

GLOBAL TENANT



INTERNATIONAL UNION OF TENANTS' QUARTERLY MAGAZINE December 2005



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Belgium
Benin
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Canada
the Congo (Dem. Rep.)
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark
Ecuador
England
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Greenland
Hungary
Ireland
India
Italy
Japan
Latvia
Macedonia, FYR
the Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Scotland
Serbia and Montenegro
Slovenia
Slovakia
South Africa
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
USA
Wales



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Cover Photo: Children rally
for the Swedish Union
of Tenants in Göteborg, 1925.

Our IUT History – a Challenge for the Future of IUT

My reminiscence of IUT goes back to 1966, when I went to Paris to attend a meeting of the Presidents of the IUT member organisations. Later I had the opportunities to participate in other IUT events before I became the spokesperson and later secretary general of IUT until 1998. That is my history which today allows me to look back at the organizational development of the association for the worlds' tenants.

Looking back into the history of IUT I see the main task as the promotion of the more and stronger tenants' organizations. But, not for selfish reasons, sooner for self-explanatory reasons. There are so many tenants in the world who are in need for assistance and protection. The idea is that tenants get together to form an association, which will enable themselves to become stronger and powerful. Organized tenants have been like a red rag to a bull for many landlords, and even to governments.

IUT is today an active member of many international organizations like UN-HABITAT, UN-ECE, EHF, Council of Europe, and so on. These organizations might be valuable tools also in the task of promoting the organization of tenants. Just to get the word "tenant association" mentioned in a UN-document might help in several countries where there are very weak contacts, if any, between governments and the organizations of tenants.

Looking back to the first actions in history of IUT to promote tenants organizations, there is still that need for action in the future. To use the tools described above in order to make it easier for tenants associations around the world to act in the best interest of their members. The pioneers of IUT struggled for basic rights for tenants and we will also carry on the work and then hand it over to our successors. Looking back to find the way for the future!

Nic Nilsson, Secretary General, IUT 1983-1998



Calendar

January 25-26: 10th Congress on Human Settlements in Developing Countries, Kolkata, India.

February 3-4: Nordic tenants' associations meeting, in Oslo Norway.

May 27: CNL, Confédération Nationale du Logement - 90 years. Paris.

May 30: European Neighbours' Day

June 19-23: World Urban Forum III, Vancouver Canada.

June 20-23: The Chartered Institute of Housing, Conference and Exhibition, Harrogate, England.

July 2-5: Housing in an expanding Europe. ENHR international research conference, in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

September 10-12: Presenting the best national and regional experts in affordable housing! Seattle, Washington US.

September 18-20: 67th session of the UN ECE Committee on Human Settlements, Geneva.

September 20-23: Emphasizing Urban Housing Design, XXXIV IAHS World Housing Congress, in Naples Italy.

October 2: International Tenants' Day. Theme: Evictions must be stopped! / UN Habitat Day

For more information: <http://www.iut.nu/conferences.htm>

IUT 1926-2006

80 years of tenant co-operation across borders

IUT and tenants go way back in history...

There have always been tenants around! Not quite sure though if some cavemen, and cavewomen, rented caves from fellow cave dwellers. But, wealthy Greek and Romans most certainly let houses to less wealthy Athenians and Romans.

Rents in ancient Rome were extremely high. When the Egyptian King Ptolemy VIII had to go into exile in Rome, 80 B.C., he had to lodge in a small, shabby garret outside the city – because rents in central Rome were so high¹. Landlords could expel tenants and tenants could leave at any time, leading to action *ex locato/conducto*. Proper causes of expulsion were: failure to pay rent, abuse of property repair work, owner's own use. Sounds familiar? Also, tenants had duty to be careful with fire.



Multi family housing in ancient Rome.

Industrialisation

The history of modern time tenants more or less coincides with the era of industrialisation, in the second half of the 19th century. The new era devoured thousands of workers and they needed to be housed, preferably not too far away from the factory itself. Jobs were created and towns grew to cities when many farm labourers left manor houses and villages. All these new city folk

needed to be housed and if the dwellings were not made available by the town halls, the factory owners had to house their workers. The majority of these workers were housed in large gloomy tenement blocks, or simple row houses in the vicinity of the factory or mill.

But there were exceptions; Richard and George Cadbury were brothers

with a social vision. They built a garden village for the workers of their chocolate factory. By 1900, the brother's estate included 330 acres of land with 313 cottages, the Bournville Village. All were rented.

Text: Magnus Hammar

¹ Univ. of Wales, 2001. Living in the city of Rome

Posen, July-August 1925

The voice of the citizen

Special publication, issued by the Polish Tenants' Union in the republic of Poland

APPEAL!

*to all associations of tenants in Poland and in other countries * to all social organisations in Poland and in other countries * to all trade unions in Poland *to all Polish social press *to all municipal and juridical authorities in Poland *to all Polish citizens and associations who sympathize with us

CITIZENS!

The housing crises, the fight for a roof over one's head, threats from eviction and tenants' scourge have now reached unbearable dimensions – public anarchy! Despair grasps people whose families face the grim prospect of eviction, thrown into the street or into miserable hovels, sheds or garrets, - yes, into prison localities and mortuaries. These deplorable, merciless evictions which are being executed with the assistance of hired police develop indignation, despair and curse, distress and wretchedness, and even suicide and murder from revenge, also breaking up of marriages and families....

/This tragic appeal was raised against the background of an international tenants' congress that was planned for October 11-13, 1925. /





Quarry Hill flats in Leeds were apparently modelled on Karl Marx Hof in Vienna in 1938. The steel frame and concrete clad construction was to prove disastrous and in 1978 the whole complex was demolished.

GREAT BRITAIN

In the late 1800's there are several reports of local tenant organisations protesting against high rents imposed by private landlords, in London, in Birmingham, Liverpool and elsewhere.

In 1891, a rent strike in London's East End helps wins the Dockers Strike. Trade and labour movements, particularly the miners' unions, campaign around housing issues. They organise tenant action against high rents and in favour of municipal housing.

Dr. William Duncan (1805-1863) from Liverpool, and the first Medical Officer of Health in England, said that Liverpool was the most unhealthy place in England. Dr. Duncan soon recognised the key link between housing, water supply, sanitation, and health and contributed in making Liverpool the first city in Europe to provide council social housing. When the City Council began to clear the slums it soon realised that they could not rely on private landlords to provide decent standards of living.

Thus when St Martin's Cottages in Vauxhall, Liverpool, were built in 1869 they represented one of the first municipal housing in England. St Martins Cottages were demolished in 1977.

Birth of the tenant movement

After the end of World War I council house building takes off and tenants got together to form tenant associations on the new estates. The associations often campaigned against high rents and called for basic tenant participation.

The birth of the tenant movement in the series of rent strikes from the 1880s to 1915 gave the movement a radical birthright which today's associations still treasure. It is the received history of these rent strikes which allows tenants associations today to portray themselves as part of a campaigning movement and a representative voice for all tenants.¹

According to the "Hidden History of the British Tenant Movement"², the first tenants associations were established in the 1920s' and served primarily as interest groups for the labour aristocracy. They were the creation of a skilled artisan class who organised to defend their privileges as much against the unskilled and impoverished working class as against their new council landlords.

British tenant activists today

In the 1970's tenants in Britain were campaigning for legal rights, especially for security of tenure and consultation. Tenants' groups began to join together. The National Tenants Organisation, NTO, was formed in the late 1970's, along with tenant organisations in Scotland and Wales and later launched its Tenants Charter. In 1987 the National Tenants & Residents Federation NTRF was established.



Article in a Glasgow newspaper, in 1915.

TAROE and TPAS

In 1997, at Sheffield Town Hall, NTRF and NTO merged into the Tenants and Residents Organisation of England, TAROE³. TAROE is now the national umbrella organisation for Tenants and Residents Associations in England.

In 1985, an "Inquiry into British Housing" was launched, chaired by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. In November 1985, the National Consumer Council took up the Inquiry's recommendation about support for tenants and the idea of TPAS⁴, and Tenants' Information Service, and set up a consultative conference for Tenants Organisations from all over Britain to discuss the ideas. In 1988, success was achieved and TPAS was launched as an independent advisory service for both tenants and landlords. Today social housing in Britain refers to the 5 million or so British homes owned by non-profit landlords either in the form of council housing or through Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), mainly housing associations. The private sector holds some 10 % of the housing sector, i.e. half the rental sector.

^{1,2} Hidden History of the British Tenant Movement, published by social housing tenants in West Yorkshire: <http://tenant2u.tripod.com/>

³ www.taroe.org

⁴ TPAS: Tenant Participation Advisory Service, www.tpas.org.uk

SWEDEN

The living conditions in Swedish urban areas at the turn of the century were similar to those in many other European cities; no running water, lice, overcrowding, outside lavatories, infant mortality of ten percent, etc. Every fourth worker was a lodger.

In Sweden, as in most other countries, the tenants associations descended from, or worked closely with, trade unions and temperance movements.

A meeting with tenants was held in 1899, in Göteborg on the Swedish west coast. The meeting was called upon due to the threat of drastic rent increases. During the meeting discussion starts whether it is possible for the tenants to get together and construct their own housing. These discussions led eventually to the formation of local groupings of tenants, and in 1907 several major tenants' associations were established in larger Swedish cities and towns.

In early 1909 the tenants association in Stockholm decides to form a co-operative housing association with the purpose of constructing a tenement house on a leasehold site just outside the city. In December the same year the first tenants move in.

Nynäshamn: 90 years of tenant protection

The oldest tenants' association still in operation is in the coastal town of Nynäshamn, some 50 km south of Stockholm. In 1911 the Stockholm city council decides to establish a new telegraph factory in Nynäshamn. Workers were talked into moving to Nynäshamn and new rental housing was erected by the telegraph company. Housing that very soon turned out to be of very poor quality. The winter winds blew right through the wooden walls and water froze even indoors. At the same time, the telegraph company chose to send out information about rent increases on up to 50 %. In 1915 the tenants formed a tenant association, and went on strike. The rent increases were stopped but the houses remained terribly cold and damp, particularly in wintertime.

First rent laws

In 1917 the Swedish government introduced the first law on rent control in municipalities with more than 5000 inhabitants. But, rents could be increased by maximum 10 % per year, when there was reference to real costs. Some say that this law reduced the construction of rental housing and worsened the housing crisis in the 1920's. But, on the other hand, when living costs rose by 160 % between 1915 and 1920, rents only rose by 30 %.



Demonstration in Göteborg in the 1940's "We want healthy housing – away with shacks and hovels"

One nation – One tenants union

In 1923, representatives from 13 regional tenant associations met in Göteborg to form the Hyresgästföreningarnas Riksförbund, National Federation of Tenants' Associations. The same year the National Association of Tenants' Savings and Building Society, now HSB, was established.

The main activity of the present Swedish Union of Tenants is to annually negotiate the rent for all tenants in Sweden, in public housing as well as for tenants in the private stock. Today the Swedish Union of Tenants has some 530 000 affiliated members and represent about 40 % of all tenants in the country.

The Swedish tenants has been dedicated their own museum; Hyresgästernas Hus (Tenants' House) in Hällefors. Open in summer, telephone: 0046 591-120 01.



Large families in 1-2 room unhealthy flats. Stockholm in the 1930's.



Karl Marx Hof in Vienna

AUSTRIA

Vienna, at the end of the 19th century, was the capital of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire with about 50 million people. Vienna had grown from about 400 000 to more than two million inhabitants in just 50 years. Vienna was now the most overcrowded capital city in Europe.

The absolute majority lived in one or two rooms and in the working districts an average of five people shared flats of 20-30 m². Additional beds were let to strangers during the night, or during the day. Those who could not afford the rents had to find some sort of sheltered accommodation, and in 1910 330 000 people had no fixed addresses. The average length of life of a male worker was just 33 years.

The Austrian Tenants' Union, *Mietervereinigung Österreichs MVÖ*, was founded in 1911 as a reaction to the miserable situation, and soon 77 000 tenants had joined the Union.

Revolution and diseases

The Austrian-Hungarian Empire was dissolved after the war, and between 1918 and the early 1920s, thousands of refugees and soldiers headed for the capital of the residual state of Austria. Many were soldiers who had been at war for several years and now longed for their families and fiancées. They planned for marriage – and a home. Only to return to their home towns to find that there was no housing available. This gave rise to general dissatisfaction. There were spontaneous demonstrations and the authorities soon

feared for a revolution, having the Russian revolution in fresh memory. Homelessness increased and further worsened the living conditions and speeded up the spread of typhus and the “Vienna disease” – tuberculosis.

After the War the MVÖ, Austrian Tenants' Union, could gain real success when the first tenant law was introduced; protection from eviction and the right to control service costs.

Red Vienna

The poor social conditions, together with the new right to vote legislation irrespective of income, made way for the Red Vienna, in 1919. During the years 1923 to 1934 the city of Vienna built 64 000 new dwellings for the workers. The most magnificent house from these times is the Karl Marx-Hof, with a facade covering 1200 meters, ~4000 feet.

Unique housing policy⁴

The extensive building programs in particular Vienna were facilitated by the new tax sovereignty of the city of Vienna, starting in 1922. A new housing tax was introduced in 1923. According to this innovative taxation scheme a simple worker's apartment was taxed annually at an average of 2 % of the pre-war rent, luxury apartments up to about 37 %. This strong progression distinguished the financing of public housing from all other European countries.

Vienna's social housing originated from the internationally acknowledged reform programme in the 1920s and has been developing for more than eighty

years. 60 % of all Viennese households today live in subsidised flats, including 220 000 in council housing. In 1926 the first International Urban Planning Conference was held in the progressive Vienna.

Repression and civil war

In 1931 the *Mietervereinigung Österreichs MVÖ* already had 250 000 members and its importance grew. At the same time, Austria went from democracy to fascism. In February 1931 the police banned the MVÖ and confiscated its property in Vienna. Later the dictator Engelbert Dolfuss banned and dissolved all other political organisations, trade unions and politically affiliated organisations. A brief civil war between Dolfuss' forces and a couple of thousand armed Social Democrats erupted in the streets and housing estates of Vienna. At the Karl Marx Hof Estate, the fighting was particularly bitter. ⁴The Government brought in machine guns and artillery and shelled the flats at point blank range. After three days, the Government soldiers storming the flats found not ammunition dumps but men along with the frightened women and children who had been trapped in the estate by the fighting. It was a brave forlorn stand and made a great impression on foreign commentators. An estimated 239 people died and 718 were wounded in the one week of February 1934 and 4 000 prisoners were taken by the government forces.

⁴ facts from W. Förster: 80 Years of Social Housing in Vienna.

Early tenant movements in Europe

The interest for the housing situation in the surrounding world, read Europe, seems to have increased considerably in the 1920's. There is regular correspondence between the tenant associations in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the Nordic countries. There is a particular interest for statistics, information about rents and housing laws. In 1926 there is correspondence with the Latvijas Irnieku Biedriba, the Latvian Tenant Association, expressing their wish to have closer contacts with the Nordic tenant associations. There is also correspondence with Moscow and Comintern's Executive Committee in 1929.

IUT starts up

In July 1924 a letter arrives from Mr Robert Hoffmayr at the Mietervereinigung Österreichs (MVÖ) in Vienna, addressed to Professor C.G. Bergman, board member of the Swedish National Tenants Association. Mr Hoffmayr describes the MVÖ with already over 200 000 members and then he sets out his intention to form an international organisation for tenant associations.

He explains that the property owners in Europe had just recently, in Paris, formed the European Property Owners Federation. The tenant's rights need to be protected and there is need for a strong alliance between European tenants.

Mr Hoffmayr suggests meeting in Vienna in October 1924, but the meeting is postponed.

A German initiative

Meanwhile, Mr Ramdohr the vice chairman of the German tenant association, Reichsbund Deutscher Mieter, in Berlin, sets out for a study trip to Oslo, Norway, for the purpose of studying the municipal institutions. In Oslo he is being informed by the representative of the National Association of Norwegian Co-operatives, about the existence of the tenants association in Sweden. In a letter addressed to the Swedish Union of Tenants in May 1925, Mr Ramdohr describes the very difficult housing situation in Germany after the war, due partly to the extorted peace agreement in Versailles in 1918. Also he puts much of the blame on greedy landlords and property owners, who profit by the hard times. Very little housing has been constructed in Germany since 1914, and the government does not seem to pay much attention to housing and most members of the parliament (Reichstag) most often run the errands of the landlords. Still, Mr Ramdohr continues, the Reichsbund Deutscher Mieter has succeeded in bringing in new laws that protects the tenants from ruthless evictions and unjustified rent increases.

The purpose of this letter is also to find out whether there is a possibility for an exchange of information, between the Swedish and German organisation - and also to explore any possible interest in forming an international organisation of tenants.

Later the same year Mr Ramdohr gets in touch with friends at the Mietervereinigung MVÖ in Vienna. These contacts, and contacts with the Swiss tenants organisation, result in setting the dates and venue for the first international tenant congress, May 21-24 1926, in Zürich, Switzerland.

1926, International League of Tenants

It is highly possible that the Austrian delegation informed the other delegates about the first International Urban Planning Conference in Vienna when the ten delegations met in Zürich on May 21st to form international cooperation. Vienna was the model city when it came to new innovative housing planning for the "masses". The already powerful Austrian organisation was elected as the office for the international secretariat. Dr Carl Wirth of Zürich was elected as chairman. A first set of statutes, two pages, was also agreed on.

I. Internationaler Mieterkongress in Zürich 21.-24. Mai 1926.	
-O-C-C-C-O-O-O-O-O-C-C-C-O-O-C-C-O-O-O-C-C-O-O-O-C-C-O-O-O-	
Liste der Organisationen	Liste des Organisations.

Tschechoslovakei:	Riesky Svat pojemnickyok spolka v R.C.S. se sidlem v Praze (Reichsverband der Mieterschutzvereine in der R.C.S. mit dem Sitze in Prag) vertreten durch: J.U.Dr. Götz Alois Praha II Hslikova 3c. Ustredi najemnickych Svatu a organizaci v R.C.S. se sidlem v Praze vertreten durch: Frantisek Nedved Praha-Karlín Palackeho ti 79d
Deutschland:	Reichsbund Deutscher Mieter e.V., Berlin, Tauben strasse 47 vertreten durch: Fritz Dziewyk, Berlin, Taubenstr. 47 Bund Deutscher Mietervereine, Dresden, Marschalstr. 29 vertreten durch: Friedrich Kamm, Mannheim, Lenge Rötterstr. 64
Ungarn:	Lakok szövetsege (Mieterbund) vertreten durch: Dr. Faj Sander, Cegved, Budapest V. Vizegradigasse 14
Schweiz:	Schweizer Mieterverband, Zürich, Kronenstrasse 48 vertreten durch: Dr. Carl Wirth.
Dänemark:	De samvirkende danske Lejerforeninger (Die zusammenwirkenden dänischen Mietervereine) vertreten durch: Hauptmann A.V. Porsdal, Roskilde.
Schweden:	Hyresgästernas Riksförbund (Reichsverband schwedi- scher Mieter) Stockholm, Roda Bergsgatan 12 vertreten durch: Vorsitzender des Verbandes Redaktör Otto Grimlund
England:	Tenants' Defence Bureau London 136 Hampstead Way London N.W. 11 vertreten durch: J. Silas Whybrow
Frankreich:	Union Confédérale des Locataires de France et des Colonies, Rue St. Antoine 16, Paris 4 vertreten durch: Josef Rein, Mulhouse, Elsass 37. Dreikönigstrasse
Oesterreich:	Mietervereinigung Oesterreichs, Wien, I. Rotenturmstrasse 19 vertreten durch: Friedrich Schleifer, Wien.
D a n z i g :	Mieterverband Danzig, D a n z i g, I. Vorsitzender Dr. Czarnowsky in Zoppot, Bürgerstr. 5a vertreten durch: Kadatz, Langfuhr, Laissenstr. 3

On the eve of May 23 1926, the following resolution was adopted:

The first international congress of tenant associations determines, as a conclusion of the conference, with satisfaction that the work to unite the tenants associations of all countries was successful, and thus a strong fighting organisation (Kampforganisation) was created.

The assembled representatives of the European countries hereby promise to work for, within the Union of International Tenant Associations, the improvement of housing (Wohnungskultur), and for the introduction of social rent, and housing legislation and for a prompt promotion of municipal and jointly owned housing. The selfish and harmful speculative landlords must be stopped.

The Congress expects the political parties in the respective governments that they should support, in the interest of the good housing for all, the activities of the Union of International Tenants Associations.

A message was sent to all European tenants, which ended with the words:

Tenants of Europe! For the success of our work, the active support of every tenant is absolutely necessary. The solidarity requires that each tenant joins its national tenant association. Only the strong union of all tenants guarantees a successful fight against, even though small at number, powerful and influential speculative landlords.

Tenants in Europe – Unite!

Tentative efforts to get the League going

In July 1927, the newly formed organisation met again in Paris at the office of the *Union Confédérale des Locataires de France et des Colonies*, in rue St. Antoine 16.

The International League of Tenants then again met in Prague in 1929, with representation from the tenants associations in Germany (Dresden and Berlin), France, Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia. According to sparse correspondence after the conference in Prague, there does not seem to have been much activity in the League of Tenants from 1929 to 1934.

The Swedish, Austrian and German tenant associations managed to get together again in 1931, in connection with an International Housing Congress in Berlin.

Clouds build up in the 1930's

Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in March 1934 and in May the Swedish Union of Tenants receives a letter from the Bund Deutscher Mietervereine in Dresden, saying that they no longer wish to receive the Swedish magazine The Tenant. The most recent issue had contained very strong anti Nazi sentiments, including an illustration of four crossed executioner's axes, dripping with blood – all in shape of a swastika!



Leaders of the MVÖ, from left: President Rudolf Marchner, Vice President Robert Hoffmayr, Secretary Alfons Pleyer, and ?. Vienna 1955.

In April 1939 there is correspondence between Paris and Stockholm regarding the possibility of organising an international conference of tenant associations...but is now too late.

In September Hitler attacks Poland and World War II is a fact.

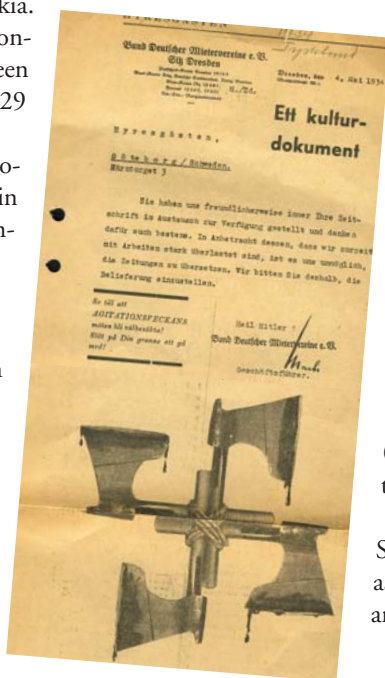
All in all, from 1926 to 1939 the International League of Tenants began the important work of international co-operation, solidarity and fact finding. Some rent comparing studies were made, and national housing policies were compared and discussed.

IUT 1955-

It took some time after the War to refresh the memories of the International League of Tenants. Most of Europe's urban centres were in ruins, particularly the cities and towns with a large percentage of municipal rental housing like in Austria and Germany.

By 1955 the Austrian Tenants' Union, MVÖ, had well recovered under the leadership of National Councillor Rudolf Marchner. The MVÖ was planning a congress in Vienna and invitations had been sent out to European tenant associations. Representatives from the tenant associations in Sweden, Denmark, West-Germany and Switzerland responded to the invitation. After the official congress was over the five delegations met to discuss the revival of an international tenant association. A first temporarily secretariat was established in Vienna. Membership fee was set to 2 000 Austrian shillings, 145 Euro in today's currency.

Sweden was asked to get hold of the associations in Finland and Norway, and to possibly arrange a Nordic ten-





Evicted family in Stockholm, 1928

ant conference. This conference was accomplished in Malmö on June 30 in 1956, attended also by the Austrian and German organisations. A decision was made to locate the Secretariat in Stockholm.

The International Tenants' Union¹, ITU, as the organisation was now mostly being referred to, commissioned the Swedish Union of Tenants, SUT, to appoint the first Secretariat. Mr Leonard Fredricsson, President of SUT, was elected as President of ITU. Mr Gösta Järtelius, legal representative of the SUT, was appointed chief of the ITU Secretariat.

In October 1957 five countries had paid membership fees to the ITU: Austria, Switzerland, West Germany, Denmark and Sweden.

This was the start of the *new* IUT, with a permanent address, a secretariat and with a small income – the real work could begin.

We must not forget...

What took place in the 1920's and 30's is now *mostly* history in the US, Australia and in most countries in Europe. But it is today's reality in all developing countries; unsafe and unhealthy dwellings, insecure tenure, sudden rent increases, evictions, one family in a room, etc. Also, people are not yet safe in many countries in former East Europe – see article from Poland page 16. In many cases the necessary protective laws are there, but not implemented or too weak. Corruption is also extensive.

Tenants' Unions will continue to play major roles in all countries. Together with its members tenant organisations become powerful and influential. So again, the appeal from 1926 is still applicable today; Tenants Unite!

¹ sometimes also referred to as International Tenants' Alliance

The tenant movement in the USA

The Industrial Revolution in the 19th century improved, living standards rose and widespread famines and epidemics diminished in some regions, which resulted in population growth. But, in the country it became more difficult to feed growing families, and many young men and women left the villages, hoping to secure jobs in the factories and industrial businesses that now dotted Europe.

Along the way, many migrants decided to cross the Atlantic and search for a better way of life or, at the very least some form of work. Altogether thirty million immigrants, driven by poverty, regional turmoil and industrialization, poured into the USA between 1815 and 1914. About 25 percent of the Irish population, two million people, immigrated to the US as a result of the blight that hit the potato crop in 1845-1846.

Until the early 1890's, the majority of America's new residents came from northern and western Europe, as scores of Irish and German citizens fled from famine and the failed revolutions that engulfed Central Germany.

After 1896 immigration patterns shifted. Eastern and southern Europeans now became the dominant groups making the passage across the Atlantic. However, this wave of the European exodus was cut short by the rise of anti-immigration sentiments during and after World War I. Several restrictions and new laws effectively shut the door to the USA. Fewer than 350 000 Europeans immigrated to America during the 1930's and a high percentage of these were political refugees, particularly from Germany and, at the end of the decade, from occupied Europe.

Manhattan as first base

Ellis Island opened as a federal immigration centre on January 1, 1892. Between 1892 and 1954 over 22 million passengers and members of ships' crews came through Ellis Island. In 1954, the Immigration and Naturalization Service moved its offices to Manhattan and Ellis Island was declared surplus property. In 1990 the island opened again, as a museum of immigration.

Ellis Island



Large profits in cheap housing

New York's first wave of tenement construction came in the 1850s' as landlords realized that sizable profits could be made from building cheap housing for the poor.

The high cost of Manhattan real estate encouraged landowners to house as many low-wage renters as possible on a single building lot. Until 1867, there were no federal, state, city laws requiring developers to provide their tenants with amenities like running water, gas, or adequate light and ventilation, so early tenements rarely possessed them. Unfortunately, New York had a severe shortage of cheap housing and the immigrants who flooded New York in successive waves beginning in the late 1840s had few alternatives to tenements.

Evictions and rent strikes

New York City's first mass rent strike broke out in 1904 in the Jewish community on Manhattan's Lower East Side; the issue was rapidly escalating rents. Part of the source of tenant bitterness was their sense that they were being exploited by poor but ambitious fellowmen who leased whole buildings from landlords and then profited from the rents they charged for individual apartments.

As landlords attempted to squeeze more rent from their tenants or to evict them to bring in a new family at a higher figure, the courts became clogged.

"Moving day" is a phenomenon in several countries: Rental contracts ended on October 1st, which gave the landlord the possibility to raise the rent. Many were those families who, more or less, chose to move on to another location. A total of 96 623 families faced eviction proceedings in 1919. As a result, "Moving day" in 1919 was described as the most congested in the city's history when over 75 000 families in just the Bronx and Manhattan changed apartments.

The 1920's

The 1920's saw millions of people flock to the cities from country farmlands. Immigrants, especially east Europeans, continued to pour into New York. As a result of these changes, the number of American city dwellers, came to outnumber those who lived in rural areas for the first time in U.S. history. The majority were renters and soon the housing shortage became severe.





New York, Lower Eastside, ca 1910.
Immigrant family in one room flat.

solidated Tenants League of Harlem organised a demonstration against rent increases. The demonstration, supported by the City-Wide Tenants Council, gathered 4 000 protesters.

In the winter of 1963-1964 a rent strike, led by tenant organizer Jesse Gray, erupted in Harlem. The focus of the strike was not rent levels but a new issue: poor maintenance and services.

Source: Most facts and figures derive from The Tenant Movement in New York City, 1904-1984, Ronald Lawson - Mark Naison, et al.

Several councils in upper Manhattan and the Bronx reacted to the situation by establishing committees to aid tenants. In early 1920 the tenants themselves got organised and formed tenant groups, such as the Washington Heights Tenants Association. The most important was perhaps the Fair Play Rent Association in the Bronx which attracted mainly middle class tenants. The organization had over 3 500 members in more than two hundred buildings.

First NY tenant organisation

In 1936 protesting tenants in Knickerbocker Village, Manhattan, joined with other local tenant activist and formed the CWTC, City-Wide Tenants Council, founded and led by London borne Heinz Norden, CWTC is probably New York City's first tenant federation.

In October the same year the black tenant association Con-



Well worth visiting in New York
Lower Eastside Tenement museum, in 97 Orchard Street
www.tenement.org

US TENANT ASSOCIATIONS TODAY

Most tenant associations in the US are state or city based. In some cities, like in New York, there are several local and district tenants associations. **Tenants & Neighbors** is a 26-year old tenant association based, working for tenants in New York State. Tenants & Neighbors has 16 000 members, living in houses managed under the Mitchell-Lama program, the federal Section 8 program and in public housing

The **New Jersey Tenants Organization** was established in 1969 and is the oldest and largest state wide tenant organization in the US.

The **San Francisco Tenants Union**, IUT member, was set up one year later, in 1970.

Founded in 1991, the **National Alliance of HUD Tenants**, NAHT, is the first national membership organization of resident groups. NAHT is a multi-cultural, tenant-controlled alliance of tenant organizations in privately-owned, multifamily HUD¹-assisted housing. NAHT connects most of the organized HUD tenant groups across the country; including 46 active local HUD tenant coalitions or organizing projects in 30 states.

¹ HUD: The US Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development

For links to tenant associations in the US, go to:
www.iut.nu/members/usa.htm



Moving Day in Hogan's Alley. New York World 3 May 1896.



GERMANY

DMB, Deutscher Mieterbund e.V., the German Tenants Association, is the highest instance of the protection of interests of tenants in Germany. It is the umbrella body of the regional, *Länder*, associations in Germany. Already in the second half of the 19th century tenants formed local associations.

The first tenants association “Miethbewohnerverein” developed already in 1868, in Dresden. Housing misery and a large outlawry for tenants were characteristic for this time. In the year 1900 finally 25 tenant associations created the Federation of the Tenant Associations, in Leipzig, which later became the Federation of German Tenant Associations / Reichsbund Deutscher Mieter. The foundation-stone for the powerful German tenant movement was laid. The lowest point of the tenant movement took place during the time of the National Socialism. In 1942 the German Tenant Associations Federation was forced to merge with the Land and Property Owners Federation and the German Residential Property Federation (Deutscher Siedlerbund). Today the DMB has some 1 million members.

SON in Prague

The Union of Czechoslovak Tenants was founded in 1926 – after having presented successful activities to protect tenant’s rights already from the year 1918, when independence from the Habsburg Empire was proclaimed. For over 50 years, 1939-1990, all activities were interrupted.



In 1991 the Association of Czechoslovak Tenants began again to represent and to protect the interests of tenants because of major changes in our social system.

In 1995 the name of the organisation changed to Czech Union of Tenants, Sdružení Nájemníků ČR, SON - with nationwide activities. SON joined IUT in 1998.

SON co-operates closely with 19 trade unions and all social oriented political parties, further with senior organisations. The experts of SON participate in legislative activities and keep in touch with autonomous organs at all levels. They also provide legal consultations for SON’s members.

by Anna Pachtová, SON

FRANCE: CNL, a young ninety years old organisation

by Jacquy Tiset, board member of CNL



The struggle for housing rights is very old in France. During the middle ages, Paris students claimed a commission for reasonable rents. In 1789, “complain copy books” denounced rents higher than fifty percent of a tenants’ income.

With the industrial revolution and the urban expansion, the situation got worse. The first local unions of tenants, together with the young industrial working class, openly showed their anti landlord sentiments, when landlords arranged collective evictions of tenants who were unable to pay their terms. During World War I, women whose husbands and sons were soldiers, learned the importance of uniting local tenant organisations in order to claim a rent moratorium.

In 1916, the UCL, Union Confédérale des Locataires / Federal Union of Tenants, the first French national tenant organisation was born.

Due to massive campaigns between 1918 and 1939, UCL managed to get some protective laws for the tenants. UCL was banned during periods of World War II and many members became part of the resistance movement. Many were those UCL members who gave their lives for the liberation of France. UCL was partly reconstituted in 1944 as CNL, Confédération Nationale des Locataires. After the war our organisation struggled for reconstruction, improvement of housing legislation and protecting tenants.

Today, CNL is still the first French organisation of tenants, due to its electoral results for tenant’s representatives. CNL is officially recognized as a consumer organisation, open for households accessing to property.

The total rental stock in France is about 38 percent, of which 40 percent is social housing, HLM.

NORWAY

The Norwegian Tenants Association, Norges Leieboerforbund (NLF), is the umbrella organisation for tenant association in Norway.

NLF was founded just after the War, in 1939, and has ever since been an important partner in forming the Norwegian housing policy. Most important has been the organising of tenants, improving the housing legislation and the building up of the social housing sector based on non profit co-operative dwellings.

The rental sector in Norway has since the War been reduced from some 50 % to 23% of the total housing stock.

Lars Aasen, Leieboerforeningen

Tenants' Union in Denmark

In 1917 the tenants formed “De samvirkende Lejerforeninger” DsL - The co-operative tenants unions. Lack of building material, due to war restrictions, had caused drastic low production of housing. At the start DsL kept itself clear from party politics and did not even consider itself as a part of the labour movement. In 1920 the DsL reached 50 000 members.

In the 1930's the tenants unions became closer affiliated with the labour movement, but differences in opinions between the social democrats and the communists increased. In 1941 the *Danmarks Lejerforbund*, DL - The Tenants Union of Denmark was formed. DL became closely linked to the Social Democrats. DL became the largest tenants' union in the years after the Second World War. DsL con-

tinued as a parallel union, now dominated by activists on the left.

In 1966 the two organisations joined to form the *Lejernes Landsorganisation*, LLO, a nationwide tenants' union. This decision was an act of showing real responsibility towards the interests of the tenants after some serious strikes against tenants in the legislation in parliament.

LLO still enjoys good relations with the social housing sector, trade unions and the political parties connected to the workers movement, but the ties are not formal. The policies of LLO are mainly composed from the outcome of debates within the LLO.

LLO is the nation wide union of tenants in Denmark, with about 50 000 members.

Some 45 percent of the Danes rent their dwellings, of which 20 percent enjoys public housing.

by Mr Jørgen D. Jensen, board member of LLO

NOTICES



May 30 2006

– Get out and get to know your neighbour!

The European Neighbours' Day aims at socializing and enhancing local solidarity. Indeed, it is our responsibility to encourage a more convivial neighbourhood in this world threatened by the rise of individualism. Neighbours all over Europe can easily get to know each other better, by simply organise a neighbourhood party in their courtyard, in their street, or in their garden. The 6th Neighbours day in 2005 brought together more than 4.5 million people in 15 countries in Europe.

Order your kit and find more information on:
www.european-neighbours-day.com/



April 8 - Dutch tenants mobilize!

Dutch tenants demonstrate on Saturday the 8th of April 2006 at Dam square in Amsterdam against the governmental policy on social housing, healthcare and kindergartens.

The original subject 'Affordable rents for tenants' is widened to also contain maintenance of subsidies for healthcare and kindergartens. The demonstration is organized by several national social organisations and the trade unions, initiated by the Nederlandse Woonbond, the Dutch Tenants Association. Slogans for the tenants: * Keep rents affordable, * Stop liberalisation of rents, * Maintain level of rental subsidy, * Renting without worries, * Equal treatment of tenants and owners. More information from the Woonbond:
www.woonbond.nl, info@woonbond.nl



EU: European Charter on Housing

The EU Interparliamentary group Urban and Housing, chaired by MP J.M. Beaupuy, has drafted a European Charter on Housing. It is still a working document, but the Charter will probably be adopted by the Interparliamentary group sometime in January, and then forwarded to the EU Committee on Regional Development for approval.

The purpose of this Charter is to draw attention to the fact that housing is a key social element in already adopted documents, such as the Lisbon Strategy (2000), Social Charter of the European Council (article 31), Charter of Fundamental rights (right to aid to housing), and many more. Also, housing has been accepted as one of the most important elements of social problems in the EU (Paris in November!).

Access to decent housing is recognised as a common objective of the Council of Europe. Also, the labour market and housing is closely connected. Lack of accommodation at a moderate price holds back the competitiveness and employment in Europe. The final level of approval will be Mr Barosso and the European Parliament.

The Charter is available on www.iut.nu

To find your MP, please check;
<http://www.europarl.eu.int/committees/>

We welcome Organisation of Civic Rights, OCR, South Africa

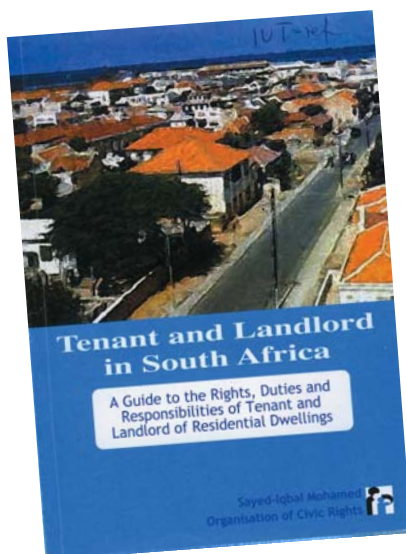
The IUT Board unanimously accepted OCR as full category B Member. OCR, established in 1984, is based in Durban by the Indian Ocean. OCR was formed to oppose racists house and land evictions in the 1980's.

The OCR is a community based NGO & Civic Organisation. It also provides a paralegal service and is involved at grassroots level on providing nation wide services to tenants. OCR also conducts workshops to empower and educate tenants, and conduct research on tenant, homelessness and crime issues. It helps tenants to establish flat and street committees.

Mr Sayed Iqbal Mohamed, Chairperson and Director of OCR, is the author of the handbook *Tenants and Landlord in South Africa* – a practical guide for tenants and landlords. The book contains necessary information about the Housing Act and the Rent Tribunal, questions to common juridical issues and easily comprehensible answers. There is also specimen of a lease agreement.

The book's preface reads "To all tenants and landlords working towards a better and just society".

We recommend OCR's website: www.ocr.org.za, and we wish OCR welcome to the IUT family!



Social Housing in Durban

About housing in South Africa

South Africa has a federal rental housing Act from 2000. This Act informs both tenants and landlords about their rights, duties and responsibilities when they enter into a lease agreement, verbal or written.

Also, in each province the Minister of Housing may set up independent Rental Housing Tribunals – free of cost for involved parties. Anyone, not necessarily a lawyer, can represent a complaint or a respondent at a hearing.

The rental market in South Africa is dominated by small landlords. Commercial landlords have not yet found this sector very profitable. Also, most new tenancies are created in the informal, rather in the formal, sector.

Ownership, but rental is necessary

The government is mainly committed to the provision of ownership housing, but in 1998 the government recognised that expanding homeownership alone could not cope with the sheer scale of housing deficit. Women groups have also been lobbying for more rental housing. The South African government is one of the very few in developing countries that has managed to develop anything resembling a rental housing policy.

Social housing, in various forms, has been implemented on a pilot basis over the last seven years, with the emergence of 64 Social Housing Institutions. Rental housing in South Africa formed 31% of the total housing stock in 1999, and about 25 % in 2003. The percentage of renters is of course much higher in urban areas, 30-40 %.

The Census 2001 gave that the share of households living in informal dwellings (including backyard shacks) has remained constant at about 16 % of the total population.

Housing and HIV/Aids

Many thousand breadwinners in Africa have died due to HIV/Aids and many families risk rent arrears. Non-payment of rents increases and the social housing sector in South Africa is faced with difficult questions. In 2004 Rooftops Canada and South Africa's Social Housing Foundation completed a report on the impact of HIV/Aids on housing. It found that up to 25 % of residents may eventually be too ill to pay their rentals. Rooftops Canada and the Social Housing Foundation have incorporated HIV/Aids programs within all their work and partnership agreements.

See also IUT congress statement 2004: http://www.iut.nu/Tillfalliga_artiklar/Aids%20HIV_final.doc

Text: Magnus Hammar, IUT

What is really the housing problem in Brussels, the capital of Europe?

The largest problem is the lack of social housing in Brussels, at the same time as the rents in the private sector have increased considerably the last five years. Also, the state of a lot of housing is very bad.

The majority of people living in the city of Brussels have low or medium incomes, around 700 Euros for a single person, and 900 Euros for a family receiving social assistance. Unemployment allowance is around 800 Euros per month and the medium salary from 1000 Euros to 1500 Euros.

Today a two rooms flat costs around 450 - 500 Euros per month in the so called non-rich parts of the city. In the more well off and quiet places rents are around 600 - 1000 Euros per month.

Brussels is also a cosmopolitan city where a lot of well paid European civil servants live. For them the cost of housing is always low by comparison with housing costs of other capitals like Paris or London.

The new regional government, who is well aware of this

situation, has in its political program foreseen a lot of measures to improve the housing situation: creation of 5000 new social housing units, requisition of empty housing, development of the social housing agencies and attribution of housing aid for persons with low incomes.

But today, after one year of activity, only 500 new social housing units are under construction.

So in conclusion we wait and see.

by M. Edith Galopin, legal representative of the Syndicat des Locataires, SDL – Huurdersbond, Brussels.



Houses in decay in central Brussels

Mr José Garcia, President of the SDL, adds in an interview that the comparable low rent level in Brussels is due to the property crisis. As there are no effective laws that compel the property owners to keep their property in an acceptable standard, a large part of the housing stock is in a miserable condition.

Quite the opposite to other cities in Europe, central Brussels is considered as unattractive – even though the Grand Place and surrounding quarters look charming and attractive to a newcomer.

– But for someone who lives in Brussels the central parts are noisy, full of traffic and one runs the risk of being robbed, says José. People with middle or higher incomes live in the outer parts of Brussels, in suburbs near woods and parks.

As there are no laws that require the owners to repair their houses, they reckon that they in any case can find ten-



Since July 1, there is a law which gives local authorities the right to expropriate abandoned and decayed housed. There are no official figures on empty housing in Brussels. But the city water distributor estimates that about 20 000 properties have such low consumption of water that they must be unoccupied.

ants who are willing to pay the required rents. And, low rents of course never contribute to funds for renovation. So, mostly francophone refugees, legal and illegal, inhabit the worst houses. Large parts of central Brussels are inhabited by low paid people from north and central Africa.

As Ms Galopin writes above, Brussels is full of foreign well paid civil servants, employed by the EU institutions and by the extensive foreign governmental and private sector.

Of course, all these people can not understand why anyone would complain about the housing market in Brussels. There is an abundance of rental flats with reasonable rents, according to the many ads in the newspapers. The problem is that they probably would not like to live in most of them – they would in most cases never accept the low quality and standard.

by Magnus Hammar, IUT

Tenants in Poland

Six fold rent increases put Zygmunt on the street

By Göran Svedberg

The premises of the Polish Association of Tenants, Polskie Zrzeszenie Lokatorów PZL, in Krakow, are soon jampacked when the doors open for members who are in need for advice. Six persons gather in the small office. At least twenty more wait outside for their turn to come in. The subjects for advice are most often similar; private landlords who intend to raise the rents drastically, or try to find reasons for ending contracts.

– Five million Poles who inhabit flats in houses owned by private landlords are more or less without any security of tenure and legal rights, says Alicja Sarzynska, President of PZL. Obscure and indistinct housing laws are behind many of the problems, Alicja continues.

Fake owners

In the processes of the privatisation of housing and of the rental market many new, and former, owners appeared, with both fake and authentic evidences of ownership.

Zygmunt and Grazyna Kich live in a two room flat. The owner fled to the Soviet Union during the 2nd World War, then returned after the War, and then went on to South America. Some time ago a woman appeared in the house claiming, with dubious documents, that she had bought the property from her 93-year old grandfather in Argentina! She then sold then house to a local businessman. The monthly rent was soon increased, from 102 Euro to 230 Euro. At the same time the new owner gave the tenants notices to quit.

Almost bankrupt

Zygmunt appealed against this unfair treatment and succeeded to delay the court decision. The owner took revenge



Mr Zygmunt Kich in his flat in ulica Krakowska in Krakow.

PHOTO: ERIK MÄRTENSSON

by increasing the rent to 634 Euro! This is more than Zygmunt's and Grazyna's joint income.

– I will end up in the street on the 1st of May, the very same day as I retire, says Zygmunt.

– Most often the owners want to convert the flats into offices, or hotels, says Alicja. The tenants are given three years to try and find another accommodation, which is almost impossible for most people. When the tenants protest the landlords often cut off the gas and water pipes or terminate the agreements with the garbage collectors, which soon turn the basement areas into a stinking dump.

Children stay with parents

As a consequence of this situation, lack of affordable rental housing, children tend to stay with their parents, even when have grown up or they marry.

– I could never afford to buy a flat with my salary, says 24-year old Beata.

Her parents, Janusz and Malgorzata Ruggiero, have lived in their flat for 22 years. But that is soon over.

– During the last three years the rent has increased by 60 percent, says Janusz. There will be more increases in 2006 and then we can not afford to stay here any longer.

The Polish Association of Tenants also has great difficulties in paying the rent, even though everyone works on a voluntary basis.

– The Swedish Union of Tenants in Helsingborg has assisted us financially during this year, says Alicja.

But, next year, I am not sure whether we can afford to keep this office, sighs Alicja Sarzynska.

Habitat Centre in Belgrade

The Association of Tenants from Serbia and Montenegro – Habitat has initiated a project for establishing the Info Centre HABITAT in Belgrade. The project is financed by IUT and Olof Palme International Centre.

The aim of the Centre is to collect, process and disseminate information on housing in Serbia. After the war in the 1990's, there has been no official work done on the living conditions and tenure forms for the ten million Serbs. For instance, official figures say that only about 1,5 % lives as tenants – but unofficial figures indicate 20%. Another task for the Centre will be to function as a liaison between tenants, the government and other institutions – to direct tenants to relevant addresses in order to look for the best solutions for their problems.

More information from: infocentar.habitat@eunet.yu



Outside the Housing Centre in 14 Murska Street; Jelena Vljakovic, Marina Ragush, Dushanka Ragush and Magnus Hammar.