

# **We are not afraid of ruins**

**On violent takeover of our home and social center Syrena by macho-anarchists**

Syrena collective and friends

2023

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# Foreword

This zine is a collection of texts written by people associated with the Syrena collective, which was evicted from an occupied building at 30 Wilcza Street in Warsaw by people associated with the Przychodnia “squat”\*. The conflict inside the Syrena squat with Przychodnia involved in it had been going on for months, if not years. We are writing about the day of our eviction — 5.12.2021, and what this house and social center was to us.

The main axis of the conflict, of which this event was an escalation (although it was not the first one during which physical violence was used) concerned the issue of moving a guy out of Syrena due to his physically violent behavior, use of threats, manifestations of transphobia, etc. The eviction of a dozen residents was carried out by a group of about 20–30 heavily armed individuals, who generously used axes, power tools, etc. For us it was not without bodily injury, as well as the loss of a considerable number of valuable items, phones, computers etc., and traumatization. The case divided the scene of, shall we say, the radical left; some influential groups and individuals supported the perpetrators outright, many never spoke out.

Who are the authors of this zine?

We are a diverse group that has been active in the last decade in the Syrena collective and in the tenement on Wilcza 30. Some of us didn’t have much in common before — we were active in different times, we did things related to different areas of activism. We were united by our opposition to macho violence, and now we are also united by our experience of surviving the attack.

On December 5, many of us lost our home, a place of activism. All of us — an important place on the anarchist map of Warsaw. We poured our anger, frustration, sadness onto paper (or keyboard).

The texts were mostly written in the days, weeks immediately following the events.

What do we think of this a year later? During this time we functioned in a divided environment, sometimes wondering if we could show up at some place or event, occasionally meeting someone from “the other side”. For many of us it was or still is a time of withdrawal, of putting ourselves back together after what happened. We learned who we could count on.

We continuously feel a sense of injustice and we’re just plainly pissed off, especially when the guys currently inhabiting Wilcza 30 hang the p\*lish flag on the facade, spitting on the values we profess and used to put into practice at the Syrena squat. The current crew, in addition to Dima and a few others who took part in the attack, includes a known rapist, thrown out by previous residents after his perpetration of sexual violence came to light — he was a guest of the collective at the time, and returned to Wilcza 30 after 5.12. Currently, the political profile of the “collective” at Wilcza 30 is certainly not anarchist, it would be hard even to call it leftist or anti-fascist. There is no longer any place for feminism or queer there.

Many of us continue to be active in many areas of activism: abortion or migration, for example. Being deprived of space and resources has not killed the spirit in us — because it is not living in a squat that defines an anarchist, but the values they profess and their actions. We continue to

be anarcho-feminists, anarcho-queers. These events have only confirmed that we are right in our fight. We too are creating an anarchist movement in p\*land, whether y'all want it or not, and we are not going anywhere. Machismo no pasaran.

## On fear and solidarity

I remember being a brave child before going to school. But years of polish public education taught me that it's pointless to come forth, because you can get hurt. That the best defence tactic is to comply or to run, that I have no chance confronting someone who has power over me or is stronger than me, so why even bother trying.

I was entering the movement during the most intense time of Stop Bzurom Collective\* activity.

I became a part a queer community that became my social bubble, an espace from p\*land's reality of everyday systemic oppression. The building at Wilcza 30 was a safe space for me and my community, and kind of an epicentre of liberation. Not to sound pompous here, but it was one of a few, if not the only such space in Warsaw, or even in p\*land anarchist, feminist, queer.

Queer meaning a fight, active resistance, not giving in to the state, the police, capitalism, religion, social norms. Destroying the homophobic truck\* in June of 2020 and the events that followed let me believe that not only all of that was possible, but also necessary.

The community gave me strength that I needed, a feeling of agency and belonging.

I sank in all that and not much later I moved into Syrena.

Living there taught me a lot about fear.

I was afraid of Thursdays these meant hourslong meetings of the collective, during which escalating conflict was in the air. I was afraid when D. threatened my friends and me, when he shouted, used physical violence, when he and his boys tried to force their way into our backyard, and finally when Przychodnia\* paid us "visits" in large numbers at meetings. Being alone, I would certainly have withdrawn from the situation months earlier, but I didn't want to leave my comrades, because only by sticking together did we stand a chance. The reformation of a social collective from supportive groups and individuals restored my faith in the sense of action. Solidarity in disagreement with the violence I felt in this group allowed me to survive. I learned not to be intimidated.

And that my fear is political.

In patriarchy as noncismales, queers and generally people who do not obey by the binding rules we are supposed to fear, to be scared for our lives so that we stay silent. What I learned in school is a tool of the privileged groups to control the oppressed, the tool of abusers to silence their victims.

What was happening in Syrena and ended in the escalation of violence on 5<sup>th</sup> of December was a show of power, a demonstration of what happens to those who oppose the status quo, demand their rights and talk about their experiences and realities.

The fact, that instead of backing off in the face of threats we resisted to the very end, was kind of a breakthrough in the scene in Poland. That queers took the matters in their hands, that we resisted the attack for 4 hours instead of giving up. That even this much violence didn't break us as a community. For me personally, the most difficult part of the whole situation, dragging on for months, was the reaction of a large part of the community. At first, when we asked for help in dealing with the conflict, but especially later, after the violence escalated.

“Was it for sure choking or holding by the neck, because there’s a difference?”

Telling us to take care of our shit ourselves, that you can’t take a stance because you know too little... Do you know enough now?

Even after the attack you are trying to remain impartial, because “after all, both sides threw bottles.” The fact that we were defending ourselves in a barricaded building from a bunch of guys who were out to get us, and they stormed the building seems to go under some people’s radar.

When I enter a (so-called) anarchist space in p\*land that does not openly and explicitly define itself as feministqueer, I can expect it to represent downright anti, and certainly not allied or intersectional attitudes.

I didn’t realize it before, but going outside of the Syrena community I always hid my queerness “just in case”. From people associated with squats in p\*land I’ve heard the most homophobic, transphobic and misogynistic things in my life. I don’t want it to be this way. Syrena gave me hope, a vision of a better world a world where there is a place for me.

The attack on Syrena was, as many have already noted, an antifeminist, anti-queer backlash, as can be seen even in the statements issued after the fact by the side supporting the aggressors, talking about the “Stop Bzdurom circles”\* or queers taking over a squat.

On December 5, Przychodnia\* succeeded in what the police, the developers, the nazis failed to do for 10 years (great job, guys).

Syrena collective still exists.

And after the tenement on Wilcza 30?

Instead of a minute of silence a lifetime of struggle.

# Your silence won't protect you

Nearly 2 weeks have passed since the events of December 5 in Warsaw.

We would like to direct this message to that part of the so-called scene that actively supports Przychodnia\* and the narrative promoted by them, according to which the attacked people are to blame for the attack — because they defended themselves by pouring water from a bucket on the perpetrator cutting the padlock with an electric tool, or used a wind-gun to defend themselves from bricks, smoke grenades and bottles flying towards them. We direct this message to those who blame the Stop Bzdurom\* for allegedly fucking up the movement and accuse us of evicting the migrant to the street, playing the migrant card and remaining silent about the physical violence D. has been using for months. We are writing to those who are building a symmetrical narrative of a truth that's in the middle... Wrap up or you'll be walking alone, because it's certain that none of us will physically defend Przychodnia\* a third time — and certainly not this Przychodnia and not this Rozbrat\*.

But first, we would like to thank from the bottom of our hearts all the groups and individuals who have reached out to us in this fucked up time, supported us in word and action, shared their experiences of violence with us, expressed solidarity and declared their participation in the common struggle against violence, cronyism, machismo and all the patriarchal tumor growing in our homes and spaces of political activity.

And now to all the groups and spaces that are so afraid for their position and security that they can't get their voices out, so they say nothing, hoping the issue will die down. To those who, by saying nothing, give permission to people involved in this heinous attack to continue acting unreflectively in their groups and more broadly in the movement. Yes, we are also writing to you — to those who pretend that nothing happened in order to take care of their own betterment, or to avoid a similar attack from Przychodnia or Rozbrat\*.

Your accusations, your silence, and your passivity (the same one we faced during the hours-long attack on Syrena) hurt us: they relativize our experiences, they put us in danger of confronting the perpetrators and their allies in the spaces and activities in which we are involved, they put us in danger of physical attacks in revenge by members of this Sunday (5.12) militia who, for various reasons, care about maintaining existing power relations.

Because after your reaction, they may feel convinced that “nothing happened,” that “the truth really lies in the middle,” meaning that they can seize it to their side and manipulate it at will. What is frightening is your passivity and your lambasting in the face of the fact that we, as individuals and groups, have lost our space, our home, our sense of security and our place of action, the results of our years of work, things that are not only private, not only close to us, but also things that we use in our political actions. You, on the other hand, will say that we are against property so it should be cool with us, that it's a squat and living there means such a risk, that it's a paypal anarchism, that since it happened, it means we've earned it.

For a week now we've been hearing that we didn't defend ourselves effectively enough or that we defended ourselves too much, that our statements are not convincing enough or overly



simplistic because we didn't debunk another sensational news story about a bag over head, which you think changes everything, that referring to a pogrom situation is an exaggeration, that we are the violent ones and bear responsibility for the fact that dozens of guys armed with bricks and pepper spray broke into our space and attacked us. Such messages and blaming accusations on us is also the violence we have been experiencing for 12 days now, 24 hours a day. And for some of us probably even more painful than the one we experienced on December 5.

The violence on your part that we are talking about here did not start on Sunday. It began when we made attempts to collectively resolve the situation of physical violence on Syrena by D. Social Collective of Syrena had been meeting weekly for several months, looking for the best possible solution, and did not allow itself to be intimidated by Przychodnia\*, which stood by the violent man. Many of you had access or were invited to this process. Many of you chose not to participate because, after all, "nothing serious is happening," "it will resolve itself," "D. is a cool guy and a good homie", "the girls and queers at Syrena are exaggerating and getting hysterical," "knife threats and strangulation? what's there to make a ruckus about?" and "violence in the scene doesn't concern us." This violence concerns all of us, and silence and passivity are its direct legitimization and what makes the violence there well, that it continues and there is no end in sight.

Evidently, the anarchist movement is so free that everyone here is entitled to all opinions unsupported by facts; to all acts, including the most selfish ones, dressed up in lofty political categories; to distorting reality in the name of higher goals and the good of the movement: the only righteous one, not the radical anti-PiS liberals from under the sign of pizza and sex. So, we can still justify the Przychodnia's violent attack on Syrena with an eviction that wasn't an eviction and wasn't onto the streets, of a guy who wasn't naked and didn't have a bag over the head. You can justify it with a defense that was de facto an attack and a forcible intrusion into the territory of another squat: well, after all, the people defending themselves also had stones and bottles, and helmets, and the gate was welded, someone took a shot at the mediator (who was not a mediator) with a wind gun.

You can explain this violent incursion by the fact that the colleagues, after all, stood up for the honored refugee from Belarus and the leader of the Belarusian movement in Poland, although his origin, migration status and alleged leadership had nothing to do with it — for us, D. was a violent man who had been physically attacking the residents of Syrena and people associated with the collective for months. If that doesn't help, one can always refer to the ongoing conflict with Przychodnia over the years and the different sides of the disputes, the same or similar dynamics in Syrena and other violence within the collective, used by both sides, the toxic bubble, doing things instead of writing on the Internet, more important topics. But if this discussion and these voices do not appear as the first sentence or conclusion that this attack is simply fucking unacceptable in all possible respects, then we wish such a polish anarchist and freedom movement an imminent transformation into a carcass.

You know what? We can manage without you, and we certainly don't need your 'well, yes, but'.

We were already coping, we are coping and there are more and more of us despite the fact that some of us are still afraid and living in fear. But know that we don't need groups and people in our lives who can't speak to us for almost two weeks because they "don't know what really happened." We don't need political goals to be reached over the dead bodies of our closer or farther comrades because they disturbed us. And when we come to tell you about it you say that

you won't listen to us because you have to talk alone. About what? About things, after all, you know nothing about? When we write about the events of the last week or month you say it's statement anarchism. For real?

So we apologize that we did not do a live stream, that there was no person commenting and describing the events in real time, it was difficult for us to record and comment — we were fighting for our lives. We apologize that the commentator was not a person from WSL\*, so that it would be objective and unbiased. And not — no stream, because that's on the Internet, why the fuck to the Internet, who went to the Internet with this first? You know very well that there were people you know and with whom you are active; people who then called you for help and intervention, and now write their accounts — but for you they are, after all, unreliable, because they are just people, manipulated, with their sympathies... And you, with a sense of rightness and moral superiority, so you have done nothing for these 12 days, certainly nothing good, certainly nothing that should be done in this situation. For that week, we — supporting each other, looking for emergency housing for each other, providing medical and psychological help, sharing our stories — have done more to build communities than you all put together, demanding action from others.

You know this conflict was going on, only somehow no one bothered to speak up and ask "hey, how's it going, I heard you guys had a conflict/violence at home, that pepper spray went off in August, there was police, can we do something?". But no, stop. It turned out after the fact that someone leaned on the situation after all. Reportedly, the upper crust of polish anarchism spoke about it the day before that disgusting evening. Where? Well, in Poznan. Somehow, strangely enough, no one informed us about it and invited us — neither those who had directly experienced violence from D., nor from the groups that had been working for several months to resolve this conflict. Aha. We apologize again and return the honor. There were mediations conducted announced Rozbrat\*. And let his name and voice be sacred, and you STOP THE BULLSHIT.

One last thing from us: if you think it's still okay to expect us to tell you how it really was — what with that mediator, the airgun, the bucket of water, the psychological violence in the collective, why we had helmets and the gate was welded — then start listening to our voice and reading what we write in our accounts. And don't expect us to do this to convince you, to satisfy your voyeurist needs, to fit into your manipulated and blame-shifting narrative that absolves Przychodnia\* and its violent crew — we must disappoint you. You expect this from people who have confronted the worst violence bred and normalized by you. You haven't asked us how we feel, you haven't helped us with anything, and all you have to offer us is shushing and disciplining. Put yourselves in our shoes, if you have even a little empathy and imagination. If you still think you'll save yourselves by keeping your heads down and fretting about the good of the movement, we'll tell you that it won't work. It would have succeeded maybe a week ago, if every person who is close to the ideas of anti-fascism and the fight against institutionalized violence had come to solidarity demonstration on Wilcza Street, if there had been thousands or at least hundreds of us, and if we had collectively shown that there was no consent on our part, and if we had reclaimed this building and emptied the other one and kicked out the perpetrators (and even give it back to the WSL\*, since they care so much). Then it would have been possible to save what the movement wanted to be and what it considers itself to be. But we had to organize this demonstration ourselves and you were not there again.

We are the ones who have to face everything that followed and you are not there, or it still seems to you that you may not be there. And maybe you think to yourselves, and let the hide

fall away, and let individuals disappear just as victims (of violence, rape, group oppression) do, because only those who remain are tough, real and worthy of respect. It probably still seems to you that it may be as it has always been. But we will do our best to ensure that the two buildings are no longer considered a safe space and that no more people are harmed there. And we know that at the moment more violent people are returning there from banishment. And don't be surprised if a month from now, or 2, 3, 5 years from now, you meet us in the middle of an intervention, when another person has been subjected to sexual, physical or homophobic violence in one of these places. You will then see us shoulder to shoulder in the crowd, because we will respond to this violence and we will fight against it. Know that this train has already left the station and you have no influence by standing next to it. It was only and as much about saying "no" to this particular incident and showing some elementary solidarity, which is what we constantly talk about and what we supposedly have for everyone who faces harm and oppression. And you were not even able to do this and preferred to stand aside. This is sad and pathetic.

So fuck off if you can't help.

We are not scared of the ruins

# Anarchonformism and empowerment

Was kinda lazy to write my story, as it has all felt much harder to others than to me. Tho, there's some things worth bringing up, less noticed.

Some say it was just suppression in my case, not any less intense. Still, had gone through very scary stuff before, it wasn't my first rodeo, so I was somehow prepared, and felt the long prelude much worse. Plus, how we were to each other at the time felt uplifting. It was nevertheless terrible to see how heavy it was on people. That's why I felt proud of them even more.

To me 5.12 was more of the epilogue and a logical continuation than a pure shock. I've been afraid it would be a slaughter — although I tended to expect rather an uncontrolled eruption and raging with lethal weapons by the main character. But I knew it would be bad even in the best possible scenario. I've heard the squat Od:Zysk\* in Poznań (Posen) had gotten cleared by their 'comrades', not without violence; I've heard that during the long conflict following the rape at Przychodnia\*, the sexist squatters had pushed out all the more aware ones; I've also felt (and later have heard rumours, still long before shit hit the fan) that Syrena was also to be taken over — both as a house and as a social center. (Luckily, we at least have managed to prevent the latter.)

It wasn't so much about one seriously dangerous person, nor their several befriended football fans. He had a big role, yep. More importantly, it has been all fueled, supported and planned by bigger players, wanting to keep their strong position and extend it, be dominating, have their order (plus, to take revenge for having it disturbed so long). I mean... not so much need to point at the dude's last name on my side (he's been btw already outed by own kin pretty widely), and the more he gets stigmatized as an individual, the better for the cold-blooded string-pulling figures.

Importantly perhaps, here I mean the following as well. As it effectively matters, regardless of whether it should matter much or should at all not. I as well acknowledge, I do I do almost eagerly... as most or many groups and somewhat more, us also have been plagued by shit-tons of infighting, power games, psychological oppressions, hierarchical and otherwise problematic behaviours, discriminations, and stuff; must say I've myself BeenThere (and also DoneThat, as we actually speak of 'stone throwing', pun intended xd). I actually believe at least half of world's evil is good folks' deeds and I find it likely inevitable and way less personal than it usually looks, too. As a rule, what makes us cross more borders or sober up depends largely on if the milieu deals with shit and in what way; is rather into supporting ppl in becoming more comradely or into building an assholeist internationale. Not that I badly need to belittle, downplay, unblame the important first row fighter (a supposedly troubled person), he quite bears responsibility in fact, ain't just a scapegoat; just that clearly barely anything would happen, had the influential and powersome others not wished it, in this way or another.

Many folks wanted to stick to them, to their physical power, or didn't care. Cause they didn't like this or that person among us and therefore wished us all possible trouble. Or out of envy towards some less established people who had come out with something fresh — which was great and successful, broadening the scope of radical struggles in the country — done own way

‘unfortunately’, not having asked the elders, unquestioned authorities who know better, how to do squatting and anarchism. [Here I think about the confrontational queer feminist activities — gaining huge traction just when Poland had started going increasingly fundamentalist-catholic in its propaganda and practices — changing even the mainstream discourse for good and winning hearts of much of the young generation.] Or just because it was too hard to believe, that these nice, sympathetic fellas could be that bad and abusive — at least if you didn’t have own experience of domestic violence — while it’s a strategy, however often unconscious, to be soo friendly and nice like in general, and to harm just the selected prey. You can imagine which sorts of people may have or have not such experiences and thus (lack of) understanding. Finally, simply because to most people the voice of the more powerful side seems truer — and to side with them costs less.

One could say that we’ve managed to unite against us people of two groups — those who hated ideological competitors within anarchism and anarconformists (plus others covertly and overtly ‘non-political’, numerous ‘lifestyle squatters’ and other pure opportunists).

It got clear to me, that chances would be slim. Through spring, summer and autumn we’ve been disappointed so many times, by so many people, often known for years from common work, actions, struggles. I realized Syr’s chances for survival were not stunning. Destruction’s always easier, even more so in a group based on an extremely superficially misunderstood consensus. There was a lot of determination, a lot of hope, just some outside support.

During these long months they’ve wanted rather to chase us away, terrorize, than to actually break our bones — using mostly threats, insults, yelling and such tricks. Often misgendering ppl maliciously; hate speech sometimes seemed to be more of a tool than of deep need. Actually they eagerly let be and even ‘respect’ some token females and queers if they don’t pursue own agendas nor challenge priorities and given rules.

In the end, so many people couldn’t stand it and had gone. We were also hoped to move out one by one, quietly, to give up. Some of us had a chance to shut up, stand aside, to be able to stay there and function. It’s often so at projects, that with time, who’s able to stay long-term is those less sensitive ones. They’d just be there, keep rooms, to live for free and freely, to use the social spaces, ‘to just do their job’, legitimizing the brutal and stupid ones. The house looked nice, despite bad condition, and had a beautiful café, where countless crews would always want to make events, without questioning about the fate of the previous crew. We’d swallow the loss silently dispersing, and half a year later the world would forget. Actually, much of the world needs to and does much to silence it all and keep business as usual. (BTW, why Przychodnia\* hates us so much and has longed for revenge was that we had taken part in making a loud scandal out of them not addressing the problem of sexual violence in their place, hoped to stay under the carpet.)

## **Before things went to the knife-edge (pun intended)**

It was after the hate truck\*, related coup attempt at Syr and imprisonment of one of us; then a few months long wave of mass and almost daily pro-choice protests in which many of us intensely participated. I was happy to see group having direction, and a great one... raison d’être, and stuff. As authorities and Roman Catholic Church were gradually targeting females&LGBTQ+

with propaganda and imposing stricter, tighter laws, used repressions, etc, that kind of direction seemed much needed...

Some members and unofficial residents hadn't seem to care (not feeling much in common with such a cause), or to like it at all — be it for bizarre- yet-widespread vision shortly covered in the below chapter or for being more interested in drinking, aligning with machos, at times for personal grudges, for often unspoken short- sighted perspective or belief that being non- radical translates to keeping the building forever; in different proportions in the mix. (Notably, some folks couldn't be equally blamed here, at that point, for sole not caring or understanding, or expected to join activities, because of dire material and status circumstances. Since ever house hosted and accepted people in trouble en masse, also for permanent membership, trying to involve them — usually failing miserably — not without mistakes; getting frustrated, overburdened and trying less and less over years.) For the record, I'm not gonna lie, there were tons of uncool behaviours and dynamics on each possible side, and yep, besides transphobia and so on there's been different sorts of symbolical violence around, various discriminations and exclusions, rarely worked on deeply. (Actually, my own list of grievances towards comrades is endless, and I can remember having done wrong not once or twice in the past myself.) To an extent, sadly, it's often so among us utopists and collectivists. Moreover, there has been much diversity of walks of life among residents, with extremely overly ambitious visions of running it all and relatively difficult overall life conditions in PL on top.

The hostile powers within the movement had it quite easy to play on the complicated situation and little coherence (the method wasn't invented that year). Until now symmetrists claim or suggest that we've deserved this amount of brutality and expelling, for us being uncool, or that we and our assailants were worth each other as equally fucked up. Rifts were growing. The organizing was getting increasingly sabotaged. Infighting was escalating terribly, everyone doubling down. 'Them' left the mediation process we organized with internationally known specialized activist, at early stage, as allegedly non- impartial, cuz they didn't like conclusions it seemed to lead to, nor wanted to have any tying-hands agreement to (not) keep.

By the time our hero has started to employ threats of direct physical attack as arguments, they must have felt sure of outside legitimization, wide strong front behind them and indifference of many others. Last but not least, with coercion, intrigue, promise of share in the conquest and demonstrations of vast power, they've converted and/or installed some more trojan horses within, digging under and flipping at right time. Which became especially problematic given that collective has never reached universal understanding of consensus, decision- making processes and such stuff, not to speak about coherent ideological platform — effecting naturally with stalemate, inertia and broader chaos, to their further advantage. Needless to say, as a group we've been at that point naïve and unable to see thru or imagine to what lengths they'd go against us, with what measures.

## **Symmetrists, anarconformism, nector-macho-ism, misogynarchism, 'just-live- ers'**

Actually, isn't a squat for free living, and being free? What was wrong for us, if folks just wanted to live there, normally? 'Good fellows', they're said to be taking care of the renovations (btw, sort of a lie), cleaning around, 'even' getting some food...

In Warsaw, 'the activist squat' was, to a degree, an abomination; many of even 'involved people' are for a primarily self-housing-oriented squatting. Even at ours, it was often, for long, for some (long ago, me including), that political activities were means to sustain a base and support for having a rent-free house — not the other way around. Therefore broad aversion, at times condemnation and rage directed towards radical/controversial stances and actions. Squat or a dream-project should be supposedly meant for counterculture, avoid antagonisms, do charity. To get a place inside, two things are meant to count: to be 'a good fellow' and appear somewhat poor-ish. On such a desert as our city, counterculture is more than enough to attract people and everyone's happy. Alternatively, you could endlessly exploit strictly limited scope of once-indeed- brilliant-fresh-and-original ideas in derivative, copycat, monopolized activism, concessioned by prominent anarchists. Isn't but a sole act of occupation something radical? Are 'good fellows', who 'take care of the place' not activists (and who's to define)? Like everyone had capacities for 'in the typical sense political' work, and like reproductive work were worthless? Isn't this 'politics' about sheer hypocrisy, or at least about keeping nose high up in the air? Well, occupying, bringing life to, and defending a place, that is in fact disliked by the authorities and somewhat on an unsure ground is one thing. Another is that — for many years the city has been accepting a functioning squat in an old ruined building that was falling apart, however not possible to get demolished (as an officially protected one). Reprivatization scandals\* had gone into mainstream and then, in turn, were no longer headlines; tragedy of Jolanta Brzeska got so exploited and cannibalized, that the family started to publicly call for moderation long ago. WSL, Warszawskie Stowarzyszenie Lokatorów (Warsaw Tenants' Association)\* had even allied with the fascist-leaning party PiS, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice)... *they didn't benefit, though*. These very authorities, ruling the country, promising things to the tenants — btw, in vain — in the same time they easily generate more social problems and launch oppressive campaigns against more and more vulnerable social groups: first migrants, then lgbtq+, then focused on trans ppl. The tenants' association WSL\* was expectedly meant to still be providing content and sense of mission to the place, or rather — help to pretend, maintain a façade, that it was still about Something — and bring some legitimation. (Interestingly, the local leader of the macho-dumbbells, character #2, dares to compare himself to the murdered tenant activist J. Brzeska; a squatter who owns properties himself, unoppressed enough to perceive as oppressions... verbal requests to stop misgendering, transphobic comments etc). The city hall had swallowed the appearance of a social center way more than 5 years before, when it had been still a pain in the ass; now it already can be easily tolerating it. Nuff said, the café opening had been warmly mentioned not once on the screens in the metro (credited to 'anarchists from the squat!'). At least if it's housing-and-counterculture oriented, resp. if its affiliations and activities stay within the already accepted limits. Why would they mind? At least they can pose for good democrats. But, that's the kind of squat we want now, isn't it? Why need more, if it's a win and you can 'just live normally'? Well, after years of cleaning and renovating one could finally yield and reap benefits, rest and enjoy own space, having become warm and cozy, and just have fun.

This model of quasi-corruption has been invented and copied to different locations at least since 70's; what often follows is that once the power feels need and finds it easy, they grab the places and kick out the people anyway. Meanwhile using, not in their long term interests, different just-housing-oriented tenants, (wannabe-) 'fellow travelers (rus.: paputchiki)' etc. What happened to La Zad de Notre Dame des Landes, the largest autonomous territory on the continent? There's more examples. But, do these 'real, true workers/punks' give a flying fuck?

Dear WSL\*, you say: 'HGW (the previous mayor — author's note) had to accept emergence of three squats, and Trzaskowski?'. Look: one of these squats fell during HGW's rule, also thanks to your informal leader, and now — thanks to your work, too — new mayor Trzaskowski has one next worry less. Since you — having now conquered new parts of house we used to share, and having evicted the activists who were personally, physically defending some of you at your doors from evictions by cops, getting brutalized — have become alt-left and far-right affiliated, for nothing more than pat on the back, the current mayor no doubt has to eagerly accept this new move of your faction of the tenants' movement. Was it you behind rising proudly the polish national flags from the captured building? (Documented.)

However, there's no like one and only way to go — is it wrong, if you have fun and just live without rent? Or, in their words, 'run a shelter for the oppressed by the system'. I mean — it's okay to just physically maintain an occupied building, even though it's not too clear whether it accelerates or slows down the area gentrification ('vibrant', 'hip' vibes)... But only as long, as you care about the outside world and do not speak against or prevent the place from being used for broader struggles!

...And pretty importantly, as long as you are not real assholes to housemates! Symmetrists, were anyone ever subject to threats and physical violence for 'not being activist enough by our criteria'???

What is 'just living normally', and what normally here means, is not written in stone; all shall reflect and co-decide. For ones normal is sexual exploitation of intoxicated persons; others call it raping. Neither WSL\*, neither many of macho supporters and symmetrists are disgusted to shake hands. As all know now, for you threats, hitting and kicking others, raising a knife, it's your norm now.

For you to be non-male, or queer, is not to deserve 'a shelter for the oppressed by the system'. Asylum is ruled by and available to cis-guys. Squat's a manly affair, other people can be there for legitimization, or for fun, or as token. Occasionally can even have some say, provided that their agenda is compatible. Shouting at, making people cry at plenums, misgendering, choking (pardon: 'squeezing one's throat') do not constitute violence, are normal for you.

It's THEM who were trying to expel 6 persons — repressed and surveilled persons — 1,5 a year before, precisely for activism (aforementioned coup attempt). As queers are not oppressed in your worldview, because you don't care, that people take own lives, get attacked on the streets, beaten by the police, while TV and Church run dehumanizing hate campaigns. It's called troublemaking (for the WSL\* head: 'shit-stirring'), and harmful. Queer means to be from a better-off family, even if not at all, or even if they are no longer their family; you know better, their activism, emotions, very life are irrelevant, fad and whim. Would you expect yourself to shut up, or allow yourself to do something, if a hate truck\* came to the door on birthday, calling not us, but Belarussians (or punks) pedophiles and child murderers with a megaphone? Don't you know what comes after you let the enemy offend you terribly like that with no reaction? Wait, perhaps the power ain't any enemies for many of you, trying to co-exist or dreaming of deal making.

'Why won't you divide the building?' some bystanders and 'fellow travelers' were saying. Sure, we'd be able to stay safe there, and co-exist, all trouble would stop, and force will no longer be used, your word, yeah? Your 'good fellows' have exposed, what their aims were, and for what methods were they ready. Still, whatever we were saying, was always put in question, disbelieved, belittled and excused. Not that it has ever stopped.



## Long agony

The more the shit was growing, the more people were turning out bad and stupid, the more I was seeing it a big, important thing, not about any single person. And that it's been for Something, for good and bad. Other people were becoming warmer, supporting each other (despite all internal shit).

BTW, I guess it was difficult for most of THEM to comprehend, why in the world did we really care about the squat, even though most of the time they seemed quite positive of success, of us dropping out one by one, tired and intimidated. Certainly, them been saying, as someone had crowd-financing, and as we were allegedly better-off kids, unlike them, we were able to afford to, and had it easy, to value Cause over safe (oh, wait) housing. Certainly too, a typical propaganda talking point based on part-truth for efficiency. I'd personally dream to be able to say we're all kids; for sure not all of us are better-off, some of us also chose to or had to say good bye to family resources, or to families at all (not everyone's able to imagine situation of a queer/anarchist in a traditional, far right dominated country). Time has also proven we haven't it easy to make a basic living. Ain't as black and white either on their side — one of the two of their biggest fish is really, really not so miserable oneself (not the only case among them all, one works for judiciary lol). But it's us to be explaining ourselves, that's how it is on the losing side, isn't it?

So we've lived in terror for a long time. There was a grand rehearsal of 'people's tribunal', some major threat episodes, mass raids, some meant to cause wounds and get us vacations in hospital and some meant 'just' to scare and demonstrate overwhelming power. Quite sadly, not so much of the world cared much, not among those who had this or that kind of power or leverage. We knew, that they wouldn't step back and that big time clash was inevitable — or otherwise we'd just hand out the whole squat in humiliation. The thought of the military confrontation was paralyzing. To imagine it was so uneasy. At the same time, I was feeling as though it was cementing us and making us better comrades.

I was visualizing numerous injuries of my own and of others, lifelong traumas, disabilities, lost eyes and dozens of teeth, scarred faces. I've seriously counted with someone's death from that knife (or from my hands). Even though he wasn't any psychopath, still impulsive, uncontrolled aggressor. I had to go with that in mind, and still we've decided to use nothing lethal. I've been much pessimistic, even wondered: am I blinded by my fear, and destroying others' spirits with my forecasts? I somewhat needed to have it constantly postponed, but mostly have felt relieved when we went for his removal; after months of fear, very well or very badly, it was to finally end up.

The very unscrupulous attack of Przychodnia\*, that has followed right after, was fucking bad indeed. I've had just a few comparable situations in life, and I knew vast majority of us had less or none, and was totally afraid of them as well. I was aware we've had a couple times less people ready for that much. Obviously, they've had fun, overwhelming us.

I've registered, they've prepared and mobilized some 5 x more people and weaponry than for the nazi holiday (11.11\* every year, Poland's day, gathering at least thousands of nazis, not so long ago big tens of thousands). It was very visible. Can't stop to mention, start of November the protagonist had fought bravely to stop us from preparing for the nazi day (until realizing that it had looked bad even for their side), because it had been clearly more important to have Syrena open and unorganized for Przychodnia's\* planned invasion, pending and awaiting the signal.

Still, I was a bit — just a bit — surprised, how they haven't hesitated for a fraction of a second to unleash the hail of bricks and all that on a mostly female crew acting in whitest gloves (like, making sure D. wouldn't get hurt, has his possessions secured etc... as the weaker side, easy to blame no matter what, we've felt bound to take all possible measures to minimize world's criticism in case of success, and also just to not be like them). They've naturally felt entitled, against minorities who didn't subordinate to power. As usually in the outside world, the stronger has no concerns or regrets; they knew no one could make a problem of whatever they'd use or if they'd cause permanent injuries, for what we, in turn, would pay beyond words. Blame Syrena; the bigger is always right.

The same circle, first to fiercely condemn a symbolic damage to the hate-truck\* in response to a nazi punching and knocking down a woman, in front of the house, 'because they'd smear us in the media', and to blame her for looking badly with blood on her face at their yard; for whom we're troublemakers; who supposedly cared just for 'good fellows being able to live normally'. This time neither the image, nor blood did matter. Did it come as surprising? This, not at all.

From the first moment already, I was mostly moved and uplifted by the courage of our folks. I saw it as a fight for some fundamental dignity. Was proud, that we've stood for it despite the risk. Obviously, I was also convinced, that it wouldn't finish with just scratches and it was no fun to remember about. Though: we've kept consensus — there was no bravado — we've stayed together. That felt great. I was even feeling as though we were making a big step toward becoming, pardon my Latin, that mythical 'community of care'.

I was remembering these countless moments from my young years, with people punching me in the face or breaking my nose because of my 'faggot' looks, with me constantly hiding or running away. Once almost jumping into our big river, almost having gotten surrounded by nazis on the bridge. Having a knife put on my throat in the city center. How helpless I had been, how I couldn't overcome it, going out of my way, never ever confronting. Feeling so lonely, as I had known no one such. I could count only on advices to adjust to the norms. Smtms compassion, however mixed with contempt at times. I had been adjusting slowly over almost like decades of cis-ing, and in the end effectively enough to have become truly male privileged and enjoy it, familiarize with it, use it, let youth time fall into oblivion (well, I don't have nice memories); forget how I had been perceiving any identity as such as a trap, being molded and confused about myself. So the 5.12 have felt personally therapeutic, strange as it may sound.

I was very glad, no one was left behind, there were no quarrels among us, and we've stayed together till end, when it has come to a controlled withdrawal after some hours of defense. I've felt solidarity and empowerment at that time. Comparing to many bitter thoughts and experiences of preceding months, I was quite okay, thinking we were losing a house, but having potential to do something new. It was a place that felt like home back then in the Stone Age, but well, I've been feeling home nowhere over last 4–5 years anyway and I don't think I'd belong anywhere anymore, ever. Great thankfulness for those who have come and taken risk for the Cause, without no personal interest.

It has felt as a real achievement, to at least try to remove the violent macho and stand against their big crew of dumbbells. It brought satisfaction in itself to spoil their plan a bit (especially that the house itself is probably unsustainable in the long run): make them show who they are, have hands dirty and to impose cost on their beloved image. Even if they sure make stories of pro-tenant intervention and what not, and after that many have sided with them (unsurprisingly as it's them who've stayed on the board, important and rich in a downtown mini-empire... so

they can cooperate). Nevertheless, the impact still counts. Same time — that was for the good side... until now I keep on seeing and hearing more and more symptoms of trauma from people who've been there.

## Regarding the events of 5.12 at the Syrena squat

Regardless of who's on one side, who's on the other side, regardless of people's backgrounds, regardless of gender identities or life experiences, because I'm tired of valuing our and others' struggles, the fact is that domestic violence took place and the people affected by it tried to do something about it in the end.

What do you do when you live with someone who uses mental and physical violence against you? You can try to fix it, you can try to talk, mediate, you can call in someone from the outside to help talk some sense into the person.

What if the perpetrator of the violence is unresponsive, ignores you and all attempts at mediation, messages, requests or stipulations of the household members, does whatever he likes in your home without the consent of others, continues his behavior and also threatens to harm you and bring his friends, and you live in constant fear in your own home? Do you run away or try to stand up? This time, contrary to the pattern of the victim fleeing from the perpetrator of violence, people along with the help of friends and people from other collectives (to make the whole process as fair as possible) decided to ask him out of the house. Voluntarily and peacefully it was not possible, it was only met with terrifying aggression and attack, and the summoning of a gang of hooligans. And when you see a hoard of large, aggressive people coming at your house, throwing bottles, bricks and pyrotechnics, and you fear for your life, your loved ones and your home – what do you do then?

You defend yourself, your loved ones and your home by any means necessary.

But when you see that nothing compares to the force and aggression that is coming at you and more important is the health and life of you and your loved ones – you run away.

The next day you wake up and people are accusing you en masse, shaming you, vilifying, that you had the audacity to throw the perpetrator of violence out of your own home, because he is, after all, a Belarusian refugee. That you had the audacity to throw, in panic and in fear of your life, a bottle and anything that came to hand at a gang of hooligans who violently attacks you and wants to take over your house in return.

Many people don't believe you that he was the perpetrator of the violence, because they, after all, have other experiences with him. Because, after all, they have been friends with him since they were kids. Because, after all, for them he is always so great. Because he says something different, he says you're lying. And you, in fact, they never liked too much, because you constantly made some kind of trouble and were annoying.

Others don't even think about this violence, because the fact that a person from Belarus lost his home is more important. And still others start a campaign of lies and slander about you.

Again, one believes in the rationale of the stronger.

How do you feel?

Because that's how all the people who lived there are feeling right now. As a person who was on the scene and who, along with others helped defend Syrena, I can attest to the fact that a more peaceful attempt to throw out an aggressive violent person (after months of other attempts and mediation) was not possible, I can attest to the magnitude of the aggression we were faced with in retaliation, and I can attest to the fact that each of us defended ourselves as we could in the situation.

I had been aware of the situation for months, I was more or less up to date with it, I wish I had been able to get more involved and help earlier. Nevertheless I saw what effect the whole situation had on individuals. It was months of living in fear and stress. I don't wish this on anyone.

And last Sunday was the climax, I have never personally encountered such a scale of massed aggression in my life.

And no one should be indifferent to the issue, it's not just "squat wars" or another "leftist fuss", it wasn't just a roof over the head for a group of super activists, it was also a key strategic point of action for our community, in all areas of action of the anarcho-queer-feminist-leftist movement and beyond (#intersectionalism ftw), a place where ideas were born, important and cool things were done, and also a place of engaged culture, it was our safe-space. One of the last in Warsaw. Lost.

Although the Syrena home is lost, I see some light in it, I hope that each of us can get something good out of it, that our whole movement will weed out the evil that was simmering somewhere all the time and sneaking around constantly, that we know who to rely on and who not to rely on. It's time to cleanse ourselves. And in spite of everything, I am glad that I was able to help individuals try to fight for themselves and our space.

As a wise person in the group said, if we can't fight for our own backyard, how can we fight for the rest of the world?

Syrena is not a squat. Syrena is a strike!

# Violence, memory, and identity

Hey. Tadek Zinowski / Paviel here. I've lived at Syrena for more than 7 years, I've been active for more than a decade, this Sunday I lost my home, my place of activism and the most important political project of my life.

I am speaking out about the events of December 5 because I can no longer listen to the nonsense being told about this issue. Nor can I listen to the deafening silence of passive witnesses trying to be on the both sides of the barricade, a barricade that has already fallen.

## WHAT HAPPENED

If you already know this part, please skip it and don't waste your time :) For a summary of the dry facts, I refer you to the profile of the Syrena collective. In short, we had a problem as a collective with an aggressive, individualistic and anti-social boy named Dima, who could not respect the rules of our group and used domestic violence. After six months of an unsuccessful mediation and negotiation process, we made the decision to deny him further housing. This decision was made unanimously, in open, plenary meetings, by the social collective of the squat (the overarching one, which organizes the activities), since the house collective (the subordinate one, which deals with everyday issues, and is a subgroup of the social collective) was paralyzed by the conflict, intimidated and unable to make a decision that would protect its activists — that part of the residents who wanted to react also participated in these decisions unanimously, a few boycotted the meetings together with Dima. As was the case with dozens of problematic residents — this is normal procedure — squats are collectively managed places and you only stay there if you respect their rules. These decisions Dima took note of and chose to ignore. We waited until the date given, then waited double the time, just to be sure, and then we carried out his removal. For this, we gathered quite a few people from the entire social collective, various groups, and most of the household members, in order to emphasize the seriousness of the decision and to prevent any possible physical aggression that individual delegates might encounter. Ahead, however, in a further attempt to talk calmly, three household members went to negotiate. Despite the fact that he immediately hit the negotiator on our side with his elbow in the face within the first few minutes of the conversation, we remained calm and held him down, and carried him out of the building without any unnecessary violence, after which we packed up his belongings. All this in an atmosphere of constant threats, including death threats, to everyone gathered.

After about over an hour, around 5pm, the Przychodnia\* collective and its allies gathered on their side of the courtyard, in a militant mood. They threatened that if we didn't let Dima back in, they would cut the locked gate and enter themselves. We didn't agree — our decisions are not the business of other collectives, we value political choices more highly than cronyism, and Przychodnia itself lost our trust and respect long ago. When one of the residents of Przychodnia began to cut the wicket, he was doused with a bucket of cold water. After a while, the first firecrackers and pellet from pneumatic weapons flew in our direction. Immediately followed by a

hail of bottles, bricks, stones and pepper spray. We responded almost symmetrically, using empty bottles and pepper spray at the group of attackers. An almost 4-hour battle began. After a while, when the wicket gave way, we retreated to the building, from where we continued to exchange bottles with Przychodnia people, who invaded the courtyard and began breaking windows in the building and forcing the door. By this time we already had people injured to varying degrees. When the door fell chopped down with axes, around 9:00 pm, we decided to evacuate the building — a group of about 30 people, including a dozen inhabitants left their position, in the building, in addition to the attackers remained 4 people who remained neutral or sympathetic towards Dima. As we found out later, the attackers broke into our rooms — some of the things were simply looted (cash, data carriers, phones, notebooks, alcohol), and some were taken over as material “hostage” so that they could play graciously giving it or not later to people returning for their medicines, glasses or panties. In all, a wild eviction of a dozen people was carried out — all women, all queer people, all the more politically and socially active. We were left out in the cold in what we stood, without a home. The following week, thanks to negotiations by neutral groups, some property was recovered.

## HOW DID I TAKE IT?

Facts are as above, but that anyone could check for themselves. As for feelings, I want to say briefly about one kind of sadness and one kind of pride. It was sad for me that the attackers who eventually destroyed the Syrena squat and who were ready to kill or hurt me (for example, a fist-sized stone fell on my bed, shattering the glass) did not turn out to be policemen, tenement cleaners or nazis — we managed to fend off numerous attacks by each of these groups in this decade. The perpetrators turned out to be people I personally knew, as I thought until recently colleagues, neighbors, but also comrades in combat. People with whom we stood shoulder to shoulder at the nationalist blockades, with some of whom we defended other buildings, whom we supported eg. during their workers’ protests. Or at least we went to their concerts, because strictly political activists were a minority there :) We expected it from all sides, but not from our neighbors — which shows how little we remember from the history of minority groups in Poland. The pogrom is always done by the neighbors.

However, during the defense I also felt a kind of pride and satisfaction. For I consider our greatest success not how long we defended ourselves or our exit without losses, but the social and political group we managed to gather by those windows. In the words of Pulp — “misshapes, mistakes, misfits”: anarchists, feminists, abortionists, sex workers, precarious women, unionists, queer kids, trans people, non-Polish people, activists and victims of state repression stood shoulder to shoulder against a bunch of dudes defending a violent pal and put up armed resistance to them on a scale unknown in Polish feminism of this century. The psychic cost of exposure and use of violence is, of course, great, but if one wants to understand anything of the situation, one should accept that the lives of many people from minority groups and non-masculine people on a daily basis are a struggle for a minimum of dignity, and sexist or homophobic violence, threats of beatings, death, rape — lurk on every street corner and even at homes. Syrena was until recently their safe haven. So maybe it’s better to be able to look this violence straight in the nasty mug and slam a bottle into it. I believe that political consciousness is formed in struggle, and that’s why I hope that someday December 5, 2021 will turn out to be a joyous anniversary, like our tiny,

micro-political Haymarket or Stonewall. The fact that we are losing is not the most important thing here, as Rosa Luxemburg wrote in her last words, “The rulers are stepping from one apparent victory to the next, preparing their final defeat, and we, though receiving blows, are working so that the international revolution can cry out again: «I was, I am, I will be!»” Leftism is also about losing — anyone who has participated in social struggles knows this. As Brecht wrote: “to beat does not mean to win.”

## WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?

The whole thing seems — and is! — an absurd. However, it is the result of several trends and conflicts that have been developing in the movement for years and consuming it like a cancer. Some people wonder what the rapes covered up by Rozbrat\*, or their sale of the “Odzysk” squat have to do with the situation in Warsaw. However, if one looks at the issue radically, i.e., to the root — one can see toxic regularities. The actually existing anarchist movement, although it contains a feminist undercurrent, as a whole is not yet feminist. In many groups and places there is acquiescence to violence, a culture of silence, exclusion of victims as a problem-solving mechanism, and so on. The response to domestic or sexual, sexist, homophobic and transphobic violence, is very often a united macho front in defense of the perpetrator. Such behavior not only does not support those experiencing violence, but also harms the perpetrators themselves by blocking the opportunity to understand their mistakes, make amends and repair the behavior. In an attempt to maintain the image of safe environments or spaces, many people focus on powdering the corpse — instead of eradicating the sources of problems, they try to plug the sources of leakage of such information. After the case of the rape at Przychodnia\* squat (<https://resiste.squat.net/?p=24396>), the squat became a toxic macho-den. Many people thought it was okay — we don’t cooperate, we don’t invite them and we don’t go there. But leaving the issue unresolved became the ground on which the male society attacking us on Sunday grew. What is repressed always comes back. A climate of misogyny and homophobia, a political level below zero and a tolerance for violence created the conditions in which it seemed like a good idea for everyone to raid the feminist squat next door, destroy it and kick the female residents out. Or maybe at least half of them saw it as a great idea — they don’t use consensus at Przychodnia, they use majority votes xD

That’s why I’m very happy that finally “these issues” are being talked about loudly. It turns out that these “corpses in the closet” are very much alive and pissed off women and queers, and they are just knocking loudly from inside to finally come out of the closet — I think they have already put their foot in the door. As one of the comrades at the solidarity demonstration following the eviction of Syrena called for — it’s finally time for #metoo on the squat scene.

Another aspect of the whole issue is the way micro-politics are practiced in the movement. Many of the groups are based on an informal hierarchy, with familiar relationships between leaders replacing open political discussion. Disputes that could be politicized and discussed freeze for years turned into personal conflicts. Personal conflicts, include personal gamesmanship — sabotaging activities, exclusion from initiatives, gossip and slander, ferment behind one’s back, etc. This prevents constructive resolution of situations and weakens the movement as a whole.

Home-grown politicians imagine that radical politics is a sort of miniature of big politics — the activists are something like their party, or a youth group, and they are its managers. This is



a far cry from anarchist thinking, in which a movement is a free association of free and equal people. However, this model took root at Przychodnia,\* has been in place at Rozbrat\* and in the Anarchist Federation\* for years, and for many years Antoni Wiesztort tried to impose it on Syrena like a saddle on a cow, until the group told him to move out. (BTW: dude who now writes Rozbrat and WSL\* statements at the speed of diarrhea, as if they were just his next troll-accounts, without asking inconvenient activists for their opinion, and in his spare time makes up and sends around people black legends straight from a right-wing tabloid, about people with whom he has organized for years, to justify the Sunday attack). It is also this very model that gives permission for violence and prevents the movement from evolving in a direction of more equality. The old-spirited activists, with egos as big and fragile as a crystal palace, are confident that they are the only ones who know what should be done, said and thought, and are ready to force the unruly to submit by force. A particularly sad example of this is the trend against direct action, in which people who have already been repressed, convicted, imprisoned and tortured by the state apparatus are oppressed, because some rusty dudes think it's a terrible drama to set fire to a police car or cut up a truck of a homophobic organization\*. Arbitrary convictions replace tactical discussion, and mud-throwing is supposed to chase away "dangerous radicals" from the movement. For these could interrupt the peaceful slumber of this (un)movement. The example of the eviction of the Odzysk squat by Rozbrat\* (the last text in this zine) was, until last Sunday, the clearest symbol of this pathology, authoritarian anarchism. In this situation, Dima has become barely a pretext, a "pawn in their game" (Dylan) for individuals and groups carrying out their dirty politics.

The last aspect I will address in this note is the politics of exclusion and division. Although mouths are full of platitudes about unity, many individuals and groups allow themselves to arbitrarily divide oppressed groups and struggles into "real" and "fake" based on irrational hatred or ignorance. Perhaps the most popular form of such invalidation is class reductionism, i.e. the belief that the only truly significant oppression is that associated with economic position. Accordingly, social struggles — of workers or tenants — are supposed to be a) opposed to b) more important than all other struggles. Both of these assumptions are wrong — just as oppressions in one person's life (e.g., "I'm poor, I'm a woman, I'm a migrant") are combined, so should be the struggles against them. However, theories are built on these erroneous assumptions, detached from the practice of our movement, which play into hands of conservatives and liberals. Other examples include the division of women into "real" and "not real" by so-called TERFs, or simply transphobes, busy putting up a wall across the women's community, or the sex-phobic attitude of parts of the labor or women's movement toward sex workers and their labor organizations. These kinds of exclusionary policies are unfortunately nothing new on the left. In the face of overwhelming pressure from the majority society, there is a temptation to exclude the "most problematic" i.e. stigmatized people and create for oneself a polite image that the rulers will like. Examples can be multiplied — the disintegration of the First International, the support of the war by the Second, the nationalism and anti-Semitism of the pre-war socialist parties, the exclusion of blacks from the labor movement and black women from the African-American movement in the USA, the strenuous battles over every letter in the LGBTQIA, the wars in the feminist movement of the '70s... without going into the nuances of these issues, well described in many sources, everywhere ultimately these divisions sabotaged the struggle and served the rulers, while inclusive united fronts served to strengthen the combatants. At Syrena, we have always tried to take

the latter route. The division they managed to build out of hatred of the Syrena and what it has always represented has yielded its harvest this Sunday.

## WHAT TO DO?

At the moment, the main reaction to this issue is no reaction, or words. Of course, words have their own weight — many of us are hurt by the lies spewed by Rozbrat\*, Przychodnia\* and certain people from the WSL\*, as well as the significant silence of some Warsaw circles, and ignorant-ridiculous statements by various internet smarties. The silence of all those who know what they should do and say, but for convenience, out of opportunism or fear, choose the silence of a passive witness and stare with gaping yawns at the development of events, unable to do a thing, or even merrily spin on the merry-go-round of jokes in the social media, is particularly ringing in the ears. It is strengthening and gratifying to hear expressions of support and solidarity from dozens of groups in the city, the country and the world.

However, what I think needs to be done is to take meaningful steps. Ostracize and exclude from spaces, events, and anti-authoritarian groups all perpetrators and participants in the attack on Syrena. Boycott their venues and events. Support the affected individuals and groups, who have lost their place to live and organize, are often in need of social, emotional, mental help of any kind. But most of all, make sure that the same fungus that took away our whole house is not taking root in your group. Zero tolerance for violent dudes, no more silence about the violence suffered, no more going by the walls and hiding your oppression, no more informal hierarchies and self-appointed leaders, no more personalizing political disputes, no more tolerance for right-wing bullshit after which you wipe your mouth with “real people.” No more homophobia, misogyny, sexism, transphobia, patriarchy — no more tolerating, silencing, relativizing them.

Revolutions are not big events and gunshots from battleships. Revolutions start with small things, small gestures of resistance at work, at home, in a group, in a relationship. As Tarde wrote, the French Revolution did not begin with the storming of the Bastille or in the Tennis Court. It began when the first peasant boy or girl somewhere in the south of France refused to tilt her hat in front of “her” master. Then someone saw the gesture, someone repeated it, and little by little feudalism began to crackle. I believe that the same can happen with pathologies in our movement. Let’s start with small, annoying, everyday oppressions and destroy them before they grow into a mob evicting us from our homes. If we can’t purge the movement of these pathologies, it has no reason to exist — it will become a club of dudes banging brews to this and not that music. (This is your anarchy / [...] / You do not distinguish good from evil / Your system of values does not exist). But in order to do this, words are not enough — if you want to help us in a real way and show solidarity, then instead of mourning — organize and fight. That’s the only way we can keep hope in all this dark — that we will someday come together again under the black and purple — and — black and pink banner and give each other some tenderness on the ruins of this fucking funfair. “The facts of dictatorship must not be contrasted with words, but with the facts of freedom. The functionaries of a dictatorship must not be contrasted with functionaries who speak differently, but with people who live and act differently” (Silone)

Revo-greetz,  
Tadek Zinowski

## **“You can’t force anyone to live with someone who uses constant threats and a knife. And nationality has nothing to do with it.”**

### **5.12**

We were there today and saw it with our own eyes. We were there four months ago, three months ago, two weeks ago and a few days ago. We were there when there were attempts at mediation, we were there today when guys from behind the fence threw molotovs and firecrackers at windows (the bottles were probably all empty, memory of a person who was under an impression molotovs were thrown at her speaks to the situation...- red.). We were there today when the refugee in question (it is interesting to reach for these categories just now) hit my colleague in the head so hard she fell on the floor. There was no eviction. There were requests, mediation and a final deadline to move out. Today that time has passed. The person was thrown out of the house because he posed a threat. Nothing happened to him during that move out. His partner was given time to pack up. Moments later, bricks and firecrackers started flying at the windows.

You can’t force people to live together. You can’t force someone to live with a person who uses constant threats, including a knife. And nationality has nothing to do with it. The person was thrown out because he used emotional and physical violence. The people who “kicked out” the violent guy today were 90% girls. The same people who have participated in eviction blockades for years, unlike your aggressive colleague.

A bunch of macho dudes are always defending their own and making manly wars out of it.

It has been this way, it is now, and will continue to be. Quintessential patriarchy.

Well fucking done, Przychodnia\*. You have reached rock bottom.

### **6.12**

I know over a dozen people – mostly women, girls – who over the course of the past 20 years experienced some sort of sexual violence at squats in Poland. And they know another dozens. Their stories were usually whispered in confidence to each other. A quiet squatters’ version of #metoo. And it was always the same pattern: it were the girls who moved out, withdrew from actions. They did it silently or in the atmosphere of scandal. They disappeared or were thrown out. You know what else all these stories had in common? Fucking fellowship of the dickheads. Solidarity of dudes: “that’s impossible, he’s a good comrade”, patting each other on the back.

There is a place in Warsaw (it’s hard for me to use past tense) where we felt safe. I’ve never smelled this distinct anarcho-macho stench there. I know fellow anarchists will say that we are destroying the anarchist movement in Poland, but you know what? I don’t give a fuck about this

movement — the one in which girls are being constantly stifled. They used to silence us with their disbelief, mockery, contempt. Yesterday they did it using bricks.

This is a story about power. About how every time marginalized groups start to do something without macho approval, there has to be a macho reaction. In this case it had a transphobic and homophobic dimension.

This is a story about anger. Who has the right to show anger. We [FLINTA people] can do it politely — we are supposed to mediate, we are supposed to write appeals, ask for support, negotiate. We are supposed to be patient and endlessly try. Dudes can get angry all they want. They can even throw a brick, because a mate (who also happens to be an abuser) is more important than female colleagues, who were abused. We should've tried harder, organize another mediations, endure another humiliation, staying nice the whole time — they were just defending their mate.

I am so fucking sad. Something important has ended. It was Syrena where first meeting of March for Safe Abortion was held, it was there we could make banners for Warsaw's Manifa. There was also the first meeting with Aunt Basia in Warsaw in 2016 and with Abortion Network Amsterdam in 2018. And the first meetings about taking abortion pills, going abroad for an abortion and getting help from foreign collectives. The people from Syrena supported us in our actions. Syrena was our community home.

And about those statements flying around and and alleged pack of masked people who threw out "the leader of belarusian political activism" (see: statement of belarusian anarchist in Warsaw), I wanna say; we weren't masked. The person received requests, invitations to meetings, mediations. It went on for 5 months. After he boycotted everything we did, threatened to use a knife, to "take us away to the forest" and kicked a person in the face, the community collective decided to throw the guy out, because you can't live like this. You simply, truly cannot.

Everything was carried out in the most 'vegan' way possible. When during negotiations D. hit one of us in the head, even then we didn't use violence. We weren't even masked. What Przychodnia\* did yesterday was a fucking attack and I despise the critics who edify us and say we should have negotiated more. These people wanted to fucking kill us there.

If you equate having to escape your own home, because a bunch of dudes is throwing bricks with a few months of negotiations, requests, meetings lasting long hours then I think you suffer from severe symmetrism, or you are in the fucking fellowship of the dickhead and your anarchism is machoanarchism. You know, in cases of domestic violence, it is also the abuser who stays in the house and the victim who has to flee.

We could and we can be angry in our own way. We can be fucking furious and manage this fury in our own way. And despite that, everything that happened yesterday was defense. Even the alleged mediator was throwing bricks at us. Dudes may think they have power over all the activist spaces but Syrena was much more than a bunch of macho punks. And I won't stand this emotional bending over backwards anymore. If yesterday your colleagues threw bricks at people with whom they once blocked evictions then it is time to react. If yesterday your colleagues acted as nazis do and attacked someone's home, where you were numerous times, it is high time to react.

Or carry the weight of knowing, that it was you who deprived over a dozen of people of a home, and your relativism is defending an abuser, who was given many chances and never took them. Or maybe it wasn't about him? Maybe it was about taking over a building, that is supposed to be yours, since you are the landlords.

I badly need a loud squatters' #metoo. To overshadow the fellowship of the dickheads with our solidarity.

## **“It’s hard to believe just a week ago I was at the last event at Syrena”**

I use the pronouns “she/her” (but then people often go “oh dear”). I am active in feminist collectives, and am currently among other things a member of the Women’s Alliance of March 8<sup>th</sup>.

It’s hard to believe that on Friday a week ago, at exactly the same time I started writing this report, I was sitting in Cafe Kryzys located at Syrena at a meeting with the FORK collective from Wroclaw. The topic was cyberfeminism and techno-patriarch-capitalism. It seems that this was the last event at Syrena squat. Because the current building on Wilcza 30 is no longer Syrena squat.

A twist of fate — a meeting about how the patriarchal-capitalist order controls every space of our lives, including the Internet, took place two days before that same order took over one of Poland’s few physical spaces of resistance against the domination of patriarchy, capitalism, queerphobia and transphobia.

I link patriarchy and capitalism for a reason. First — they are inextricably linked. Second — capitalism is a constant quest to multiply property. The bunch associated with Przychodnia\*, already owning “its” place of life and activity, on 5.12.2021 took over another physical space. What is more, it did so by using the tools of authorities — through extreme violence, by moving to the margins the very people and ideas that the current authorities hate. Ideas and people who most strongly criticize and undermine the current status-quo.

Now about what I saw and felt on Sunday 5.12.2021 while being at Syrena and what led to my presence there.

I had known for a long time that there was a problem with violence at Syrena and that the collective was trying to solve this problem. I finally learned from the collective’s members that their means of getting along with D — Syrena’s violent inhabitant — had been exhausted. I joined the reactivated Syrena’s social collective. I was already strongly connected with Syrena — I co-founded the collective when we wrote the first manifesto, when we opened the previous venues, even before Wilcza 30 was opened, then I organized and lived there. It’s obvious to me that when violence occurs, you have to mobilize and react to it.

That’s why I don’t understand the accusations that the current social collective is not authorized to make decisions, because it only formed in response to the problem. The social collective is made up of groups and individuals with activist ties to Syrena who cared about preserving Wilcza 30 as a place torn out from an order based on patriarchy, capitalism, queer- and transphobia. We have a stronger legitimacy of action than anyone else. The persistence of Przychodnia\*, Rozbrat\* and the rest of this corporation to call the Syrena collective a “Stop Bullshit environment”\* is a political tactic to marginalize us as a small interest group (but of course I deeply respect SB).

During the meetings, which lasted several weeks, we discussed how to solve the problem of a violent person living at Syrena, as well as with what actions to sustain Syrena as a space as safe

as possible for, to put it bluntly, people other than cis-guys. Subsequent solutions, which you can read about in detail in Syrena's materials, have not worked. I want to strongly emphasize here that Bartek, another resident of the building, is co-responsible for the failure of attempts to solve the problem of domestic violence at Syrena, as I clearly saw when he rarely (perhaps twice in a few weeks) appeared at the collective's meetings.

D. was asked to move out, he ignored this request, he received a letter with an indicated date for moving out, he ignored this letter, people went to ask if and when he would move out, he ignored this question. The social collective decided to enforce the call to move out.

On Sunday, 5.12.2021, I was not inside the building by the D.'s room. Together with several people, I stood in the courtyard, watching what was happening at Przychodnia, because we were afraid of their reaction from the beginning. This fear itself is telling – it did not appear unfounded, as proved by what happened next. At first, the courtyard of Przychodnia\* was empty, you couldn't even see anyone in the windows. At some point, I'm guessing after D's partner "called for the guys" (this announcement can be heard on the video she published of D. being led out of the room) several members of the Przychodnia collective (they were, without exception, cis cronies, including A...sz, holding a high position in that collective) approached the wicket. They immediately demanded to be allowed into Syrena's premises. We talked for a relatively long time, explained to them that they should not get involved, that this matter had nothing to do with Przychodnia, that if they wanted to support D. then it would be best for them to help him find a home. Our interlocutors still only demanded for the wicket to be opened. In the meantime, we saw other groups of people exiting the building and approaching or driving up to the gate of Przychodnia and invited into the yard. The previously empty area was filling up. After dark I don't see too well, but well enough to recognize that they were dudes, especially since every now and then some of them would come up to the fence to insult us, threaten us, yell things like "you're fucked up, you'll see what happens, it won't end like this," etc. They threatened and left, and didn't listen to what we were saying. At one point, with a group of dudes, ONE so-called "female gender" person actually came up, also to yell at us. My advice is that next time she should shout from her diaphragm, because otherwise she'll rip her throat out.

After a long time, A., a member of the Przychodnia collective, grabbed the U-lock we had put on the gate and asked: do you open or not? We denied. He replied: "THIS IS THE DAY THIS SQUAT ENDS".

Then A. brought an extension cord. Here a small anecdote. A.-if you still have a mind-fuck and don't know if you dreamed it, then know that you actually had to look for a second extension cord. The first one we reached for through the fence and after tugging even the plug let go, we managed to pull it all the way to us. Anyway, A. brought the second extension cord, hooked up the angle grinder and started cutting the u-lock. I doused the gate with water to stop the cutting. At that moment, the first bottle thrown from the side of Przychodnia smashed next to me. More bottles and stones flew, then firecrackers, smoke candles. Under their hail, people from our side ran for more buckets of water to thwart the opening of the wicket. I heard from people connected with Przychodnia\* or the gang there that people from our side had helmets and goggles, that it was strange that we prepared like that, since we just wanted to get D. out of the house. Yes, the people from our side had helmets and goggles, because they knew what the band from Przychodnia was capable of, and this was confirmed.

I wish I had a helmet. I didn't live at Syrena recently, I didn't have regular contact with the gang from Przychodnia, and I couldn't imagine that anyone who wasn't the police or nazis could

do such a thing to us. Anyway, not wearing a helmet and fearing for my life and health, I fled to the gate of Syrena from the objects thrown from the side of Przychodnia. I don't remember what I did for the next while, I don't even know if it was a few or several minutes or maybe even longer. I was in complete shock. I do know that at some point I went into the building to look for some of the people I had come with, to see if they were safe. I also remember thinking that I needed to get warm, as I had been standing in the cold for several hours. Now, knowing what happened later, I see how absurd that thought was. And on the other hand, how "normal" — after all, the behavior of the gang from Przychodnia and the subsequent development of events were unimaginable.

At some point, I think when the gang from Przychodnia had already cut the gate and broke into Syrena's yard, I joined the people watching the yard from the windows of the building. "Our" people were no longer there. We took the bottles we had prepared at the windows for 11.11 on the Wilcza side in case of an attack by the Nazis. It turned out that Przychodnia did what the nazis couldn't do. To make sure that the gang from Przychodnia did not come to the gate of Syrena we threw bottles into the courtyard. They threw bottles at the windows, and unfortunately, I am ashamed to admit that even throwing from above, I had less range than these dudes throwing from below. Seeing this bunch, their numbers and militant preparation, I feared for my health and life. And it wasn't an unfounded fear, for fuck's sake. I saw one of the people from our side with a face drenched in blood, who, even before the Przychodnia gang entered the Syrena's premises, was hit by a bottle from them; in the ER it turned out that they had a fractured skull. Another girl's helmet broke from being hit by a rock — I don't want to imagine what her head would have looked like if she hadn't been wearing a helmet. I saw terrified people next to me who were only able to repeat "I want to get out of here, I want to get out of here." In defense, I did what I could and knew how to do, and if I had the ability and skill to do more, I certainly would have. That bunch was like a cloud of football fans who are just waiting for an opportunity to fuck something up and fuck someone up, and they are vandalizing the city because legia (Warsaw football club) lost or legia won. They broke down the doors of sheds, smashed furniture, tables, and, protecting themselves with them, approached the building.

In the narrative after the events of 5.12, there was information from the side of Przychodnia\* about an alleged attempt at mediation, that supposedly the mediator was not let through. This is some complete nonsense. First, the Food Not Bombs group, which was cooking meals at the time (which, by the way, is quite absurd), was let through the gate leading to Wilcza. Along with this group, some people from our side left, in a state of panic and extreme terror. Then from Przychodnia, someone shouted that someone was going to mediate, so we shouldn't throw stuff in the yard. But at the same time they themselves kept throwing. We stopped throwing, they also stopped. Someone from the side of Przychodnia walked across the courtyard to the gate of Syrena. But immediately after this person, more people started to run and did not stop, even though the protested from the windows.

Since we had heard the cry for mediation from below, the people below must have heard our protests. Again, we began to defend ourselves.

Anyway, even then I totally didn't understand what they meant by mediation — one goes to mediate to the party that attacks, not to the one being attacked. Because what would such a mediator supposedly say to us? "Give up?" That's not mediation. And what would such mediation achieve? That they would stop attacking a little, and we would give up a little? At no time did



Syrena attack Przychodnia. They were the ones who cut the padlock, broke into the Syrena's yard and wanted to enter the building as well.

I saw crying, terrified people. A friend told me that she called friends of people from various groups affiliated with Przychodnia\* or people from Przychodnia to calm this gang down, to tell them "what the fuck are you guys doing." These individuals did not answer.

More and more people amongst us talked about evacuation. Some had already made this decision, some were still hesitating. Finally, information came from somewhere that a gang from Przychodnia had broken into the building. We ran away, not through the gate, not through the door. Along the way, I found myself in a room that few people frequent. I felt like curling up somewhere in a dark corner, under some furniture, and waiting until they went away, hoping they wouldn't find me. Because I saw such fierceness and aggression in them that I was sure they would look for people around the house. And again it turned out that I was not unfoundedly afraid – the next day we learned that all the locks on the doors of the rooms had been smashed and the rooms rummaged through.

I have a Jewish background. This is exactly how I imagined a pogrom.

## **“Eviction of Syrena was a culmination of what a right-wing deviation can look like”**

Hi, it’s me. Some of you know me, some of you don’t know me at all, and some of you probably do a little. For my own purposes in this text, I will remain anonymous, since anyway there is a full negligee in it. I use mostly feminatives in the text, but when I’m not writing about myself I write about the people of all identities. It is difficult to include everything in one text, and this voice is undoubtedly only part of the story. I write mainly from the perspective of personal feelings.

I will not once again describe what happened. I won’t write about the letter, the mediation, the door, who did what to resolve the growing conflict, who did nothing, and who actively sabotaged the process. At this stage it should already be clear why support needs to be on our side, if it isn’t already there. If anyone needs further evidence in the case “before forming an opinion” (repeated like an echo by facebook ghosts of long-time activists (TM), thus choosing the side of their glans brothers), here is the ultimate proof: the building at 30 Wilcza St. Once a place of resistance and initiatives, today a frightening hovel in which almost all the windows on the side of the courtyard have been broken. We evacuated from this building a month ago, and to this day I don’t know what would have happened had we stayed there.

I understand the need to analyze what happened, because I think something very bad did.

What happened is that a gang of furious, enraged by annihilating fury guys from a neighboring squat could forcibly evict a dozen of its residents and their friends from the building, in defense of a guy with whom the residents had long said they did not want to live, because, as the practice of living together showed, it threatened their safety. What happened?

The brutal, forcible eviction of the Syrena residents carried out by the hands of useful neighbors from across the fence (and supposedly from the same side of the political line, although that’s just not true) was the culmination of what right-wing backlash, hostility to feminism, and resentment of queer people can look like when they are allowed to grow undisturbed. In my opinion it was — among many things — an anti-feminist, anti-queer backlash. I want to write about it from the perspective of sensitivity. Most of who I am today, what I do, and what I base my security on, is connected to this place, to Syrena. Over the years, being at Syrena has allowed me to grow, build connections, learn, do political activism and explore different areas of life and models of community. I had no prior experience in activism, I didn’t fight nazis before I started crawling. I learned everything in action, through contact with other people involved in activism (defined by them in different ways), and it was an extremely developing time, filled with memories. Nevertheless, when Syrena was evicted, I had no longer been its resident for several months, and I left with a sense of cruel disappointment and weariness.

In the last months of my residency in the building on Wilcza Street, the phrase “spit into the wind” became very useful to me, as it aptly described the state of affairs in the house. While we were protesting the ongoing queer vilification (very real and actual), the boys at home were invalidating our identities. When we resisted the systemic violence against us (very real and

actual), we heard that we were the threat. When some of us were arrested, and most of us suffered police violence (very real and actual), we heard at home that it was not a struggle but a fad, and our experiences were belittled. When we strengthened our communities, we heard that struggle was measured by the number of hours done in the workplace — as if that was any value in itself! When we tried to win for ourselves a piece of reality that finally would not threaten our difference, we were attacked. All this took daily forms: abused trust, symbolic violence from the “community” and finally domestic violence. Very real and actual. That was not something I wanted to squander my energy on — especially since proposals to confront the conflict were being ignored — because I wanted to get on with building solidarity bonds and community, rather than spitting in the wind. So, over the summer, I left the community directly connected to the house at 30 Wilcza St. and scattered to others for a while. It was great, and I had a chance to heal from the admittedly difficult (especially recently) experience of living at Syrena.

I returned to Syrena on 5.12, because I wanted for this situation devouring my friends alive to end already. It was necessary to get rid of the nightmare and get back to life. What happened next shattered me to pieces. It took me a month to put myself back together a bit, although I still feel like I was only temporarily stitched up.

I remember very little of that evening except the moment of evacuation, which was like coming out of hell. I experienced tremendous violence and found that the only thing I could do further was to expose myself and my guts completely. That I no longer had the strength for anything, nor did I have the strength to hide my belly. For one month I was taken out of my life, although I planned this time differently. I could afford it because I have a community of radical care around me who have experienced the same thing. I felt like I had been skinned, but the caring hands of my friends helped embalm my wounds. It took away my fear of vulnerability. I’m even more sure then before of who I am: I’m a feminist, I’m a queer person. I want to be in this, I’m not afraid, despite many tragedies that continue now and will continue in the future.

I’m not kidding and I’m not exaggerating when I say that we might not have gotten out of this alive. But we are alive and I believe we are stronger. For me, the first outing to the world after a month of gluing myself together was a few days ago waiting outside the courthouse for a person detained for spraying about techno on a church building. Because this is the reality: people suffer real oppression for fighting for a place for themselves, for signaling their presence. Sometimes they end up in detention centers, and sometimes colleagues take matters into their own hands and deprive them of their homes. I don’t know who hands out antifa IDs, and I don’t know if they would have awarded them to anyone gathered outside the courthouse that day, but I don’t care.

What amazes me, however, is the auto-fixation of the “movement” and this narrow conviction that now the struggle is still supposed to look the way the fathers of anarchism saw it a hundred years ago. This will not be the case, even more — this is not the case. The struggle is happening in many fields of activism, in everyday resistance, to which we can testify with ourselves. No, struggle is not a lifestyle, but it is part of the experience and life of individuals. We need intersectional spaces where vulnerability is the place from which inspiration for resistance comes. One of them was Syrena, which is no longer there. Let’s build another ones and fuck the shitters!

## **“We set a boundary for a violent guy and defended our home”**

It's been a little over a month since the attack, and it still hasn't occurred to me that Syrena is homeless. For almost three years it was my safe haven on the map of this queerphobic country. Living as a transgender person in Poland, I felt worse here with every passing year, but the actions initiated by Syrena always lifted my spirits, gave me a sense of empowerment and faith that maybe things will be beautiful one day.

One of my earliest memories from Syrena is of K., who at a birthday party of the squat, walks up to an aggressive type two heads taller than her and tells him to get the hell out of the yard because he's spoiling our celebration. I remember another birthday party, where we smashed the homophobic truck\*. I remember all those dances at square near main metro station against the Ordo Iuris imbeciles. Those moments when we screamed together that we are queers, this is our home and we are not going anywhere.

On 5.12 we did exactly the same thing — we put up a boundary to the violent dude and defended our home, our space. It was the only day in my life when I was convinced I would end up in the hospital or the morgue at the end of the day. I keep comparing it to what I felt at the pride march in Bialystok, well, but there at least I was protected from stones by a helmet. After that march, I read comments online from friends saying we were asking for it, we should not have flaunted our presence in Podlasie. Now I'm reading the same things, supposedly it is impossible to stand up for us — well, after all — we were also throwing the bottles. This country doesn't know what to do with alive queers. We should have let Przychodnia\* thugs in, let ourselves be meekly crucified, and then everyone would have known which side to choose, because as a society we already have practice in putting up candles with a rainbow ribbon.

Although I've never lived at Syrena, I feel as if a very important pillar of my life has collapsed. My whole faith in the new queer world was cracked piece by piece with each window broken by the boys defending the old model of Polish anarchism — the one which, shirtless, with a beer in hand, shouts something about 'fascist c\*nts' and gets pissed off if you tell him it's not ok. For a month now I've been feeling defeated by these rusty pricks and on the verge of giving up the field to them, giving up on action and coming to terms with the wisdom of life repeated to me since the day I was born — “that's just the way this world is, you can't help it”.

It has been mentioned many times before — Syrena is not a squat, it's a strike, it's not a building, it's people. It's all true, the Syrena collective is still active, it still brings together people very close to me, it's still providing support for each other in the most difficult situations. I am extremely grateful for all this, and at the same time it is difficult for me to admit that I am in mourning for the building. For Kryzys, with its beautiful floor. The stairs to the stage — I think it was only a miracle that I never fell from them. The armchairs being the spot where one could observe the entire charming courtyard. The bike shop, where I learned how to change brake pads. The freeshop, always full of whatever I happened to be looking for. This one room where I

learned to smooth the walls. The gate where someone mischievous sealed the keyhole and which separated the gray, hateful world from the place that the efforts of dozens of people over the last decade tried to make safer for everyone. Until the very end.

## **“I knew living at a squat meant risk of eviction. I didn’t know it meant risk of four-hours long assault from neighboring squat”**

We keep on repeating this at the activist scene. Remaining silent is the worst. There is no third, neutral side. If you think that by staying in between the ones attacking and those being attacked you can just look the other way and pretend you don’t see, because “you don’t know anything about this”, “both sides have good points” or “this can’t be that bad” just know this: this is worse than throwing a brick at us. You know I’m talking about you.

Syrena squat on Wilcza 30 was the first place where I’ve ever felt at home. When I moved in along with the keys I was given a map that allowed me to find myself. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December I haven’t lost a place where I had lived for 7 years — I lived there for a much shorter period of time. I was deprived of a piece of my future, the last material thing that was keeping me in Poland. I knew that the risk of eviction is a part of squatting. What I did not know is that it is a risk of an attack from another squat. That people who formed me as an activist are those, who I never hope to become as a human.

In what I do I demand a good life for all beings. A life worth living, that doesn’t crush you, imprison you, break your back in the first 20 years. This is what queer is to me. Bodily autonomy, workers’ rights, abolishing work, prisons, and borders and private property, the right to shelter, to life and abortion, euthanasia. About fighting the climate catastrophe. Syrena was supposed to be all of that.

So just imagine what was happening inside my head when after a year of the topic being mainstream I was asked by a member of the house collective what’s between my legs. Or when he said that “there were no queers in the [good] old days”. Or when he joked about rape on our meetings. When no one seemed to understand why I feel like it’s not the best moment to make decisions when the only people who stayed at meeting were a bunch of cis-boys and I. When it was explained to me that if I can get pregnant, then I’m not a dude. Or when after half a year of weekly skirmishes he still didn’t know whether I’m a dude or a chick. When one of the boys currently occupying Wilcza 30 wondered whether police is as bad as we make them out to be. I don’t know man, go to them and try to report rape or an illegal eviction, we’ll see.

I was accepted into the collective by acclamation, without discussion. I recognized that perhaps some work was needed, but in general these opinions are exceptions. Three days later, however, it turned out that I was upsetting the balance of things for the boys. The veto to me being accepted into the collective was only the latest of many events in a long-standing resistance to any political activity beyond ‘reprivatization — bad’. We hit a wall. We wrote a letter. We expected the most aggressive dude to move out and his staunchest defender to cool off. And

that I would be able to stay. After attempts at talks, mediation, many requests and demands, we hit the wall for the second time. Those who considered themselves neutral decided to make a decision on who leaves and who stays — one aggressive dude or six queers. For three months I lived from Thursday to Thursday not knowing if I would have a place to live on Friday. I had nowhere to go. And the situation escalated. Threats, humiliation and eviction are active violence. You can do something about it, prepare, react. High-five yourself that you didn't lose your nerve.

What the neutral team did does not match it at all. When the dude sitting a meter and a half away from me shouted at me that I should get the fuck out, that he would come to my place at night, that he would throw me and my stuff out the window, your neutrality consisted of a downcast look. When the dude repeated the circus a week later, after four hours of debate and resort to all sorts of rhetorical devices by the later evicted "side of the conflict," you graciously decided to ensure that in the event of physical aggression you would condemn the attack. You will express regret. As we know, kind thoughts heal fractures and prayers stitch up wounds.

When, after months of deliberation, the self-appointed neutral third party was ready to pass judgment, when already a person was taking a breath to say what to do next, one of you interrupted and said that actually she still had doubts. I left because you wanted to determine what the issue was. when I returned, I learned that if I agreed to meet with you and answer some questions, you would be obliged, because there are still a few issues that are unclear. for the past three months you must have overlooked them. I agreed, I really wanted the end. I asked that the questions be given to me in writing, I don't want to answer in front of the committee. I was laughed at.

In a very physical way, I felt my heart lose its rhythm. what broke in my mind at that moment is beyond repair. I packed my backpack, went to my friends. for a while, to keep up with neglected duties. Wilcza 30 became for me a place of disappointment, betrayal, imprisonment, small people determined to bring everything down to their size. frightened cowards, able to respect only the stronger. I'm not proud of the fact that I left my friends there at the time. I feared for my life, that one more moment within those walls and I would stay there forever.

The reactivation of the social collective was returning my hope with every passing week. slowly I began to participate in the meetings, I could feel the juices returning into the dry leaves. I trusted and this time I recognized people who do not accept neutrality.

I planned to return right after 5.12. I revived and wanted to incorporate this life into Syrena at Wilcza 30.

Almost a month had passed since 5.12.

People have already written about pogrom, assault, anti-queer, anti-feminist backlash, about cracked skull, bricks, bottles, firecrackers. that Przychodnia *with WSL* did what the state and nazis failed to do. what comes back to me is the first time picking up things, when within 15 minutes you had to decide what from the apartment of three people is the most important to take, because you do not know how much time you have and whether they will let anyone in except you. Each successive minute is another small, final decision. When you carry panties, medicines, notes, books, flowers, shoes, cosmetics, clothes, tools, posters, cables, (...), and with each bag, with each cardboard box you parade in front of a column of taunting drunken winners.

You don't know if this time they'll stop you to see if they're definitely your panties. if this time you'll be able to convince them that while that bowl isn't signed, you borrowed it from your mother. if you'll still make it back upstairs, or if they'll throw you out the gate. well, and what to do next with those boxes.

There is a moment in queer life when you realize that you will not get another one. it's not easy to understand that everything in front of you will have a different weight than it was supposed to have, that there is not and never was a place for you. I chose this life and I knew it would be different. I knew that a big part of it would be fighting, I'm a transqueer in poland. I didn't know that it's not those who want to kill me who are the biggest threat.

To those who participated in and support the attack, I have nothing to say. that night, I looked into the future and saw our death. the fact that we came out of it shows the difference between you and us — we protect life. you carry death. perverse, eh?

But to all the rest of the happy arbiters, right-minded philosophers, sensitive to all wrongs only not those right next door, concerned about every violence only not the one perpetrated by your buddy — when you say that you are neutral, that you do not take a stand, that you do not know the situation, that both sides are equally at fault, there aren't really sides here, why do you have to take a side, or that, my favorite, NOW THE LEFT WILL LOSE SUPPORT — every time you tell us, tell me, that our lives are less important than your well-being. That our health is less important than your sense of aesthetics. That you go after power and not what is wise and good.

End this farce and openly stand by those who on December fifth made Syrena homeless. A much more comfortable position than constantly swinging on the top of the fence.

People who support us — we are a strong community and we are there for each other. they have a tenement in one city and a piece of field in another. They will be consumed by the mold from the walls, and the queer mycelium gives birth to vigorous children.



## **“Although I feared for my life that day, it was also the day I learned that I didn’t have to run away”**

Although I have never lived in Warsaw, my fate has long been intertwined with that of Syrena. I still remember what a big impression my first trips to Warsaw made on me, almost a decade ago. I was as impressed then as I am today by many of the activities of this collective. I can see their influence on me and my political backbone. Syrena was made up of people I have known for years, or met more recently. People I value, who are close to me, and some of them — the closest to me. So it was difficult for me to pass by indifferently in the face of the voices that had been reaching me for months about the problems plaguing the place.

I see myself, above else, as a feminist, so I didn’t question for a moment the stories of those in the collective about how X used physical violence at Syrena. While giving unconditional trust in such situations, in the same way, I expect that the movement of which I am a part will not question my experiences of violence. I consider such an attitude essential if we are ever to deal with this problem. Going consistently one step further, I decided to take part in bringing X out of Syrena. Even if anyone had doubts whether the decision was right, X dispelled them himself in the first minutes of the conversation by raising his hand at A. There is no excuse for such behavior. There is no place in our homes for such behavior.

Although I feared for my life that day, it was also the day I learned that I didn’t have to run away. And so far I had been running away — from the family home, where my mother’s nose was broken in front of me, later from the collective home, where an alcoholic roommate slowly poisoned my life with shouts and insults. Later, I escaped from the realization that a feminist partner who has no problem jerking me around or smashing plates around me is neither a feminist, nor should he be a partner. On that day at Syrena we did not run away. In line with what we say at demonstrations and write in manifestos — alone, with agency, without court or police, we, the vast majority of girls and queers, went to kick the violent dude out of our space. And that fills me and my sisters and brothers in fight that day with real pride. Despite the price we had to pay for it.

The attack from Przychodnia\* that followed (already widely described by others) is an unprecedented situation. Although a week has passed, I still find it hard to believe that knowing the faces and names of the residents on the other side of the fence, one can throw a stone at them. I don’t understand how one can break windows and chop down the door of a house occupied with so much effort for years. How is it that a group capable of heinous, pogrom-like and extreme acts of violence can emerge in our movement? And another group ready to support them in this? How many things have we neglected, how many mistakes have been made? Let me repeat for those who make comments that are unnecessary, relativizing, symmetrizing, and

blurring the picture: there is no excuse for such behavior. There is no place in our movement for such behavior.

When the glass was breaking on the facade of Syrena, my heart was breaking as well. It breaks every time, when sitting in my room, I think of the dozen or so Syrena residents who were thrown out of their home. It breaks when I recall their eyes swollen from pepper spray or blood-soaked faces. It breaks when I realize how much work we have to do in our environment, which, after all, we are trying to make a refuge from the “outside” world filled with harm. I don’t know where to start yet, but I know I won’t stop trying. And I know I won’t be alone.

Wiktoria Marzec  
feminist, Wroclaw resident

**“Almost a year has passed, and I, except for the fact that we have lost our place and support statements were issued, see no change.”**

Almost a year has passed, and I am still unable to describe my experience of the attack on Syrena.

I am not able to recall everything. Remembering traumatic memories is funny. At first you seem to remember everything, all too well. You don't want to remember, you try not to think, you repress.

Now I wish I could remember. At night when I can't sleep I return more and more to the moment of the 5.12 attack, I go back to the months of fear for the lives of my closest friends. It's easy for me to remember situations I've turned into jokes, certainly the closer we get to December the more they fall out of me. I still wear the "I just turned 18, there's a whole world ahead of me" T-shirt I got from one of them for my birthday less than a month before the attack. The whole world but get the fuck out of here.

Those desperate or regular violent moments I don't remember. Don't get me wrong, I know perfectly well what was going on, just going back to them I don't see myself in them. I cut myself off and retreat. When at night I try to process in my head the fear that involuntarily returns — I can't catch the bottle-throwing moments for too long, I don't feel the same courage I had then. Everything flies by in the blink of an eye. I only feel the helplessness I remember most.

We were accused of having planned it, because we came to D. with goggles, wearing helmets. And you know what? You're right, we planned to defend ourselves. We planned to defend ourselves, because we knew exactly what kind of aggression we would have to face just because we didn't condone violence from one of our fellow residents.

I didn't and still don't know how to fight, I don't know how to throw a bottle far. But I know first aid and knew we would need it. On December 5<sup>th</sup> I was to be a paramedic, I had already recalled how to take care of wounds a few nights before.

I had sat up all night learning or repeating how to dress all kinds of cuts, stab wounds, abdominal rips, fractures, skull injuries, what to do if someone shoots you in the face with an air gun, what to do when an eye falls out of the eye socket. It's not like we were there in helmets and gas masks to attack someone. We knew we would meet with aggression, our lives would be in danger if D. went on a rampage or Przychodnia\* started attacking us, defending their fucked up mate.

Despite all the repetition, I just remember how helpless I felt when I heard A. shouting to D. "don't touch me, don't touch me!", how helpless I was when the medicine cabinet prepared for 11.11 didn't open, how it ran out of gazes and I tamed the bleeding from a ample wound with

tissues and a plastic triangular sling. When a person took a brick that broke their helmet in two and told me “I have to go back there, they will kill us.”

I felt helpless when I knew that there was a terrified cat in my room, which I had no one to carry out before the whole event. Because contrary to all the fucked-up opinions, we are not at all children from “good homes” with a second apartment waiting for us. I ran every now and then between the living room, where I made a first aid station, and the cat locked in a container in my room, ready for a quick escape.

Some of the people had evacuated earlier, I knew I had to stay, I had to continue dressing the wounds, rinsing people’s eyes of pepper spray, and when we ran out of bottles to throw – to bring plates. I don’t know at what point we stopped defending the house and started defending our lives. Not figuratively, but physically, our health and lives. I remember that when I heard them cutting the door with a flex I didn’t think “I can’t let them in the house” I thought “If they come in here they will kill me.”

Very soon the whole building was full of smoke and pepper spray. At one point someone reminded me that there are rats downstairs, their owner is not home now, they will suffocate. It was already the moment when they cut the door with a flex. Ula from WSL\* who says we shot at her was with them, she hurried them.

We had nothing to put the rats in. We first put one in a plastic box. The other one ran away in panic, the room was dark, full of pepper spray and smoke. I only had a flashlight from my phone, which to catch the rat I threw on the bed. We managed to catch both rats, but the phone I never recovered again. The plastic box broke, I locked the rats in a pot covered with a colander. That’s how I carried them out of Wilcza 30, on the way falling down the stairs when I tripped. I fell so I wouldn’t drop the rats, because I wouldn’t catch them a second time.

I also felt powerless when I wrote on the Food Not Bombs Warsaw group that they can not stand by. One of us was hit in the head with a brick, if it wasn’t for the helmet she would have died, now you can’t look the other way and pretend nothing is happening. I heard that it was our fault, we are all hurt by this, and in general let’s not talk about it. I know that part of the Food sided with D. Now they do events and benefits together, I hope it’s worth it to sell the collective members and anti-violence values of the group for a dirty kitchen with bugs and beer with shitters.

I remember it all well, until now when I am left alone with my thoughts I shake with helplessness. A.’s screams ring in my ears, it scares me more than the bang of firecrackers or screams or the sound of the flex.

Almost a year has passed, and I, except for the fact that we have lost our place and support statements were issued, see no change. It’s as if it was all for nothing. I still feels powerless. I feel powerless because I feel that no one except the people who have already talked about przychodnia’s\* fuck-ups care about what happened. I see the guys who threw rocks at us coming in places that declared they wouldn’t allow people involved in the attack. I feel powerless when one has to plead to enforce this and get these people the fuck out of your events or workshops. When you still hold events with people from przychodnia, when you don’t kick them out of demonstrations about violence, when you allow them to be at “queerfriendly” events. You still do things with them, you are together in groups. Even we can’t function if we want to exclude all these people, or else you’ll push us out of spaces and go on doing things with them like you used to. We have to be the first to take part in demonstrations, or we have to agree to some stinky agreements and false consensus.

I'm tired of reminding. I'm sick of having to explain it every time, as if the fact that it's a different event changes something, as if the fact that it's your colleague suddenly makes it so that he didn't make a queerphobic attack.

I used to think that the anarchist movement was trying to oppose the hierarchy, was anti-fascist. However, it turns out that if someone was your colleague, with whom you have had some kind of private arrangement for a long time, then even the loudest anti-fascist bragging about souring the snout to the nationalists doesn't mind that his mate did exactly the same thing, only this time instead of doing it for the nation he does it for his squat and for his power and influence.

The problem isn't just dudes from przychodnia\* and dima. The problem is that in our whole scene (I'm talking about the whole of poland, not just warsaw) in every collective there are dudes who hold the power, who more or less take control, take over the organization of events, have a little more voice, a little more rights. Any such guy can be another dima, another przychodnia. Every person who tolerates this is another przychodnia guy who defends her boyfriend/brother/friend who is an agressor or a rapist.

This environment will never change when after a big attack, finally from the compulsion of outside opinion your collective will say a forced "we don't agree with violence". To make a difference we have to react on a daily basis, in every group, even in the most pretend-inclusive one. Each of us.

# Od:Zysk not for sale — No means no!

## Translator's notes/foreword

The text is from 2015. In short, it tells the story of how the collective of the young squat Od:Zysk, placed on the Marketsquare of the Old Town in Poznań (quite vis a vis the city hall) got destroyed and the building got sold to the landlord for some 120 000 PLN (29,000 EUR) by the Anarchist Federation (FA), *people running the Rozbrat squat*; they took the money and made sure that the squatters will go. Among the means used were creating divisions, threats and direct physical violence.

The author belongs to the ones who left before the last wave of people abandoned the building. To our knowledge, many people critical of the FA role were threatened (even as recently as in 2021). Some engaged in other projects, including squats, many dispersed around the country and the world. The building stands empty until now (2022).

The criticism was silenced, there was virtually no public discussion. One could encounter different opinions, some were saying that the text was emotional (we leave the somewhat messy language) or exaggerating; some Od:Zysk people, who took the FA side, just refuted everything without dispute, some even joined to live at Rozbrat. Some people argued about some small details; the basic facts are widely known, though. One could even hear some more graphic stories about violence, told often with lowered voice. Regardless of the details and the flow of time, as well as the fact, that FA or Rozbrat is not entirely monolithic or incapable of *\_any\_* changes, it still puts some light on their collective mindset (and the reality of the Polish movement).

What happened to Syrena carries some similarities. Notably, by the time of the Od:Zysk scandal, Syrena collective didn't issue any statement, being unable to find a consensus, with some important figures being close friends with FA Poznań.

[When the squat RC10 (Reaktor) in Cracow got evicted by the cops directly after it was attacked by the macho 'antifa' (the sides were also tied to the two factions of Poznań), again the controversies could be felt within the Syrena group.] These friends of FAP moved to Rozbrat some years later and there was clearly some involvement from behind the curtains on the macho side, even though it was not shown super very openly until shit hit the fan. The Rozbrat's support of the Przychodnia\* attack and the eviction of Syrena (to overtake the building) was voiced just in their facebook post, although very clearly and it's very visible, that it's their operating methods and influence, at least.

A couple of years before they managed to shut down another squat they couldn't control tightly enough and the movement was helpless, many of the critics were just afraid of the threats and/or being beaten. They used the position of the oldest squat (est. 1994), one of the few in Poland, and their skills, resources and influence, their organised and disciplined environment. Przychodnia, in recent years their ally, tried to adopt similar methods to dominate in Warsaw. It also helps to understand why so many in Poland and in Warsaw preferred to be on the stronger

side or just didn't want to antagonise them and didn't want to say or do anything. (There are also some other fucked up reasons, ofc.)

## Introduction

Od:Zysk got sold. Not much of a shock. Every now and then our squats are being bought and sold by a house-cleaner or a developer. This time it was different, though. The whole situation looks like the Od:Zysk collective fought for a while and finally, unable to find a solution, sold a building that they have been occupying to the landlord for ~120 000 PLN (29,000 EUR). You can think about it with admiration, as a smart move; here anarchists made a fool out of a rich investor. Such a stance, however, causes a resistance and disagreement in me, even more because of the much wider context behind the whole situation, known to me as a participant.

Everything takes a completely different shape if we understand a few facts. First of all, the collective Od:Zysk does not exist as an autonomous, independent being for a long time already, nor does it decide in its own matters, consequently. This situation continues and gets worse since at least a year and a half. A direct reason is the moves of the Poznań section of the Anarchist Federation (FA). Secondly, the decision to take money from the current legal owner of Od:Zysk is not a decision of the Od:Zysk collective (for obvious reasons, lack of decision power), but the FA decision, forced on the hull collective with formal games, threats, intimidation and finally physical violence. This all means that the case of taking ~29,000 EUR by anarchist collective is no longer a matter in the field of ethics and a question about whether to take or not take. If it were, it should be probably protested (this decision without a doubt influences the conditions, in which squatting movement in Poland operates) and one could not say nothing more against it. It would only be a decision of one collective. Questionable but autonomous. However, it's not that way. Paradoxically, we are dealing here with a situation that is best described with the vocabulary taken from the area that we most fiercely criticize. There was a hostile acquisition, robbery, house-cleaning (forced eviction) and finalizing the entire project in the form of a sale. All this was made by the Anarchist Federation. More, I am convinced it was completely deliberate. I will try to prove that this is a logical consequence of the strategy adopted by the Poznań section of FA, which influences also other anti-authoritarian collectives and organizations in Poland.

This text expresses concerns about potentially harmful impact of the Federation on all of us here, even on those, to whom the Federation activities are completely foreign. Moreover, as we see, speaking about FA Poznań, we can easily include several other organizations and initiatives such as the Greater Poland Tenants' Association (WSL, "Wielkopolskie Stowarzyszenie Lokatorów"), Rozbrat Squat, the National Commission of the Workers' Initiative (IP, "Inicjatywa Pracownicza"), the Poznań Antifa, The Street Association ("Stowarzyszenie Ulica") or Cafe-club Revenge ("Klubokawiarnia Zemsta"). Their centralization and the structure of operations will be described later, now I want to point out that Od:Zysk, despite the wish to cooperate with them all, had a completely different vision of cooperation and was therefore destroyed.

I wrote the essay more than a week ago. I was wondering for a long time whether to publish it and in what form. I decided to publish it for a few reasons. First, to break the status quo. What happened and still happens in Poznań I consider only an extreme manifestation of the disease that affects the whole Polish so-called 'movement'. It is a disease of authoritarianism, lack of solidarity and mixing personal conflicts with ideological ones. It is also a taboo disease. Silencing

many issues, faking activities and discussions. In my opinion it's a theater in which no one has an idea or courage to go beyond their role. Our political actions are characterized by defensiveness and lack of vision. In these conditions, I am afraid that any internal discussion would quickly end in the group of these among us, who enjoy the strength and influence and probably the whole case would be silenced in the name of the unity of the movement, unity that is only a unity of and for the certain people.

Another thing is safety of those who would like to say something FA Poznań doesn't like. As there were serious threats and physical attacks against people who did not agree with the FA line in Poznań, I believe that informing people broadly should at least stop physical aggression. When the whole situation becomes public, they need to be aware that "people are watching" (hopefully). The text is quite long but covers more than two years. In fact, I think that it should be longer and cover many more threads than just Od:Zysk and FA Poznań. I did not do this as I hope for a broad public discussion. After all, none of us is ashamed of own views and is not afraid to speak them aloud, right? I hope. What convinced me in the end was the hypocritical statement of "Od:Zysk". Especially at the point where they mention that Od:Zysk is a part of a grassroots movement that is not assumed to accept donations or grants but agrees to leave the building in exchange for a grant to WSL (Greater Poland Tenants' Association – please note that Warsaw Tenants' Association's name is also shortened to WSL; surprisingly(!) it seems to be a pure coincidence – translator's note). Heroic attitude; the thing is that WSL and FA are the same people. As it will turn out later in the text, it is also symptomatic that the signature of the Anarchist Federation got removed, even though for some time it has always appeared under every statement of the Od:Zysk Collective. Interesting, considering that never before in its short history has Od:Zysk been so dominated by FA members.

I also believe that in this situation every collective in this country should make a statement!

I am a former member of the Od: Zysk collective. The text was published on the Od:Zysk mailing list. So I believe that I have completed the formalities. The text is only my position and not the R.O.D.'s, who let me use its blog for the publication (thanks).

## **Od:Zysk – fight for sovereignty**

It is impossible to understand the situation of Od:Zysk if you do not know its internal history, how it was born and the role that the Poznań FA played in it. Without it, one can't either get the FA's claim to the right of extensive interference in the activities of this collective.

## **Capital Accumulation**

It is fairly basic to know that there are several types of capitals. Capital is people, means of production, material goods, funds. We may not like the existence of capital, but for the time being we operate in a society that is completely subordinate to it. Any collective needs it to work, too. What can a newly formed squatting group do if it does not have the money, tools and has little social capital (generally understood here as 'connections')? It can start to develop slowly, quietly, in line with its ideas. Sometimes this takes a long time and goes along with being kicked out of several locations several times. It allows you, though, to gain experience and skills. With a bit of



luck, „connections” are also made, thanks to which it is easier to organize events, borrow a car or a screwdriver, or finally get some money.

What if there is an organization called the Anarchist Federation right next door, some of them live in the country’s oldest squat, with people, skills, connections, money and tools? Isn’t it more rational to ask for help? In addition, it is a ‘federation’, a loose association of mutually supportive local anarchist initiatives. The choice seems simple. In the case of Od:Zysk, the initiative group consisted in part of people who considered themselves members of the federation. Before they opened Od:Zysk, people associated with the federation at that time had tried three times before. With the support of the FA – though sluggish. Their last action before Od:Zysk – squatting a building named named The Workshop (not to be confused with a contemporary project of the same name in Crakow – translator) – ended with a brutal eviction, and the most part of FA’s support was to see at that point. Here it should be added that the idea of opening a new squat in Poznań was born during the FA meetings, and the reason was the overcrowding of Rozbrat and the massive interest in living there by more people. FA had no particular idea for a new site. If we think about it, it might sound strange; an association of several groups should actively seek solutions and initiate new activities. In fact, FA is a union of more than dozen people representing various organizations. The central body administrating the rest. Because none of the ‘new’ squatters had a high position in it (and there were moments when this or that person was at odds with someone from the ‘top’), apart from solidarity support (eviction of The Workshop) or purely technical (borrowing tools from individual people), FA was not involved in the matters of the new place.

The situation started to change when Od:Zysk was created. But involved in this squat were people not from the FA, or what we sometimes call ‘the scene’. I believe that all initial successes (loud campaigns, successful opening, quick restoration of the building, etc.) were due to the strong involvement of people from the outside, who quickly became at least half of the inhabitants. They brought with them human resources and over time FA began to look at it greedily.

The FA is the dominant political force, using anti-authoritarian and anarchist slogans in Poznań. This allows it to greatly support (if they want) new groups. However, it demands a payment for this support, and being a „monopolist” it sets prices and has the means to force payback. In the case of Od:Zysk, it was an adaptation to the political line of the FA and active involvement in IP (Inicjatywa Pracownicza, Worker’s Initiative) and WSL (Greater Poland Tenants’ Association). In turn, participation in the FA meant something like an internship. Your voice was ignored (if you dare to speak up – meetings conducted by these people are a traumatic experience for many) or politely silenced. You could take responsibilities that other people were already bored with, come to pickets and nod. There was not, and still isn’t, any room for any kind of spontaneity, creativity or own ideas. Ethics or morality does not exist, only rationality, expressed within the so-called media strategy (I hope to write a critique someday).

We were then busy with other matters, we ran our own campaigns. Despite this, many of us took up the challenge and got involved in the activities of WSL or IP. As Od:Zysk, we joined the “Hanging of the Elites” campaign, which was the idea of FA, to a large extent executed by us. Already then there emerged a conflict; the line of division ran between what we want and what the FA demands.

## Are you an Anarchist?

The conflict created by the FA made itself increasingly felt. We were more often leaving the meetings disgusted; jokes about dictators, communists, parties and Bolsheviks appeared. However, we did not take our intuitions too seriously. We enjoyed enough autonomy, and the focus was on Od:Zysk. Most of us did not know each other before, we were just building a collective (never finished). People with Poznań experience were used to it. They still cared about building the movement, unity, solidarity and mutual help.

Even before the official opening, there was a discussion on describing the nature of the place. Simply put — whether is it an anarchist one. For the first time, FA authoritarianism appeared here. It should be remembered that FA is an anarcho- syndicalist formation and only such anarchism is right for them. At that time, this issue was not raised. The question was whether we want to be called an anarchist squat or not. Most of us were declared anarchists and though we wanted the place to be recognized as such, we wanted it to be available to everyone. It was supposed to be open and support all these anti-authoritarian initiatives that had no place. The plans were great. Theaters, different workshops. And everything was to be bottom-up, self-organized. Only later, it turned out that we started to resemble FA, there were hierarchies and specializations. We could see it when many valuable people, disgusted by months-long discussions about how not to collaborate with the system and preserve the ideological cleanliness (for example, not to use workshops for private moneymaking — today it sounds like a bitter joke) — just left. Like other issues, also this was solved by forcing. This is a usual FA's trick; pressure so long until the opposition simply gets tired and goes. But let us show the nature of these 'discussions'. One day, a well-known and experienced syndicalist, scientific worker and author of several books, during the FA meeting pointed finger at every newcomer and asked loudly: "Are you an anarchist?"

If only someone got up then and said: "Well, if you put it this way, I'm not sure"... or even better: "And you?" But we chickened. Not the first time and not the last one. And as we speak of cowardice, one should say clearly that the only thing that we're guilty of — former and current members of the Od:Zysk collective — is cowardice.

But put yourself in our shoes. From one side attacks by FA that in general we're not anarchist enough and we do not do what's important, meaning we do not engage in tenant and workers' struggles (it's telling, the exclusion of the activists from the realm of "normal people", when tenants refuse to pay rent is a rent strike, when you are squatting a building, you have to do something else, otherwise you are a parasite and an opportunist), from the other side, the pressure of the city and the police, the struggle against the selling of the place (after all, "Od:Zysk ain't for sale" — do we still remember?).

And then yet another side: own actions, organizing meetings and everything that creates the character of the place and the collective.

Pressure made by the FA influenced what was happening at Od:Zysk. The division was there. And although over time the positions of individual people were changing, internal cracks grew. I repeat once again: the collective was being destroyed from the inside before it could actually form. The one that emerged saw people unrelated to FA and not defining themselves as anarchists (though nothing in their practice was faulty) quickly removed. This is an important fact, if you interpret it as a purge. Such purges continue, and their frequency and brutality will grow the more, the weaker will be the Od:Zysk collective.

## **Formal issues**

How to get leverage on a group of people? Exploit an internal conflict. This is a method known to any power. How to do it? You either create such a conflict or use already existing one. To be able to do this, you need ‘your man’ to enter the group – a provocateur. Such person was already inside our group, he often sabotaged attempts for the autonomy and was one of the reasons the collective reached a state of passive resistance (later about it). Epilogue of his business was searching through residents’ rooms and kicking them out of the building at 2 am. This was the last purge, which took place at the beginning of September and to which we will come back.

Previous cracks inside the collective Od:Zysk turned into a split after action at the University of Economics (\*a queer protest during a lecture, pacified by the cops illegally with tasers and much force – translator). As we do not want to reveal any personal information here, we can not dwell into this event too much. Action – probably few people know – was organized spontaneously and without a larger plan. And yet some arrangements were there and some people broke them, thus leading to escalation at the University Hall.

It is irrelevant here if it was needed or not, it was important that because of it a conflict grew enough to paralyze the collective processes for a few more weeks and led to a weird decision, taken by Od:Zysk (although from where this idea came – I do not know). From that point, all decisions taken at the Poznań Federation meeting regarding the collective Od:Zysk were to be binding. The absurdity of this decision shows how effective was the dividing policy. Interesting, those meetings of Od:Zysk were on Wednesdays, and Tuesdays – FA’s. That’s how the ‘nodding’ process started: approving FA decisions at our meetings. Of course, thanks to such arrangement of meetings, the Federation could easily impose its point of view. What gained the provocateur? A rise in his informal position in centralized structures of the Federation, and in the context of a new division of tasks (passed into the hands of FA) greater influence within Od:Zysk itself.

What made the collective take such a decision? Lack of faith in own strength to solve the internal conflict. Easily to see here, that FA, after all, was still perceived by us as a friendly structure, faithful to the idea of anarchism (vide its inflexible stance that Od:Zysk has to be anarchist by definition). In other words, we simply expected help to get through a difficult period. Nobody predicted the loss of identity and decision-making. These decisions were also supported by people who are today thrown out of the building with force by... the anarchists.

## **Anarchist Federation Section Poznań or Anarchy is a company**

### **Formal issues, continued. – FA structure and the concept of ‘Movement’**

A lot about centralization and hierarchy in FA. It’s worth to explain and organise everything. I wrote already about several groups that have their representatives in FA. We also mentioned that FA was rather a management board than the forum of these groups. Because FA is still an unregistered legally group, without official bodies, all forms of centralization and hierarchy are also informal and hidden. This makes the mimicry of this group as an anarchist difficult to see through for a casual observer. If they only want, FA can preserve all forms of a group based on

equality, and make decisions in — it would seem — collective way, sometimes even consensually. However, this is an absolutely false picture (just look at the silent lips during plenums). This group should be perceived as a form of a party, and not through the lens of the declared views, but practical activities.

FA meetings are open, but this does not mean that everyone who appears at them is FA (even if the person thinks so). And although everyone has a voice, of course, its importance varies. Standard behaviors during the meetings include shouting, offending people or ignoring them. These are the forms of verbal intimidation and psychological suppression. Instead of substantive discussion or analysis on someone's opinion, you can generally hear that what was told was stupid, nonsense, dreamy, irrational or (ultimate argument) incompatible with the FA strategy. For instance, a frequent argument (to which we will still come back) against the self-determination of Od:Zysk, and rescuing it at all, it is that the Od:Zysk collective was unable to develop their own strategy and policies and that there were no sensible alternatives on its part.

Firstly, it's illogical, when we take into account the fact that the decision that FA's decisions bind has never been withdrawn, which literally means that The Federation is to take responsibility (and they took it, oh!) for Od:Zysk. Secondly, all attempts for an alternative defense strategy and activities were cut by FA before even a discussion could start. How symptomatic is such behavior for this group will show when we describe the structure of what in Poznań is called 'the movement'. FA is the Board of the so-called Movement. Movement sometimes has some extra parts, such as a tenants' one, but this it's not relevant. In general, it should be understood as anarchist. FA are more than dozen people, each of which is involved in one or two subsidiary organizations (the language of corporations or party is very adequate here). Except for the Board, meetings are attended by mid-level management. While the top management is the Activists, these others are activists.

The mid-level stays silent, unless the discussion deals with the details of the decision taken by the Management Board. As FA, though not so many, it is well organized, generally the board can do what suits them. There's also a group of novices, acolytes who do what is said. While FA is the meeting of the „movement's” board, the individual sections like WSL, IP or Antifa reflect the FA structure only as part of the specialization they do. Some people from the Management Board flow between the subsidiary organizations due to lacks in human resources, though they rarely share their capital (skills, contacts) and if so, then only with trusted mid-level members. They pass competence reluctantly, which btw limits their structures numbers. They operate in the paradox space between declared values and everyday practice. If they dared to cede the decision to people whose fidelity to FA (not to anarchist ideas or even anarcho- syndicalist ideas, but the Federation, understood as the highest form of Movement) is not yet proven, it could happen that their political vision wouldn't be implemented. Precisely the belief in the strategy and its advantage over another visions leads to such an aggressive centralization, and at the same time deficiency of people.

This also explains why in the summer of 2014, when during the most intensive struggle for saving Od:Zysk, FA pressure was growing and collective autonomy was being gradually limited, so many people left Od:Zysk. In fact, they did not leave the squat — which is dear to me and many other people to this day — but FA. These people engaged in at least four other initiatives throughout the country, also in Poznań, but also in Crakow and Warsaw. Collective Kłak, R.O.D. and Reaktor (RC10), as well as groups organizing Anti-Frontex days or No One Is Illegal movement, not to mention other initiatives. It's important in the context of bad word spread about

Od:Zysk, suggestions that the group creating it is worthless, inept people, for whom FA must think.

Summer 2014 saw another purge. Those who stayed were persons, who still had faith or just were too strongly connected to Poznań to leave. Those who replaced them weren't at all worse, but they found themselves in a much worse situation. A small part found a place in FA, most, it seems, fell into a passive-rebellion mode. Not stupid, it was enough for them to go to FA meetings for a few times to find out how it smells. The more so because with a weakening of Od:Zysk aggression and contempt on the part of the Federation increased and only idiot could have some illusions about the nature of this organization.

To sum up, FA is the Management Board; other organizations are departments or subsidiary companies. And all in the name of what? Revolution? Maybe, we won't dig into it, although many years ago one of the board members said: "We realized that we weren't an avant-garde. That we wanted to change something here and now." So probably no revolution (especially that a few years later, he ran for the Old Town Council). We're convinced it's all about influence. But for this one needs people, which is likely why at the very beginning FA did not interfere much in the Od:Zysk matters. In their arrogance and self-righteousness, Od:Zysk probably seemed to them a large resource of people who, if they are anarchists, ought to naturally stick to FA and dependent organizations to somewhat relieve the old, tired activists. Hence, I guess, the source of irritation with the "Are you an anarchist?" at the time when it became clear that vision of people from Od:Zysk and FA were at least incompatible.

I shall describe one more important feature of the FA organization — specialization. It will help us understand another problem that FA people have with Od:Zysk. Until its appearance the FA had: one Squat, one club/cafe/ bookstore, one tenant organization and one workers' union. After the creation of Od:Zysk there were two squats. And nobody (except for the squatters) knew what to do with this. The problems that this situation has generated were reflected in the complaints by FA (or people strongly associated), eg. regarding infoevents at Od:Zysk — after all, it is a job of 'The Revenge'. Do you want to compete? (A frequent charge). Next example. Once at an Od:Zysk plenary there came up an idea to open a free summer cafe; before it was even discussed, the same charge was raised. But when FA tried to reanimate Od:Zysk politically in spring, the only thing that they thought out was counselling for tenants (done by the WSL anyway) in the arcades, next to pubs and the bustle. An idea was dubious, but there were photos and an article in Gazeta Wyborcza (mainstream, liberal/centre- right newspaper — translator). Similar doubts about the competition were also brought up regarding concerts, especially punk ones. After all, this is a Rozbrat's job, do you want to make competition?

Let a quote from one FA member sum it up. (A acolyte and a pricker, but I guess he described accurately FA's approach, btw we saw it also in a local newspaper Głos Wielkopolski.) "We live in a bourgeois city, so we must also use such language". It would be interesting to dig to the point one day when bourgeois language turned into bourgeois methods.

Taking all this into account, the Corporation Anarchist Movement FA decided to close an unprofitable branch. I don't know if they had such a goal already when they imposed their power over us. We suspect that it happened a little later, when they realized that despite taking over the power, they are not able to control the Od:Zysk. After all, there lived anarchists (and still live there), who don't care about any power. Even power that calls itself anarchist. Pressured from both sides, by the FA and the city and the owner, forced to give the strategy of the struggle for

the house to the hands of the Federation and deeply divided we could do one thing — use passive resistance and absence.

## **Od:Zysk fell, but does not give up**

“We need to regain control over Od:Zysk. We do not even know who lives there now” — E-mail from the mailing list of the Poznań Anarchist Federation.

At one point, the turnover of people at Od:Zysk was beginning to resemble that of a supermarket. Not only the Anarchist Federation did not know who actually lived there, probably not even Od:Zysk knew, themselves. But we repeat again, they were not some drunkards. Party mood is also one of the forms of the rebellion. You can do nothing; you can leave or take care of your affairs and actions, in which no one would interfere and tell you what you should think (many people who stayed chose it). You can also drink in the ruins. Accusing new residents that they led this place to fall is a misunderstanding. FA led to this state. These people had come to a place that at some point had the opinion of one of the most radical in the country. Possibly they had wanted to participate in it. However, they saw the ‘political line’ imposed from outside and internal, constantly sustained, conflict. What could they do? Could they stand against it all?

Those who think so we ask to reread the part about the capital. Capital developed by Od:Zysk was either taken over by FA or went away with those who have left (and maybe they were rather exiled). New people did not have strength (and here the argument from rationality is legitimate) to oppose FA or generate new activities that could revive the place. In the city where ‘Movement’ is dominated by FA, at the time when Od:Zysk was already taken over (from now on, we can already talk about Federation having grabbed it or just about a ‘hostile acquisition’), every political event by Od:Zysk without prior consultation with the Federation had to count with ostracism and excuses. In turn, consultation attempts always ended under the umbrella of the Federation and, in the best case, takeover or significant interference. That’s why there were drink and partying in the ruins. At least this could not be forbidden. Their gang has not come inside yet.

Passivity in regard to FA decisions, absence at the meetings of both collectives — because what sense was it making, since one is not decisive, and one had no voice at the other? — This is the last stage of the conflict between FA and attempting at bringing to Od:Zysk some quality. This possibility actually has already been eliminated, so before we think about what next... Shit, let’s go drink. This is one of the funniest but also sad moments of this story. So many efforts on the part of the FA to somehow make the Od:Zysk people FA-like activists, and the only thing that managed was to either chase them away, or cause a complete lack of interest, resp. inspire a massive several-weeks lasting party. Well, what to do, if not put responsibility on them once again, using the power of your capital (this time the authority of one of the strongest activist/anarchist scenes in Poland). After all, who would listen to people called useless by some known member of Poznań FA?

This way FA considered Od:Zysk as their own project, which suffered a loss not by their fault and deserved closing. Just as corporations shutting down unprofitable factories. Kick out people and sell out the bankruptcy estate for a paltry penny. But it turned out these people, allegedly doing nothing but partying, still have opinions. And they have rules, which they do not want to

break in the name of any ideas and know the value of prioritising principles over the idea. For none of them the goal justified the means. Besides, none from FA explained the goal.

Long ago, right after the Mr. Woźny bought the building, the buyer offered us a small sum of money (1 or 2 thousands euro). Although the Federation mentioned taking it at the plenary, the collective position was then clear and unanimous – no money, for anything, ever. Even the provocateur put that clear by the time – no way. Then negotiations started. The strategy was clear; we talk with Mr. Woźny to play on time, all the offers from the city and the investor we long consider, we send the papers, we wait and we send next ones. Not everyone loved it. Under the guise of tactical play, somewhere we felt that this was kind of self-deception. I mean, let these negotiations take a year or more. How to explain it later? We were already trapped in the so-called ‘media strategy’, pushed by the FA, so it was obvious that we’d have to explain. What we gonna say, if the city finds us a building, and Mr. Woźny gives money for the renovation, for instance? However, not so. We want to be at the Marketsquare, hell! We have this right, not as anarchists, but as people. And here we are fighting for ourselves and for others. But we chickened. We didn’t confront the FA, and the situation seemed urgent. If only we had the experience that we now have. But we didn’t, and the collective was in disarray. We accepted this strategy. There were already voices saying – in such case, give some alternative. But for that not only we seemed to lack time. Moreover, according to the accepted framework, a decision concerning Od:Zysk had to be presented and discussed at FA’s plenum. Few were eager to do it. So, the solution seemed safe. It was a serious mistake. The second serious one after commitment to the custody of the Federation. Because it got us into even greater dependence. Just the condition remained still the same – we do not take money!

## **And we take 29000 EUR, though. Who? Us?**

In Poznań, sentiments for the glorious past and the so-called great figures from 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are strong. Od:Zysk once had a huge banner with Bakunin. Quite often there are books about Makhno published (one of the house members sometimes even used nick ‘Nestor Makhno’ – funny, I admit), about Kronstadt or the Spanish Revolution. Ironically, all actions of the Federation in regard to Od:Zysk have analogies in these books. Unfortunately, these analogies do not run between FA and the Free Army of Ukraine, Kronstadt sailors of the FAI/ CNT. No, toutes proportions gardées, they bring to mind a pale reflection of Bolsheviks and Stalinists. Well, it turned out that FA wanted to negotiate with Mr. Woźny money for people moving out from Od:Zysk. Note that most people living there did not belong to FA and were not attending its plenums. Still, Federation felt entitled. At the Od:Zysk plenary there was no decision taken; consensus could not be reached. At the FA’s one, the provocateur scolded other Od:Zysk people, who protested against the recognition of decision of accepting the money as a decision of the entire collective, with words that if the decision was made, it was valid and it did not matter how it happened. Well, it did, because part of the people did not want to move out, regardless of FA’s decision.

Here, the whole story could finish. Let FA take money (in two installments, the first time while handing keys to Mr. Woźny, and for a noble goal, because it was to be transferred to WSL’s account – we will comment it), and those who want to stay would stay and defend the house. Easy? No. For many reasons, this was unacceptable for FA. All because of the „media strategy”,

in which FA had trapped itself long before and which is one of the reasons why FA changes into a political party.

First of all, FA poses for an organization that almost never loses. They are scrupulously building its powerful image. We can guess that sooner or later, the police would drag people out from the barricaded building. FA perceives it as a failure, so FA can not harm its brand with it. What a problem? Let FA not take part in this — someone naive would say.

Of course, FA wouldn't take part. They even withdrew the support. They also threatened people who wanted to defend the place that they could not count on the Federation or ABC. It's been said more outright — "you're gonna stay there alone".

The thing is that FA can not allow such a situation happen at all, because whether it'd take part in defense or not, the media would write that it's anarchists. FA itself tried to 'merge' with Od:Zysk, and as result, these beings are inseparable for media. Even the journalist Żytnicki, conditioned by this alleged journalistic objectivity, would ask: "Well, how is it? It's anarchists or not anarchists?" As FA always aimed at building one, united movement in Poznań since ever (from time to time they look for a key to whole Poland), they can't say, though, that they are another anarchists. Well, if they are another anarchists, why don't you support them? And what is the poor FA supposed to say, then? It's bad anarchists; we keep contracts with a developer, they do not?

Once again, you can see the discrepancy between the proclaimed idea and practice. This is the second reason; people who'd be in the with no help from FA would bring it shame in the eyes of activists, anarchists and anti-authoritarians around the country. Thus, FA was unenthusiastic, since people from management were involved also elsewhere in Poland (through tenant movement and especially trade union movement). They couldn't harm their prestige (not to speak about Rozbrat's popularity). But refusing support was smallest of problems. They were a pack of useless drunks, weren't they? One could explain it.

But how to explain themselves to Mr. Woźny? Thanks for the money, but you know... Well... several persons will stay. You gotta kick'em out. But I paid for them not to stay! Yyyy... you know, we clean the house for the first time. Most left, but the rest do not want. That would become a huge shitstorm, cause media wouldn't swallow it.

Personally, I think that taking money and staying would be fun and desirable. In turn, keeping a contract with a developer, well, not very anarchist. But also this, from the FA point of view, one bear. Although probably the journalist Żytnicki would start inquiring again. And here is the last and most important reason.

The FA knows themselves, that however one approached the situation, it does not look the best way possible. That's why the building has to be emptied, blame Od:Zysk as much as possible and limit the damage by imposing own narrative. Do it all as quietly as possible and with the hands of outmaneuvered Od:Zysk itself. This is also the reason for me to write this text. Something like that shall not pass; and still we have not yet discovered everything.

The Federation must therefore force people to leave the building. During the already mentioned plenary, when the option of taking money was 'adopted', there happened much more. The head of the gang department (due to later events, it's difficult to still call them Antifa) announced that he'd personally beat up anyone who'd stay at Od:Zysk after the move-out date (agreed with the developer). He argued that the potential removal of such people from the building would offend his honor (apparently selling the squat and playing a house-cleaner do not).



Later it was stated that today squatting today doesn't make sense (the meeting took place at Rozbrat (seriously!)) and the fate of The Workshop and Reaktor (RC10) were used as examples.

Let's stop for a moment over Reaktor (RC10). The situation with the eviction was a complete surprise for this Cracow collective (police interest was an effect of a surprise raid by some Antifa thugs – translator); everything took place within a few days. A modest in numbers team managed to put alert and get interest from the media during the weekend, organize support on spot and bring some people to defend. Here let's go back to the part about capital. The Cracow Reaktor (RC10) was a tiny collective, consisting of several people, in a large part of foreigners and former members of the collective... Od:Zysk. FA Poznań did not think that Reaktor (RC10) was worth even symbolic support on their part, they called them pathetic because they "begged for help". These miserable people, however, did a piece of such a good job that even right-wing media in Crakow stood firmly behind them. In a few days they did something that FA couldn't do for 20 years.

On the other hand, the 'defeat' of The Workshop (the Poznań one, not the Cracow one – translator) resulted in the creation of Od:Zysk, which took place in an atmosphere of openness and diversity and now it dies miserably, betrayed and abandoned by those, on whose support they counted the most. Let's remember this lack of solidarity, cynicism and arrogance. There were many more words said at this plenum that can be considered threats and intimidation, meant to surrender and a 'peaceful' leave from the building. Did anyone wonder what would happen to the tenants? No, because in the logic of FA, squatters are apparently not tenants. Therefore media-oriented and legalist ways led an informal group to informal party-mafia and authoritarianism. For the rest of the plenum, a good few hours, FA was already sharing the dreamed treasure and debated what would they do with 47,800 EUR. As it turned out, not 47,500, but 29,000 EUR. There were curious opinions expressed, for instance that anarchists are bandits, and that some in the FA collective feel bandits, so the whole situation is fine, because they rob the developer. And again, it didn't come to anyone's mind that they did not rob a developer, but the collective Od:Zysk. Because the developer anyway bought the building super cheaply and these 29,000 EUR makes little difference. It's amazing how the Capitalists from FA can rob the same people for a few times. From freedom and dignity, and finally from the building. Things started to accelerate.

## **FA cleanses Od:Zysk from a 'suspicious element'**

During the recent event at Od:Zysk, a group of militants appeared and brutally expressed their approach to undermining the applicable political line. They informed everyone that anyone criticizing FA actions, mentioning that Od:Zysk had been sold, would be beaten up. We did not have to wait long until theory changed into practice. Stencils criticizing FA have appeared at Od:Zysk. Soon a group of thugs, with a provocateur at the forefront, came to the room of a person suspected of this terrible crime. Screaming they searched the room, and though they didn't find the evidence, they took the keys and kicked that person out. All at 2 am. Some time earlier they treated another person in a similar way. One of the survivors of the assault, reporting this incident, said directly: "I felt like at a police interrogation, so I behaved like at such – I was silent." Ones who protested against these practices heard that it was a "corrective effect" (whatever it meant) and that if they do not like something, they can, of course, fuck off. They were also warned by other people that digging into these matters may "end badly".

All this made me, a person once belonging to the collective Od:Zysk, who feels a part of the squatting and anarchist movement to write this text and publish it. Anxiety and a sense of threat due to the logic of actions that Poznań Anarchist Federation seems to follow is not a matter of local environment. I find its influence harmful and destructive, and now, when its actions come onto light, especially in retrospect, I have the right to think that FA would like to implement its strategy also in other places. What's more, FA's ready to do it in the same brutal way, that has nothing to do with anarchism.<sup>1</sup>

Also, I want to express my solidarity with intimidated people of Od:Zysk. They are the most harmed, twice. Not only the threats and violence took away their house but also by keeping the whole thing silent, they are being striped from dignity. Let us not agree to it, let's not let it be.

Od:Zysk is something more than just a building at the Old Marketsquare, and that no one is able to sell or buy. Neither FA nor developers! And so for a reminder:

Solidarity our weapon! Against every aggression!

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<sup>1</sup> The more so because recently the National Commission of the trade union Workers' Initiative/ Inicjatywa Pracownicza (dominated to a large extent by FA Poznań), still does not register one of the Commissions, after a campaigns of lies. It still prolongs the registration process of a Commission already achieving many successes and deems it to illegal existence, which exposes it to various reprisals from employers and possibly legal sanctions. Instead, WI(IP) sent to Warsaw a person, who can not be called other than a spy or provocateur, only to get into the Commission. These actions bring live memories of these done by FA members against Od:Zysk, and from the historical perspective, bring associations with the actions of stalinists to anarchists and syndicalists during the Spanish revolution. A year ago at the anti-fascist demo same people beat a group of funny communists carrying the portraits of Soviet genseks (secretary general). Did they want to reclaim the images?

# Dictionary

**FA, Federacja Anarchistyczna (Anarchist Federation)** A country-wide network established in the early 90's, big for the local measures. Dominated by Poznań city; the crew from there is very closely tied to Rozbrat squat. Their doctrine is anarchist platformism, the group aims to centralize the movement and claims a leadership position.

**Hate trucks, aka homophobovans or fetus-vans** Small trucks equipped with big loudspeakers and covered with banners, cruising through cities' downtowns with disgusting, deceiving and aggressive propaganda of anti-choice and anti-lgbtq+ nature on banners and via loudspeakers (for instance, linking lgbt to pedophilia). They are part of an international radical catholic network, influential in Poland, with connections to the government. Before trucks got assigned police escorts, they were often blocked and sometimes a tiny bit damaged, usually by very small groups of people; results were often published. That was one of Stop Bullshit (Stop Bzdurom) [\*see note] activities; many unassociated ppl got inspired and followed. During Syrena's birthday celebration a year prior, hate truck made a stop in front of the building. As the verbal confrontation started, some rightist jumped out of nowhere and punched a female comrade in the face. The reaction was still mild, due for instance to the police station being 100 m away. What followed were also damage to van banners and somewhat the van itself (around/below 1kEUR/5 kPLN tho) + public prayers at our gates + reportages at prime time in state TV + a few months of pre-trial imprisonment of Margot in a jail for 'male' arrestees and very much media coverage of the topic, eventually shifting the main discourse to somewhat less queerphobic.

**PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, Law and Justice)** The ruling party in Poland, governing with more than enough support and representation since 2015 (they also tried to establish a new, Fourth Republic when in power the previous time). Far right, very catholic and often xenophobic. Notorious for largely successful overtaking of, among others, the media and judiciary system, routinely using hate campaigns against migrants and sexual/gender minorities. Fairly authoritarian, although less successful than their inspiration from Hungary.

**Przychodnia** A squat in downtown Warsaw, since 2012, neighbors of Syrena from another side of the fence, across the inner yard. A punk one, counterculture oriented. Until 2018 relations were most of the time complicated. Most of the times, topic of the conflicts was sexist or homophobic and transphobic violence of Przychodnia members or guests. In 2018, when a rape took place there and various people from the movement pushed for a right response, its collective enraged and disappointed so many, so much. Members, who didn't agree with the position of the majority got pushed out/ resigned and left. No meaningful appropriate steps were taken and thus in 2019 a call out has been published (see <https://resiste.squat.net/?p=24396>). Since then the two squats disliked each other even more, re-

lations being low-profile/tense/icy. Some residents or even members of Syrena, though, ones more into counterculture and/or unhappy with the struggles Syrena was involved in and/or members of eastern diasporas seeking contact with others of similar backgrounds, were visiting there frequently and having friends.

Przychodnia and its circles were outspoken critics of Stop Bullshit (Stop Bzdurom) for trouble-making and, with help of their trojan horses, tried to force out many Syrena members thought to have acted against the homophobovan [\*see note] in front of Syrena gate. Before the 5.12 attack, Przychodnia let their territory be used for a dozen armed guys attack against Syrena (which was fended off), in defence of the same D., who went there after getting pepper-sprayed, when he was punching, kicking and choking people stopping his attempt to overtake and privatize for himself a few more (public) rooms. It could be clear by that time, that the plan was to overthrow Syrena sovereignty, install more machos and chase away Syrena people easily. After this event D. came back himself, using a knife to make sure he'd be able to stay and spreading manipulated stories organized a few invasions of dozens of up to ca. 40 personal friends, hooligans, Przychodnia people and our opponents from within the movement aimed at demonstrating capabilities for violence and lower or higher profile threatening behavior.

**Reprivatization scandals, WSL (Warszawskie Stowarzyszenie Lokatorów, Warsaw Tenants' Association), Jolanta Brzeska** :: After WWII city was close to 70% destroyed and had gotten rebuilt with paid and unpaid work of the whole society. The state had taken many private parcels, along with (usually ruined) buildings. When capitalism was re-introduced, there emerged claims to ownership – “legal” and phony – made by landlords' heirs and claim traders – often well-connected in courts and city hall, often purchasing claims very cheaply from elderly people. City returned many in full, now reconstructed, nicely located, worth tons of bucks, with tenants given no protection and often quickly and brutally made go. Some collected dozens of properties and claims. The business was going so well, that the tenants' movement couldn't do much; it was a taboo. In 2011 a 63 y.o. WSL (Warsaw Tenants' Association) member Jolanta Brzeska got kidnapped from her flat and murdered, with authorities not looking for perpetrators too much. WSL resided at Syrena, which got occupied the same year, cooperated with WSL closely and was blocking evictions many times; some people were members of both groups. A few years later the thing became more interesting for the big media and it has slowed down. Conservative far right, who took power, tried to use it instrumentally against the previously ruling neoliberals, doing nothing though, however providing us with many opportunities to resist new, varying oppressions. WSL, slowly cleansed of more radical members lean towards pro – government, reformist positions. Brzeska's daughter, feeling disrespected and disappointed, has cut off from WSL. Being a one issue organization, WSL has consisted of communists, anarchists, lawyers, anti-communists, catholics, mostly old and poor people threatened with eviction or after it (also ones who had been physically defended by us), sometimes not much politicized; SWERFism, religious intolerance, transphobic etc attitudes occur within ranks. Its former members have ended up on both sides of the conflict at our place; the current base has enthusiastically supported the macho against the queerfeminist side, one member having taken part in the assault. They frame and praise the brake-in and eviction of 12 people with robbing valuables, performed by 30–40 largely veiled guys with heavy weaponry, as a pro-tenant intervention.

**Rozbrat** A squat in Poznań, half-a-million city in western Poland, halfway between its capital Warsaw and Berlin. Established 1994. Very closely tied to the city's FA, Anarchist Federation. Well known, much politicized, successful and important in PL. Its people were involved in the tragic developments regarding the closing of Od:Zysk squat [\*see foreword + last essay in the zine] and received money from the owner. By end of the decade, base for two prominent former members of Syrena since its beginning, important in WSL, but with whom most other members didn't want to cooperate or co-live and who had to leave after a few years long intense conflict. After 5.12 Rozbrat sided with the attackers on social media and TG, even though it has not been taking any overt high-profile action.

**Stop Bzdurom (Stop Bullshit)** A small and vocal queer anarchist collective, active 2019–21. Focused mostly on challenging aggressive and dehumanizing queer- and homophobic propaganda by the Polish state and Catholic Church, often also supported by large part of the media and “justice” institutions. Employed direct actions in the public, much present in the internet and social and traditional media, acting overtly. [\*See note on homophobovans] Controversial within left, somewhat also within lbtq+ circles (at least initially), ie. because of the rude and troublemaking queer image — which has been a novelty in Poland, used to very polite, liberal, media-friendly and law-abiding work, also in the context of general Polish infospace (excl. far right) being relatively not too radical. The thing got much traction and attention, especially after the jailing of Margot, which has brought unusual interest and support from within the mainstream, surprisingly wide and also from abroad; the arrest caused massive demonstrations, provoked an open physical confrontation between young queers and the police (before, a pretty unknown thing here), who, following orders from above, acted obviously more brutally than their sick standards were. The events of that time got quite some coverage and heavily influenced the public mindset. It seems kind of irreversible by now that the existence of queers got somewhat normalized, resisting and solidary attitudes got more popular and less condemned, and the hateful campaigns were brought to the spotlight, more widely criticised and forced to slow down.

**11.11** National holiday, anniversary of country's independence. Since 2007 celebrated by far right with marches, that got big starting in 2010, often confronted directly or politically by antifascist. The initiative became a core of nationalistic organizing, eventually becoming the biggest far-right gathering in Europe. Size of the march varies, but it always gathers several to tens of thousands of people, including 20–50% of active far-right militants. Thus, every year there are acts of violence e.g., in 2013, an attempted attack on the squats and the burning of the rainbow sculpture, frequent racist or homophobic assaults, arson of apartments, etc.

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We are not afraid of ruins  
On violent takeover of our home and social center Syrena by macho-anarchists  
2023

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