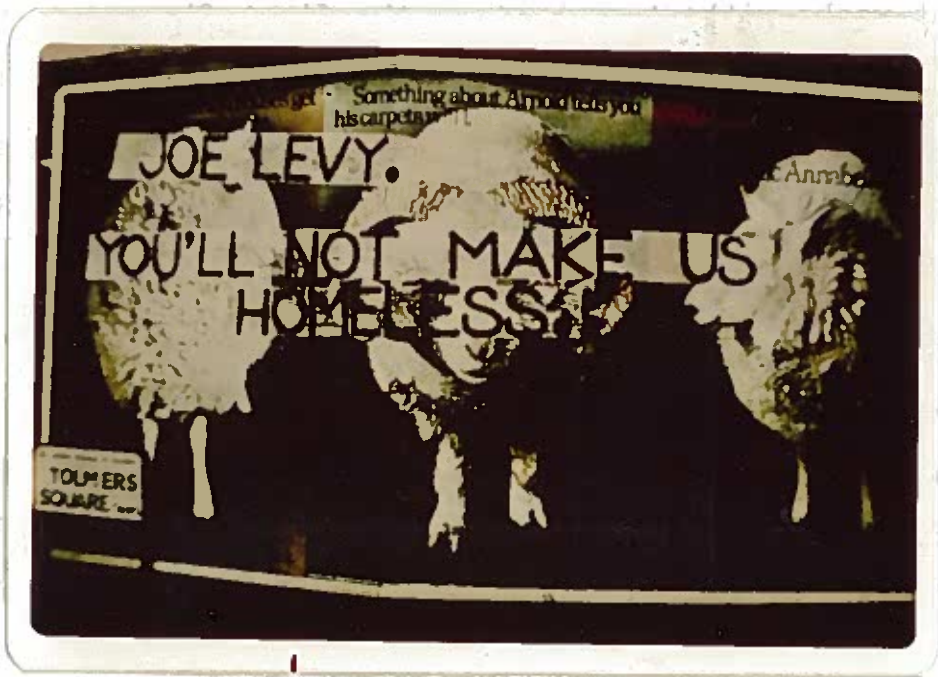


GUY FOX STREET CELEBRATION
AT THE TOLMERS SQ. SQUAT.

C.L.

Initially it was hopeless because many.... well I think for all of us it was the first time ever. It was a privately owned property. We felt terribly insecure. We thought we'd be out within two weeks. We spent the first eight weeks without any water, the first five weeks without any electricity and winter was coming on. It was October. It was a very, very cold October. I Think that there were eight of us. And the fact that it was such a hard time initially meant that we became incredibly strong as a small household unit and very, very communally minded. And I think that really helped carry us through.

Usually, when one moves into an empty house, one that has been empty for any period of time, he finds that basic installations such as plubming and electrical installations are totally inadequate. The lead pipework in empty houses is very valuable and often gets ripped out by thieves or vandals and also electrical wiring might be very antiquated. These very basic repairs are things which most squatters are faced with as soon as they move into a property. There is so frequently a threat which requires some kind of organization and also, because of this, mutual need for the mutual support, in terms of borrowing euipment, sharing baths and so on. Sharing tools for a knowledge in skills for how to do up housing - perhaps organizing community cafes, community restaurants, community shops, developing printing presses for printing, dealing with publicity, organizing concerts and other events too, both for the benefit of the community and also to raise money for campaign-



Caroline Lewin - continued

ing or for repairing houses. Some squatters actually collect almost a rent amongst themselves, which goes into a common fund which can either be used to do up houses or to pay for defending themselves against evictions, or for anything else which the community wants to do.

N.W. And, of course, squatting hasn't always been, isn't always rosy. There have been lots of cases of squatting in a very disorganized way with people going in and rather than repairing the houses actually making them worse, destroying them - taking the bits to be sold off and so on. There have been a lot of cases where squatters being antagonistic to the different culture of the local people and there have been all kinds of battles and street fights and so on between squatters and tenants. I mean squatting is a desperate response to a desperate situation, really.

C.L. Next door, at One, there lives a family with a young child who had been squatting. They're Sicilian and they had a cousin who lived in the house and told them they could have the ground floor they'd come out of. They occupied it and it wasn't until a summons was issued on all the squatters in the area that they, themselves, knew they were squatters. They never realized themselves, let alone the rest of us, that they were squatters. I don't know how many cases there are like that in London.

 One important point to make in defining squatting is that squatting is the occupation of an unoccupied property, so that all these popular myths that have gone about us in



Caroline Lewin - continued

the past, where people go on holiday and come back and find squatters in their house are not strictly correct, because those people are not squatters. If the house was occupied, then they are more or less common burglars and that is a criminal offence.

I. Are they always charged accordingly?

C.L. They can be, but cases we've heard of are so few and far between that it is difficult to set a general standard if something like that happens. But you can just go along to your local police station and get them to remove them if you find squatters in your house when you come back from holiday because they are not squatters.

As far as any accidents or anything like that is concerned, we know of no instances whatsoever, where there have been disastrous deaths, accidents, as a result of squatters interfering. We know far more disasters and accidents that have been caused by deliberate neglect of houses by landlords. In this area alone, two houses completely collapsed only a couple of years ago as a result of deliberate neglect.

N.W. And the tenants were still living in them at the time and they just ran out of the building on time. They were woken up by a rumbling sound.

The other big impact of squatting, in terms of local politics, is that squatters in several cases have been able to play a major part in changing or opposing new development proposals. Quite frequently squatters have moved into an area which was due for demolition because of



Nick Wates - continued

a road scheme or redevelopment purpose, or something like that and, by being active, they have been able to make the legislature change its mind about some aspect.

Frequently squatting has been used as a political protest. A very good example of this is the classic case now of Centrepont, which was an office block built in the centre of London by an office developer who then just left it empty for 12 years or so, an extremely long time because office rents were rising at the time so it was cheaper for him to wait, leave it empty and hope that he would get a high rent next year and this was just so intolerable that he was allowed to leave this building empty at a time when there were thousands of people home-less, that a group of people organized a demonstration squat for this building and one of them became a security guard and worked at guarding the property and then let everybody in at night and they occupied the place for a couple of days and then left, and even paid money for the electricity bill when they were there. The purpose of that was purely as a political protest against the fact that people were allowed to leave office blocks empty at a time when thousands of people were home-less.



SQUATTER GRAFFITI - AMSTERDAM

**"ARE YOU ONE OF THE 100,000
PEOPLE WHO ARE BEING FORCED
TO LEAVE THE INNER CITY OR
HAVE YOU ALREADY LEFT"**

AMSTERDAM

AUKE BYLSMA - COMMUNITY ORGANIZER
HANAP - SQUATTER

A.B. In Amsterdam, the need for houses is very, very great. On this moment, there are officially 30,000 people who urgently need a house, but the real number is much bigger because you can only subscribe yourself as a person working, you need a house, you are above 25 years and then you have already been living in Amsterdam during more than two years.

One is always blaming a lot of people of the government or sometimes blaming squatters that they are taking houses before other people who are waiting, who are on a waiting list. I think that's not true, because, in general, squatters are taking houses which are too old or partly damaged or they convert buildings which are not belonging to the existing spots into liveable houses or into liveable dwelling place, so, in fact, squatters are adding living houses and dwelling space instead of taking. They are adding it to the number of houses which are there now.

In the beginning, squatting was very individual case. It was not really organized. Everybody squatted, took a house and there was no co-ordination between it. They changed in the beginning of 1970, when one of the members of the...some members of the former Pro-vo Party were coming in Parliament, the city Parliament, so called Kabouters, and they organized a squatting day on the 5th of May, the day on which we are celebrating the fact, the end of the war, the Second World War. So on that freedom day, squatting day



SQUATTER INTO CENTRE

The photograph shows a narrow alleyway between multi-story brick buildings. The buildings have dark window frames and some balconies. The alleyway is very narrow and appears to be a residential area. The caption below the photograph reads "SQUATTER INTO CENTRE".

Auke Bylsma - continued

was organized and a lot of buildings on that day were occupied - all buildings which stood empty for years.

The history, here in Amsterdam, especially in the Newmark area was at the end of 1970, when squatting was still a very individual case, it changed into a more organized one because the city government tried to get rid of a lot of squatters by cutting off electricity and gas and so on. During that time and before that time they refused always to give a replacement home even to your families and who had been squatting and so that a lot of neighbours were giving you electricity and water and so on. And, in the beginning of 1971, they were cutting off a lot of these lines just to get rid of the squatters. Then the squatters decided to occupy the head office of the gas and electricity department of the city government and they asked from that moment, they demanded gas and electricity for all the squatters in Amsterdam. The city government decided that we could get electricity and gas from that moment. Everybody who wants to pay for it can get electricity and gas when he wants it - every squatter.

The number of squatters in Amsterdam is, at this moment, about at least 10,000. So it's quite a group. And at this moment, the organization of squatting is developing more and moment the organization of squatting is developing more and more. For one reason there are a lot now, enormous amount of empty houses and to squat needs good



HOME IN A SQUATTED WAREHOUSE

Auke Bylsma - continued

organization, so we have at this moment five information points in Amsterdam where people who want to squat can get information.

Hanap

Squatting for me was not a political decision, it was just a decision because of the housing problem. No house any more means find another house and because the houses in Amsterdam are very expensive, you have to find another solution.

After you kept interested in a housing problem, about ownership problem and things like that, you have to be more aware about things going on - housing, well, everything. So they have quite a hassle of the political idea in yourself and that's when you approach squatting or you see anywhere a housing problem you have to make a decision afterwards, too, if you want to go on like that, if you are pleased with living like that. And maybe doing some more about it. So you start off by helping other people to squat and telling them what for, what's going on and what it's all about and it's not just that you live in a house but it's also that you live in a kind of society. What's wrong? So you get more aware about things.

A.B.

skd be
Nieuwmarkt
In the Newmark area, it was very much needed that squatters were co-operating. Co-operating because of the threat of eviction by the government and on the other hand



LEEUWENBERG SQUAT

WAREHOUSES, VACATED APARTMENTS & BOATS

Auke Bylsma - continued

because it took a lot of work just to repair the houses, which have often internally be damaged by the government just to prevent squatting. And, so in 1973 and 1974, we decided to found a sort of fund, a communal fund to pay out of this fund the repairs of the houses because otherwise some squatters would have to pay a lot and other squatters wouldn't have to pay much because they were coming in a house where not very much had to be done. So to spread the cost we organized a sort of communal fund.

After the Second World War more houses have been destroyed here, expecially in the lower-income areas, for profit reasons and so on. And we tried to stop that type of planning and, I must say, we, in some casses succeeded. We could stop some hotel plans, some office plans and some big university plans, very big ones, and we stopped the motorway right through our neighbourhood. We couldn't stop the making of the underground line through our neighbourhood, but we have stopped the rest in fact from building the underground lines. They are making one underground line now, but the rest will not be made anymore. So, in fact, we have had a lot of results.

We try to do something against now, the cars, I mean the cars are blocking a lot of the narrow streets. It's very dangerous for fire prevention reasons for instance. We have made a very nice circulation plan for traffic and so on, and about 90 per cent of the population is very much in favour of that and we try to get it through now and we have already been working on it four years. We have results,



COMMUNITY REBUILDING THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION

Auke Bylsma - continued

I mean, in the last year there was nobody killed in the neighbourhood by traffic anymore, while the year before, each year we had twenty seriously wounded persons and so on and at least two or three people killed by the traffic so as a result. Other things we are doing are making gardens on empty spots in the area because we can't have much gardens here and we try to make some communal gardens. Other thing is to take care of better light in the area and better....the streets are making repaired in a good way. And by improving the housing conditions and by converting a lot of existing empty store buildings, for instance, we try to raise the amount of persons who are living here and we try to prevent that the people are forced out of the inner city. And therefore, I mean, that's the reason that we try to maintain in that way the number of customers for the small shops. I mean, it's very important to them, otherwise they get killed. I mean the shops get killed and so on because the number of customers is declining very much.

The right wing party and the conservative parties are always talking about us as radicals and the left wings are always saying that we are right wings. The left party is always saying that we are right wing people so I think we are on a good spot, just between them and we can criticize all the two directions of political parties.

I don't believe in international organization or things like that. Even a very hard question to organize



"AMSTERDAM SUPPORTS CHRISTIANIA"
DUTCH SQUATTER MARCH THROUGH COPENHAGEN

Auke Bylsma - continued

your own community. Now international organization, I don't believe in that. But I think it's very good to see how other people are doing it and to know that all over the world a very spontaneous movement of self-help housing and so on is beginning at this moment, especially the last five years. It's developing more and more and it gives you a lot of hope and a lot of strength, you are not alone. That all over the world people are doing the same things and so on. And to get inspired by this, it's very important to look at each other's works. Some of the people of London are visiting us, some of the people of Copenhagen, out of Frankfurt, out of France and so on. The Christiania for instance, to give just an example. Christiania is a big self-help community in Copenhagen. When they were threatened with eviction, we made posters in favour of them and sent them to the Danish Embassy here and 50 of us we just going there to help them by repairing toilets and doing very practical things, with our tools and so on and that gives a lot of....it's for them a good mental inspiration to continue and for us we have learnt a lot from them, too.



DANISH MODERN

COPENHAGEN
CHRISTIANIA

VALIANT AND ESTER - SOCIAL WORKERS
NEIL HERSKIND - ARCHITECT
HEINER GRINGMANT - CHILD CARE WORKER

N.H.

If you want to live in the big city, you have to raise yourself early in the morning and join this whole machine running, you know, and it's running all the day long and the night too, I mean, and if you just can't fit in to that pattern you fall through it and then there's nothing really, I mean. And you see that happening and happening. So many people breaks down and institutions filled with people who can't bear it. I mean, in Denmark we have the highest number of suicides in the world I think. I mean, that's not special for Denmark in any case because you have the same problem in all big cities in the western world.

You build small apartments for the nuclear families and even you put them above each other or you put them out in small houses with each a little garden. It's still the same. But there have been a break with the new generation and that break is basically, you know, it's something really different, people want to live together in groups and collectives.

...back to 1970. At that time the military, the Navy, the Danish Navy in Copenhagen, left a very big area in the centre of the town which had been a part of the defence of Copenhagen for many years back. It includes about 220,000 square metres which you, I don't know, but it might be about 100 acres. And the city didn't know exactly what to use this, they didn't have any plans for this area



RECYCLING MATERIALS



NARCOTIC TRADING

Neil Hersking - continued

so it was just left free for the first time and after a half a year it was squatted by a lot of people from Copenhagen. They had this big place for themselves and it was squatted and most of the people would like to try to build up something new at this place. So they tried to form some rules for the area and it was simple rules like we didn't want any cars here and we want to try to build up everything with re-used materials. We want to run and rule the area ourselves and have a local kind of system in the area. And we would try, or people would try out there to make their own stores just selling things that wasn't poisoned and things that were necessary and not too expensive and after a while small production places like iron places and places where they were recycling materials, old different furnitures and stuff, fixing it up and selling it again. After a while then we'll make a little kindergarten out there and later on they'll come to school. In first time, sure it was a question of fixing up all these old different houses and heat them up and mostly it was done by firewood heating

The area had become a very popular area for all kinds of different groups of people, also for more or less criminal people and popular area too for narcotic people. Kids who run from their home could find a new place out here where the lay and system didn't care too much at first hand for them, where they could find a place, where they do what they liked to.

Neil Herskind - continued

The inhabitants grew at this place and after a year or two about 600 to 700 people lived at this place and it became kind of a free city in the centre of the big city of Copenhagen. It had now raised for about seven years and in this period it built it up to a kind of a real alternative to what we know of compared to different self-area and different small cities around Denmark and in most of the world.

HG. It's really limited what you can earn on Christiania, because you are living to those, from some people who live on a very low money level. But then it's some kind of community by serve each other. Those who are running the sauna, bath house, they get a special amount free foods from the food shop and they get their stove made at the blacksmith free, you know, because those they carry to their place to take their, each day, you know. So it's somehow change, changing natural goods without money. And those from the bakery, they are coming to take their bath there and they come with bread.

NH This functions so that people try to help each other. People who have more energy try to help people who have less energy. But the social structure of it is, of course, very much touched by the fact that it's in the centre of a big city.

V. A lot of persons pop in here are junkies and



WARDROBE IN A COMMUNAL HOME

Neil Herskind - continued

so they can't participate much. And yet a lot of people that don't have the same problems and that want to be accepted as a, you know, they are convicted and he's going to have to work and they put all their power into it and it is a lot of people who can't produce the same things, so it's not just based on a conviction to participate, it's based on, you know, Christiania and the ones that want to really be part of the collectives, they're going to have to give all their energy, no matter, if there are people who are not producing. You know, to be really into this collective and to become a member on this team here, you're going to have to be able to put yourself to work because that's the way the house works.

V.

We borrowed, I can't remember, two tractors, one truck and some other tools and have lent it to different parties at different times. And the machines still belong to the fund, so that we could decide who should have it most and people could ask for it. We were giving it to some major projects. First we gave the truck to a big circus tent, somebody had bought a big circus tent and they put it on the truck and then they get all their workings and stuff and they went around Denmark and campaigned against atomic energy.

N.H.

If I should tell anything about how the place is functioned now, then it must be seen in the light of this



BASIC DEMOCRACY

The following is a summary of the basic democracy program as presented at the meeting held at the factory on the 15th of the month. The program is based on the principle of basic democracy, which is a system of government in which the workers of a factory or other enterprise elect representatives to a body which has the right to elect and dismiss the management of the enterprise. This system is designed to give the workers a direct say in the management of the enterprise and to ensure that the interests of the workers are protected. The program is based on the following principles: 1. The workers of a factory or other enterprise shall elect representatives to a body which has the right to elect and dismiss the management of the enterprise. 2. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election. 3. The representatives shall be elected for a fixed term of office. 4. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election. 5. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election. 6. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election. 7. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election. 8. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election. 9. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election. 10. The representatives shall be elected by the workers in a free and fair election.

If I should like to explain about how the plan is functioning now, then it would be best in the light of this

Neil Herskind - continued

fight and this pressure all the time knowing that you might be thrown out tomorrow, that this whole thing might end in a couple of months or perhaps in a year. So in that light it is difficult to build up a kind of a structure for the place and it's difficult to build up a kind of future and make plans for the area, so most of the things going on is spontaneous. There's things growing, one thing by another and it's running up but the big group in the place is of course....have more energy than other people and is really working on the political side of the case and it is making a very big and hard job to make the government accept Christiania. But the structure which is functioning now in Christiania... The structure which is now functioning in Christiania is a kind of basic democracy where it's all divided up into small areas and each area have their hown meetings and taking of their own problems and problems concerning the whole area is dealt on the big Christiania meetings where all the different areas meet and ciscuss the things. There's no leaders at all and each time there's something that must be done, groups put it down to solve these things.

V. That means all the politicians that are running the society right now, they are pretty old, sooner or later they'll be finished. And we have to try to take over the responsibility for how things will develop. The young people have to, all their ideas that have been coming up.



NO MORE EXPULSIONS

DOMINIQUE(?) DELASSUS - PARIS

KATHERINE KIPT - SOCIOLOGIST

In France, as in other countries, once you have established residence in a place it's against the law for the policeman to enter. If they knock down your door they are breaking and entering and you can take them to court. The trouble is, though, that when they break and enter and they evict you, you are out in the street and the owner has his house back. It does you a lot of good to win a court case against a policeman who broke and entered your house even though you are still without the apartment.

We put on the doors a reminder to the policemen of this article so that they know we know it and they know that we are going to defend ourselves if they try to evict us. But it's not so much a question of laws, it's a question of what they call, in French Rapport de force, in other words clout, I think you might say in English. We have with us on our side...we have lots of the neighbourhood people, the neighbourhood associations are ready to come out and defend us. The left wing parties who will have a system of sirens so that when there's an eviction a siren will ring and everybody in the neighbourhood is meant to come running to our help.

These two groups they'll work together. The squatters are independent people who come and settle. But, in fact, the planning studio encourages squatting because it's...when there are people in the buildings it's much harder to tear them down. It makes it much longer, much



PARIS SQUAT

Katherine Kirt - continued

harder work for the renovation authority which is a public and private group mixed, as they call societe des mixtes, which is partly the city and partly private banks working together to buy up the land and to tear down the buildings and to sell it to developers. It's a result of an urban renewal project, which leaves a lot of the houses empty. Many of the houses are destroyed - deteriorated, as you say. The floors are pulled up and the windows knocked out and the doors walled up. With a lot of work these can be made habitable again.

In fact, we do pay rent. The rent we pay goes to the material we need to rebuild houses.

A charming family with several children, who ~~did~~'t want to move out, who are supposed to move out but nobody's capable of finding them another apartment with nine rooms in it, which is what they need because they have seven children..so they are still here and they are delighted that we're here because that means that their neighbourhood is not empty. They don't have to live next to an empty building.

In Bellvue, some other people squatted very briefly and were thrown out...they were tried and evicted the same day by the rapid procedure that they developed all of a sudden which applies to everybody. That was a private owner who managed to get the trial and eviction all done through in one day.



EVICTION IN BELLVUE

Katherine Kirt - continued

They were out of there in a great hurry because they wanted to do it before the first of November when there was this winter truce about squatters. They are not allowed to eradicate to get people in the winter. Especially as in France there is what they call "treve d'hiver"...you have this four months you are not allowed, you are not supposed to be able to legally evict people.

Other people in the neighbourhood, the local stores ...some help us. There's a pharmacy and a newspaper store across the way who aren't in the renovation area, but who help us in one way or another. The newspaperwoman gets up every morning at 5:30 to receive her newspapers and she's going to let us know if she sees policemen coming, as you can see them a long way away.

D.D.

Paris is going to become like New York city. I mean, that we keep on building more and more expensive apartments and it means that just regular people can't afford to live in them.... so they are just thrown out of the city or in an indifferent poor area of Paris. Well, this area's been preserved, more or less, until now, but some parts of Montmartre are being taken over because, the fact is, that some artists lived in the area earlier in the century so that's a way of making apartments more expensive.

I wanted to belong to some sort of group just because I had been living in different areas of Paris and



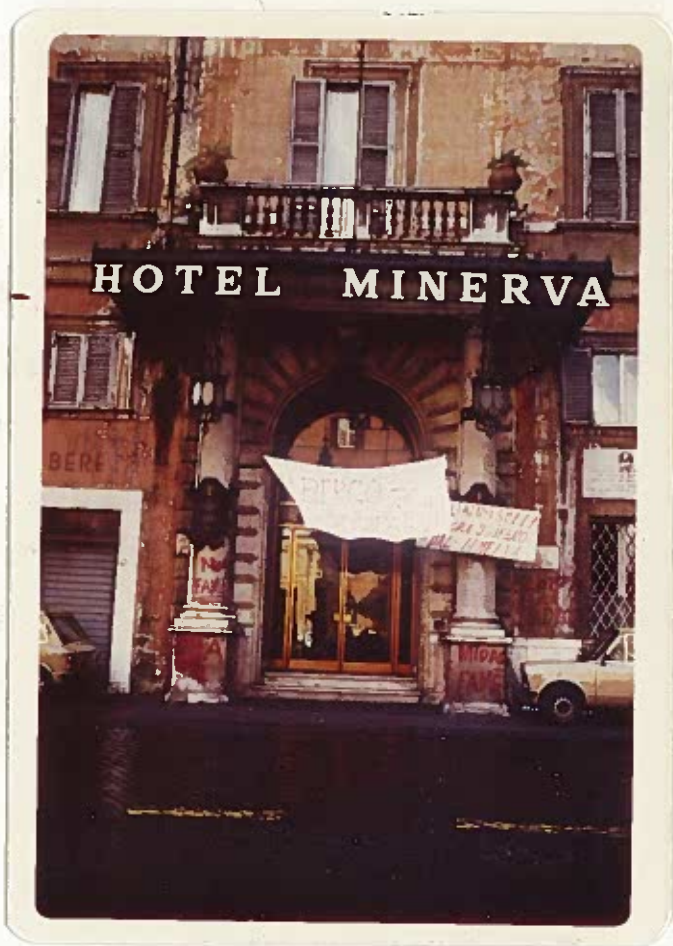
WARMTH FROM THE SUBWAY

GRATE

D. Delassus - continued

I spent my time going to visit friends all over the city and I felt like I was sometimes losing my time and I thought it was better to try to find, you know something near you.

V. So, you know, we squatted this place. In order to keep all the environmental groups of the area running, we needed a place to meet, to talk....so we squatted this place, not to live in this place, but just to provide all the groups of the area; the women's groups, the anti-nuclear groups, a place, you know, where they could get together and anyone keep in touch with each other.



ROME HOTEL OCCUPIED BY
STAFF AND FAMILIES

ROME

IDA CARNAVALI, SEC. PARTY RADICALS
 SIMON ROSSI - SQUATTER
 BRUNO FRONCI - SQUATTER

In Italy there is hardly any public sector housing and even more than in other countries new housing construction has been of luxury flats. It is common for these flats to stand empty for months or even years before high income tenants are found.

I.C. You know they....the government puts money, but nothing is done because the money stays in the bank and gives interest and the administrators take the interest so they don't pay for making houses. This is the problem. They use the money for their boats....

And mostly of the price they earn with the work, the worker is very low, very, very few money. The prices of the houses grow very big and the money that people earn goes lower and lower and lower.

BF Turin squatters have often been migrant families who have moved from the poverty-stricken south of Italy to find work. And in 1973 in Palermo, building workers moved in with their families to a block of flats which they had just finished building.

In 1976, an Italian journalist estimated that squatting in Italy "has already provided more than 70,000 lodgings in recent years...the activities of squatters no longer gets much coverage in the Italian newspapers. Squat-



SQUATTER SHACKS AT THE BASE
OF RUINS OF A ROMAN AQUADUCT
- ROME

85

Rome - continued

ting has become such a frequent affair, especially in the large cities, that it is no longer news."

I.C. Years ago, when those things started, they were not so badly viewed by the communist party but now that the communist party is the main instigator of administrations, he's afraid of those things because...they wanted a compromise with the Catholic group.

SR The Italian Communist Party has discouraged squatting, even calling squatters 'enemies of the working class'. By contrast, anarchist groups and groups of the revolutionary left in Italy and elsewhere have often used squatting as a tactic. In Italy, a recent trend has been the opening of community centres, which also act as bases for the extra-parliamentary political groups.

"We have siezed the housing which this city denies us because we make a living from precarious jobs at low salaries and because we are the worst hit by unemployment." They pointed out that landlords often refuse to rent flats to groups of women on the grounds that a group of women would only want to live together to set up a brothel.

I.C. We decide to occupy this place. Guerno Vechio is the name - in the centre of Rome, ancient Rome. It was three years ago. No it was two years ago. And we were a



SOFTENING THE COMMUNITY FOR
A FUTURE SQUAT BY MAKING THEM AWARE
OF EXPLOITIVE PROPERTY HOLDINGS.

Rome - continued

I.C. group of women, policial groups, mainly liberation....and we need really a place where to do our activities, political activities activities and our activities was and it is now also continuing to see the women and the fighting for the free abortion. Free abortion and contraception. The women come to us to ask for the abortion and there is a lot of women coming. More and more. And we learn to do the common method of this operation and we start doing it. Not only for the woman, particularly for the woman, to help the woman but also for....against this government, this political class that wanted the abortion always in the clandestine and the woman continuing to die for abortion.

BF

In the afternoon, there's a festive mood about the place; a turntable with loudspeakers has been installed on the balcony of one block, and all the other balconies are crowded with people who've come to take a look around, or to see friends or families who are squatting.

Workers from other areas arrive to talk about the problems they're having. They promise to do the same and encourage people not to give in. By about 8 p.m. every block (about 400 flats) in the Via Angeli is occupied. And as other families arrive they occupy neighbouring blocks of flats...People arrive with frying pans, mattresses, cookers - they mean to stay.