

Poznan 31.3.2010

Hey everybody!

The last moments of the winter in Poland are starting to be over. Little by little the people of Poznan are starting to feel alive again. The warm and sunny weather we have had lately has coaxed people out of their homes for various reasons, perhaps just to enjoy life, or even to participate in organized activities.

A while back I got out and marched the streets of Poznan for the sake of the local squat, Rozbrat. Some sixteen years ago a company that owned buildings near to the city centre of Poznan fled the country because of the massive debts they were in. At the same time they left behind a sizeable complex of buildings. The local anarchists seized the opportunity. From that moment onwards the space has been both a home and an autonomous social centre for many different people. The dissidents and radicals of Poznan, members of various subcultures and casual passers-by (especially those who choose a bicycle over a car) have found a home in Rozbrat. The residents of the squat have themselves been restoring and re-building the buildings, which have been on the brink of collapsing for years. Moreover, the flourishing cultural activities of Rozbrat are mainly organized by the people of Rozbrat themselves. Now the story of Rozbrat was about to end prematurely, as the city of Poznan set Rozbrat again up for an auction. The last time this happened, nobody bought Rozbrat. Therefore the price was lowered this time around, and the scare of losing Rozbrat was more relevant than ever.



My own experiences of Rozbrat are, of course, scarce, as I am still quite green to the city. Only this year I have started to attend the concerts and the parties more frequently. I am happy about this, because the atmosphere in Rozbrat is without comparison. Also, when thinking about weekend activities, I will choose a scruffy punk rock cave over one of the glitzy clubs of Poznan any day. I also feel like I came to Rozbrat at a good time - the hardships of past months have brought the diverse folks at Rozbrat together for the sake of fighting for this place that for many is the true symbol of the city. I do think that as a city Poznan is beautiful and works well, but sometimes it feels a bit too flawless. For this reason, I think that the colourful, rebellious people of Rozbrat bring with them a good amount of balance to the city.



A couple of days ago I got a text message saying that the fight proved to be fruitful. The auction was held as planned, and Rozbrat was left unbought again. As the chants over the streets of Poznan said; "Miasto to nie firma, Rozbrat zostaje", which means, "The city is not a company, Rozbrat stays! Right on!

To my knowledge, squatting has never become a great success in Jyväskylä. The latest attempt was in the spring of 2008, when a group of local activists took over one of the empty, wooden buildings at the campus of the University of Jyväskylä. However, the squatting attempt declined in just one day, after the owner of the building called the police in order to surround the building and to break down the resistance of the would-be-squatters. Myself I am not taking a stand on what is wrong and what is right in a situation like this. However, the phenomenon of squatting is so fascinating, that I would rather study the matter thoroughly before forming an opinion - and this time my vote was clearly for and not against Rozbrat.

Bye from springly Poznan for now,

Anna

