

# LIVING WITHOUT PERMISSION



The Bullo Amanecer Barrioquero Garden ("Beautiful Puerto Rican Dawn"), founded in 1984 and located on the corner of 8th and C. This community garden, a lush East Side treasure, is an important change of direction. The City wants to allow a developer to build luxury apartments on the site.

El Jardín Bullo Amanecer Barrioquero, fundado en 1984 está ubicado en la esquina de la Calle 8 y Avenida C. Esas tierras se luchaban para el propio movimiento de destrucción. La Ciudad quiere darles a los propietarios para que construyan un edificio de lujo.

Our spirit will not be daunted, nor our will broken. . . . The light of Liberty burns low just now. But do not despair, friends. Keep the spark alive. The night cannot last forever. Soon there will come a rift in the darkness, and The New Day break even in this country. May each of us feel that we have contributed our mite toward the great Awakening. EMMA GOLDMAN



"An individual cannot know what he really is until he has realized himself through action. . . . The interest the individual finds in something is already the answer to the question of whether he should act and what should be done."

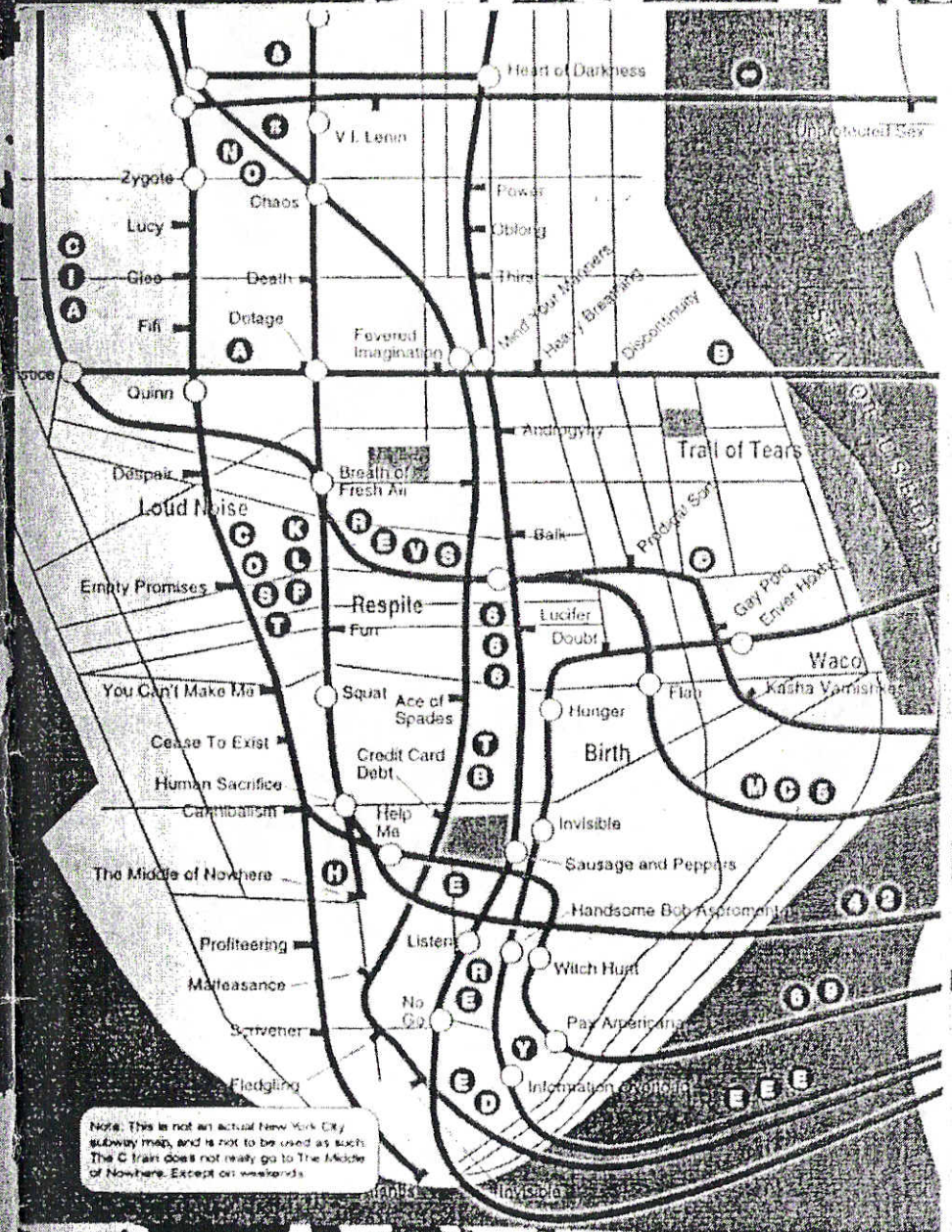
—Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

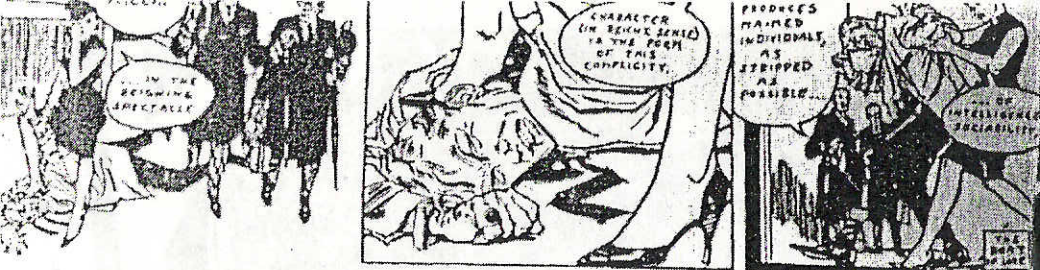
"We can comprehend this world only by contesting it as a whole. . . . The root of the prevailing lack of imagination cannot be grasped unless one is able to imagine what is lacking, that is, what is missing, hidden, forbidden, and yet possible, in modern life."

—Situationist International\*

Revolution

is not an accident, not a sudden happening. . . . [Ideas] grow slowly, gradually. . . . Hence the social revolution is a . . . development. . . . It develops to the point when considerable numbers of people have embraced the new ideas and are determined to put them into practice. When they attempt to do so and meet with opposition, then the slow, quiet, and peaceful social evolution becomes quick, militant, and violent. Evolution becomes revolution. **ALEXANDER BERKMAN**





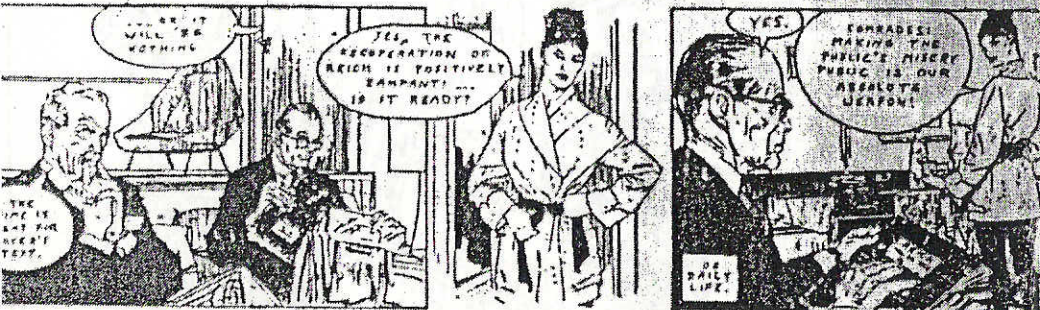
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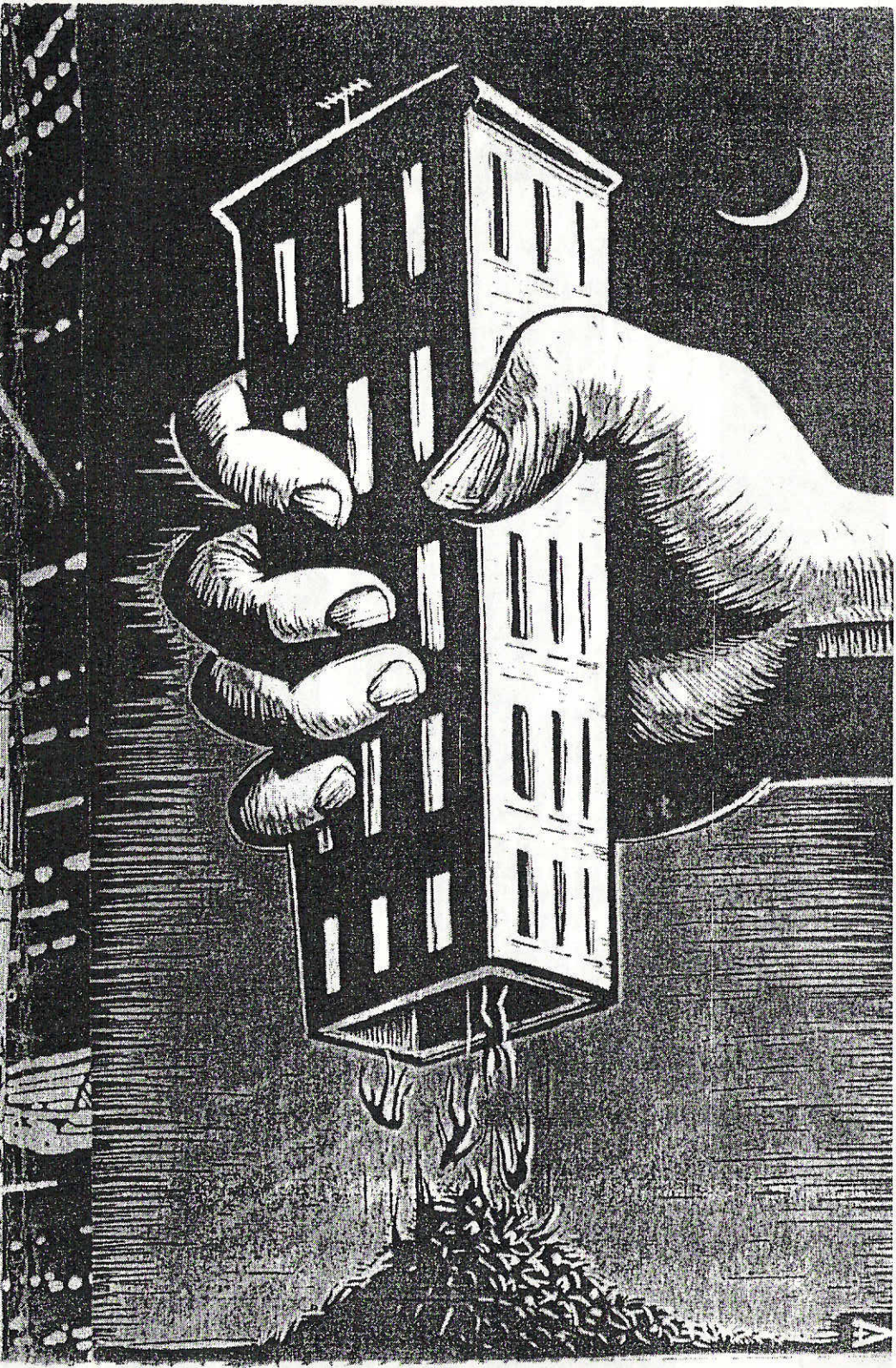
**INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY PREHISTORY**

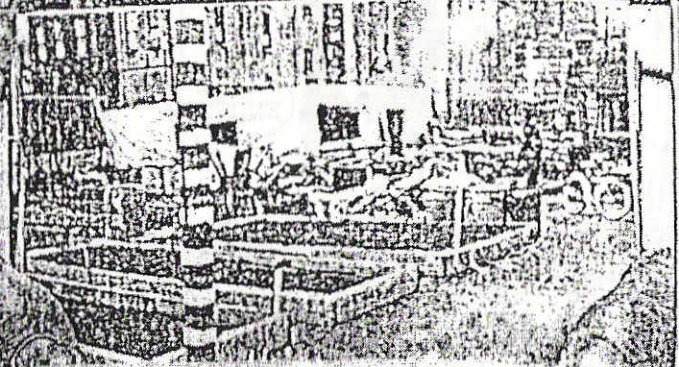
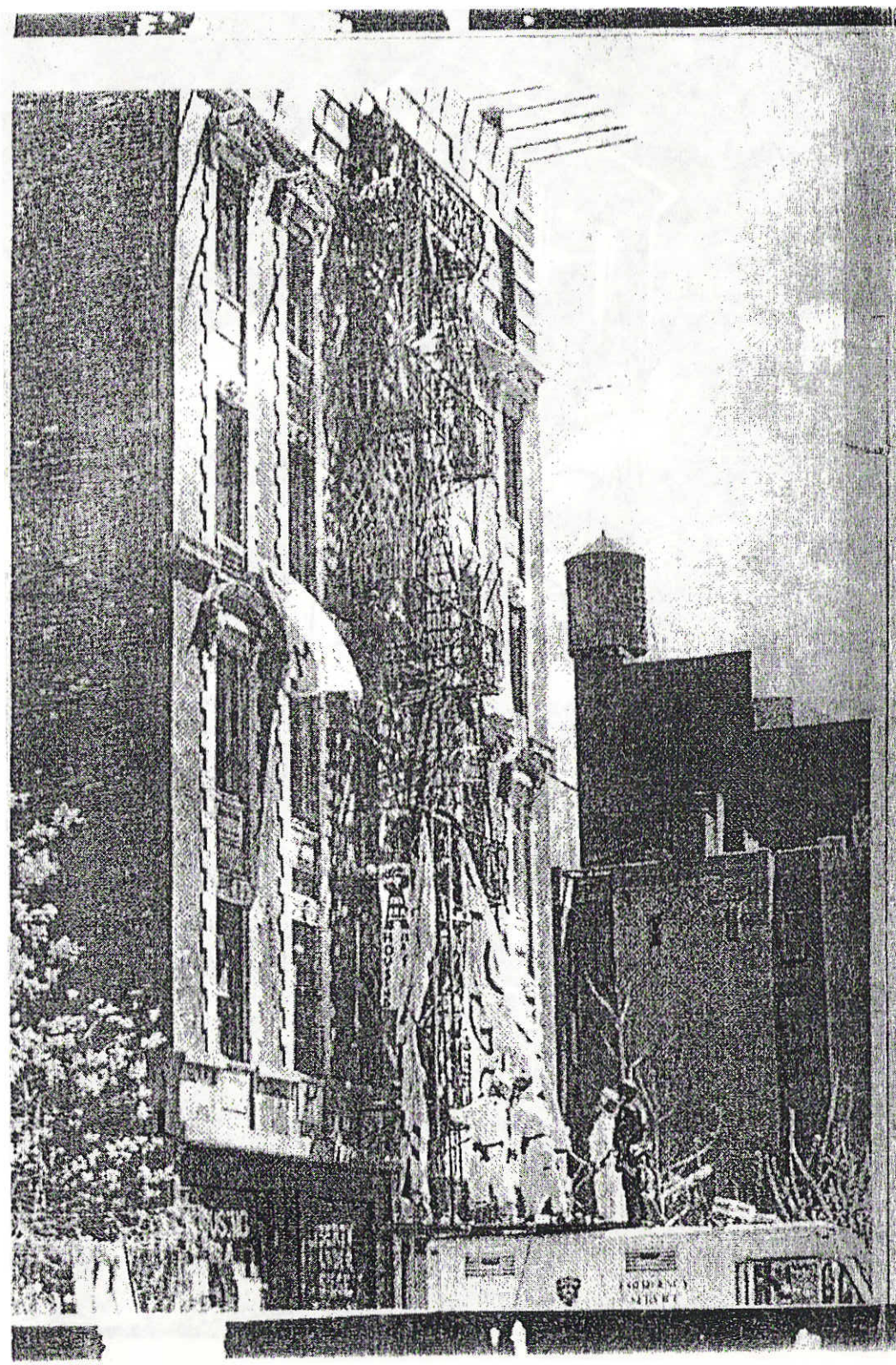


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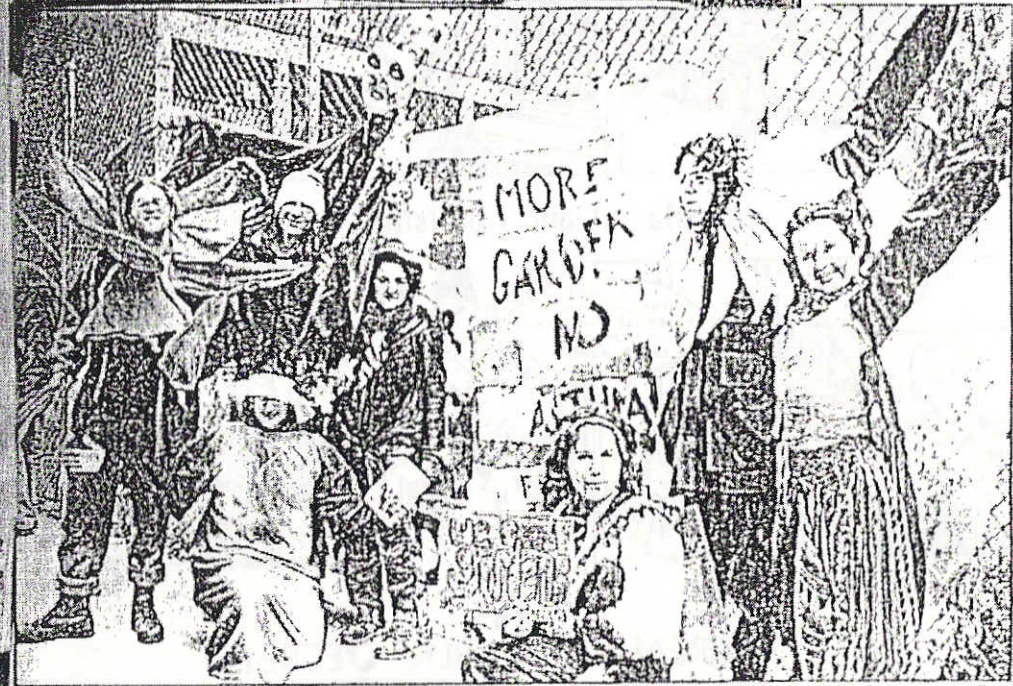


**BUREAU OF PUBLIC SECRETS**





**GARDENER** Charles McLoyrd shows photo of lot he began cultivating five years ago as protesters (below) gather in lower Manhattan.



## ANATOMY OF A PRISON-MAN

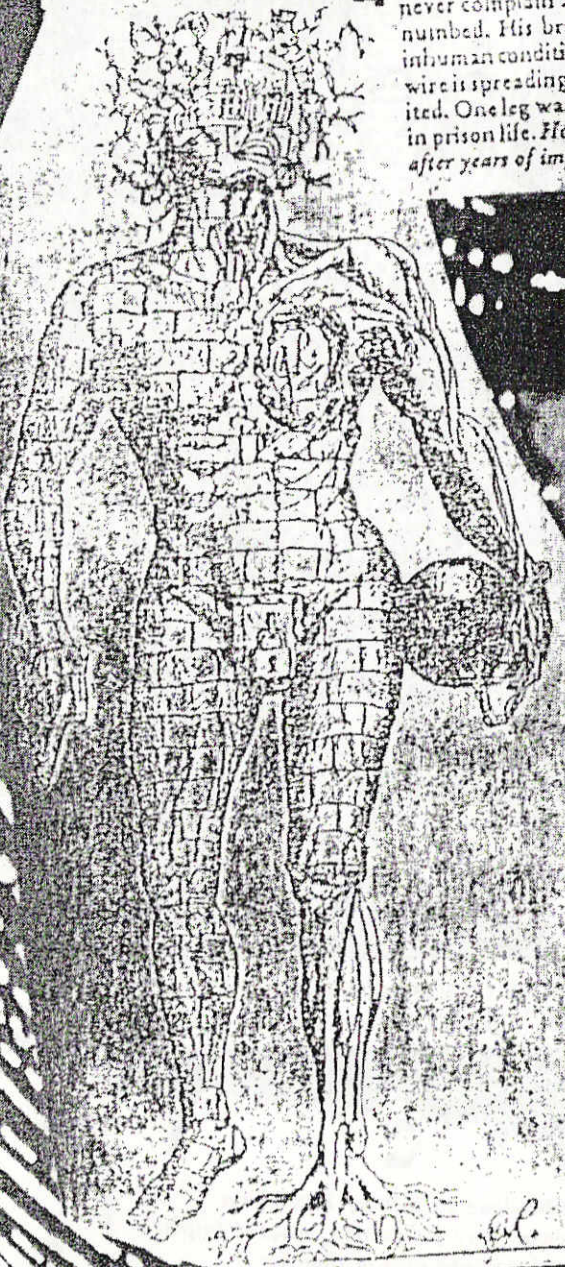
*Prison-man represents prisoners in general — not those who grow strong, conscious, and connected to reality.*

*His whole body is walled. His throat is cut — he will never complain again. His heart is empty, his feelings numbed. His brain is stone-washed by living under inhuman conditions. Where the brain should be, barbed wire is spreading. His vision is sealed off. Sex is prohibited. One leg wants to leave; the other is deeply rooted in prison life. How can he ever live normally in freedom after years of imprisonment!*

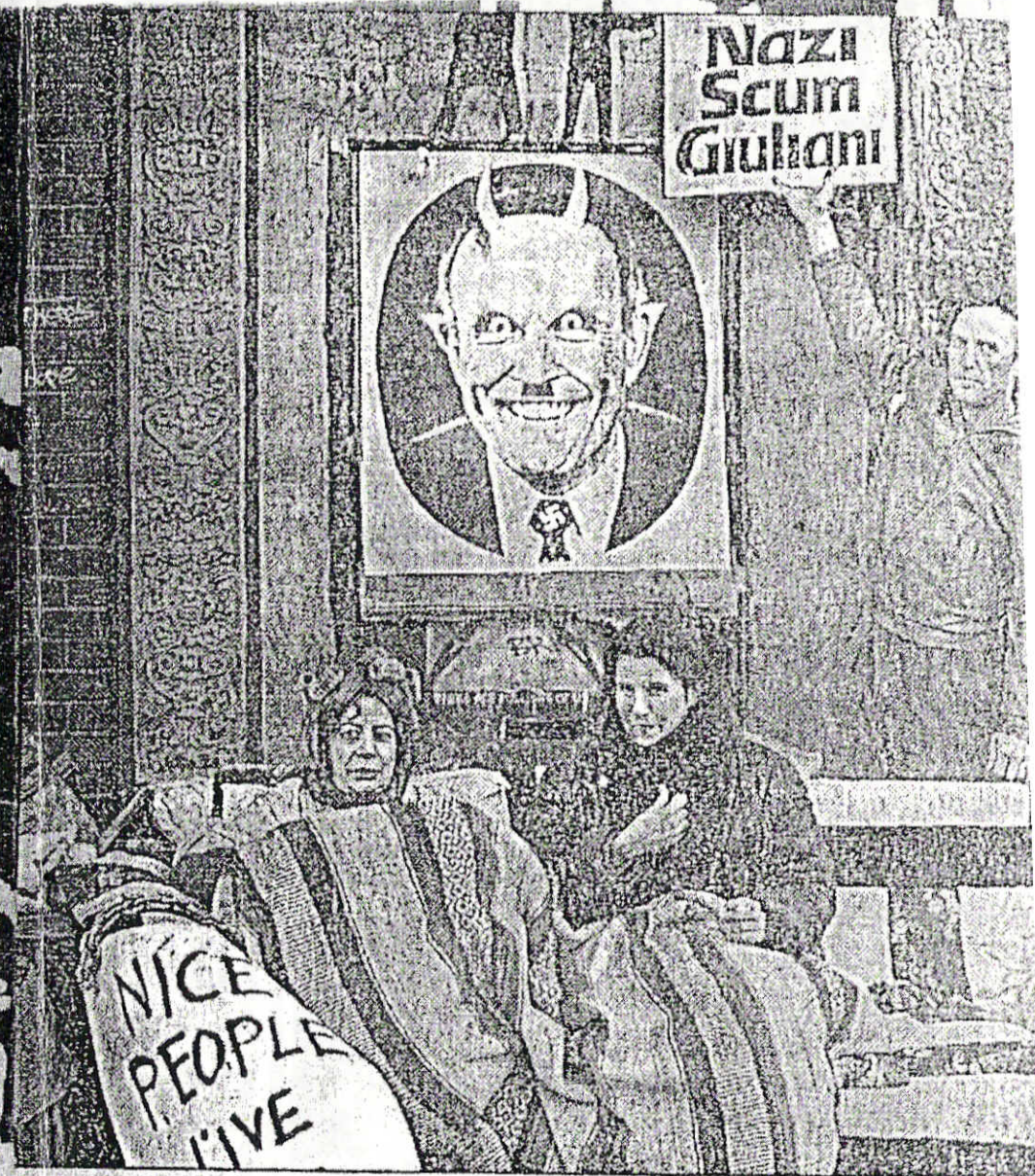
In reality, the "new approach" amounts to the old approach, gestapo-like targeting of the most poor, especially those "disorderly elements" on the streets, not to mention, those who are fighting back and organizing in their communities, eg. the youth "gangs". The unleashing of sadistic and highly racist police against victimized (colonialized) communities makes apparent the particular qualities of 1990's style, vulturistic capitalism. It accomplishes this by stretching the meaning of "crime", thereby easing it's net wide, criminalizing whole groups, and doing so "legally". Like their Nazi mentors, the current fascism recreates legs for it's own "legal" basis.

"Call the police, someones breaking into our house!"  
 - Comment shouted from the fire escape by Dos Blocos resident in response to police task force members breaking into his home.

On April 27th, NYPD, the 9th precinct task force, and Manhattan South Emergency Services teams, using jackhammers, battering rams, axes and crowbars, broke into a 6 story tenement building at 713 E. 9th st. between Avenues C and D, and forcibly evicted its residents, arresting those who refused to leave their homes when ordered to do so. Ironically, media reports on the eviction have described the building as being 'vacant', or 'an abandoned building occupied by squatters', as if the status of habitation is only conferred by a rent receipt. How can a building be called home by more than 60 people for 6 years and still be described as abandoned? Mainstream media has also described Dos Blocos as a building where squatters "lived in squalid conditions" with "feces smeared across the floors" and "ripped out staircases", and yet the truth is that Dos Blocos was in as good shape as many NYC tenement apartments on the rental market and probably exceeded most buildings throughout the city which are poorly managed by the city housing authority and H.U.D. as section 8 housing. There were no ripped out staircases, all 27 apartments had full utilities, with all wiring, plumbing, light fixtures, sinks, stoves, bathtubs, toilets, doors, sheetrocking, insulation, painting, windows, masonry, roof and back fire escape bought, scavanged and installed by those who lived there. The residents worked on their own spaces and contributed to a building fund each month and held work days to repair the common areas of the building such as the community room, hallways and roof. How many rental market apartment buildings have a community room with a stage for neighborhood bands to play and travellers passing through town to sleep on? How many buildings have house meetings? how many residents of most buildings even know who their neighbors are?



The truth is that Dos Blocos was a building which had been abandoned at one point by fine, upstanding participants in the Real Estate speculation/rental market because it wasn't paying out, wasn't showing enough profit to justify any further commitment to it. The building title traded hands several times, at one point it was taken over by a bank as a result of the S&L scandal. Dos Blocos' history is illustrative of how the notion of housing for profit is a miserable failure that considers apartments as profit generating 'units' rather than as the spaces where people create their lives and call it 'home'. At this point, squatters moved into the building, and it was no longer 'abandoned', people had claimed it, built it, loved it, hurt no one through it, made absolutely no profit through it, created their own lives in it, and called it home. Instead of swelling already overcrowded housing waiting lists, instead of relying on already overburdened social services, instead of living under bridges, instead of sleeping on friends couches or in homeless shelters for years while waiting for an apartment to open up in one of the most expensive, overcrowded rental markets in the world, people decided to exercise and satisfy one of the most natural urges in the world -that of self reliance, that same basic notion which underscored the hatred of 18th century colonists against the moneyed aristocracy of England, the same notion which informed the radical polemics of Locke, Jefferson, Thoreau, Emerson. The truth is, Dos Blocos was a living environment which encompassed all areas of life; play, raising children, working, making music, art, friends, and participation in the fabric of neighborhood life; and it worked. When the media, police, landlords, or free market apologists charge that squatters don't pay rent, it sounds as if they are jealous that squatters seem to get so much out of life while 'paying' so little, especially when compared to the average renter who often works long hours at a meaningless, repetitive task for little compensation simply to pay for the privilege of maintaining a cubicle of space that is out of the rain, without any of the benefits of being part of a community, or having the satisfaction that is derived from having built their own home. Renters typically are not even allowed to paint their own walls without permission from the land 'lord'!



**DEVIL OF A TIME:** Protesters lambaste Mayor Giuliani near the Ninth St apartment building where police "evicted" squatters yesterday.

*"It seems somewhat ridiculous to talk of revolution . . . .  
But everything else is even more ridiculous, since it implies  
accepting the existing order in one way or another."*

—Situationist International!

Rent is an abstract commodity, a building is only built once, but it is paid for many, many times over by the continual payment of rents which in themselves have no relation to an equal 'something' given in return, its not like purchasing a pair of shoes which are then yours to 'own', you are paying literally for no thing, for 'space'. Rents are never calculated by cost to the owner but by what the market will bear, in other words the maximum amount that the owners figure they can possibly get for something which is essential to your survival. This is the greed upon which our society is based. Landlords and real estate speculators are like bankers - they actually produce nothing at all, but somehow one way or another manage to control just about all of the space on earth, and make all the rest of us pay for it by working our whole lives simply to exist in a little space, thus ensuring that the system is self-perpetuating. In a free market economy, only those who control the market are free. We are all homeless.



These are some of the reasons why Dos Blocos, and squatters in general, pose such a threat to those who occupy the real decision making positions of society - those who control the land. Squatters subvert that control by making their own decisions, by creating their own lives without permission in exactly those 'spaces' which point out the failures of the entire rationale behind the housing market. Picture the thousands of abandoned and boarded up properties in any city as 'wounds' which this rationale inflicts on our landscape and which are healed by those who refuse to be victimized any longer.

The spectacle of April 27th, the vast array of equipment and police power, the scores of cars towed away to make room for 'command posts', the blocking off of streets to deny citizens a view of what the police were doing, the arrests and harassment of pedestrians walking too close to police activity, the arrests of those who disagree with the use of power by the state, the charges of 'resisting arrest' and 'obstructing governmental administration' given to those who chose to exercise their first amendment right to free speech and engaged in non-violent civil disobedience, the incredible expenditure of citizens tax money to enforce the will of a single private land 'lord', the battering in of doors, the reckless destruction of building walls, the arrogance of Task Force police converging en masse in front of a neighboring building and battering its door down with a ram and charging to its roof in order that cops could better photograph the faces of Dos Blocos defenders as they stuck their heads out of windows - these photos are then kept in police folders of 'agitators', (one man who lived in a tent on the aforementioned roof had a gun put to his head and was informed that his dogs would be shot if he did not leave his own roof) the 'extraction teams' with white 'sanitary protection' suits (?), gas masks, helmets, guns and clubs to remove citizens from their homes, all of this is a scenario where a land 'lord' has used the police as a private army to execute and enforce a private policy decision, i.e. state sponsored armed robbery. And its a win/win situation down the line, they acquire more property to acquire more profit, the police make more overtime and hazard/special

assignment pay with the added face slap of having it all paid for by the very citizenry- the are oppressing, while those who dared to voice thier dissent are relegated even further to a marginalized, alienated status by the media which uses certain buzz words and psychological cues which pander to a mainstream fear of whatever the state has deemed to be unamerican, unsafe, unclean, anarchistic, or simply 'other' than itself. the final result is that the residents of Dos Blocos, Latino, Caucasion, African American, Indian, men, women, children, artists, musicians, writers, activists and self motivated experimenters with life, have all been displaced to create housing for upscale professionals who already benefit from every social advantage that currently exists while contributing nothing whatsoever to any 'community' except others who inhabit the same tax bracket. Where are the private armies angrily kicking in doors to create affordable housing? Where are those willing to spend vast sums of the publics money to give children better school lunches and lead testing and on the job day care for all parents or to provide humane treatment for AIDS patients or universal health care and education? Where are the streets blocked off to cars so neighbors can have spontaneous block partys in the street and allow children to play kickball? Where are the 'command posts' set up to ensure that African Americans and Latinos are not murdered by racist cops? Next time you look at your rent receipt, look carefully, and you'll see the answer.

Which leads to point 2. The role of land as a commodity is central to a free market economy, and has been since the industrial revolution. It wasn't always so. Most of the world up until then had some version of 'common lands', that in theory were owned by the state but in practice were used by the common people for their own ends, usually housing, farming and hunting. Factory owners in the 17th century began to realize that these common lands could be aquired cheaply to build on or to 'rent' out to those displaced by factory enterprises (former artisans, craft workers, members of trade guilds who could not compete with a factory which produces thousands of shoes, plows, kettles or rugs in a fraction of the time and cost) these artisans were first put out of work by 'competition', then brought to the cities and warehoused close to the factories to form the urban working poor who worked cheaply and lived on land which belonged to someone else who lived outside the community and sucked up most of the income of the working poor through rents and selling back to them the same 'products' they had produced.

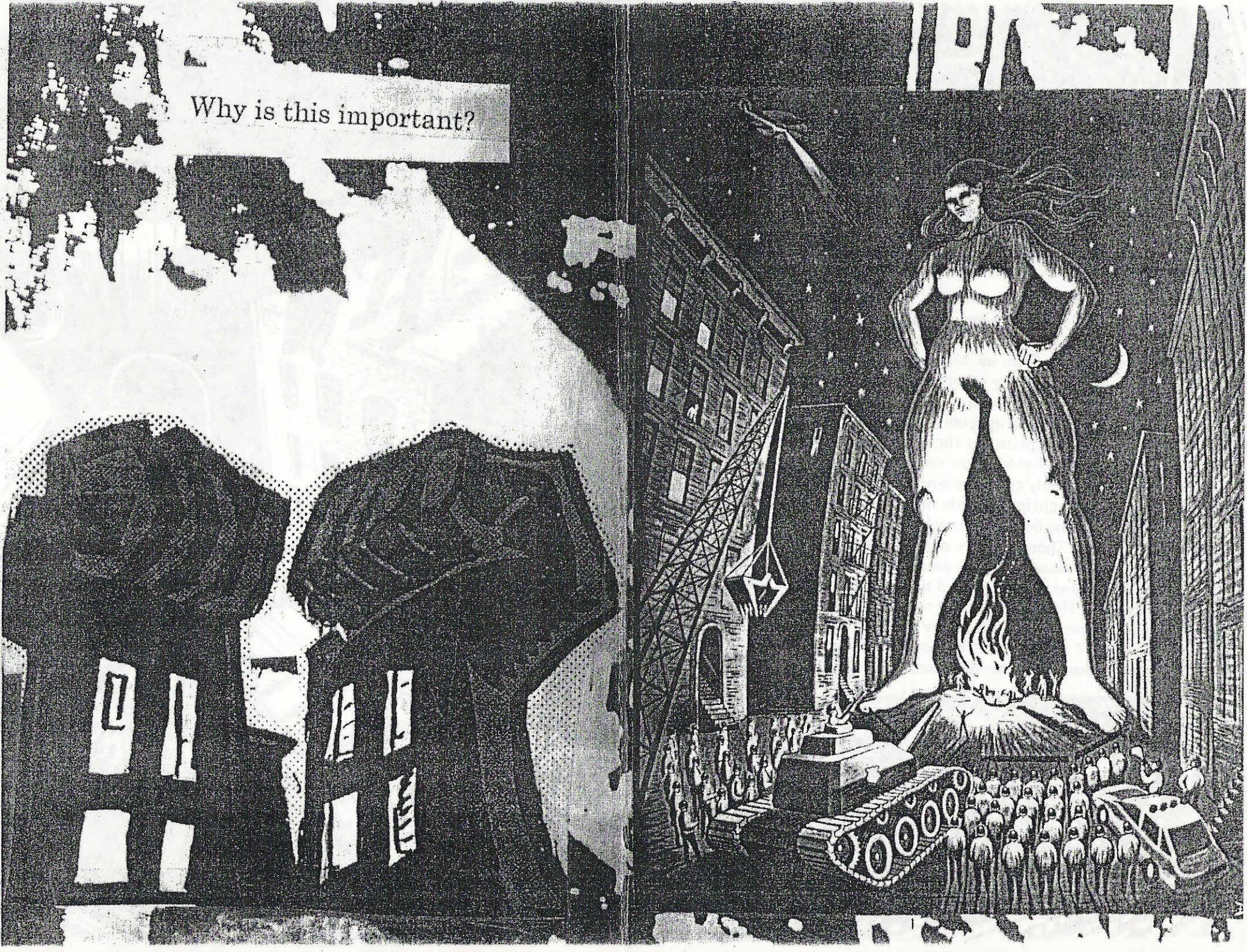
In 1649 a group of individuals in England moved onto a piece of common land that had been used as a garbage dump, they cleared the garbage away and built houses and cultivated large gardens, made desicions collectively and lived self sufficiently. They were called Diggers and were resented by their neighbors because they had escaped the rent trap. Neighbors in surrounding villages burned many of their houses and destroyed their fields, then the kings soldiers came and finished the job. There was a general fear at the time that the Diggers ideas might spread, and slowly, common lands began to dissappear. Even the myth of Robin Hood had its origins in the common lands where poor people had the right to hunt, until the king began to seal them off as private hunting ranges for the aristocracy and labeling those poor who still covertly hunted there as poachers, subjecting them to heavy fines and imprisonment. The system as we know it today was then in its infancy, but even then individuals resisted what, when looked at rationally, is an unnatural, exploitive way of life.



Consider these last two points. 1. There is an expression frequently spraypainted in our neighborhood that says "we are all homeless". None of us own our homes or are secure from having them forcibly taken from us. Not squatters, not low income housing residents, nor any other class of renters. All are equally homeless. Most people rent, and are subject to the whims of their landlord. When rents go up, poor people move out, the more privileged may complain but they pay up because they are able to, but those who are unable to are very often forcibly evicted. This is not an issue that only concerns squatters, in fact many squatters believe they are fighting a battle in common for the 'space' rights of all, even those who do not acknowledge any shortcomings with the current system. Those who are able to pay up are buffered from reality by their money, but the same laws that are used to evict squatters are also regularly used to evict renters who are unable to pay their rent. How many people are presently walking around NYC with stories of how they have 30 days to find a new apartment and they have no money for the deposit, or the 1st and last month security? Homeless shelters are full of these stories.

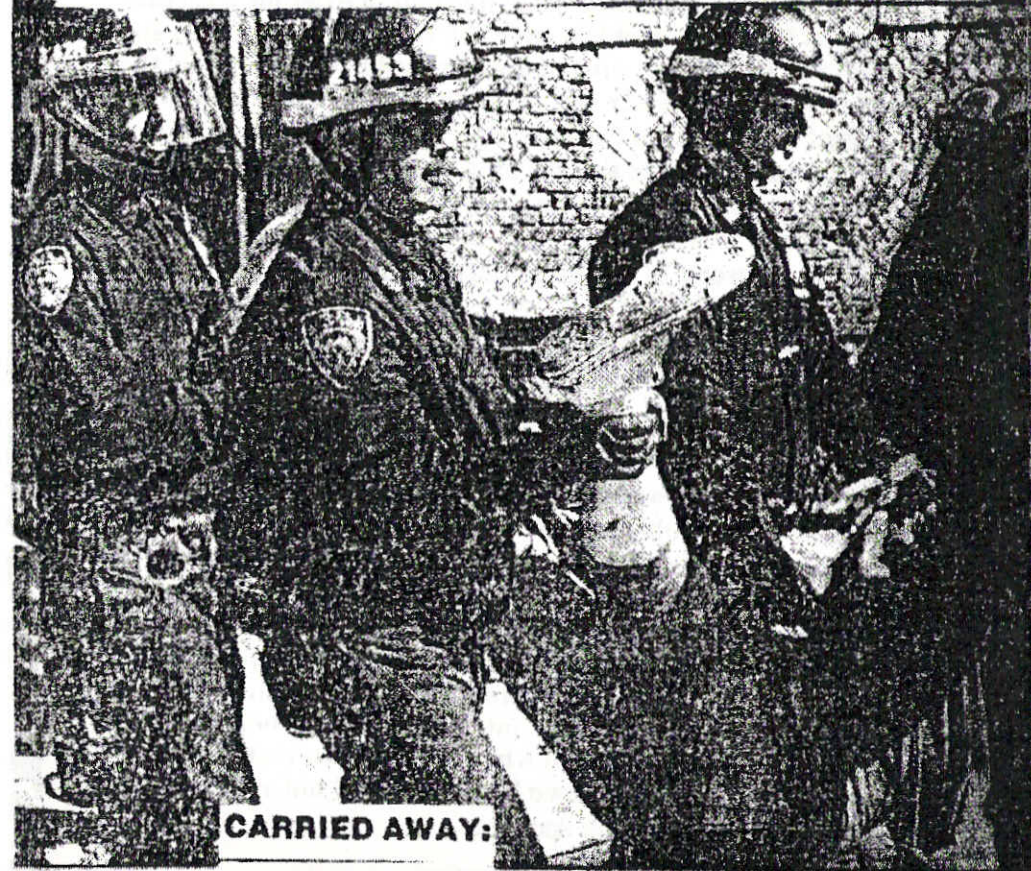


Why is this important?



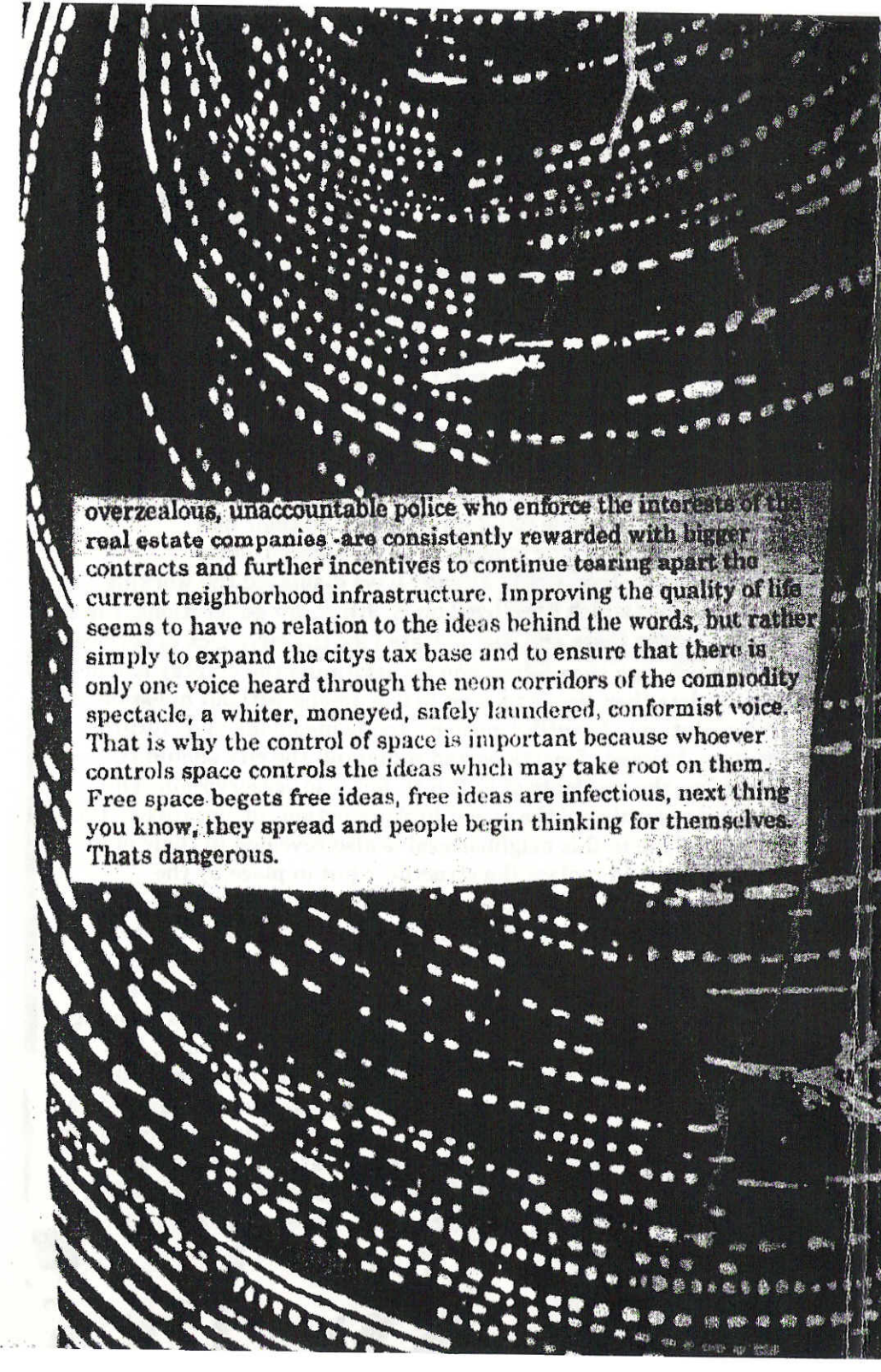
Landowners view space as a commodity to be bought & sold on the 'open' market, not as composites of individuals, families or communities. Dos Blocos was an integral strand in the web of 9th street life and the larger culture of resistance. The developers who used cops to forcibly evict these families are not interested in any way with what the neighborhood itself desires for itself or perceives as being in its own self interest. This is also evidenced by the loss of Charas/El Bohio Cultural center on E. 9th st., despite overwhelming neighborhood opposition and several mass demonstrations, the new owner refuses to recognize the wishes of the neighborhood to determine its own affairs, anyone observing the situation would have to conclude that to the new landlord, these dissenting voices, in other words the neighborhood itself, does not exist.

Now that market forces have won out in the case of Dos Blocos as well, the building will change from being a collective of individuals who work and play together and participate in the neighborhood arena of life, to a building where apartments will be rented out at prices no one currently living in the neighborhood could ever possibly hope to pay, the new class of upscale professionals will not know their neighbors either in the building nor on 9th street in general, nor will they care to. By the time any of the new bourgeoisie could have existed in their new whitewashed flats long enough to be considered 'of the neighborhood', they would already have displaced the working class families which have lived on E. 9th st. for generations, raised their children there and compensated for the city's lack of services by empowering themselves and transforming the empty needle strewn lots they were expected to live among without question or complaint -into beautiful gardens and homesteads and cultural centers. Instead of evictions and contempt, the city should be awarding the residents of E. 9th st. for civic preservation. The twisted reasoning of the power brokers notions of 'improving' the quality of life in this neighborhood is also revealed in their plans for what should replace the structures put in place by the neighborhood itself: Charas is to be replaced by a hostel for rich tourists coming to visit the now 'safe' and trendy east village; Serenity garden will become a parking lot for all the upscale tenants who move into the new condos that will replace Dos Blocos, while across the street a new gymnasium/fitness training center is being constructed for officers of the 9th precinct, how convenient! There are so many ironies here connected with the mayors 'quality of life' campaign that they are almost logic defying, since those citizens who truly improve the quality of life for all, are summarily punished for their labors with arrest, eviction and economic displacement, while those who continually deteriorate the quality of life, such as landlords, developers and an



**CARRIED AWAY:**

Officers haul off a reluctant evictee from the building yesterday.



overzealous, unaccountable police who enforce the interests of the real estate companies -are consistently rewarded with bigger contracts and further incentives to continue tearing apart the current neighborhood infrastructure. Improving the quality of life seems to have no relation to the ideas behind the words, but rather simply to expand the city's tax base and to ensure that there is only one voice heard through the neon corridors of the commodity spectacle, a whiter, moneyed, safely laundered, conformist voice. That is why the control of space is important because whoever controls space controls the ideas which may take root on them. Free space begets free ideas, free ideas are infectious, next thing you know, they spread and people begin thinking for themselves. That's dangerous.

The circumstances surrounding Dos Blocos are representative of a much larger battle which has been taking place since the dawn of the industrial revolution -the battle for space. Space can be land, it can be the structures that sit upon the land, it can also be the space in your head, your ideas, your cultural, political, artistic beliefs, or the ways you pursue your desires. Space is a place where you live passionately, not as a commodity, a statistic, a prisoner or a tourist.

The battle for both space and ideas comes down to control of the land, because ideas which need room and time to evolve naturally, such as with self sufficient collective living or gardening or running of an info shop or a micro broadcasting station, need a secure physical setting that can be depended on to exist for a certain length of time. The problem with the survival of such free spaces, is that the notion that anyone could possibly be any 'freer' than they supposedly already are, or that they may have completely different definitions of freedom other than those offered by mainstream society, is an affront, a slap in the face to those who already have everything invested in the current system, they instinctively resent 'free spaces', because they undermine the values of the world of things as they are and posit a world that could be.

All of these kinds of spaces are under siege from the world of things as they are, a world that is threatened by the implications of this world that could be. Those implications represent lost profits, as well as the lost ability to influence the population to keep its eye on the dangled carrot of personal gain and 'safety' from the unpredictable forces of those who would subvert that life. It implies that land should be defined by those who use it directly in the shaping of their own lives and for their own direct enrichment, rather than by distant, absent landowners who are not concerned in any way with what is in the interests of the communities in which they own 'pieces' of land but rather with how they can fill their bank accounts.