

ALTERNATIV STAD

Ingress

Stockholm as the best planned city in the world, as the Environment capital, was the image the Stockholm authorities wanted to give the city during the UN Conference. By alternative sight seeing-tours and many other things, the urban action group Alternativ Stad showed the conference visitors that Stockholm is close to the opposite.

The UN Conference being the gr biggest event in the history of Stockholm was of course a great opportunity for the authorities to make propaganda. They arranged exhibitions on "Stockholm - az xi city to live in"; they wrote books on how beautiful and well planned Stockholm is; they had sight seeing-tours to well selected areas. And they cleaned the city center from people with social problems before the conference, just to make sure that nothing would blur the picture of beautiful Stockholm.

During the past few years the environment movement in Sweden and Stockholm has grown to become very strong. In May, just one month before the conference started, 15.000 people marched in one of the biggest demonstrations ever held in Stockholm. They protested against the bad planning of Stockholm, against the rapid growth of the city and demanded that the concentration of people to Stockholm be stopped.

For these people and for people who have worked for many years in different groups trying to save the environment of Stockholm, the conference also meant a great opportunity, but for them the opportunity was to reveal the picture of the authorities, to show the real face of Stockholm, and to tell of the struggle that people are participating in. One of the groups that have worked on this is Alternativ Stad (Alternative City). The group organised a lot of activities during the conference.

Have you been fooled?

"Have you been fooled during your stay in Stockholm? Fooled by the UN smoke-screen conceiving of the real problems and causes of urbanization.

Fooled by the authorities of Stockholm..... Then you must take your chance to be informed about the new view on urbanization problems expressed by more and more people in Sweden about the shortcomings of the political system to deal with the problems and to involve individuals in the planning process and in the decisionmaking about the growing movement and the ideology that seem to be the only solution to the problems in big cities."

That Alternativ Stad said in a leaflet and the information promised was given on a sight seeing-tour that presented an alternative people's view of Stockholm.

Together with the PowWow group Alternativ Stad had fixed a shit powered bus for the sight seeing-tours. The bus was of the old type, nice and cozy inside and it was driven by methane gas produced out of chicken shit. In a city where the electricly driven trolley buses and trams or street cars have given way to gasoline driven buses and underground or subway, the "shit Bus" was like a pearl as it left no dangerous exhaust fumes.

The sight seeing tour started from the famous Elm trees which the Stockholm inhabitants with their bodies stopped from being cut almost two years ago. The Elms were saved not only because of their own beauty, but as much because they had become a symbol for all the green areas that are threatened in Stockholm. Now the Elms also have become a symbol for democracy, a sign showing that people are powerful when they unite.

The Bomb Crater

The town passed the city center which looks just like a huge bomb crater. Almost every old building has been torn down to be replaced by the concrete and glass monsters of this time. But large parts

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of it is not yet rebuilt so there are huge wholes just like big wounds. And instead of the old houses where people lived and where there were small shops and stores there are now banks, hotels, department stores, banks, hotels, offices, banks...

Perhaps the most powerful part of the tour was the trip to the Järva field, the green lung of Stockholm, cutting in like an oasis from the north. This quite large green area where there still are farmers, is slowly being exploited. Within the next few years there will be a new city of well over 100 000 people at Järva. And when the bus stopped at one of the last farms, the guide could point into the future of Järva which already has been manifested in the nearby suburbs of Tensta and Rinkeby.

Future towns

The tour also went into those "future" towns, where e.g. the social problems are enormous. Mostly young families, with great economic problems due to the high ~~xxx~~ rents, live there. The children, who never see true nature or any older people, have nothing to do but break windows and steal things in the shopping center. No trees, nothing small enough for a little child to identify with. And these suburbs have been built because people have had to move to Stockholm because it has been most profitable for the big companies to concentrate to the big cities.

After that sight seeing-tour not many still believed that the authorities were right when they told their story of beautiful, well planned Stockholm.

The critique of the planning Alternativ Stad developed further together with other groups participating in People's Forum (see page). The sight seeing-tour by bus and the ones by bike and foot that the group also arranged gave a good illustration to the theoretical discussions and questioning of Swedish style planning, the solution the UN recommended to the problems of urbanization.

Twice during the conference, Alternativ Stad arranged public meetings in Kungsträdgården, the park where the Elms stand. Music was played, theater performed and speeches given. Ui Jun from Japan participated together with some Indian friends and Swedish scientists. They talked on the problems that they are facing and of the struggle that they are leading and of the reactions of the establishment to this struggle.

Recycled ~~by~~ bicycles to borrow, selling of alternative postcards and the groups magazine, exhibiting an electricly driven bus from not too long ago, were some other things that Alternativ Stad did.