



# Europe Rehoused

Elizabeth Denby

With an introduction by Elizabeth Darling

## EUROPE REHOUSED

*Europe Rehoused* was one of the most influential housing texts of the 1930s, and is still widely cited. Written by the housing consultant Elizabeth Denby (1894–1965) it offered a survey of the nearly two decades of social housing built across Europe since the end of World War I, with the aim of informing British policy makers; as a reviewer declared ‘it has a decidedly propagandist flavour.’ Denby was a leading figure in housing debates in the 1930s. Adopting a line in sharp critique of what she saw as the entirely materialist approach of state housing policy, Denby advocated the incorporation of social amenities alongside well-designed and well-equipped flats and houses, ideally sited within urban areas; by the late 1930s she was a pioneering advocate of the concept of mixed development.

*Europe Rehoused* is divided into two parts. The first considered the origins of the housing problem of the inter-war decades, which Denby dated to the onset of the Industrial Revolution. She then examined the various national factors which influenced the problem: climate, post-war economy and the nature of land ownership. Finally she discussed the financial aspect: the bodies responsible for house building and the nature of the subsidies available for building. This was very much a schematic survey and the second, and largest, part of the book was devoted to individual studies of European practice, and discussed ‘two winners in the War, two losers and two neutrals’: Sweden, Holland, Germany, Vienna, Italy and France. This section was completed with a concluding chapter in which she compared continental work with the British system, and the lessons that could be learnt in this country from abroad.

Although Denby’s book was not the only one of its sort, its importance lies in its polemical nature and its advocacy of a rehousing policy which would become widely adopted after World War II. Significant too, is that the book is the voice of a woman who had assumed a significant status as a housing expert in the inter-war decades; Walter Gropius, who wrote the introduction to the US edition of the book, observed that the book ‘carried the weight of perfect expertness’. Such voices have for too long been overlooked, yet Denby formed part of a very strong tradition of women reformers who worked to reshape the inter-war and post-war British built environment.

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# EUROPE REHOUSED

*Elizabeth Denby*  
*Introduction by Elizabeth Darling*

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# INTRODUCTION

*Elizabeth Darling*

Published in 1938, *Europe Rehoused* became one of the most influential housing texts of the post-war era, and is still widely cited today. Written by the housing consultant Elizabeth Denby (1894–1965) in a decade when a major programme of slum clearance was underway, it offers a survey of the nearly two decades of social housing built in six European countries since the end of the First World War. Divided into two parts, the book opens with three chapters which focused on general issues: the nature of the housing problem before and after the war, national variants of the problem, and the differing forms of financial support deployed to fund development. The second and most substantial part of the book is devoted to detailed accounts of housing policy and practice in Sweden, Italy, Germany, France, Holland and Austria (chiefly Vienna). Denby concludes with a chapter that compared these continental examples with what had been built in Britain in the same period.

Studies of continental housing practice were by no means unique at this time in Britain. A committee formed by the Building Centre, for example, published what was essentially a handbook of European housing handsomely illustrated with plans, photographs and statistical data, but with little analysis of the schemes included; its target audience arguably designers as much as policy makers (Building Centre Committee 1936).<sup>1</sup> Common also were reports and articles by local authority politicians who had visited the new European housing estates as research for the preparation of their own housing schemes. These sometimes ended up as rather smug endorsements for existing policy. Thus Lewis Silkin, the head of the London County Council's Housing Committee, wrote in 1936 of his satisfaction that 'continental policy was tending towards cottage estates on the outskirts of town', although he did acknowledge that the Council could learn from the continental habit of defining housing as a social service rather than just the provision of new habitations (Silkin 1936: 8–11). Others, as Alison Ravetz has noted, used their reports to justify the introduction of flats into British housing programmes. The praise these contained for the well-equipped and technologically advanced estates then being built outside Paris, and for the social amenities of Vienna's *hofs*, was a means of implying, perhaps, that British council flats



*Figure 1* Elizabeth Denby, photographed in Sweden, circa 1934.

would take a similar form (Ravetz 1974: [chapter 2](#)). The fact that this rarely happened, as well as Silkin’s hint that British housing policy might be lacking in some important respects, give an idea of what distinguished *Europe Rehoused* from such texts, and which make it so worthy of reissuing in the present century.

In the late 1930s, it was Denby’s combination of documentation and analysis with a very particular polemic that made her book so distinctive; as a reviewer noted ‘it has a decidedly propagandist flavour’ (Dougill 1938: 217). The book’s epigraph – ‘where there is no vision, the people perish’ – was a clear indicator of the opprobrium in which Denby had come to hold British housing policy. Thus the main chapters, although written in an admirably matter-of-fact tone, with each nation’s housing stock evaluated according to the same criteria, build slowly to a conclusion which declared that of the ‘vast quantity of new small dwellings’ that had been erected in Britain since the war, ‘few can compare for quality with the output of any other European nation’ (272). This withering summary formed the prelude to Denby’s own, decidedly radical, solution to the housing problem: high-density mixed developed schemes aimed at all classes, and built within urban areas and incorporating extensive amenities (273–78).

The fact that such a policy was the work of a woman writer, and one who had assumed a significant status and authority within housing debates in the inter-war decades, is the other aspect of this book’s significance, now as then.

Lord Horder, the King's Physician, who wrote the foreword to the British edition, noted that Denby was 'both expert in technology and experience and yet gifted with vision,' adding that 'if we will accept her guidance' the housing problem will 'be solved to-morrow' (8). Walter Gropius reiterated this view in his foreword to the US edition in which he observed that the text 'carried the weight of perfect expertness' (Gropius 1938: 10). Such estimations were reiterated in the book's many reviews (see below) but, as has so often been the case, contemporary recognition and approbation did not translate into a permanent place in the histories of housing, planning and architecture. It is, therefore, on a discussion of Denby's distaff position in history – as a woman, and as a housing theorist fiercely outside the mainstream – and how this shaped *Europe Rehoused*, that the rest of this Introduction will focus.

### **Before *Europe Rehoused***

That Denby published a substantial book on housing with a distinguished imprint in 1938 suggests how normal it was for women to have a voice in housing debates by the inter-war period. Indeed it was. As a small band of feminist historians have worked to show, women like Denby – and there was a considerable phalanx of them in the inter-war decades – were the heirs to several generations of primarily middle- and upper-middle-class women who, since at least the 1860s, had used the biological 'given' of their gender's predisposition to nurturing as a springboard for political roles in their communities. Women's putative synonymy with the home, in particular, enabled them to create and monopolise a space in reformist activity. From there they developed innovative approaches to both the design of the home and, when their purview included social housing, to its management also; something epitomised in the careers of Octavia Hill and Henrietta Barnett, especially in the 1890s and 1900s (Darling and Whitworth 2007: *passim*).

The fact that such activity originated within the philanthropic sector was what enabled these women to assume positions of authority and influence. It too mapped private concerns onto the public realm, and, operating as it most often did at a local level, provided an accessible site in which women could come into direct contact with some of the greatest social problems of the day, and from this intimate knowledge generate models of reform practice to combat them. That such work was so often innovative reflects the territory of critique that the sector occupied as a whole; formed in reaction to the nature of existing social welfare policies (or the lack thereof). Moreover, since women dominated the day-to-day running of philanthropic organisations, from the start there was no sense that it was unusual for them to be at the helm of reform.

It was in such a context that Denby came to her career in housing. Born in 1894 in Bradford, to a doctor father and a mother who had been a nurse, she formed part of the emerging generation of middle-class girls for whom a good

education, often to tertiary level, and a career, was increasingly becoming the norm. Attendance at Bradford Girls Grammar School was followed by study for the Certificate in Social Science at the London School of Economics, a course specifically intended to train women for careers in social work. After some years working in the Civil Service, she entered the world of the inter-war voluntary housing sector when she became Organising Secretary to the Kensington Council of Social Service (KCSS) in 1923.<sup>2</sup>

Although the sector was undergoing considerable change in the inter-war period as central government assumed responsibility for many of the services it had hitherto provided (maternal and child welfare, some aspects of social housing, for example), it remained a significant force, entering a new phase of activity that the social welfare theorist Elizabeth Macadam labelled '[the] New Philanthropy ... the system of combined statutory and voluntary social service' (Macadam 1934: 32). For Macadam, the fact that the sector had, in many areas, relinquished its leading role in welfare provision to the state, formed not a moment for its retreat, but the opportunity for its reinvention. Reconfigured as a vanguard, its challenge was to create new roles for itself, and develop new strategies to address the needs of a society undergoing rapid change. Hence, she argued, '[t]he propagation of ideas, which have not yet been accepted as part of the currency of thought [became] ... another of the most enduring possibilities for voluntary action'. This was where the sector had an advantage over the state, she believed, because the development of 'sound propaganda' depended on research and experimentation, something it was often impossible for governments to pursue because 'private action can penetrate where the state dare not venture'. She concluded, therefore, that 'the spread of ideas based on the result of careful research and experiment ... is the necessary precursor of all reform' (Macadam 1934: 31–32).

The organisations for which Denby worked epitomised the New Philanthropy. The KCSS, which was based in the Portobello Road, then the heart of the slums of north Kensington, was a voluntary organisation that sought to coordinate social work and address the most pressing welfare issues in the locality. Amongst the most urgent of these was the need to renovate or replace overcrowded inner-city housing, a problem which had gone untouched by post-war housing legislation. To campaign for this cause, the KCSS established two groups, the Kensington Housing Association (KHA), a propaganda body formed in 1925, and the Kensington Housing Trust (KHT), formed in 1926 as a public utility society to build new housing. Denby became the Organising Secretary to these two groups, a role which combined ordinary administrative work with the development of propaganda (PR in today's parlance) campaigns and housing policy.

Although the KCSS and its offshoots had men as its president and often its chairpeople, it was women who ran the organisations. Chief among them were Rachel Alexander (d. 1964) who used her personal wealth to fund its activities and represented the older tradition of lady volunteer that Denby's

generation, with its professional qualifications and salaries, were beginning to supplant. Together, these women developed a distinctive approach to the provision of social housing, and a range of provocative techniques to draw attention to the plight of the slum dweller and the need for government action to resolve the slum problem. They were not alone. Across London and the rest of the country, small housing groups, many women-led or managed, pursued similar activities (Darling 2002).

The typical tenant of the KHT was thus entitled to have access to a differential rent scheme, a furniture-loan fund to equip the new home, a programme of social amenities and the services of a housing manager (trained on the Octavia Hill method) as well as a soundly built, well-equipped modern flat (England 1931, Tanner 2001). Such model accommodation was, in itself, intended as a form of propaganda, a built reproach to an inactive local council, but it was complemented by an increasingly sophisticated, and ultimately pan-London, publicity campaign for a nationwide programme of slum clearance. So what began as a programme of, for example, lobbying local councillors and the creation of displays of good and bad housing in local shops, or the holding of Housing Sundays, when local clergymen were asked to raise awareness of slum conditions among their wealthy parishioners, escalated to the commission of a campaign film, 'Kensington Calling', (KHT 1930), and, in 1932–33, the creation of a new urban plan for north Kensington. This emphasised the necessity of town planning if the slum problem were ever to be resolved permanently (KHT 1932, Denby 1933a).

Denby was at the heart of this work. As her fellow-worker Elizabeth Pepler recalled, '[Elizabeth's] brilliant, ferocious brain made the office a whirlpool of activity, arguments, disagreements and vitality' (Pepler 1966: 9). And it was Denby who was among the leaders of an initiative to bring together London's many housing associations in a collective campaign. This began in 1931 with the first of what became a series of housing exhibitions, 'New Homes for Old', held at Westminster Central Hall (Darling 2002). It culminated in the creation of the Housing Centre as a professional think tank and lobby organisation for progressive views on housing in 1934 (*Housing Review* 1984).

All this activity, which spanned 1923 to 1933, might be said to have been vindicated when, in 1930, the new Minister of Health, Arthur Greenwood, introduced the first post-war housing legislation to tackle directly slum clearance. The Greenwood Act created subsidies for the costs of rehousing families displaced by clearance, and made higher sums available for building on expensive inner-city sites. It also required local authorities to develop and submit five-year programmes of work to the Minister, and ordered that provision was to be the responsibility either of municipalities or of housing associations working by arrangement with them (Ravetz 2001: 87–88). The downfall of the Labour administration in August 1931, as the Depression deepened, somewhat thwarted this vision, but it represented a major shift in government policy away from building suburban cottage estates for better-off workers to a



more active engagement with slum clearance. Once economic conditions began to improve, Edward Hilton Young, the Minister of Health in the National Government, sought to restart the campaign by declaring a ‘mass attack on the slums’ and introduced a new housing bill to Parliament in December 1932 (Hilton Young 1935: 5). This became law in March 1933 and abolished the state subsidy for the building of council houses in favour of sole support for slum clearance.

The 1933 Act, and the shift in policy it embedded, might be understood as the starting point for *Europe Rehoused*. Certainly, one of its other recommendations had a decisive impact on the voluntary housing sector. Whereas Greenwood had envisaged that both housing associations and local authorities should provide the housing to replace the slums, the 1933 Act, following a period of intense lobbying of central government by local authorities, awarded primary responsibility for its provision to municipalities (Garside 1995). Although organisations like the KHT continued to build despite this (using donations rather than public subsidy) the policy pushed them further into the vanguard role described by Macadam; cemented in the Housing Centre’s formation in 1934 as already noted. For Denby, the evolution of housing politics also caused her to reassess her position. A decade in the slums had, she later confessed, left her ‘intensely bored with the slums’. Increasingly ‘her interest, enjoyment and heart, lay with what was to take their place – with new building, with construction and everything that meant’ (Denby n.d.). After unsuccessful attempts to persuade the KHT to give her a more direct role in the commissioning of housing schemes, and aware that its opportunities to build were now unlikely to expand, Denby sought instead to exploit the skills and knowledge she had acquired in the preceding decade, and become a one-woman vanguard. In October 1933 she therefore resigned from the Trust to pursue an independent career as what she called a Housing Consultant, a polymathic expert who could advise on all aspects of the design and management of social housing.

Although Denby seems to have had few offers of work at the time of her resignation, her recent experience, and the world around her, suggested that she could expect to be employed in the years ahead. Her work in developing the New Homes for Old project and in collectivising the London housing sector demonstrated her abilities to organise and to address a platform beyond north Kensington. She had also begun to publish articles on housing and planning during 1933, the first of which discussed the 1932 Kensington plan as part of a wider feature on planning in the March issue of the *Architectural Review* (Denby 1933a). A number of articles on kitchen design followed as well as an appearance on the BBC discussing ‘Planning the Modern Kitchen’ as part of the series ‘Design in Modern Life’ (Denby 1933b, c, 1934a).

The informed voice that Denby represented in these articles and the broadcast, was symptomatic of an emerging deference to the figure of the expert as the recovery from the Depression got underway. Across the political

spectrum there developed a concern for the planned reconstruction of the national economy and a consequent demand for advice. The formation of the think tank Political and Economic Planning in 1931, which set itself the role as ‘a bridge between research and policy making’ (Pinder 1981: 5), and the government’s establishment of an advisory committee on design, the Council for Art and Industry, in 1932, were clear signals that there was a market for experts like Denby. Indeed, she had already gained some experience in an advisory role in early 1933 when she was asked to take the Prince of Wales on a tour of the slums in order that he could ‘learn the hard facts of housing and humanity’ (Woollcombe 1936: 6). There is little evidence about how this happened, not least because it was a private trip, but it seems likely that it was a well-connected KHT volunteer or donor who made the introduction.

If these were all clear indicators that in 1933 Denby already had a voice that was respected and listened to, she nevertheless sought a still more solid basis for her expertise, one that would distinguish her from other opinion makers. Thus, in the late summer of that year she applied to the Leverhulme Trust for funding from what was only the second round of its new Research Fellowship Programme in order to study slum clearance at home and abroad. Denby’s proposal was approved by the Committee at its meeting on 6 October (just a few days after she had resigned from the KHT) because of the urgency of the slum problem. She was awarded a personal grant of £350 and £150 for travelling and related expenses. A year later, following an interview with Professor Carr Saunders of the Trust’s Advisory Committee, she was granted an extension of the Fellowship and a further grant of £200 (Leverhulme Trust 1998).

### ***Producing Europe Rehoused***

The years between the onset of Denby’s career as a Housing Consultant and the publication of *Europe Rehoused* in April 1938 were extraordinarily busy ones. At the same time as she worked on the book, she wrote a series of substantial articles for the architectural press, co-organised two further New Homes for Old exhibitions (1933 and 1934) and collaborated on the creation of two blocks of social housing for rehoused slum dwellers: R.E. Sassoon House, south London (1934) and Kensal House, west London (1933–36). These schemes were designed with the modernist architect, Edwin Maxwell (Max) Fry (1899–1987), the first intended as living accommodation for some of the families who were members of the Pioneer Health Centre, the second as model flats commissioned by the Gas, Light and Coke Company to demonstrate the ways that gas technology (as fuel and equipment) could improve housing. Assimilating her Kensington training with modernist design principles, in both projects, Denby’s concern to provide high levels of technology throughout the flats and to plan on labour-saving *existenz-minimum* lines can be seen. Likewise her emphasis on the importance of social amenities is evident, either close by the flats, as was the case at Sassoon House, with the Health

Centre a two-minute walk away, or incorporated within them. Kensal House included not just 68 flats, but two social clubs, one for adults, one for children, a nursery school, a playground and allotments, and was initially run on a day-to-day basis by a tenant-led committee.

The research that Denby undertook for the book increasingly informed her consultancy. In all she visited ten countries, Denmark, Finland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in addition to the six discussed in the final manuscript. As becomes clear from the text, her research was thorough, encompassing on-site visits, discussions with local housing authorities and managers, analysis of housing legislation and census data, and interviews with the people who had been moved from slums to new housing. Their responses, particularly from those to whom she spoke in her English researches, led her to revise substantially her approach to the form that new housing should take. This she unveiled in November 1936 when, in a further sign of her contemporary eminence, she became the first woman to address a meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). In a speech entitled 'Rehousing from the Slum Dweller's Point of View' she delivered an excoriating critique of contemporary housing policy (prefiguring that of her conclusion in *Europe Rehoused*) derived from what her interviewees had reported about life as lived in post-war flatted and cottage estates.

Of flats, she noted criticisms of the absence of lifts and a private balcony, the lack of sound insulation, their ugly architecture, and the inefficient and inconveniently placed equipment. A canny eye for detail led to her description of one woman who had to stand on a stool in the hall to feed the electric meter, on the edge of the bath to feed the gas meter, and on the edge of the sink to open the kitchen window. The woman commented 'The architects who built this must have thought we were blooming goats!' (Denby 1936: 65). Denby also criticised the lack of imagination in the use of land around flats and concluded '[flats] are intensely unpopular among working people, who consider that they provide an environment which is entirely unsuitable for family life' (Denby 1936: 65).

Denby argued that many of the criticisms about flats were equally applicable to the cottage estates built on the fringes of English towns and cities. In addition were problems associated with the expense of living at a distance from work, and the absence of cheap shopping centres or friendly tradesmen who would give credit. She drew this part of her speech to a close with the declaration, 'with all my heart I agree with the working man and woman that the choice for a town dweller between a flat at fifty and a cottage at twelve to the acre is a choice between two impractical and unnecessary extremes' (Denby 1936: 66).

In the second half of the speech she outlined her proposal for an alternative model of housing for slum dwellers, one which addressed the lived experience of working-class families and acknowledged the fact that their opinion was 'overwhelmingly in favour of some form of development which houses the

people nearer to their work and nearer to the companionship of the centre of the town' (Denby 1936: 65). The result was a proposal for what she described as 'a close urban development for working people ... a mixed-development scheme which will bring in the strength of the better-off people to assist the more precariously placed working people, and proper provision for recreation, for health, for fun ...' (Denby 1936: 80); that is a scheme which combined flats and houses for all classes in a planned neighbourhood unit. The published version of the talk included a design for the dominant dwelling type in the hypothetical scheme. These were to be terraced cottages for families built at densities of 40 per acre, a significant shift away from the modern flats she had designed with Fry. These houses were as well-equipped as those flats but had more generous plans with a working kitchen and dining alcove in the living room.

The speech was highly controversial. Archibald Scott, Chief Architect at the Ministry of Health, who had the task of giving the vote of thanks, had to concede that while he had enjoyed the paper 'very much', he disagreed 'almost entirely with what she said' (Denby 1936: 78). The audience, mostly men, seem to have agreed, with only a few openly supporting Denby's argument. Such a response was, perhaps, to be expected. Her approach was entirely in keeping with the vanguard position in which she had been nurtured, and was an early indication of the polemic that underpinned *Europe Rehoused*.

The writing of the manuscript seems to have been Denby's primary occupation during 1937. It was delivered to Allen and Unwin towards the end of the year (the preface is dated November 1937) and was published in April 1938 at a cost of 14 shillings (approximately £38 today). The design of the book was not particularly distinctive (compared to contemporary publications such as Herbert Read's *Art and Industry* or *Circle* which were steeped in the conventions of the New Typography). Serifed fonts were used throughout; the most progressive note (apart from the content) being the dust jacket's collage of photographs of European housing schemes. The book was illustrated with 32 photographs, many of them Denby's, as well as line drawings (these are not signed and it is unclear who drew them).

Denby had originally hoped that the Duke of Windsor might contribute the foreword to the book, given their previous relationship. Writing to him in October 1937, at which point the book was called *How They Live* she noted 'Your personal interest in the welfare of working-people in England is remembered with affection, and I should value more than I can say a "God-speed" from you to the constructive ideas behind this book' (Denby 1937). His reply was cordial but negative: with so many requests to write forewords he had had to make a rule 'not to do so'. He did, however, express a desire for a copy of the book 'as I know it will be very interesting and helpful to me in the continuance of my studies of the housing problem'. He added 'I shall be particularly interested to read what you think of Germany where I was very impressed with the amount of good building that is going on' (Duke of

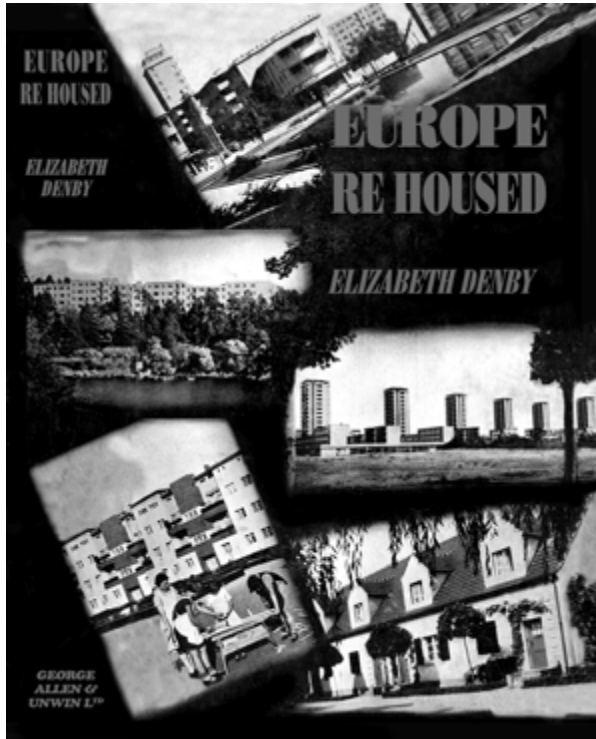


Figure 2 The dustjacket of the first edition of *Europe Rehoused*

Windsor 1937). Lord Horder, although not quite as glamorous, was a suitably eminent second choice.

As noted above, *Europe Rehoused* was ostensibly a reasoned account of inter-war European housing practice aimed squarely, as Denby wrote in her preface, at ‘officials, local councillors, landlords, builders, managers or tenants’ (13). A closer reading, however, reveals how those aspects of housing practice which Denby chose to recommend, or of which she disapproved, served to build up a case to support her new approach to housing and, ultimately, to persuade that same audience of its viability and desirability. Thus Denby held up Red Vienna as the authority which had, in her view, achieved the most successful and complete model of housing in Europe because ‘It was ... first recognised in Vienna that shelter is not enough, that human beings needed companionship and recreation, need beauty in environment, need the help that can be given to parents still in slums by taking their children into nurseries’ (253). Sweden was her next best model. She was impressed by its policy of devolving house building to tenant-led co-operatives, which she felt encouraged social stability. She also approved of the degree of control over development exercised by local planning authorities, something she noted was evident everywhere

except Britain (255). This approbation served to underline those aspects of Denby's housing theory which emphasised the need to cater for both the physical and social well-being of tenants and her demand that slum clearance schemes should form part of overall planning policies. Her new emphasis on respecting the wishes of the tenants, particularly housewives, is most evident in her criticism throughout the text of the use of the minimum plan. She noted, 'the one serious but (officially) unnoticed fault, and it is one common to most of Europe, is the inconvenience, in fact the intolerable discomfort of "minimum planning"' (135); an observation which had directly informed the designs she outlined in her 1936 speech.

The damning indictment of British housing policy that Denby offered in her conclusion was followed by a series of recommendations of the European practices she believed would be worth adopting or adapting into national policy. Many would have provided opportunities for experts like Denby. Thus she proposed that 'the quality of Government direction should be improved ... First-rate schemes will only be inspired by first-rate people.' Conversant with all the latest developments in housing, such people could inspire 'a vigorous campaign among citizens and municipalities, informing, helping, stimulating them to recreate civic life at the same time as they demolish their slums'. They might also form a travelling commission – comprising figures as diverse as an engineer, artist and administrator – as had happened in Sweden, to consult local people and convey the problems of particular areas to the Minister of Health. This mattered because, 'the needs of Glasgow, Wigan, Durham and Newlyn are too different to be met by the application of the same official standards' (273–75).

A rather more brazen suggestion was that central government should revise its approach to densities 'thus family cottages with small gardens could be permitted in central areas ... while blocks of flats to any height might be built for the unmarried or childless' (275). The promotion of such pro-urbanist views was reiterated in the very final paragraph of the book:

Success will be achieved only when citizens, whatever their incomes, no longer want to escape from their city at every opportunity ... when working men and women all over the country no longer say, "My God, we've got to move," but "Thank God, we're going to move" (278).

### ***After Europe Rehoused***

Two years on from her controversial appearance at the RIBA, Denby's views were received more positively than perhaps she might have anticipated. *The Listener's* and the *Times Literary Supplement's* critics, for example, were unstinting in their praise. The former stated that 'every taxpayer should read it', adding that there could be 'no doubt about the authority of the critic – no-one knows more about the tenants' point of view than Elizabeth Denby' (*The Listener* 1938).

This view the *Supplement* reiterated: ‘this book could hardly fail to be as important as it is given her experience’. It also insisted that all those responsible for housing policy should ‘be forced to read such books as these’ (*Times Literary Supplement* 1938). Francis Yerbury, in the *Architectural Review*, approved of her criticism of the British tendency to regard housing as a practice unconnected with the broader issue of planning and made *Europe Rehoused* his ‘book of the month’ (Yerbury 1938). The response to the US edition was equally positive: ‘Miss Denby succeeded in shaking many people in England out of their torpor. We now have the splendid result of her broad knowledge and her stimulating advice’ (Anon 1938: 22).

Not all reviewers were so complimentary. *The Phoenix*, the journal of the Fulham Housing Association, one of the groups with which Denby had collaborated earlier in the decade, noted ‘we always expect to be inspired by Miss Denby, even if we do not always agree with her conclusions’ (*The Phoenix* 1938). The architect (Margaret) Justin Blanco White (who had been involved in the Building Centre’s investigations) acknowledged Denby’s long experience and humanistic approach but expressed disappointment at the lack of architectural analysis (Blanco White 1938: 762). The most dismissive reviews came from the town-planning press. This is not surprising since Denby had made mordant comments about garden cities throughout the book. In its introduction, she spoke of the ‘romantic escapism’ which had led to the movement (28). In her conclusion she argued that garden cities struck ‘at the heart of compact, orderly, intellectually stimulating urban life, sacrificing as they do the positive gains of companionship to the negative ones of segregation, isolation and loneliness’ (273). Wesley Dougill in the *Town Planning Review* politely suggested that she ‘was mistaken to lay the whole blame at the garden city door’ (Dougill 1938: 217). In contrast, F.J. Osborn, writing in *Town and Country Planning*, could not contain his contempt. He described the book as ‘a blend of chatty travel book and a note-book of interesting housing gadgets ...’ and alone focused on what he called ‘her incredible conclusion’, her proposal for high-density cottages. He queried, not unjustifiably, how she had arrived at this model given that she had cited no European equivalents and had championed both the flats in Vienna and the low-density houses built in Sweden. Had Miss Denby, he wondered, gone ‘about Europe with her eyes shut’ (Osborn 1938: 119).

Osborn’s cattiness was, however, untypical and the response to her book was overwhelmingly positive. Little evidence survives to show how well it sold, although pencil jottings on a 1941 memo in the Allen and Unwin archive suggest sales of approximately 950 by that year (AUC 110/3 1941). Once published Denby worked tirelessly to keep her ideas in the public realm. In 1939 she achieved a considerable publicity coup for its ideas when she was commissioned by the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition to design a house – the All-Europe House – based on her recommendations. A reworked version of her 1936 scheme, this too was well received (Anon 1939, Darling 2007). Once war broke out, as soon as autumn 1940 she began to lobby for a

sixpenny version of the book in order that her proposals might inform plans for reconstruction, infinitesimally nascent as they were at this point. Although Allen and Unwin were not unwilling – reporting that the British Institute of Adult Education was ‘keenly interested’ in the book – it took until 1944 for it to happen because of wartime limitations on paper supply (AUC 110/3 1941).

The positive reception for *Europe Rehoused* in 1938 was indicative of a groundswell of progressive opinion away from the ‘bricks and mortar’ approach of inter-war British social housing to, in Silkin’s words, one based on an understanding of housing as a social service. Such a concept would be foregrounded once wartime debates about the place of housing in reconstruction planning began properly, and in such a context Denby’s ideas were to exert some influence (and, it should be noted, those of her women contemporaries in the voluntary sector). She gave evidence to the Dudley Committee, which produced the main housing report on which post-war policy was based, and was also active in the RIBA Housing’s Committee. Both produced broadly similar recommendations which emphasised the need for well-equipped architect-designed housing and advocated that mixed-development should be the primary model for new housing schemes (Bullock 2002).

Given such a shift in policy, Denby might have been expected to have prospered, but her post-war career was something of an anti-climax. This was partly due to a prolonged period of ill-health. It also owed much to a shift in sensibility as the Welfare State became more embedded in national life. In this professionalised and bureaucratised climate, a polymathic figure like Denby, who crossed the boundaries of design, writing and sociology and never succeeded in being less than forthright, found it harder to maintain a foothold. Typically, then, she continued in the vanguard role she had occupied so successfully before the war. Now she focused her energies on a critique of core aspects of Labour’s housing and planning policy, decentralisation and the policy of New Towns, which reflected the influence of her pre-war nemeses, the garden-city boys.

At the end of 1956, the *Architectural Review* published a special issue edited by Ian Nairn called *Counter Attack against Subtopia*. This formed part of its campaign against the ‘Subtopia’ that post-war planning policy had created. This, Nairn argued, had blurred the distinctions between town and country and smoothed away the (vital) differences between them (Nairn 1956: 355). Alongside articles which laid out the principles for a new approach to planning, and various case studies of good and bad landscaping, Denby wrote on ‘Oversprawl’. Picking up the ideas first introduced in 1936 and writ large in *Europe Rehoused*, she again argued that her high-density and centralist approach to planning would prevent such blurring from taking place, and declared: ‘True urban development makes unnecessary both sprawl and overspill (which is only sprawl-gone-somewhere-else)’ (Denby 1956: 430). It was to be her final call to arms.

Denby died in 1965 just before her ideas, and those of the Nairn generation, found increasing resonance as planning policy began to focus on the



demolition of inner-city communities for urban motorways and business districts rather than new housing. One wonders how Denby might have contributed to the campaigns against the building of the Westway, which ploughed through her old territory of north Kensington. Her influence is surely to be found in the more radical side of the Community Architecture movement of the 1970s and the user-led focus of feminist architecture praxis in the 1980s (Matrix 1984). Today, as debates about the desirability or otherwise of the Green Belt continue, as brownfield development of both houses and flats at high densities is part of housing policy but its quality perhaps not always what it might be, a figure like Denby is much needed. Until she appears, it is, surely, time for ‘officials, local councillors, landlords, builders, managers or tenants’ to look again to Denby’s wisdom, and read through the pages of *Europe Rehoused*.

### Notes

- 1 Another comparable text, and author, though there is not space to pursue the comparison here, is *Modern Housing*, written by Catherine Bauer and published in 1934. As Denby would do, Bauer’s concern was to research European housing practices and discern the lessons her native USA could draw from them. And like Denby, Bauer’s overarching goal was to transform understandings of both social housing policy and its design. The 1938 edition of *Europe Rehoused* included adverts for *Modern Housing* in the endpages and on the back of the dustjacket. On Bauer see Oberlander and Newbrun (1999) and Bauer (1934).
- 2 There are several gaps in Denby’s biography, particularly for the period between 1921 and 1923. An intensely private person, she ordered that her personal papers be burned after her death. Such as survived, alongside some business papers, are now housed in the archives at the Octavia Hill Museum, Wisbech. For a more detailed discussion of her life see Darling (2000) and Darling (2005).

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# **Europe Re-housed**

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# **Europe Re-housed**

BY ELIZABETH DENBY

*With a Foreword by The Rt. Hon. The Lord Horder  
G.C.V.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.*

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## **Foreword**

by **The Right Hon. The Lord Horder, G.C.V.O.,  
M.D., F.R.C.P.**

THAT I HAVE BEEN asked to introduce Miss Elizabeth Denby's book by a short foreword must mean that the author regards planning for Health as being a fundamental part of the housing problem. Indeed, that the privilege falls to a doctor, rather than to an architect, or to a politician, seems to suggest that Miss Denby would keep Health foremost in any sound policy with regard to this subject. And if we take the broad, and only satisfactory, view of the health of the people, one which includes their happiness, it is difficult to see for what else any wise statesman or administrator would take the trouble to plan. So I do not propose to apologize for standing godfather to this child of Miss Denby's mind and experience, especially as I feel quite sure that the many readers which I anticipate for the book will not fail to regard it as both sturdy and intelligent.

I have committed myself more than once to the dictum that next to the provision of a sufficiency of the proper food our most essential necessity, and one which is nearly, if not quite, as primitive is shelter. But in just the same way as no one has, until quite recently, thought our feeding needed any planning, but was the result of accident rather than of design, so our housing has been, up till the last few decades, of the most casual sort.

In both of these human essentials we must now change all that. And we must change the erstwhile haphazard, opportunist provision of housing for something that is not only intrinsically better, but that is better in the broader sense that it takes into account, not only that other fundamental element of food, but also the elements (no less important, even if less primitive) of occupation, communal life and what we term the amenities. In short, the housing problem



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can never be a detached study, but can only be solved satisfactorily by constantly keeping in mind the nature and demands of the human factor in relation to the whole of life.

It is considerations like these that should lead us to welcome most heartily Miss Denby's full and careful presentation of the problem of housing as it is seen to-day and as it may, if we will accept her guidance, be solved to-morrow.

It is always a satisfaction, when approaching any question of deep human interest, to know that the guide is both expert in technology and experience and yet gifted with vision. Both of these assets are here. Internal evidence would tell us so even if we did not know it from the author's reputation. The reader can therefore enjoy to the full that sense of peace of mind which comes from the assurance that the guide knows every inch of the way and has, in addition, the power of clear and succinct expression.

The introductory chapters of Miss Denby's book deal, in a most interesting fashion, with the historical aspects of housing, with the national variations of the problem, with the business side of it, and with the present position. We are then given an illuminating insight into the ways in which the problem has been tackled in Sweden, in Holland, in Germany, in Vienna, in Italy and in France. To Russia alone, of the big European nations, does this analytical survey not extend. The accounts are so vivid and so informing that even the technicalities of them are eminently readable.

There emerge from this survey all the various needs, policies and achievements that are required for constructive and long-distance planning in Great Britain—what experiments may be applicable and what adaptation may be necessary to make these fit our special needs, difficulties, traditions and prejudices. How much we have to learn becomes clearly apparent. Whether we are willing to be taught remains to be seen. Miss Denby notes that even in the most progressive Continental housing developments the germinal ideas

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are often of English origin: co-operatives; saving-societies; modern sanitation; garden cities; by-laws and inspection. They are all, as the author says, "English by birth," but "all have been changed . . . and greatly improved by their sojourn abroad, . . . ready to be brought back and used again for our advantage." It is refreshing to read such stout championship of the British origin of ideas that have borne such good fruit through their development abroad.

But we are warned that, though we initiated excellent ideas, we lag behind in actual practice. On the other hand, as Miss Denby reminds us, however the theory may read, there is a limit to the increase of housing accommodation in any country, because land is a constant, and a certain amount of it must be preserved for agriculture—and, it might be added, for the preservation of health. The author notes the interesting fact that the density of the population of Germany and of Italy is little more than half that of Belgium and of England and Wales, so that the two countries which make the most fuss about over-crowding are the ones that still have the most space. And Miss Denby gives Holland, the third most densely populated country, credit for being the only one of the three to realize that her countryside can only be preserved by the careful planning of her urban areas.

When the author comes to sum up the position as regards which nation has got the best value for the money spent on housing (1919 to 1936) the diagram introduced is revealing. Great Britain heads the list as having spent more money per dwelling than any other country. Granted that our problem was greater because of our vast industrial slum towns, our extravagance could only be justified if our houses were better houses, fitter for happy and healthy lives. But, alas! this does not appear to be the case. Most of the money has been spent on land and materials.

It is to Vienna that Miss Denby gives the palm for obtaining the best value for money, if we use the word value in its fullest sense.

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The warmth of the author's enthusiasm in making this award is striking:—

. . . taken in its broadest aspect the writer has little doubt that the Viennese policy not only contributed most to human happiness, but was most clearly and intelligently adapted to the particular problems it had to solve. It was, for instance, first recognized in Vienna that shelter is not enough, that human beings need companionship and recreation, need beauty in environment, need the help that can be given to parents still in slums by taking their children into nursery schools. It was there that education in responsibility was given to the tenants through their "Estate Committees," there that allotments were given to starving families within the borders of the city, there too that smallholdings were first tried with expert technical tuition and with invaluable machinery for co-operative marketing. All this imaginative help to a poverty-stricken people was given at a cost which was so carefully watched at every point that prices were constantly lowered as the programme expanded. Profiteering was permitted neither in land, nor in building materials, nor in money, and though these new estates are only indifferently good in architecture and planning, and though the equipment is extremely simple yet, putting first things first, Viennese housing may still be claimed as the greatest housing achievement of the century.

Achievement in the housing problems in Sweden comes next to Vienna in the author's estimation, and this country has for us the special interest that her resources approximate most nearly to our own. Speaking generally we are assured that if we "have the right vision . . . the right action will follow," and "wherever there is informed control, wherever there really is a plan, the finest and most intelligent work is being done." And the author does not shrink from telling us that it is just in this very respect that the inferiority of the British to Continental housing is most apparent.

I must not stay to deal with the section of the book that touches upon traffic, roads, municipal housekeeping, small public gardens or even upon the dwellings themselves (what kind of houses have

## FOREWORD

been built, if the people like them, if they can afford to live in them).

The concluding chapter, in which the author looks ahead and emphasizes the principles that should govern our policy, is full of wisdom. I yield to the temptation to glean a little of this. We must "realize that although the housing problem is national, solutions must be local. Two things are essential—really informed and sensitive official standards of urban planning and of taste, and adequate protection of the community against land speculation, to ensure that the city itself benefits from any rise in land values due to its replanning policy, and that 'development' is not merely short-sighted exploitation. Cities . . . must exist; and the larger they are the more essential it is that they should be well and interestingly planned. . . . The encouragement of health through exercise and entertainment, access to forests and lakes have been marked in Continental city expansion and redevelopment, and the municipalities have either themselves or through others provided the necessary buildings or facilities. Not 'community centres' with their flavour of patronage and 'social service' which are to-day being sponsored in Great Britain; not 'educational settlements' where people, exhausted after a heavy day's work are supposed to improve their tired minds—but places for exercise, free companionship and family enjoyment. City atmosphere abroad is often easier and sweeter, less strained than here. In Britain, families cannot suitably go together to the normal public house; the kind of café provided abroad is their natural gathering place. Why should anyone try to 'do good' to citizens who happen to be below a certain income level? Is it perhaps a guilty conscience? Once we were known as 'Merry England.' If there *is* a crime against the poor to be expiated it is the theft of gaiety."

"Where have we, one of the greatest nations in the world, gone wrong? What has happened to our wealthy cities to make them so hideous? For British industrial cities are in fact proverbial abroad for their excessive size, their wasted land, their lack of civic dignity and beauty and of opportunities for enjoyment. Beauty with us is too often sacrificed to utilitarian ends and financial gain. Numbers, output, is our blinding passion. Money is spent on schemes which are slums before they leave the drawing board."

"At the root of the trouble may be this—an industrial city is looked

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upon as a place in which everything is subordinated to money-making; only the unfortunate live there. Money is spent in it but not on it. Surely it should express the country's civilization? Possibly, too, we in Great Britain to-day are still dominated by the tradition of the men who said, 'Where there's muck there's money,' and proceeded with vigour and success to make both."

"Good housing is not the absence of slums any more than good health is just the absence of disease. Slum clearance . . . is not merely a question of substituting a clean box for a dirty one. It is not a problem which can be solved by better plumbing."

And, for a final quotation, the conclusion of the whole thing, the concluding admonition of this, to me, most admirable and inspiring book:—

Success will be achieved only when citizens, whatever their income, no longer want to escape from their city at every opportunity; when once again "to live within his own family, free from interruption, contest or intrusion, to have apartments that are clean and warm, adapted to their several purposes and in every respect convenient, is the Englishman's delight": when working men and women all over the country no longer say, "My God, we've got to move," but "Thank God, we're going to move."

HORDER

## Preface

THIS BOOK IS the outcome of eight years' practical experience of slum clearance and rehousing in London, followed by a year's investigation of the low-rented estates which have been built on the Continent since 1918: the work was made possible by a Fellowship generously granted by the Trustees of the late Lord Leverhulme.

I set out primarily to discover how the housing problem was being tackled abroad. What were the national habits of life? How did other countries retain or create the beauty of their towns and countryside? In the industrial areas, had they escaped from the smoke pall, the mean streets, the imprisonment in ugliness? Had they slum areas, and if so how were they dealing with them? How and where did people work and play in relation to their homes? Was the expenditure being justified both from the financial point of view and from that of increase of human happiness?

I actually visited Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Holland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but for the sake of simplicity I have limited the countries described to two winners in the War, two losers and two neutrals.

The book has been written in a form which will, I hope, interest those actively concerned with housing problems, whether as officials, local councillors, landlords, builders, managers, or tenants.

My aim has been to present the idea behind rehousing in these representative countries. In the endeavour to keep the book to a reasonable price I have omitted all but essential statistics and have reduced technical details to a minimum. Statistics are rarely comparable, for instance in Sweden figures are only available for the larger towns, covering only two-fifths of the population; France shows only the rooms which have been exempt from taxation in

## PREFACE

certain districts; and Italian figures are on a different basis again. Fluctuations in the value of money during the past twenty years also make comparisons difficult (see Note on page 19). And censuses were last taken in 1930 or 1931. Maps of cities have been reproduced to the same scale, i.e. four miles to the inch; the plans of flats are also to the same scale, i.e. 16 ft. to one inch, for ease of comparison.

The excellent publication of the International Labour Office, *Housing Policy in Europe*, 1930, is recommended to all who wish to study housing statistics up to that date; the resources of the Office enabled comparative tables to be drawn up with some degree of accuracy, data which must otherwise be extracted from the year books of the various countries, and then adjusted.

It is impossible to mention individually all those who helped me ungrudgingly during my travels, but I should like here to record my gratitude to the Government and local officials, the architects and tenants in the several countries I visited.

ELIZABETH DENBY

*Leverhulme Research Fellow*

LONDON

*November 1937*

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## Note

### EXCHANGE RATES

Value of £ in national currencies

			End of year		
			1920	1930	1936
<b>France</b>	..	(francs)	59.70	123.67	105.14
<b>Holland</b>	..	(guilders)	11.26	12.06	8.97
<b>Italy</b>	..	(lire)	101.50	92.75	93.31
<b>Sweden</b>	..	(kronon)	17.69	18.13	19.39
<b>Austria</b>	..	(schillings)	1,525	34.49	26.50
<b>Germany</b>	..	(marks)	258	20.39	12.20

*“Where there is no vision, the people perish”*

## **1. Introduction**

### **the housing problem in Europe before and after the War**

THE HOUSING QUESTION is not new, and though aggravated by the War, is not the result of it. New houses had long been urgently needed, for the shortage of dwellings for families with small incomes had been persistently increasing throughout the nineteenth century in every country in Europe. By 1919 the shortage was too obvious to be ignored, as no houses had been built during the four years of the War, years during which people had been crowding into towns for work or for safety, while the existing accommodation had been reduced by those houses which had been turned into offices and workshops.

But why, one may ask, were there not enough dwellings, since there were thousands of families willing to rent them? Why should their supply be different from that of food and clothing which, in response to demand, is produced of good quality at competitive prices?

Such questions must be answered, however briefly, and some description of national conditions sketched in as a background, if one is to understand the huge building schemes undertaken all over Europe since the War, and be able to assess the achievement of each country at something approaching its true value.

The modern housing problem is rooted in the Industrial Revolution and the phenomenal increase of populations during the nineteenth century. To look at the census figures of the leading European countries between 1830 and 1936 is to see how easy it was to be taken unawares, how difficult it must have been to foresee the enormous number of new houses required, and to build them quickly enough when the need was realized. For the population

## INTRODUCTION

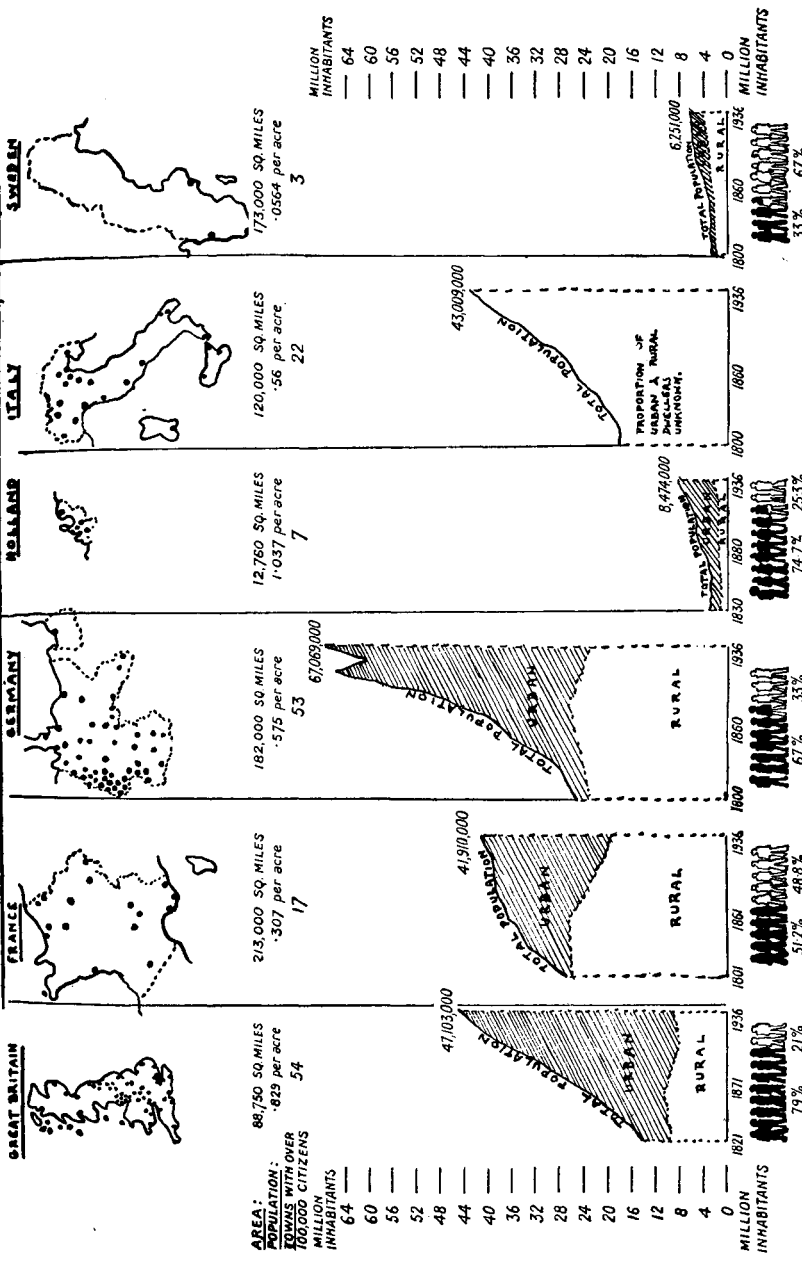
increased very rapidly in the countries that became industrialized, that is to say, when machinery was widely used, and this increase was confined to the towns. Thus in Britain between 1821 and 1936, while the *country* dwellers decreased from ten to nine and a half millions, the *town* dwellers increased from four to thirty-seven millions. In Germany while the *country* population dwindled from twenty-three millions in 1801 to nineteen millions in 1936, the *town* population rose from two to forty-eight millions.

Upon the introduction of steam-driven machinery working on a large scale, new factories were built on coal and iron fields, where they became the nucleus of the new manufacturing towns and, as the workpeople had in those days to live within walking distance of their work, the mines and factories were inevitably closely surrounded by the workers' dwellings.

Sweden was an exception to such development, for there industrialization was not introduced until after the discovery of electricity, which for the first time brought power to industry instead of requiring industry to congregate at the source of power. This fortunate circumstance probably explains why their proportion of country and town dwellers remained constant, two million countrymen to one million townsmen in 1800, and four million countrymen to two million townsmen in 1936. The further fact that the population in nineteenth-century Sweden increased less rapidly than in any other industrialized country may also possibly be due to this non-centralization. The relationship between urban industrial development and population increase merits serious and expert consideration.

Whatever the reason for the multiplication of populations throughout Europe, greater prosperity, a higher birth-rate, or a lower death-rate among young persons due to better sanitation and public health services, the housing problem is born of this unexpected

**SHOWING NUMBERS LIVING IN TOWNS AND IN THE COUNTRY, 1800-1936**



*Out of every 10 persons, the black ones live in towns and the white ones in the country.*



## INTRODUCTION

increase and the rapid growth of industrial cities that took place in the nineteenth century. Look at these figures. By 1931 more than four-fifths of the total population in Great Britain lived in cities; in Holland three-quarters; in Germany two-thirds; even in France, that stronghold of the smallholder, over half the population were town-dwellers.

It is not surprising that this vast problem found the municipal authorities inexperienced and unprepared. With new towns springing up and old ones doubling and trebling in a generation, the public authorities had more than enough to do to increase the existing public services, such as water-supply, sanitation, transport and police, without also undertaking the provision of cheap housing. Besides, it was assumed that the demand for dwellings would be satisfied by private enterprise in the same way as other personal and individual needs but, as the demand for new homes was mostly from workers whose earnings were very low, it was inevitable that the supply should fail to keep pace with the great and ever-increasing need, and that standards of accommodation should deteriorate. For the industrial revolution had dislocated agriculture as well as industry, thousands of men and women had been driven to the mills and mines as their only available livelihood, and the demand for cheap "hands" was supplied by every authority which had vagrants or children at its disposal. The people working the machines were therefore often those who were least able to protect themselves and enforce their demands for decent living and working conditions; they formed the majority of the inhabitants in the new industrial towns throughout Europe.

A contributory cause of bad housing conditions was that the principles which should govern town planning were not really understood and the standards to which building should conform, as set by law, were not drawn up in relation either to national needs or to the problems of the new population.

## INTRODUCTION

This outline of events leading up to our twentieth-century problem—the rapid increase of urban populations, their segregation in towns or districts primarily planned for industry instead of for happy family life, the poverty of the majority of the workers and the degrading conditions under which they worked and lived—will give some idea of its complexity.

The problems of civic planning that faced public authorities in England, however, differed markedly from those of the other European countries. For on the Continent, where wars and invasions had been frequent up to and beyond the middle of the century, defences (high walls or, as in Holland, water) were still important and had to be kept in working order. Necessarily such towns were compactly planned, with narrow streets and houses several storeys high. As the population increased, the houses had to be built higher and packed more closely within the restricting city walls. Every available building site was overcrowded with dwellings, and the dwellings themselves were overcrowded with people, the normal home in a city being a flat. Citizens could only avoid these cramped quarters by risking their lives and property and living outside the walls. But although site overcrowding was intense in such towns, civic life was generally well regulated, and the country was sharply defined and accessible to every citizen, beginning as it did immediately outside the walls.

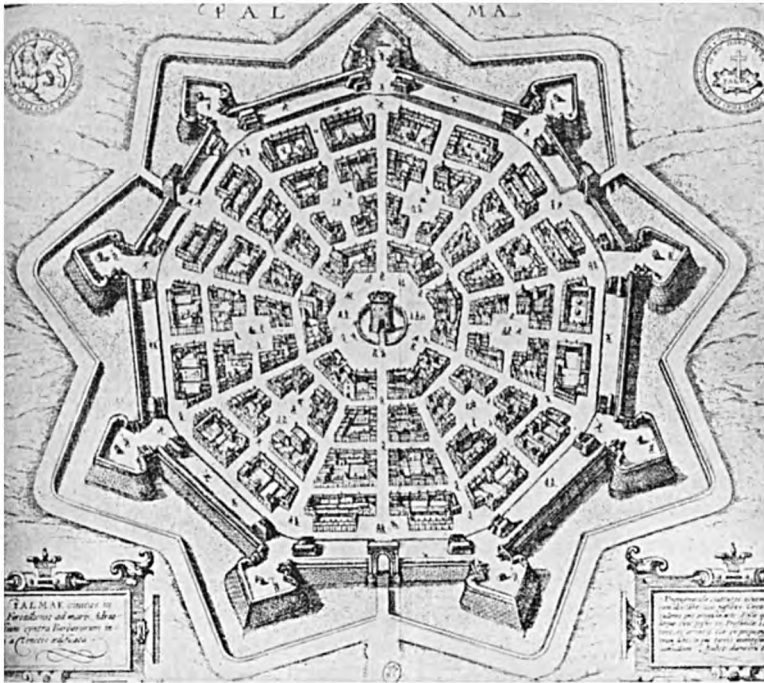
In the British Isles, Scotland alone, with its French connections, was in the Continental stream, and tenement flats were built in the great Scottish cities at a time when they were unknown in England. For in England, free for three hundred years from warfare, the towns had been able to spread without fear or hindrance, and houses with gardens, cottages with gardens, free and comparatively wasteful use of city land was the common habit of urban living. Buildings could be put up without any of the second thoughts, any of the economy in

## INTRODUCTION

layout which would have been essential if towns had been afraid of attack. But as the population grew the towns sprawled out, and it became increasingly difficult for the poorer citizens to reach or know the countryside.

By 1870, when the housing shortage was becoming acute, the local authorities of industrial towns in every country were unfortunately intoxicated by industrial success, preoccupied with urgent civic questions of public health and lacking in imagination. They failed to recognize the magnitude of their responsibility and of the opportunity they had for housing their working-class citizens in new estates worthy of the growing cities. Instead of creating planned residential areas suited to the revolutionized conditions of industrial life, the new housing estates were mainly built in haphazard extensions of the traditional method of urban housing. Thus in Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Copenhagen and all the other great Continental cities, blocks of flats were built higher and higher and closer and closer together, one of the most popular designs being constructed six or seven storeys high, with three, four and even five courtyards leading from each other, served by one entrance from the street, estates being mainly composed of one- or two-roomed dwellings off long, dark, interior corridors. Buildings often covered 90 per cent of their sites, and light, air and space in such homes became unattainable luxuries for the mass of the poorer citizens.

In England the same spirit prevailed and the same quality of working-class housing was built. Directed by a different tradition our factory workers were housed in cottages instead of tenements, but the cottages were built nearer and nearer together, their gardens gone, trees gone, all beauty gone, built back-to-back, or in *culs-de-sac*, massed in dreary regiments over square miles of countryside, the inhabitants living under a pall of smoke that came from their own chimneys and the chimneys of the factories they served.



*The fortified town of the Renaissance becomes—*



*the industrial city, developed in tenements*

PLATE I



*The English market town becomes—*



*the industrial city surrounded by acres of cottages*

PLATE 2

## INTRODUCTION

Vertical slums abroad, horizontal slums in England. Overcrowding both of land and people. In neither case were the dwellings based on human needs, and the people were cut off from the living tradition of urban as of rural life. For in all industrialized countries the growth of factory towns got completely out of control, perhaps most in England where industrialization was first and most rapid, and the dwellings built in response to urgent and unremitting industrial demand became the slum areas which are causing so much trouble and expense to clear to-day.

Meanwhile, too, the overcrowded cores of industrialized towns went rotten. Fine houses built by prosperous citizens were spoilt by the encroachment of industry and poorer buildings. The owners moved to more spacious and healthy areas farther out, while their houses became shelters for a family on each floor, sometimes a family in each room, sometimes for more even than that, without any structural alterations being made to meet the changed conditions. Overcrowding and the indiscriminate siting of new industries combined to add to the complications of the housing problem.

In addition to difficulties caused by unplanned urban housing, there was a real sociological problem. A new class of landless men had been created, dependent on the machine, precariously employed, isolated from the normal simple enjoyments of life and of healthy recreation, unable to supplement their livelihood from smallholdings, easily starveable, nervously suggestible, congested in blocks of airless tenement barracks on the Continent, marooned in smoke-invested cities in England. The Continental and the English problems were no different in essentials, only in degree, and as the difficulty of living in industrial communities increases in direct proportion to the size of the community, a more complex organization of the cities as well as the radical simplification of life was clearly necessary.

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This is all known too well to bear further repetition. Besides, the public conscience had by 1890 begun to stir uneasily, and by 1914 a very lively interest was being taken in housing matters. The first revulsion from industrialization had come from England, which was understandable because there the ugliness was greatest, and experiments were being made in "garden cities" based on romantic escapism, a longing to fly from the machine and return from the ugliness of an industrial city to a village paradise. The idea had been seized upon with ardour on the Continent and in 1901 Holland led the way by passing a Town-planning Act requiring each town of 10,000 persons and over to see that it had enough cheap houses, and to prepare its own scheme for ordered growth.

But in each country each Government had to find its own cure. The problem fell naturally into three parts, first how to catch up the arrears caused by a century's underbuilding; then how to prevent a recurrence of the shortage by organizing a regular supply of new dwellings sufficient to house the annual increase of population; lastly how to demolish and re-plan the worn-out or unhealthy parts of cities (in particular those parts which had been built for the workers during the nineteenth century) in accordance with modern needs, without also destroying historically or aesthetically valuable buildings which were in those areas.

The first part of this programme was obviously by far the biggest and most difficult, in fact no country is yet in the proud position of needing to supply only its annual housing requirements and of having eliminated its slum areas.

When the difficulties are realized, it is perhaps surprising that so many good housing estates are in existence throughout Europe, that such ingenuity and resource have been displayed, that so few irreparable mistakes have been made. For the intervention of the War intensified the housing problem not only by the interruption of all

## INTRODUCTION

building for four years, but by increasing the cost of materials, labour, land and money when the War was over. Is it surprising that, in 1918, low-cost housing was regarded as the concern of Governments, and not of private individuals?

It was in an atmosphere of uncertainty and change, of mingled despair and hope that the first serious European experiments were made to deal on a large scale with the housing of the lower-paid workers. The total cumulative post-War building output (1919 to 1936) has been enormous; notable experiments have been made and notable results achieved in satisfying the incipient demand for healthier conditions, greater convenience and pleasure in the environment of townspeople. The similarity of the general problem, its variations, the methods adopted by certain typical countries in their attempts to solve it are of absorbing interest, and may perhaps prove to be of some practical value to this country in its present vigorous housing campaign.



## **2. National Variations of the Housing Problem**

IN ANY SERIOUS STUDY of housing needs and building policy in Europe, it is obviously impossible to assess achievements correctly unless national and local variations have also been taken into account.

For the efforts made by each Government after the War to meet the demand for low-rented dwellings, were necessarily and profoundly modified by local laws and habits, political and religious needs, customs and prejudices whose influence was so strong that a policy which was successful in one country might well have been unsuitable and even harmful in another.

Questions like these had to be considered:

What was the financial and industrial position of the country? Had it been a neutral, a victorious or a defeated nation? Was its credit good? Had it to import the raw or manufactured materials required for building? Had a legacy of squalid and overcrowded towns been handed down from the prosperous days of industrial development, or had the cities retained form and design in their growth? What proportion of the people lived in cities?

What was the growth and movement of the population? Was it increasing, stationary or decreasing? Was it hurrying into the towns or drifting back to the country? Was it starving or prospering? And what was the official policy of Church and State towards the birth-rate?

What kind of houses were demanded and what was the national way of living? What were the income levels? What the rents? What size of dwelling was most needed? What were the tenants' occupations? What standards of accommodation and equipment were demanded? What was the climate—temperate, or with extremes of heat or cold?

## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

What building machinery was available? Who should build? Municipalities? Co-operative societies? Public utility societies? or Private enterprise? Which were the most efficient? Which most willing to undertake the work? How much official help would be needed in money or in guidance?

What were the existing laws for town-planning and land tenure, and what amendments were required? Was there a tradition of municipal pride, or of drift and squalor? What could be afforded in the way of new building? Was it better to indulge in a little "face-lifting" within the city and to concentrate on building new towns, new suburbs or new estates outside—or was it economic to rebuild the central areas? Who owned the city land—the city itself, or private persons? Should the land required be confiscated or paid for, and on what basis of valuation?

Of these considerations, the growth of population was perhaps the most fundamentally important, because an intelligent anticipation of housing needs could only be based on the rate of increase and the probable size of the families who would require the new homes.

For some forty years before the War the birth-rate had been falling slowly but steadily throughout Europe, particularly in those industrialized countries where the rate had formerly been highest.\* The average number of children in a family was, of course, decreasing too, but this was misleading for, though smaller, there were actually more families and, as housing needs are by family units and not by persons, this change of grouping made the shortage of dwellings in countries where the birth-rate was decreasing, greater than was realized by the statisticians for some years.

The shortage of low-rented dwellings was obviously likely to be greatest in countries whose populations had increased fastest in the

\* See Table on page 32.

## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

	Birth-rate per 1,000 inhabitants				Death-rate per 1,000 inhabitants				Infantile mortality per 1,000 live births				Rate of increase per 1,000 inhabitants	
	1900	1914	1920	1936	1900	1914	1920	1936	1900	1914	1920	1936	1900	1936
	Sweden .. ..	27.0	22.9	23.6	14.2	16.8	13.8	13.3	12.0	98	73	63	43	10.2
Holland .. ..	31.6	28.3	28.6	20.1	17.9	12.4	12.3	8.7	155	95	73	39	13.7	11.4
Germany .. ..	35.6	26.8	25.9	19.0	22.1	19.0	15.1	11.8	226	164	131	66	13.5	7.2
Vienna .. ..	32.4	16.9	16.1	5.5	20.9	15.5	15.1	12.6	—	139	137	64	11.5	— 7.1
Italy .. ..	33.0	31.0	31.8	22.4	23.8	17.9	18.7	13.7	173	130	127	100	9.2	8.7
France .. ..	21.4	18.8	21.4	15.0	21.9	17.7	17.2	15.3	161	113	99	67	— 0.5	— 0.3
England and Wales	28.7	23.8	25.5	14.8	18.2	14.0	12.4	12.1	154	105	80	59	10.5	2.7

*Epidemiological Reports, Health Section, League of Nations, December 1937.*

## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

preceding century, and the organization of a regular annual output of new dwellings was a much more serious problem in Germany, Italy, Holland and Britain than it was in Sweden or France. In Holland and Germany, however, heavy arrears had never been allowed to accumulate, and though their cities had sometimes been too compact, they were built to a definite plan. New estates could therefore be developed on the outskirts and yet be near the centre of the town and within easy reach of industrial areas. Another factor simplifying rational housing development was that many of the Dutch and German municipalities owned the land on which their cities were built. Not only did this check or wipe out the speculation in land considered "ripe for development" from which we in Great Britain suffer, but suitable areas were available for immediate development by public-spirited authorities.

If, however, these new estates built to house hundreds or even thousands of families were to become normally constituted parts of a town and satisfy more than the minimum need of shelter, family life and human companionship had also to be encouraged by incorporating maternity centres, crèches, kindergartens, schools, playgrounds, meeting-rooms, gardens and allotments, and so on. They are, of course, expensive to provide, and yet they are most necessary where there are many children.\* It was, curiously enough, in countries with the lowest annual increase of population that these needs were first recognized and provided for; in Vienna immediately after the War, and nowadays in the co-operative estates in Sweden and in the new towns round Paris.

Another difficulty and expense in housing large families with low incomes is that they naturally need large dwellings; but the larger the dwelling the greater the cost of building it, and the bigger and younger the family the less rent it can afford. So the Governments of these four great countries, Britain, Holland, Italy and Germany,

\* See Table on page 34.

## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

*Composition of populations in age groups, showing the proportion of young to old persons in different countries.*

Country	Date	Ages							
		Males				Females			
		0-14	15-44	45-64	65 and over	0-14	15-44	45-64	65 and over
Italy ..	1931	30.93 %	45.04 %	16.89 %	7.14 %	28.60 %	46.30 %	17.64 %	7.46 %
Austria ..	1934	24.94 %	46.58 %	21.08 %	7.40 %	22.54 %	46.10 %	22.94 %	8.42 %
France ..	1931	24.07 %	45.99 %	21.65 %	8.29 %	21.91 %	44.64 %	23.12 %	10.33 %
Germany ..	1933	25.28 %	47.81 %	20.29 %	6.62 %	23.11 %	48.06 %	21.29 %	7.54 %
England and Wales	1931	25.13 %	46.95 %	21.26 %	6.66 %	22.63 %	47.19 %	22.06 %	8.12 %
Holland ..	1930	31.41 %	45.76 %	16.89 %	5.94 %	29.89 %	46.32 %	17.33 %	6.46 %
Sweden ..	1930	25.69 %	47.52 %	18.42 %	8.37 %	23.99 %	46.76 %	19.28 %	9.97 %

*Annuario Statistico Italiano, 1937.*

## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

with their urgent need for new, inexpensive, family, housing estates, had to decide whether to build dwellings of a size required by these large families, equalizing the cost with those of more normal dimensions by economies in equipment, finish or quality; or whether to reduce rents by subsidizing those families who needed space but could not afford to pay for it; or whether to build small enough dwellings for big families to afford them, and permit those families to overcrowd them.

Countries of quick growth and with still increasing populations had therefore to overtake the shortage of dwellings by expanding their towns, to provide for family life in the new estates, to organize an annual building programme sufficient to house the annual increase of families, and in addition to reconstruct the worn-out and unhealthy parts of their towns.

In countries of slow growth and with stationary or declining numbers, such as France and Sweden, the question was simplified to one of satisfactorily housing the small or childless families who predominated in the national life, and of encouraging the large families they wanted by building especially for them at low rents. And because these countries were freed from the need of undertaking a large annual building programme it was possible for them to raise the general standard of housing accommodation by replanning and rebuilding their worn-out or unhealthy areas and dwellings.

Disconnected though it may seem, the solution of housing problems is greatly influenced by climatic conditions. Northern builders are handicapped by conditions quite outside their control, they must instal expensive equipment for heating and for washing, which can be ignored in the South where tenants can warm themselves in the sun, can bathe in lake and stream, can wash and dry their linen in the open, except for a negligible part of the year. What a simplification! In the North crowding is cosy: families huddle

## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

together for warmth, unless some cheap and efficient system can be installed for heating them and their dwellings. It is possible a system of inexpensive central heating would do more to solve Sweden's main problem—that of voluntary overcrowding—than any amount of Government propaganda intended to raise housing standards.\*

Yet against savings in equipment in warmer climates must be set the larger superficial area essential for each dwelling if the family is not to be stifled in summer, the care which must be taken to keep food from going bad, the danger from epidemics by faulty sanitation.

Climate, too, must have considerable influence on layout and construction. Sunlight, essential in the North, must be guarded against in the South, where dwellings must be sited to cast shadows and windows placed to keep out sun—an aim diametrically opposite to that which should obtain in Great Britain. And heavy falls of snow need a different pitch and type of roof to bear or shift the weight.

Habits, too, are affected. Open-air life, swimming pools, boulevards, cafés, come naturally to the Southerner, he knows by instinct lessons which are only beginning to be relearnt here—lessons of planning for fun as well as for shelter, of the short-sightedness of considering “housing” and rehousing as elements which can be isolated from other normal human needs and activities.

What was the quality of the people who most needed new homes? The difference in standards between the lowest-income families in different countries was of course considerable, but tastes and customs in Europe among working people at the end of the War were still very simple; the delights of an efficient American plumbing system were as yet almost unknown. In general it was usual in towns for the different services, water, gas and electricity, to be brought to the

\* In 1936 the average Swedish family was 3·2 persons, yet 39 per cent of all dwellings built in that year consisted of one- or two-roomed apartments. It is still rare, even among the professional classes, to find a sitting-room which does not also contain a bed.

## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

dwelling, and for the tenant himself to provide the equipment he preferred or could afford. This has been superseded in Scandinavian countries and in the new towns round Paris by the installation of standardized equipment, provided cheaply in large quantities, but it is still customary in other European countries for the tenant to bring his heating and cooking equipment with him, only the flue being provided in living-rooms and kitchen. Thus in a block of flats in Italy, one may see a very poor family using oil for lighting and charcoal for cooking and heating; next door a better-off tenant may have connected the electricity for lighting but use a coke cooking stove, another may use gas for cooking and a charcoal fire for heating, another may instal a geyser, and so on.

Baths were almost non-existent before 1914. The traditional sociable weekly baths taken by Scandinavian families on Saturdays in special steam rooms somewhat on the Turkish pattern, were established so firmly in popular favour that a bath in each dwelling was unnecessary and extravagant; it is still considered remarkable in Finland. In many countries the inclusion of a bathroom still means in fact a simple shower-bath, which is popular among working people as taking less hot water and less time than the lounge-bath now common in Great Britain.

The income of those families who wanted dwellings, and their personal standards of cleanliness, were important if secondary matters for the housing authorities. The candidates for new homes ranged from the shack-dwellers outside Paris, Rome, Milan or any great city (many of them verminous and unused to the most elementary conveniences of modern life) to the neat, elegant, intelligent inhabitants of the barrack-tenement slums of Vienna. Were the poorest or "undesirable" families to be ignored, educated, penalized or simply rehoused, trusting to a better environment to influence a good response? Holland and Italy were so shocked by the low standards of some of the people they were called on to rehouse



## NATIONAL VARIATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

that they took definite educational steps to reform them, while in Vienna the dirty were put into reconditioned old houses whose inhabitants had moved to new dwellings. Such segregation was, however, unnecessary in countries like Sweden, where it would have been impossible even to consider "zoning" their sophisticated democratic citizens, with their roughly equal incomes, their education free to and used by all, and their consequent lack of "class feeling." It is interesting to note that in Scandinavia the demand for mass-produced goods was effective financially for some 80 per cent of all families.\* They could demand and get reasonably priced, because standardized, products of a very high level of efficiency and beauty, and for this among other reasons, their housing policy is well worth most careful inspection.

One thing all nations had more or less consciously in common. Throughout Europe the average workman and his family were heartily tired of living in a city rookery, divorced from the land and natural things. Already before the War, the "garden city" theory was being adapted to Continental needs and habits; already the populace were putting new values on space, light, air, sun, recreation and communal life. After the horrors of war this longing became too strong to be denied, conditions which had been tolerated before became no longer bearable, and the demand for a new and better way of living became irresistible. The problem of providing dwellings within the means of the people who needed them most became also a question of raising standards of urban planning, of equipment, of the amenities of life above anything which had been known in the past.

\* In Denmark about 99 per cent of the people have salaries between 3 and 9,000 kr. (£150 to £450) per annum. The chief architect's salary is 12,000 kr. (£600) and the Prime Minister's 15,000 kr. (£750). Dwellings and rents need therefore vary very little.

### **3. The Business Side of Housing**

finance. the building agencies. town-development

THE NEED WAS URGENT in 1918 for a large number of new inexpensive dwellings. How were they to be produced? Something had to be done, and done quickly. But money, materials and labour were scarce and very expensive, while the construction of new commercial buildings and other profitable works, which had been delayed for four years, were naturally considered by the building trade to be much more important than working-class housing schemes which could only be expected to bring a comparatively low return on the capital invested in them.

It was, in fact, soon clear that the responsibility for initiating a housing programme and seeing that it was carried out could only be undertaken in each country by the Government itself, since a public body could alone afford to undertake the responsibility for unremunerative housing schemes on a big scale within the means of the lower-paid workers. Governments therefore had to step in, some eagerly, some with extreme reluctance. Action fell into three parts: to finance the buildings, to see they were built and, in addition, to safeguard the quality of the dwellings, their rents, and the relation between the new estates and the existing town.

Although each Government initially took roughly the same line, divergencies soon appeared, tactics were modified according to the obstacles, and experiments were made on increasingly individual lines and with varying success.

Nations neutral in the War had an obvious financial advantage over the rest of Europe. But whatever the difference in degree, certain difficulties were shared by all, notably the high and fluctuating cost of money which, being one of the most expensive elements in building, was one of the greatest obstacles in each country to the construction of cheap dwellings.

## THE BUSINESS SIDE OF HOUSING

Though financial policies subsequently differed widely, each Government began precisely the same: first, the rents of existing working-class dwellings were restricted to a stipulated maximum increase over 1914 rents, in order to prevent profiteering; next, to stimulate new building, a direct subsidy was granted for dwellings built in conformity with certain requirements as to size, quality and the rent which could be charged.

These two steps may almost be regarded as automatic, intended to give the Governments time to look round and devise some more inexpensive way of stimulating a suitable housing programme. For although direct subsidy was obviously the easiest way of encouraging building, it was also obviously the most expensive, as builders required a very large inducement to tempt them from other orders. The cost was in fact so great that few countries could afford for long to get such poor value for the public money they were spending. It is interesting to find that Britain alone has kept unswervingly to this policy of subsidization, the amount granted per dwelling varying from time to time, being absorbed for some years by the building and allied trades, and more recently by the owners of land. This consistency in British rehousing finance for the past eighteen years is in sharp contrast to the more supple and economical measures adopted in other countries.

For instance, a special tax based on existing accommodation and earmarked for new housing was soon levied in Vienna, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. The proceeds were lent at a low rate of interest to approved societies for the construction of dwellings conforming to stipulated minimum requirements, and although only a proportion of the building capital needed could be obtained from this fund, it helped to offset the particularly high interest charges, sometimes as high as 12 per cent, which had to be paid on the balance of the money required.

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But this special tax, too, was only a temporary expedient, except in Vienna. Here all new housing was done by the municipality itself and financed from the annual income produced by this house-rent tax, and as new dwellings were taxed as soon as they were occupied, the revenue increased automatically with the building programme. The low rents charged in these Viennese municipal estates are largely due to the fact that they were financed out of income which carried no interest charges.

The Swedish, Dutch, German and French Governments soon decided that the most constructive stimulus they could give to inexpensive housing at the least cost to the taxpayers, was to *i s s u e* *o r* *g u a r a n t e e* *l o a n s* to approved societies at especially low rates of interest. These loans therefore varied both in amount and in interest charges, according to the state of the national finances. It was this interdependence of housing output and Government resources which, after the slump of 1931, ultimately slackened even the Dutch municipal building programme: it was the realization of this weakness which caused the Scandinavian countries to shift as soon as possible the responsibility for financing low-rented housing schemes from the Government on to the people who required the dwellings, and who had organized themselves into co-operative building societies. These societies, in return for preferential treatment in land and other commodities, were by 1929 responsible both for contributing the bulk of the capital required for new building, and for seeing that it was properly spent.

Co-operative housing organization, which depends of course on the prosperity, security and democracy of the people, probably constitutes the soundest basis yet devised for financing the supply of new dwellings—provided that, as in Sweden, the schemes are controlled by intelligent town-planning regulations, and that the level of education and taste among the co-operators is reasonably high.

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Where, on the other hand, there is great poverty or insecurity among the people, the Viennese method of taxing all dwellings to provide the capital for building new ones seems the most equitable and economical arrangement, provided again that expenditure and planning are controlled by competent and educated people.

During the first experimental years after 1918, many other ways were tried of encouraging the building of inexpensive dwellings, ways less direct than loans of cheap money and less effective in the long run. The most popular indirect help was to exempt new buildings from taxation for a period of years. But this kind of relief, which was particularly favoured in France and Italy, was not enough to stimulate builders to any great response: the number of new dwellings built in Italy is probably due less to this negative help than to the positive assistance given by municipalities to approved utility societies (Istituti di Casa Popolari) in the form of cheap land and the construction of free roads and other services in the new estates.

The importance of land for housing was recognized in every country. Money to build with, land to build on. These were the two main needs, and much of the success of the housing efforts of Holland, Germany and Austria was due to the existence of suitable inexpensive urban land on which the new estates could be built. In those countries it was usual for the municipalities themselves to own land and use it to the public advantage. The crippling effect on rehousing of speculation in urban land can be seen very clearly in France where city land was mainly in private hands.

In judging the relative failure or success of a housing policy, the cost as well as the number and quality of the dwellings should be considered. Were they in fact available for the lower-paid families for whom they were intended? Were the costs as low as they might be?

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Were the rents in the right relation to wages and the cost of living? These questions are important, for the gap between the rents which the workers could afford and those charged on the basis of inflated or even normal prices of land, money and materials was the amount which had to be filled by some form of subsidy or public help. Both taxpayers and rentpayers expected, quite rightly, that these costs should not be unreasonably high and, if they were, that attempts should be made to reduce them. It is curious to see that though Governments were considered responsible for arranging the supply of low-rented dwellings, were expected to provide cheap money and cheap land, the cost of materials was illogically excluded from more than desultory control, although indirect but fairly effective checks were of course exercised through research into building technique. For instance, in Vienna, in Germany, in Sweden, and more recently in the Building Department of the Seine (Paris) interesting and valuable results have been obtained by experiment in improvements in the layout of estates, into cheapening and strengthening building materials and, by mass-production, into raising the quality and lowering the cost of the various elements required in making a home.

Next to cheap capital, land and materials came the choice of building agency. Governments, having undertaken the responsibility for deciding quality and cost, had also to decide who should be employed to do the building and on what terms. The agency which was permitted or encouraged to undertake low-cost housing might at first appear philanthropic but, in the long run, it gained such unique experience in estate-planning and development, in construction and administration, as to be equivalent to a training in a new profession.

For many years after the War, private enterprise was out of the question—too depressed in the defeated countries, too

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busy in the neutral and victorious ones. Yet France and Britain both hankered after it and wasted much energy for many years in flogging this expensive and most unwilling horse. Financiers and private builders were in fact definitely uninterested in the cheaper end of housing until the slump of 1931, when the drop in prices and the saturation of the "better-class" demand led them to turn to the working-class market. Although in most countries by far the greatest number of dwellings have been erected by private enterprise (see diagram, page 251), these dwellings were built for persons who could afford to buy their own homes, and only show how relatively few were constructed for the lowest-paid workers by other agencies. Land, money and materials were at first really too expensive for Governments to do much for the poorest families, and for several years after the War their prestige and resource were fully taxed to get a few thousand low-rented dwellings up and into occupation at a price which now appears fantastically high.

Except in emergency, it was rare for **G o v e r n m e n t s** themselves to do the actual building. In Italy, Germany and France, however, dwellings were put up for key officials in areas where no accommodation at all was available, principally for railway and postal employees, while in Czechoslovakia the proceeds of a government lottery, now alluded to somewhat shamefacedly, financed the building of homes for a number of civil servants.

**P r i v a t e e m p l o y e r s**, too, experimented from time to time in housing their workers, either because there was a shortage of accommodation near the factory or as a special social experiment. Interesting estates of this kind were built at Siemensstadt outside Berlin, for railway workers in France, and, before the War, at Port Sunlight and Bournville in England: they were, however, isolated experiments limited to special sections of the population, and had little effect on the general housing situation.

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Municipalities were the obvious channel for spending public money and supplying local needs. But they too were generally unwilling to launch out into direct building unless no other agency could be found to carry out the work. In every country they have in fact been foremost in inspiring housing reform and giving help both in money and land to the chosen contractors, but only in Britain, in Vienna, and in isolated French towns, has much of the actual construction of dwellings for the poorer citizens been carried out by the municipalities themselves. Their most important contributions to housing have been the control of civic development to ensure that growth and change is for the advantage of all the citizens and not just one section of them; help with suitable inexpensive land; and guaranteeing loans for the actual building operations.

The national housing shortage gave their chance to two kinds of building society which, before 1914, had been working on a small and amateur scale—the public utility housing societies and the co-operative building societies. Semi-philanthropic building on a public utility basis had long been recognized in every country as part of the machinery by which low-rented dwellings could be built, but only in Italy and in Holland has a substantial part of the post-War work been done by them. In both countries these societies are so strictly controlled by the municipalities that in practice, though not in theory, they are equivalent to municipal building societies. State control over philanthropic effort in every country is generally stringent, particularly with regard to the interest which may be paid on the capital invested, but such societies are undemocratic, the tenants are rarely represented on the Board nor have they any say either in the type of dwelling which shall be built or in the details of management.\*

\* In England charitable people were among the first to recognize the slum problem in the nineteenth century. Led by the Prince Consort, whose knowledge of urban working-class housing was based on Berlin and other tenement



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More interesting and more democratic are the co-operative building societies which, inspired originally by the English consumers' societies, have flourished on the Continent. The movement was warmly encouraged for, under proper safeguards, it has exceptional financial independence and stability. A substantial part of the building costs can be raised from members of the society who are themselves to inhabit the dwellings, and outside help is only needed in raising the balance of the capital at a reasonably low rate of interest, or in getting suitable land at a reasonable price. Co-operative building societies are formed in several ways, either by persons of the same occupation, or by those who wish to live in a certain district, or who wish to pay rents within a certain range. Tenants are, of course, directly interested not only in the general planning of the estate and the quality of the structure, but also in the annual expenditure on maintenance and repairs; outgoings are closely watched, and careless tenants dealt with by their co-investors. This source of building has reached its most vigorous development in the Scandinavian countries, though it is also flourishing in Czechoslovakia.

Throughout the preceding outline allusions have been made to the vital importance of new dwellings taking their place in an orderly plan for the whole town or district. Control over the growth of towns, control which is also discriminating, intelligent and imaginative is indeed the key to a proper solution of the housing problem. In Holland and Sweden, with few accumulations of central slum dwellings, straightforward suburban extension was possible on satisfactory lines. In Germany, France and Vienna, on the other hand, the soundly constructed blocks of tenements which had been

cities, rehousing in the London area was for the first time carried out in blocks of flats, surrounded by concrete or asphalt "playgrounds." Recognition of the slum problem was good, but the solution was bad. It is interesting to speculate on the line which housing reform might have taken if rehousing in the 'eighties had followed old Bermondsey instead of old Berlin tradition.

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built in central areas at so high a density that they had become slums should have been thinned or cleared; but this was prohibitively expensive and these countries had to be content with building new suburbs. The contrast between the Viennese and German estates, which were constructed to a plan of development for the cities, and the uncontrolled French estates is very instructive. The clearance of slum areas was complicated in Italy by the extraordinary beauty and interest of many of the buildings in those areas; wholesale clearance was impossible to people of such historic and aesthetic sensibility, and extremely interesting regeneration schemes have been initiated throughout the country, in conjunction with the creation of new suburban areas on specifically prepared town plans.

In the following chapters the financial, the housing and the town-planning policy of six European countries are given in some detail, emphasis being laid on those things of particular interest to British people with some experience of our own low-rented housing estates.

## 4. Sweden

PEACEFUL, MERRY, HOSPITABLE SWEDEN, with its wooded shores, quiet lakes, houses gay with paint and flowers; well-arranged, clean and prosperous towns; summer colonies on the islands; fleets of little boats darting about the waterways; friendliness, security, ease, and dignity of life—all combining to create an atmosphere of happiness which is not dispelled, however often acquaintance is renewed. Democratic, with no great extremes of riches or poverty to distress the mind; alive, alert, eager, full of fun, its inhabitants seem to be well on the way to attaining the full life.

The total population of Sweden at the end of 1936 was 6,251,000 people, or two millions less than the population of Greater London; only three cities, Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö, contained more than 100,000 inhabitants, and there is only one person to every sixteen acres averaged over the whole country.

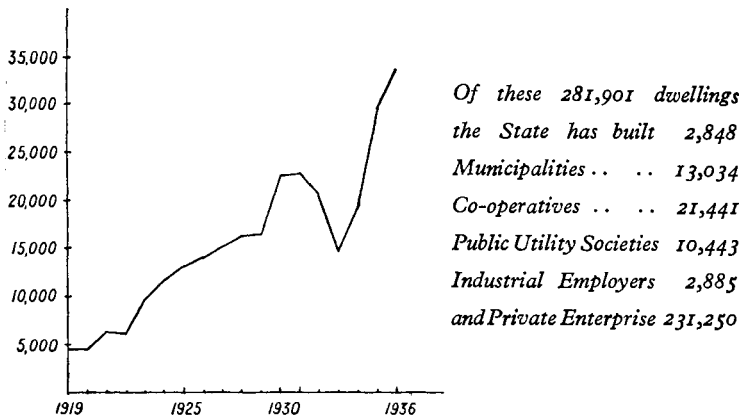
Although industry is considerable—notably steel-works, sawmills, pulp and paper mills—two-thirds of the people are still classified in the census as country-dwellers; for the migration of workers into towns, which was an inseparable feature of industry in Britain and Germany during the nineteenth century, did not occur in Sweden. There industrialism was not introduced until electricity generated by water was established as the source of mechanical power, and electricity, since it can be distributed widely and cheaply, does not require the industries and workers to be grouped near the source of power as does the use of coal.

This absence of concentration of the population in towns was accompanied by a steadiness both in the general increase of the population during the nineteenth century and in the relation of the numbers of town and country dwellers which is very striking when compared with the spectacular increase of townsmen in other countries. But since 1887, the year in which they were most numerous

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(140,169), the birth-rate has declined; in 1936 the number of births was 88,500, the same as in 1831, and to-day Sweden has the lowest birth-rate in Europe. National opinion is increasingly concerned with maintaining the population at least at its present level. This preoccupation is reflected in the housing policy, which is framed to encourage and facilitate family life but has also to take into

*Housing Output in Urban Districts (covering two-fifths of the total population)  
Swedish Ministry of Health*



consideration the old and childless as well as the young people in the national life.

The amount of new building in Sweden since 1918 has been prodigious. Public buildings, private buildings, bridges, roads; there seems no end to creative energy. For Sweden is prosperous; she made money out of the European War and is spending it wisely in works that will improve the health and the real wealth of the nation. In 1919 the position was particularly favourable in comparison with other European countries: the housing problem was for many reasons less acute, a slower increase in the population for one thing, while the comparatively equal income levels made it possible for many people

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to pay reasonable rents. Also, having been neutral in the War, financial and economic difficulties were not so acute as in the belligerent countries, and the post-War economic position improved so much more rapidly in Sweden than elsewhere, that price-levels had been consolidated and stabilized as early as 1924, and after 1925 building developed on a scale unknown before the War.

It would be misleading, however, to ascribe the very real post-War housing achievements in Sweden mainly to the absence of difficulties. Problems were there, but the Swedish handling of them was so intelligent and adaptable that difficulty after difficulty was anticipated and averted; a steady supply of new dwellings was ensured at a reasonable price; the chief burden, finance, was shifted from the State on to the people themselves, under minimum but adequate State guidance; and last and most important, the siting of new buildings and the preservation of fine old ones were carefully controlled by the local preparation and enforcement of well thought out plans for the modernization and growth of every town in the country.

At the beginning of the century the shortage of low-rented dwellings in Sweden was acute, and in 1912 a Commission was appointed on the initiative of the municipalities to inquire how the State could best assist in improving the housing conditions of persons of small means. This improvement did not apply to bad structural conditions, for there were no real slum areas and only a few unhealthy individual houses in the towns. The main problem was sociological, *o v e r - c r o w d i n g*, due very largely to the deliberately chosen, traditional habit of family life in one-room dwellings; and as this probably had its origin in the need for keeping warm in winter, it will no doubt weaken and ultimately disappear with the installation of cheap central heating.\*

\* A housing census taken in 1933 and 1935 disclosed that 53 per cent of the dwellings in Stockholm, 59 per cent in Göteborg and 50 per cent in the other towns with over 10,000 inhabitants, consisted of one or two rooms only;

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Government policy was from the first directed primarily to raise the people's standards of living and to educate public opinion to demand at least two rooms and a kitchen for every family, to stimulate the building of modern healthy dwellings and to clear and replan central city areas. This somewhat ambitious programme was designed to be carried out with the least possible charge on public funds.

Building costs rose rapidly between 1917 and 1920, as they did throughout Europe, and rent-control was imposed on all pre-War dwellings, while to stimulate the production of new dwellings at low rents, non-repayable subsidies of 33 per cent of the building costs were granted to the builders. Two-thirds of the subsidies was paid by the State and one-third by the municipalities who were responsible for the allocation and control of funds and, in fact, mainly used them themselves.\*

and that almost one-fifth of the total population were living two persons to a room. Although overcrowding is not yet illegal, lodgers may officially be required to leave where they are the cause of congestion.

\* The money required for subsidies came entirely from State funds, the National Insurance Fund alone advancing some 36,000,000 Sw.kr. for dwellings built by Public Utility Societies. In 1921 and 1922 a special tax was levied on pre-War buildings at the rate of 0.02 per cent of their capital value, the proceeds—12 million kr.—being devoted exclusively to the supply of low-rented houses.

From 1917 to 1920, during which years both loans and subsidies were available, the maximum grant allowed to any builder was 50 per cent of the building cost, with a maximum of 15,000 Sw.kr., which was reduced in 1922 to 12,000 Sw.kr., and in 1924 to 8,000 Sw.kr. Redemption of the loan was in annual instalments at the rate of 2 per cent spread over thirty years, but repayments did not begin until five years after the loan had been granted. Here, as before, the Government worked entirely through the municipalities, who were responsible for the payment of the interest and redemption charges.

The Urban Mortgage Bank of the Kingdom of Sweden, founded in 1910 with a working capital provided by the State in the form of State bonds, grants loans on first mortgage up to 50 per cent, sometimes 60 per cent, of the value of the property. The issue of the loans is carried out through the urban mortgage associations, which are local organizations with joint liability for the loans granted. In 1933 the State bonds amounted to 10 million kr., the outstanding loans to affiliated associations then being 792,000,000 kr.

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When, in 1920, *actual* wages had risen and higher rents could be afforded, subsidies were reduced to 15 per cent of the building costs and, instead of being used by the municipalities, were allocated direct by the Government, mainly to co-operative societies and to private persons engaged in building for the poorest families. In 1923 building costs had fallen, subsidies were abolished and rent control abandoned as no longer necessary.

Although it was still possible in 1920 to get loans on the open market up to 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the building cost on first mortgage, the rate of interest was so high that it constituted the chief obstacle to cheap housing. In 1920 the Government, therefore, formed a temporary **State Dwellings Loan Fund** which supplied loans and credits on second mortgage for cheap dwellings at 5 per cent interest, later reduced to 4 per cent. The main capital was obtained from a State fund established before the War for emergency expenditure, the balance coming partly from a share of the proceeds of the tax on alcohol and partly from various Government grants, including the balance of the house-tax which had not already been spent on subsidies.

By 1924, judged by post-War standards, the general economic situation was normal, trade in general was booming and the cost of building was stabilized at rather more than double the pre-War level. But luxury and business building took precedence of more modest housing demands and the Government decided that a permanent organization would be necessary to supply cheap money for low-cost housing schemes. In 1929 therefore the State Dwellings Loan Fund was superseded by an independent permanent body, the **Swedish Housing Loan Fund**, based on the co-operative movement, which had developed an admirable housing technique and building organization since 1918.\* It is notable that this new organization no

\* The Swedish Housing Loan Fund was formed in 1929 with a capital nucleus in 4½ per cent State Bonds of 30,000,000 Sw.kr. especially voted for

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longer depended on State funds for housing purposes, the capital being obtained from the co-operative building societies themselves.

Established eight years ago, this new organization is succeeding admirably; it has superseded other forms of State aid and is likely to be a permanent feature of the national building movement. Its value, embodying as it does co-operative responsibility and State financial freedom, while retaining a certain amount of State control, can hardly be exaggerated; the responsibility for financing low-rented houses has been shifted with the least possible dislocation or cost from the State on to this stable but unofficial body, and the Government, now that it is no longer occupied with finance, can

the purpose by Parliament. The fund is administered by an independent Board of Directors of seven to nine members of whom two are appointed by the King, and the remainder are elected by a general meeting of delegates from the credit societies affiliated to the Fund. It works with the Central Bank in Stockholm and with the co-operative societies which are building in the provinces. These co-operative societies are composed of individual borrowers, jointly responsible for the obligations incurred by them, while the individual societies are jointly responsible for the obligations incurred by the Fund towards its creditors. Second mortgage loans, which are granted up to 75 per cent of the value of the property as assessed for taxation, are restricted to dwellings with a maximum of four rooms and a separate kitchen.

The liabilities of the Fund may not exceed ten times the amount of the original capital, and if any part of this nucleus is drawn on it must be repaid into the Fund in full within five years; normal risks *must* be covered by a reserve fund consisting of contributions from the individual borrowing societies of 0·10 per cent of the total sums lent them in addition to the annual repayments at 2 per cent made to the Fund for interest and amortization of loans. Loan capital is raised by the issue of debentures negotiable either directly by the borrower or through the bank, and is secured by a mortgage on the particular property concerned. As first mortgage loans up to 60 per cent of the building value of low-rented but well-built property are obviously a very safe investment, savings banks, mortgage banks, insurance companies and other societies wanting investments with low risks are anxious to collaborate in this scheme. Loans are granted only to recognized building societies, and they must be redeemed within forty years. The total amount of loans granted to the end of 1933 was 66,400,000 Sw.kr. by the original State Dwelling Loan Fund, and 76,200,000 by the Swedish Housing Loan Fund, which superseded it.



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concentrate on questions of town-planning, housing-research and other matters vital to the future happiness of the people.\*

From 1918, general advice on the proper planning and development of areas with regard to health had been obtainable from one of the State Departments, rather on the English system, but it was not until 1929 that the Government was able to tackle town-planning with real energy. In 1931 a Town Planning Act was passed by which each local authority, even the smallest, was required to prepare a rebuilding and development scheme, and submit it within six months to the Government for approval. In these plans all new building had to be designed in relation to the town as a whole, but the city authorities were only given power to order the demolition of any unsatisfactory building when its destruction was necessary to complete a comprehensive scheme for rebuilding that district. This clause has not appreciably held up redevelopment, for owners are being stimulated to rebuild by the low rate at which money can be borrowed over long periods, and by the fact that the new dwellings which are now being built are so much above the pre-War standard that owners of low-grade property are forced to bring it up to date in order to get or keep tenants. And as ill-designed and unregulated new building is prevented by the town plan (which has had both local and Government approval), and as "good" but old buildings are carefully protected, the beauty and unity of Swedish towns is increasing, and increasing rapidly. The general co-ordination of street-architecture is particularly fine, and the "wild-west" appearance of the majority of our English redevelopment areas seems to have been entirely avoided. For the control of development is really stringent. Separation into industrial and residential areas is required

\* Substantial Treasury grants have been made to the Academy of Technical Science for promoting every kind of technical and scientific research into the improvement and standardization of building methods, while the State Housing Office has also drawn up a series of model plans which suggest the rational layout of dwellings.

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in all plans for new districts, and though the height of a building is not limited by law, it is limited in fact, because it must not interfere with the plan or amenities of neighbouring properties. Often the effect of a replanning scheme is tested by models of the buildings made to different scales, placed on a contour model of the area, and then photographed and examined from every angle to ensure that the best use is made of every view or undulation of land, and to avoid obscuring any existing fine building.

In criticism it is said that private builders often neglect to put aside the proper percentage for amortization of their property, gambling on a rise in land values due to the ordered town-planning of the Government policy. That may well be. But it is also true that the Swedish Government has forestalled and prevented any speculation which could injure the appearance or amenities of cities. And it is perhaps worth repeating that these improvements are being obtained without the expenditure of public money, and without directly scheduling unsatisfactory areas. The cost of clearance and improvement is less than in many countries because, while public opinion will not allow confiscation even of neglected, bad private property, it is equally opposed to the payment of large sums of money to the owners. It prefers to freeze them out or reform them, and the policy outlined above is succeeding admirably in this respect. All that the Government has done is to ensure that rebuilding shall be encouraged and that when it takes place it shall be neither haphazard nor unco-ordinated, but in relation to a carefully thought-out and controlled plan for each town as a whole. Sweden's respect for the past is linked with a brilliant and thorough system of planning for the future.

The Government has in addition encouraged the growth of public responsibility, control and thrift through co-operative action, which is probably the best method of checking the incipient abuses of private speculation. For it is believed that unrestricted private enterprise can be safely encouraged only when public opinion is so sure,

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so intelligent and well-ordered that the community can protect itself against the indifference, or stupidity or greed of the few.

There are few slums in Sweden, in our definition of the term; such as there are being due either to the bad siting of houses, generally well-built in themselves, or to the Swedish habit of liking to be overcrowded. The Swedish idea of emptying them is to draw these ill-housed families from the congested centres of towns by the attractiveness of the new dwellings which are being put up on the outskirts.

No attempt is made to segregate dirty families, as in Holland or Italy, although they are constantly visited by the sanitary inspectors and given free soap.\* It is said that dirty families are generally the larger ones; this is probably partly due to their being inevitably more overcrowded, for it is more difficult for a large than for a small family to keep a tiny place neat. Also, among the working classes, large young families having least money to spare for rent necessarily take the cheapest dwellings which are also the smallest or the least healthy, with the result that the largest families tend to live in the smallest or most worn-out quarters. This is bad policy from the point of view of health, and does not encourage the rearing of sound children. But the paradox is European and not peculiar to Sweden.

Rural housing policy has differed from urban because the wages of agricultural labourers did not rise enough after the War to enable them to pay an "economic" rent for new houses. In 1933, therefore, although public opinion was opposed in theory to spending public money on reconditioning, Parliament voted 10,000,000 Sw.kr. as a fund from which subsidies and loans could be made to defray half the approved cost of reconditioning dilapidated

\* In cases of extreme poverty the family rent is paid as part of poor relief, in addition to the cash subsistence allowance of at most 5 Sw.kr. a day per family.

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cottages.\* No universal rules or standards of accommodation are enforced, as styles of building vary widely throughout the country, but policy is in general based on an effort to prevent the undue flow of countrymen into the towns by attractive offers of resettlement on plots of several acres.

But the doubts raised in 1912 as to the housing conditions of all large artisan families had never been dispelled, and at the end of 1935 a Commission of Inquiry into Slum Conditions was appointed, composed of an economist, two medical experts, a Government official, an architect and a builder, who travelled round the country investigating conditions and discussing local problems with local experts. Their recommendations, which are being followed by the Government (see page 82), include building or reconditioning (either by or in association with the municipalities) special dwellings with at least two rooms and kitchen, rebates being recommended of 30 per cent of the "economic" rent for families with three children, 40 per cent for four and 50 per cent for five or more. The cost is to be covered by a special annual subsidy and this money is not grudged, as the Government, troubled by the falling birth-rate, wishes to encourage large families by every means it can devise. In view of the campaign against overcrowding, however, and the fact that the scheme is devised to benefit large families, two rooms and kitchen seem rather a low minimum to stipulate!

The Government has been responsible for housing and town-planning policy in general, while much of the actual low-cost building

\* This fund works in with another fund, founded in 1904, for helping with the purchase of dwelling houses and agricultural holdings in rural areas. By 1934 about 296,000,000 Sw.kr. had been advanced to 52,658 borrowers, of whom 19,546 built residential dwellings and 33,112 built houses on agricultural holdings. The mortgage grants amount to half the value of house and land. For the first three years interest is at 4 per cent and no amortization repayment is required; interest is then 5 per cent, amortization being spread over 21 years.

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has been done by co-operative effort. It would, however, be unfair to underestimate the work of the municipalities, for it is undoubtedly through their efforts that interest was first aroused in the importance of improving housing standards. Most of the really low-rented housing in each town has been and still is being done with money contributed by them, either by granting the first or third mortgages required by local co-operative or public utility societies, or by guaranteeing the second mortgages which are granted by the Swedish Housing Loan Fund. Land resettlement schemes have, since 1932, also been undertaken directly by the municipalities (see Stockholm, page 68).

The vast majority of families in Sweden can, of course, afford to pay rents which represent a reasonable return on the capital invested, and to contribute towards the cost of their own homes.\*

\* An inquiry among wage earners and salaried employees in 1933 showed the average income of a wage earner's family to be 3,450 kr. and of a salaried worker's family 4,135 kr. per annum. The average family was 4.11 persons, and family incomes between 3,000 kr and 4,000 kr. were most numerous in both categories.

The sources of income of families having up to:

	<i>700 kr. per annum</i>	<i>700-1,450 kr. per annum</i>	<i>Over 1,450 kr. per annum</i>
From employment ..	85.5 %	90.5 %	91.1 %
i.e. Husband .. ..	79.4	87.9	88.7
Wife .. ..	0.2	1.2	2.2
Children .. ..	5.9	1.4	0.2
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
From other sources ..	85.5	90.5	91.1
i.e. Boarders and lodgers	14.5 %	9.5 %	8.9 %
Sickness benefit and assistance ..	6.0	3.5	3.6
Gifts .. ..	1.3	0.8	0.7
Interest .. ..	1.3	0.9	1.1
Miscellaneous ..	0.3	0.3	0.4
	5.6	4.0	3.1
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
	14.5	9.5	8.9
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
	100 %	100 %	100 %

*(Continued on page 59)*

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Co-operative building societies have, in Sweden, been in the van of the building movement, and their growth in efficiency and power is one of the most dramatic things in post-War Sweden. They are frankly encouraged by the Government, and have become the most potent and stable force for improving housing conditions in the country.\*

(Continued from page 58)

The wage earners mainly lived in one, and the salaried employees in two rooms and a kitchen.

*International Labour Office Review, June 1935*

*Swedish Family Budget Inquiry, 1923 and 1933*

<i>Expenditure Group</i>	1923 %	1933 %
Food .. .. .	42·7	35·9
Housing .. .. .	13·9	17·9
Fuel and light .. .. .	4·3	4·0
Clothing .. .. .	13·9	13·0
Miscellaneous .. .. .	25·2	29·2
i.e. Taxes .. .. .	7·8	6·7
Medical and hygiene .. .. .	2·2	2·9
Insurance, trade union, etc. .. .. .	4·9	7·1
Education, etc. .. .. .	2·7	2·8
Amusements .. .. .	1·0	1·5
Transport .. .. .	2·0	2·2
Gifts .. .. .	1·7	2·1
Other items .. .. .	2·9	3·9
	25·2	29·2
	100 %	100 %

When the 1923 budgets were recast on the basis of 1933 prices, housing had increased to 18·3 per cent, i.e. by 14 per cent.

Education costs are insignificant as it is supplied mainly free by the State and local authorities.

\* There is still no definition in law of a public utility society in Sweden, though the present building societies are truly co-operative, founded as they were with the definite aim of providing good and cheap dwellings. In the early experimental days, from 1870 to 1918, such societies were small, often inefficient, and generally veiled profit-making concerns. In 1919, during the housing shortage immediately after the War, many new building societies were started, but as official control was then lax the promoters alone made

## SWEDEN

A description of old and new housing in Stockholm is probably the simplest way of giving some impression of Swedish life (varied though it is from province to province) and of showing how the housing and town-planning policy is working in practice.

Stockholm—the Venice of the north—is built by a lagoon of the Baltic Sea, the wooded islands which surround it being linked by ferries, steamers and flotillas of sailing boats which make a very decorative show on summer evenings and at weekends.\*

The amount of new building in Stockholm, from a new town hall to vast cottage estates, turns each fresh visit into an exploring expedition. But as development is strictly controlled by the approved

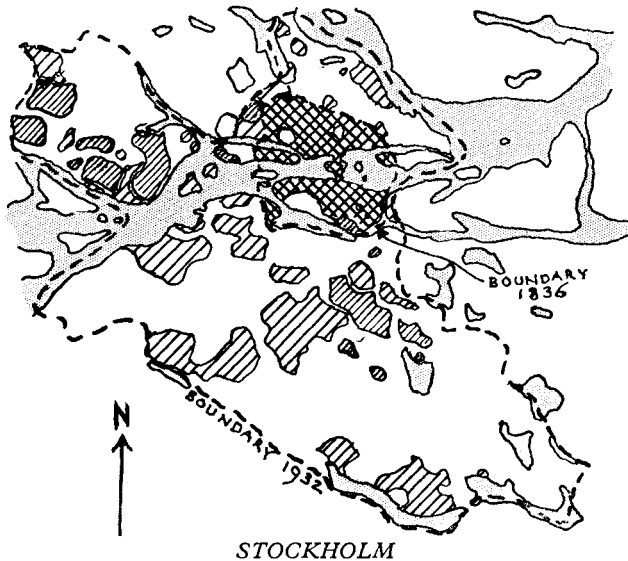
money while the shareholders lost it. Regulations were soon tightened up and every building society must now not only be registered but must also, when sending in its application, submit a thoroughly worked-out building scheme which is examined by the municipal authority concerned, in collaboration with two local independent and trustworthy persons. Second mortgages up to 75 per cent of the value of the property to be built can be obtained by these societies from the Swedish Housing Loan Fund, of which they are themselves the shareholders (see page 53). First mortgages at  $4\frac{3}{4}$ – $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent interest can be obtained without difficulty up to 60 per cent of the value of the property in the open market, or from the State Bank, or mortgage and private savings banks, or insurance companies, while municipalities also help by loaning or guaranteeing money for mortgages and by offering cheap land.

In 1934 there were between 900 and 1,000 co-operative building societies in Sweden, of which 450 were in Stockholm and 250 in Göteborg. The societies are of two main types—"Letting Societies," in which the dwellings are owned by the society and rented by it to the members, and "Owners' Societies," in which each member owns a share proportionate to the value of his dwelling. In 1927, out of the 20,127 families who were members of co-operative building societies, 30 per cent were in letting societies and 70 per cent in owners' societies, the former predominating in Göteborg and the latter in Stockholm. The interests of the societies and their members are guarded by two central bodies which deal with questions of loans and credits, undertake, if required, the central buying of materials, watch over the interests of the co-operative movement generally, and undertake "good housing" propaganda.

\* In August 1937 the municipality bought for £12,500 nine hundred and fifteen islands in the archipelago for permanent preservation in their wild and lovely state.

## SWEDEN

town plan, and as the general level of architectural taste is high, the adventure is almost unalloyed pleasure. The town too gives an impression of freshness and prosperity because the municipality rigorously enforces the by-laws which require owners of property



### STOCKHOLM

*Superficial area, 53 square miles*

*In 1890, 247,000 inhabitants; 1900, 301,000; 1919, 415,000; 1935, 525,000 (650,000 if the suburbs and satellite towns are included). Average density per acre, 15 persons. The hatching indicates the new suburban estates*

*Scale: 1 inch to 4 miles*

to keep the façades of their buildings neat and clean. Besides giving an air of general gaiety to the streets by the gleaming paint and colourwash, pride in the town is fostered among the citizens and scamped work is reduced because bad work only needs doing again sooner.

Another reason for the increasing beauty of Stockholm is probably



## SWEDEN

the fastidious care for line and proportion in the new buildings put up in each street, in each area, and in the town as a whole. Ordered and intelligent thought is given to every detail, and the effect of projects is tested in the town-planning department by constructing models of proposed development and placing them on a modelled contour map of the city; their effect on perspective and skyline can thus be seen and their general influence on the neighbourhood noted, in particular their relation to buildings of historic or aesthetic value. This method of town-planning is most practical, and neither time, trouble nor intelligence seems to be spared in analysing the effect on the neighbourhood of destroying an old building or erecting a new one.

The medieval layout of the old town which is the nearest approach to a "slum" area in Stockholm, is still untouched by any replanning scheme, although the rest of the city, which was replanned and developed in the seventeenth century, is being considerably altered under the new town plan and the new building by-laws, drawn up in 1931 to meet modern needs and new methods of construction. An international competition was held for a design for redeveloping the most congested central areas while, as a result of the "appalling death roll" of thirty persons in one year in road accidents, the streets were improved to carry the increasing load of motor traffic, some superb new roads now linking the old town with the mainland. The new estates and suburbs, which are being laid out in accordance with this plan of 1931, are most attractive, incorporating as they do the latest ideas for siting, planning and equipment, and providing for open spaces, gardens and playgrounds, schools, shops, restaurants and recreation.

Plans for clearance schemes as worked out by the town-planning office are put up for one month for public inspection. Unless grave objections are made, the schemes are then approved by the city council and forwarded to the Board of Public Works for royal sanction.

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But the municipality has powers of compulsory purchase only when land is needed for access, public parks or in exceptional cases where the existence of private property prevents the normal development of the district; neither has it complete control over planning, the new Regulations of 1931 being permissive rather than obligatory. Still, special regional plans in which the number of storeys permitted is graded according to the district and its distance from the centre of the town must be complied with by any owner who wishes to rebuild, and as there was, by 1937, no shortage of the better flats, it was obviously to the advantage of landlords to rebuild quickly all blocks which had become out of date.

Stockholm has few dilapidated dwellings because the town grew slowly and according to plan, and the municipality since 1906 has demolished a certain number of bad dwellings. The Old Town is the main, possibly the only, really "insanitary" area. Yet, owing to its being built on a steep and rocky island, it is fresh, dry and healthy, in spite of the excessive number of dwellings and of people on it.\* And whatever its inconvenience and technical undesirability, the Old Town, with its narrow streets, is regarded with great affection by the citizens, who are determined to preserve it if only for its historical interest. The St. Erik Society for the Preservation of Historic Stockholm recently undertook an architectural and artistic survey of the inner part of the Old Town. Detailed plans were worked out for clearing and modernizing a sample dwelling-block; careful calculation was made of the expenditure which would be incurred, while theoretical arguments were reinforced by a practical demonstration of the reconditioning considered necessary in a typical block of old tenements—chiefly by

\* Building costs in Stockholm, as in Helsingfors (Finland), are considerably increased by the granite foundations: trenches 6·56 feet (2 metres) deep have to be blasted to take the drains, water mains and other services.

## SWEDEN

doing-up the fronts of the houses, amalgamating courtyards by demolishing some of the flats and planting the courtyards with trees and flowers. The municipality adopted these suggestions and are using the survey as a basis for future replanning and a guide in the organization of any clearance schemes which may be considered necessary. A small green space has meanwhile been provided in the densest central area by the municipality, who bought and demolished several unimportant houses for the purpose.

There are few families in "The City," such as there are being generally large and not too clean. Apart from a few people, such as sailors, who are there temporarily, and the old people who live there because they work in the neighbourhood or are sentimentally attached to it, the inhabitants are mainly persons of a low standard; dealers in illicit drink traffic; and keepers of brothels.

There is great overcrowding, but rents are low. The houses are tall, often with a family on each floor or in each room. The streets are narrow and the buildings closely packed. Yet few of the homes are dirty, and although the slum smell is undoubtedly there, the place seems remarkably clean, particularly the approaches, which are kept tidy by the tenants of each block in turns of a month each. Huge dustbins stand neatly in recesses in the courtyards. The staircases are of stone for safety against fire, and one sees flowers on the window-sills of the common staircase, a touch which is rare in "made-down houses" or tenement flats in other countries. Each family in the house has one of the earth closets which are grouped together under the roof, the tenant informing the city authorities when his should be emptied.

The inspection of dwellings for structural defects is done by a staff of women under the Board of Health. Between 1931 and 1934 the number of occupied dwellings in the city condemned as unfit were reduced from 284 to 69. As a rule only the top and bottom floors need condemning, and ground floors condemned for use as



*The old town,  
Stockholm's slum area*



*A typical street. The ground  
floors are mainly condemned  
as living quarters*

PLATE 3

*The new road linking the old town to the mainland. The spiral viaducts enable traffic to flow smoothly  
in any direction without impediment*





(a) *Work on the foundations*

(b) *Raising the timber walls into position*



PLATE 4 *A Stockholm municipal cottage, put together by the tenants*

(c) *Completed*



## SWEDEN

dwellings owing to damp or darkness may, by permission of the Board of Health, be converted into stores or workshops.

As in all other parts of Europe, the really unsatisfactory areas in Stockholm are those which were built in the second half of the nineteenth century. These blocks consist of tenement-flats, five, six and seven storeys high, with centre and wing blocks and sunless, airless courtyards. As they are still in good structural condition, and yield good rents because of their central position, they cannot be condemned as structurally unsound or as definitely injurious to health. They are ‘‘architectural slums,’’ and the best that can be done is reconditioning and thinning-out, which are of course only palliative measures.\* Their demolition depends upon the owner being persuaded that it is worth his while to incur the expense of replacing out-of-date buildings by modern ones and, since the municipality has no power compulsorily to purchase either the buildings or the sites, it is trying indirectly to force the hand of the owners by creating a margin of empty flats. And new buildings with modern improvements are being erected so rapidly in Stockholm, that owners of old, inconvenient flats are beginning to find difficulty in letting them. When they decide to replace old flats by new ones they find that this must be done in conformity with the city plan.

But, as has already been said, the problem in Stockholm, as in Sweden, is neither insanitary dwellings nor bad siting of individual blocks, but overcrowding. The arrears of building due to the War were not made good until 1924, when the building output equalled that of 1913, with some improvement in living conditions.† But

\* Owners of adjoining blocks of tenements sometimes join together to recondition them, loans on easy terms being advanced for the work by the municipality.

† In 1912 and 1920 the *average* number of persons per ‘‘fireplace,’’ as it is calculated, in Stockholm was 1·29; in 1926 this had decreased to 1·19, and in 1928 to 1·16 persons. In 1930, however, it was found that 11,515 dwellings,

## SWEDEN

although it is claimed that better conditions of comfort and health are being provided in the new buildings, the total inhabitable area in a dwelling of the new type is no more than in the old one, for an extra room is obtained merely by splitting the old big kitchen into a living-room and a kitchenette!

Before the War, the municipality built about five hundred dwellings each consisting of one room and a kitchen for their own employees on "free" city land, with borrowed money, rents being fixed to cover the costs of repayment in forty years, later reduced to thirty years. After 1918 they began again to build, and completed of which only 12½ per cent had more than one room and kitchen, housed a population of 60,535 persons.

In 1930, 16 per cent of the population of Stockholm was overcrowded in that they were found to be living at an average of two persons or more per room; of these overcrowded persons more than three-quarters were living in lettings of one room and kitchen, or less. It was found in 1935 that 58 per cent of the total dwellings in Stockholm consisted of one or two rooms.

The census returns for 1930 show in Stockholm:

	1920	1925	1930	
Total dwellings were ..	101,338	114,339	145,640	
	%	%	%	
of which .. ..	46·7	44·8	48·3	had one room only
	26·2	27·4	27·5	had two rooms
	10·9	11·5	10·1	had three rooms
	5·5	6·2	5·6	had four rooms
	4·5	4·7	4·1	had five rooms
	6·2	5·7	4·4	had six and more rooms
Dwellings equipped with bath	10·4	16·0	34·3	
Dwellings equipped with central heating .. ..	12·7	22·2	46·4	
	<i>Sw. kr.</i>	<i>Sw. kr.</i>	<i>Sw. kr.</i>	
Rents (average) .. ..	939	1,192	1,284	
(The greatest increase was in the smallest dwell- ings, where the rent nearly doubled)				
	%	%	%	
Apartments vacant ..	0·07	0·54	1·42	
(Most among two- and five-roomed dwellings)				

## SWEDEN

about three thousand dwellings for which the tenants were selected by means of an income test. By 1925, however, when co-operative societies and private enterprise were building vigorously, it was agreed that the city was more profitably employed in encouraging good building by granting loans for it than in undertaking the actual work itself, and direct municipal building was discontinued.\*

But the number of children who have been born in Stockholm since 1924 is under 40 per cent of the number required to keep the population of the city at its present size, and the city is entirely dependent for its future growth on immigration of adults from

\* The necessary funds were obtained from Stockholm's Tomträttskassa Bank for leasehold houses, which was established with a share capital of 1¼ million kronen, largely subscribed by the municipality. The bank had the right to issue bonds, guaranteed by the municipality, up to twenty times the value of the share capital. The rate of interest charged when the builder merely leased the land was slightly higher than when he owned the land: it has averaged between 5·75 per cent and 5·9 per cent, except in 1921 and 1922 when it rose to 7·22 per cent.

Altogether about 32,000 dwellings, that is about one-fifth of the whole of the existing dwellings in Stockholm, were built between 1916 and 1934 with direct financial assistance by the municipality, mainly in mortgage loans lent at the same rate of interest as that at which the municipality was able to borrow. Second mortgage loans were also granted, while additional direct contributions and guaranteed loans for housing amounted to about 80,000,000 Sw. kr. in addition to the sums which the city had itself spent on building. Ten per cent to 15 per cent of the construction costs of approved schemes were usually lent by the municipality, co-operative societies were themselves able to raise a further 50 per cent to 60 per cent in the open market, while the remainder of the money required was contributed by the members of the co-operative society, if that was the agency which was undertaking the building.

The municipality helped approved societies further by finding building sites. In 1928, when the town covered an area of 4·51 square miles (1,170 hectares), the city owned 22·92 square miles (5,938 hectares) of land in the immediate vicinity. Of this area, nearly 2·81 square miles (730 hectares) which had been zoned in accordance with the town plan were offered to building agencies on very favourable terms; either pre-War prices were asked when sites were sold (although the price of land was rising rapidly) or special facilities were granted for payment; for instance, only 5 per cent of the price might have to be paid in cash. Under an Act of 1907, the land was frequently leased and not sold.



## SWEDEN

outside. This explains the artificially high preponderance of grown-up persons in Stockholm as compared with the rest of the country. The authorities have begun to redouble their efforts to encourage larger families by building inexpensive dwellings, particularly cottages, suitable for families, and three main types of dwellings are now being built in Stockholm for families with low incomes:

1. Small cottages with gardens, built in planned suburban groups, designed and financed by the municipality.
2. Cheap municipal tenements on the outskirts of the city.
3. Building by co-operative societies in the centre and outskirts of the city.\*

1. The shortage of good, cheap little family houses in Stockholm and the great demand for them at the beginning of the century decided the municipality to buy inexpensive land on which they could be built at a lower cost than blocks of flats. Large country estates were accordingly bought outside the boundary of the city, and later incorporated within it. Since the first purchase in 1904, fifteen estates totalling over 20,000 acres have been bought at a cost of £1,200,000. They lie both south and west of the city and two and a half to eight and a half miles from the centre and are being laid out by the municipality as "garden cities," the streets and mains for water, gas and electricity being laid down first to define the lines of development. Building sites are not sold, but are leased to private persons for sixty years with an option for the holder to renew his lease. The annual ground rent, which is calculated to cover the cost of the land, layout of streets, provision of mains, etc., is about 5 per

\* The main societies are the Stockholm Co-operative Society (S.K.B.) which builds for its own employees, and a National Co-operative Society (H.S.B.) which caters for the general public.

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cent on the value of the site and rose from about 2d. per square yard before the War to between  $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 10d. (average  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d.) per square yard in 1934, which is considered a reasonable return on this civic investment. The plots are usually 900 square yards for the larger houses, 600 square yards for the smaller types and 420 square yards for cottages. The different types of these garden-city houses are often known by English names, such as "Home Sweet Home," "Yes," and (unjustifiably, for it is a charming design) "Pardon."

During the first experimental period the houses were built by the municipality itself, but though intended for tenants who could only afford low rents, they were mainly taken by well-off families, who flocked to the new suburbs.

In 1927, therefore, the municipality characteristically decided to extend and modify its policy, definitely encouraging artisan families without discouraging or interfering with the better-off people who were now arranging for their own houses to be built, instead of expecting the municipality to do them.

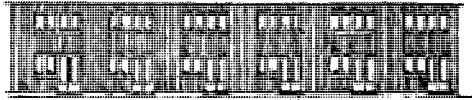
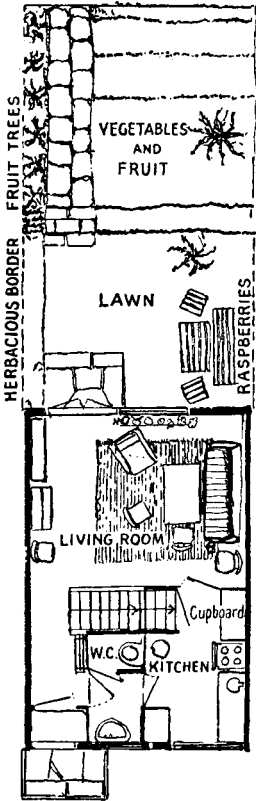
Artisan families in Stockholm were enthusiastic about the "summer colonies," or huts each surrounded by a plot of garden, which were built in and around the city and to which they migrated in summer. The municipality took these colonies as their model, plans were drawn for five different types of three- to five-roomed detached and semi-detached timber cottages, the units of construction were standardized and workmen were invited to build their own homes, under skilled supervision, on land leased to them for sixty years, with capital loaned for a period of thirty years.

Development is controlled and the tenants' welfare safeguarded at every point.\* The work undertaken by the municipality includes first planning and preparing the areas selected for settlement, and accumulating the loans necessary to finance development. Then the drawings and complete working instructions for each standard type

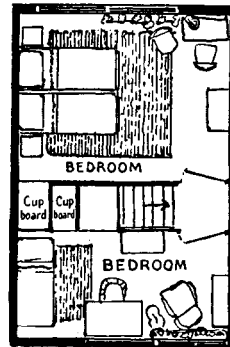
\* See *Stockholms Stads Fastighetskontor*, Småstugelyrån.

## SWEDEN

of cottage must be prepared in a form suitable for amateur builders; the most suitable applicants must be selected; all the building materials and units required for the particular estate must be ordered,



*Terrace houses, timber, built by a co-operative housing society*



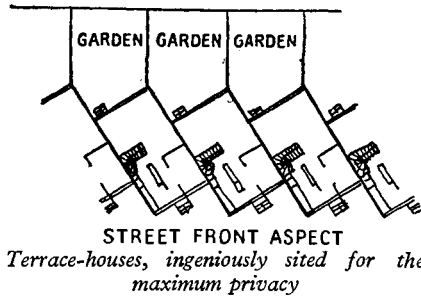
made, and available on the site at the proper time; contracts must be let for such work as the home-builders are either not permitted or are incompetent to undertake; technical instruction must be available on the site for the various building operations; and, finally, careful

## SWEDEN

financial and technical inspection must be made during the erection of each separate cottage.

This "amateur" type of development is, whenever possible, on land which has been previously cultivated, both for ease in digging foundations (which in Stockholm must often be blasted out of the rock) and in order to give the tenants gardens.

None of the estates are more than thirty minutes' tram ride from the town. The average size of a plot is 5,622.75 square feet (525 square metres) and the average rent for it 33 öre per square metre (10.76 square feet), which works out at an annual ground rent of about 172 kr. The cottages are generally placed close to the street line, so that the interior of the block forms a continuous open space, the plots being separated at the boundaries by low fences or hedges.

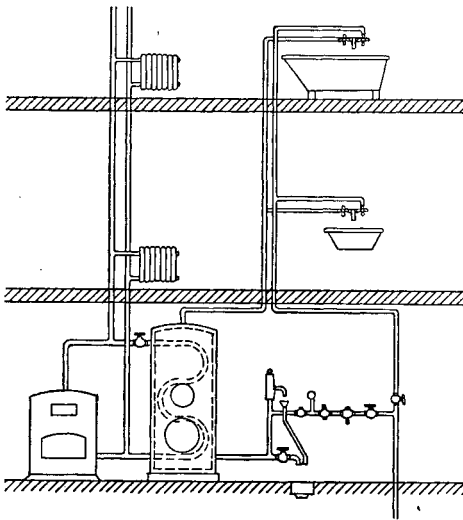


Space is always reserved in each estate for public buildings and shops, which are soon built and occupied; ground unsuitable for building because of its rockiness is reserved for parks, public gardens and children's playgrounds. In two estates a pond has been included, and in several areas runestones and other archaeological remains have been found and suitably displayed. Being Stockholm, there is always a lake or an arm of the estuary for boating and swimming in summer, skating and ice-yachting in winter!

There are five types of cottage to choose from, with a total usable area, including half the basement and half the staircase, ranging from 66 square metres (706.86 square feet) to 103 square metres (1,102 square feet). Each cottage is completely equipped with gas, water,

## SWEDEN

drains and electric light. A simple central-heating system was installed in the first cottages, the water being heated in a combined heating-boiler and cooking-range put in the kitchen while the radiators were placed centrally, near the chimney stack. An improved plan has been substituted by which an independent coke boiler is installed in the basement, the radiators are placed below the window-



sills in each room, and cooking is on a gas range in the kitchen.

The most popular type of cottage has a sitting - room and a kitchen - dining - room on the ground floor; in the basement is a combined bathroom and washhouse, a w.c., a food cellar, and a large space which can be used for a workshop or a garage; there is room for two or three

bedrooms in the attic and there are many cupboards. It was, incidentally, because extra bedroom space was wanted that the steep Mansard roofs of the early cottages were superseded by straight saddle roofs which allow a third bedroom to be included.

The municipality buys the materials in bulk, and sells them to the builder-tenants at about 15 per cent below outside prices. The timber is prepared and assembled as far as possible in the factory; wall sections, thin layers of wood with a thick layer of seaweed or pine chips between each as insulation; sills; floor beams and struts; floor and ceiling boards; doors; windows of double glass for protec-

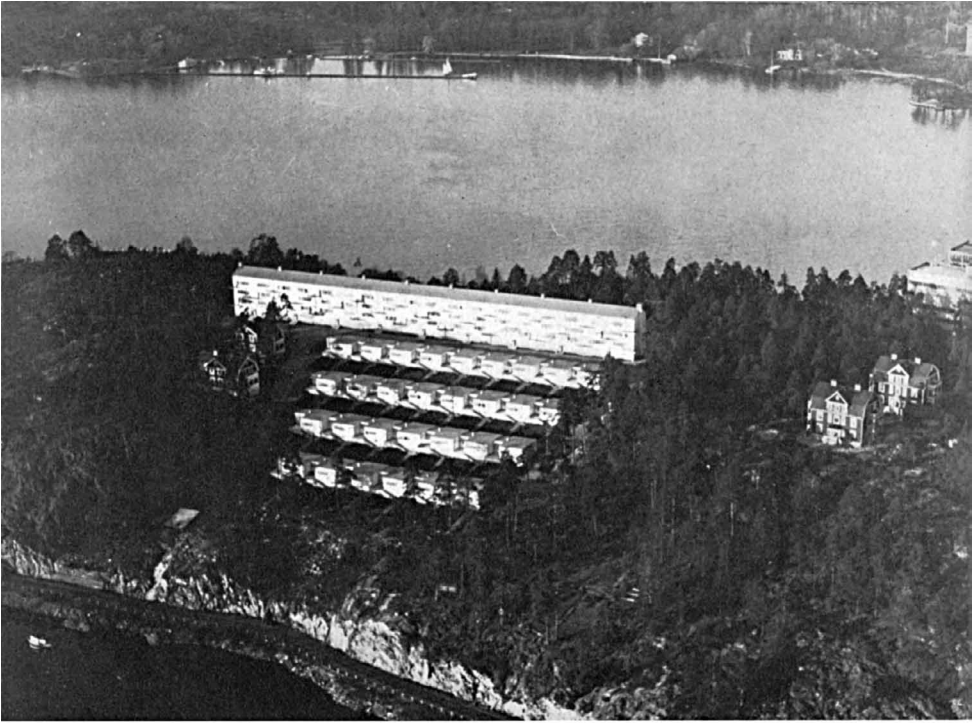


PLATE 5

*Two of the "home-made" estates*



*A bedroom interior.  
Note the radiator*



*The Stockholm Co-operative Society's estate of mixed flat and cottage development. The grain factory and Rye-Vita works are behind, on the right*

PLATE 6

*An H.S.B. block for workmen. The "stepped" roof was economical, enabling entrances to be made to flats from the half landings of the internal staircases*



## SWEDEN

tion against the cold, etc., arrive, complete with fittings, cut into proper lengths and tied into bundles for each different room. A minimum of skilled labour is required, as everything has been thought out in the drawing office and made in the factory; the tenants' job is assembly and erection only.

The foundation walls are of brick, which is more convenient than concrete for the amateur builders to handle; and the chimney stacks arrive in special light blocks made of "gas concrete" in which are cast the earthenware pipe sections which, when piled on top of each other, form continuous flues and evacuation ducts.

Under the building by-laws special licensed contractors must undertake the fitting of gas, water and drain pipes, as well as the installation of electrical wiring and fitting. The municipality therefore arranges for these tasks, sheet-iron work, glazing and the heating installation to be done professionally by contractors: if, however, the tenant happens to be an expert in any of these trades, he may save money by doing the work himself, provided that he notifies the municipality when he signs his first agreement.

The City Estate Board working through the House Building Committee and its Small Cottage Bureau, which has offices in the town hall, organizes the actual development of each estate. A temporary local office is set up in each building area, from which building materials are distributed, and advice and instruction given. One instructor is allowed for every fifty cottages and a chief instructor for the whole estate.

The prospective tenant has to pay to the municipality the first year's ground rent in advance as well as fees, the whole reaching a maximum of about £15 10s. (300 kr.), while two separate agreements regulate respectively the ground lease and the building-loan and supply of materials.\*

\* The tenant receives his 90 per cent loan in materials, not cash, and contributes his 10 per cent in his own labour.



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The cost of building ranges from £450 to £669 for the different sizes of dwelling. Of this, materials account for about half the cost, contractors' and special work for over a third, and the remainder is for costs of instruction and administration.

These small cottages are at present the cheapest accommodation in Stockholm, although the annual charges vary from 882 Sw. kr. (£45), on the smallest to 1,059 Sw. kr. (£54) on the largest types. Demand has been so greatly in excess of the possibility of satisfying it, that families with young children and with incomes between 3,000 and 5,000 Sw. kr. a year have been given preference over other applicants.

The municipality prepares the plans during the summer before development is to begin, materials are bought, contracts let, streets and mains laid. In the following March the tenants are chosen and each selects the type of dwelling he wants or can afford. In April he goes down, in the order of application, to pick his site. Immediately the formalities have been completed, he starts to mark out his foundations and begin work—special help being given in the early stages.

A municipal leaflet, in a lively account of the scheme, makes it quite clear that hard labour must be done at the end of the day's work and on Sundays:

“The home-builder has not only to do heavy work, he is in many cases forced to lead a regular camping or settler's life which, however, is not altogether devoid of the charm of such an existence. This charm is perhaps not quite so apparent to the eager home-builder who rushes out to dig on his plot before the frost has left the ground and the chill April blasts sweep over the still bare field. Even in May the poetry of the enterprise may not touch him very keenly while trudging around ankle-deep in the wet clay at the bottom of his foundation pit, not even if the lark has arrived by that time and is warbling in the sky over his head.

## SWEDEN

“But by June the real building is well under way and has put its stamp on the area. There is life and movement over the whole ground. . . . It is safe to say that spirits are not damped by the inconveniences suffered during this first period of occupation; to most home-builders the reminiscences of these early troubles will stand out as dear memories of ‘the time when we built the cottage.’”

By the first of October, which in Stockholm is the date on which most leases of flats lapse, the majority of the home-builders are installed in their new homes, but as a rule the cottages are not quite ready until about the New Year.

The spirit of emulation is said to be a great support in trying times and, as competition enters both in the time factor and in eventually getting the finest cottage, work is quick but not scamped. The women are often the moving spirits in the building of their new homes and every member of the family, not only the father, contributes much of the actual physical labour. Many families in their enthusiasm even improve on the original plan as they go along.

These “home-made colonies” are extremely happy places and are shown with pride to visitors. Variety between house and house is obtained by painting them outside in colours which will not contrast too violently with their neighbours. The interiors too are gaily painted. The gardens are cultivated with great care, and charming arbours built in them, in which meals are often taken. Apple, plum and rowan trees are planted both in the gardens and in the public streets.

The popularity of these estates is yet another sign of the desire of rootless city populations, the dwellers in tenement cities throughout Europe, to attach themselves more firmly to the soil than they have been able to do hitherto.

2. By 1928 it was generally felt that the housing needs of the poorest families in central areas was being neglected. The municipality accordingly began to encourage the

## SWEDEN

construction of inexpensive dwellings on a novel plan, basing the scheme on the conditions which they were able to attach to the land they sold or leased for building purposes.\* About 5,000 dwellings in 100 tenement blocks were built in five years, and the municipality are well satisfied with the working of the plan.

3. By 1934 over a tenth of the population of Stockholm was living in dwellings built by co-operative societies. These societies are encouraged in every way by the municipality and play a most important part in the housing life of the city: they are about 30 per cent to 40 per cent cheaper than dwellings privately built and owned—partly because land, plus the costs of providing essential common services, accounts for 20 per cent of the cost in private building and only 15 per cent in co-operative building, partly because the units of equipment have been standardized, mainly because a lower return is required on capital cost. As rents are therefore below the rents charged by private companies, they can if necessary be raised without putting the dwellings at a disadvantage in the open market, and this “margin of error” is considered by investors to be an additional security in financing the estates.

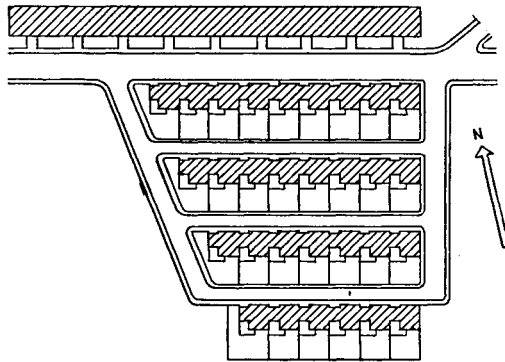
Of the two main co-operative building societies in Stockholm

\* For some years the municipality tried, not very successfully, to stimulate by subsidies the building of cheap tenements in the inner part of the town. The new methods adopted in 1928 turned out to be very effective in lowering rents. The principle is briefly as follows:

The municipality sells a site for building a tenement house. The purchase money is divided into two halves—one bears interest in the usual way; the second half bears no interest, as long as the buyer agrees to let the flats to tenants nominated by the municipality at a rent that the municipality approves. Second mortgages are granted to private builders up to 80 per cent and to societies up to 90 per cent of the total cost of the block. As security for the half of the purchase money which carries no interest, a mortgage is granted ranking directly after the mortgage which stands as security for the secondary loan. This mortgage must not exceed 90 per cent of the value of the house, and is intended to prevent the buyer evading his obligation regarding rents by selling the house; if it is sold by Executors, the town is able to control the terms of sale by its “security-mortgage.”

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one, the S . K . B . (Stockholm Kooperativa Förbundet) is a general co-operative society, engaged in the production and distribution of goods on the English model, and famous for the high standard of its work and products. The houses which it has built are admirable in design, quality and finish, but they are for their employees only.



THE S.K. KUNGSHOLMEN ESTATE:

*Built on a southern slope, with flats at the north, and four rows of little terrace houses below, each with an unimpeded view over the trees and water.*



Scale: 1 inch to 213 feet

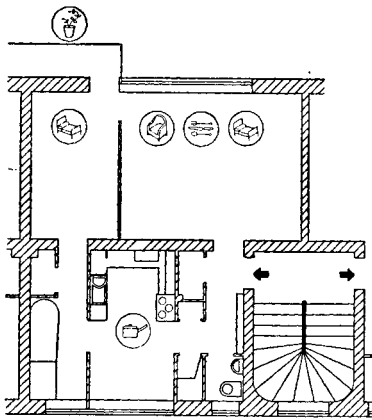
*Siting plan and lay-out of the S.K.B. estate*

The first estate was built on land owned by the society within the city boundaries; the second was built on an island just outside the jurisdiction of the Stockholm building by-laws, and cost less to build because the width of the staircases and the height of rooms could be reduced below the Stockholm requirements. Such economies were considered reasonable and justifiable by the society, which considers that the Stockholm building by-laws need revision!

It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful outlook than this new estate possesses, situated on the spine of a hilly, wooded

## SWEDEN

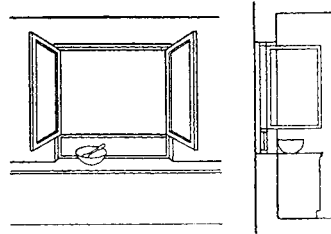
island, with views across water and forests to Stockholm. The



*Plan of the Kungsholmen flats*

dwellings were constructed in terraces one below the other, so that the view is shared by all. The highest terrace is built in flats, three storeys high, and the lower terraces are one-family houses. The plans were first shown and explained to prospective share - holding tenants in a lantern lecture by the architect, but considerable modifications and improvements were made as a result of the criticisms which were freely expressed.

convenient and modern. Constant hot water is provided, and an experiment has been made in the latest scheme of central heating by ceiling-panels; there are common washhouses, large cellars for the common storage of bicycles, etc., and private lock-ups. Living-rooms are very large, with one wall almost all glass, four windows, each four feet by three feet, in wooden frames, opening outwards in pairs. This gives an exceptional feeling of space in the room, the more so that the view is enchanting.



*The usual Swedish kitchen window, admitting the maximum light and air. The lower fixed glass pane prevents things falling out*

The kitchen-dining-room is also large and well-equipped (there is a definite reaction against the "minimum-workshop kitchen" in

## SWEDEN

the S.K.B.), and there are many cupboards. The construction is of steel and brick, the concrete floors being covered with linoleum as part of the equipment. Both the workmen and their wives preferred showers to baths, which were installed in a very small interior room, lighted artificially, which also contains a hand-basin and a w.c. Wallpapers are chosen by the tenants from among a selection submitted to them by the management.

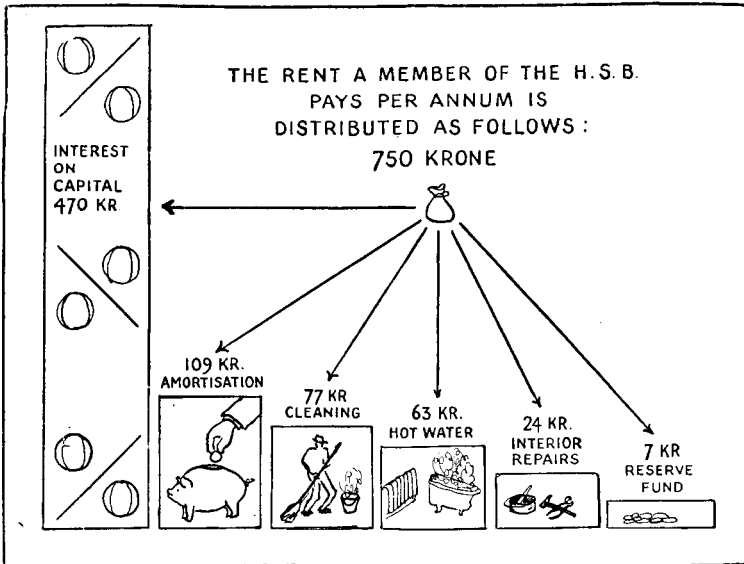
The rents of the earliest bungalows were 1,188 Sw.kr. per annum, paid monthly, for two rooms and the usual offices. The earliest flats were let at 900 kr. a year, but costs have been reduced and the latest will be 800 kr. a year, for corner flats with a superb view, and 580 kr. for all the others.

The other great co-operative, the H. S. B., is an "Owners" Society and is only concerned with housing. It builds throughout the country, developing estates and then selling them to the tenants, who become "daughter societies," responsible for their own finances, but able to call upon the main organization for help. The range of activities are indicated by the initials of the society which stand for "Saving, Spending, Building"; shareholders' deposits in the savings bank being used to finance the new estates. Originally formed to press the needs of Stockholm people for better standards of accommodation in the new post-War housing estates, the society in 1923 began itself to build. Success was immediate, branches were opened in 1924 in Göteborg, Malmö and Norrköping, and by 1936 there were branches in sixty-one towns. In that year the value of the properties amounted to 160 million Sw. kr. (of which 124 million kr. was in Stockholm), 12,494 dwellings, and over 16,000 members. In December 1935 there were two empty dwellings out of the 8,805 owned by the society in Stockholm,\* and rent arrears amounted to 0·22 per cent!

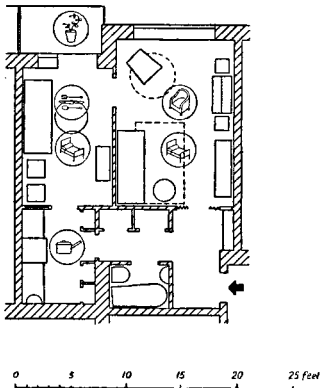
Four types of dwellings are built (all in blocks of flats):

\* Compared with 1·42 per cent empties in the whole of the city.

## SWEDEN



*Typical educational propaganda among the tenants of H.S.B.*



*Plan of a typical H.S.B. flat, with private balcony, large windows, many cupboards*

“A” (the highest standard), where a deposit must be made of 10 per cent of the value of the apartment.

“B” (a lower standard), where the deposit is 5 per cent of the value of the apartment. In both of these two classes the tenant receives interest on his deposit which will be repaid in 20 or 25 years. He must also hold a share of 50 kr. in H.S.B.



*A kitchen class in connection with the nursery school on an H.S.B. estate where young girls learn management of children, cookery, and other household arts*

PLATE 7

*In nearly every estate a room is fitted up for carpentry*



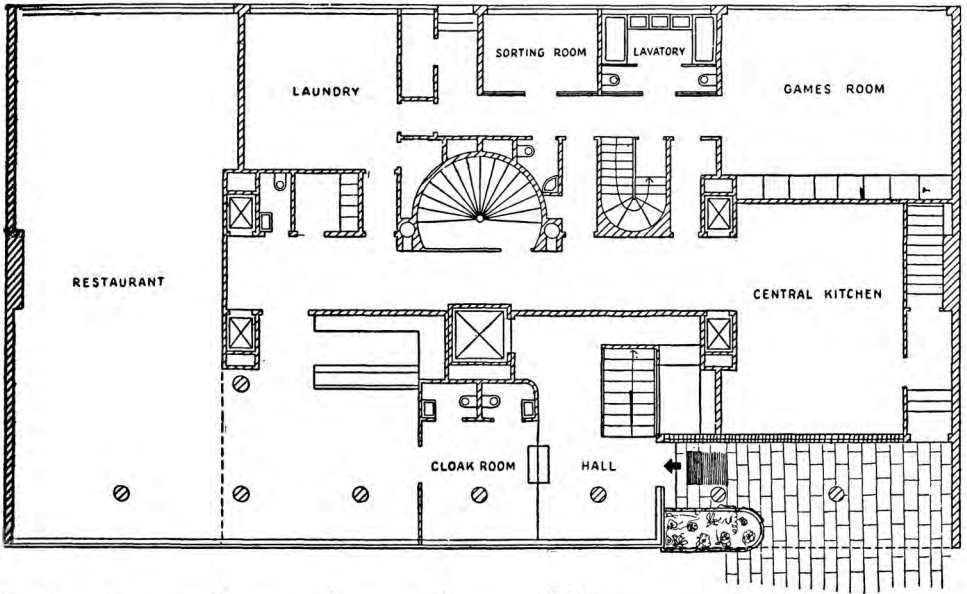
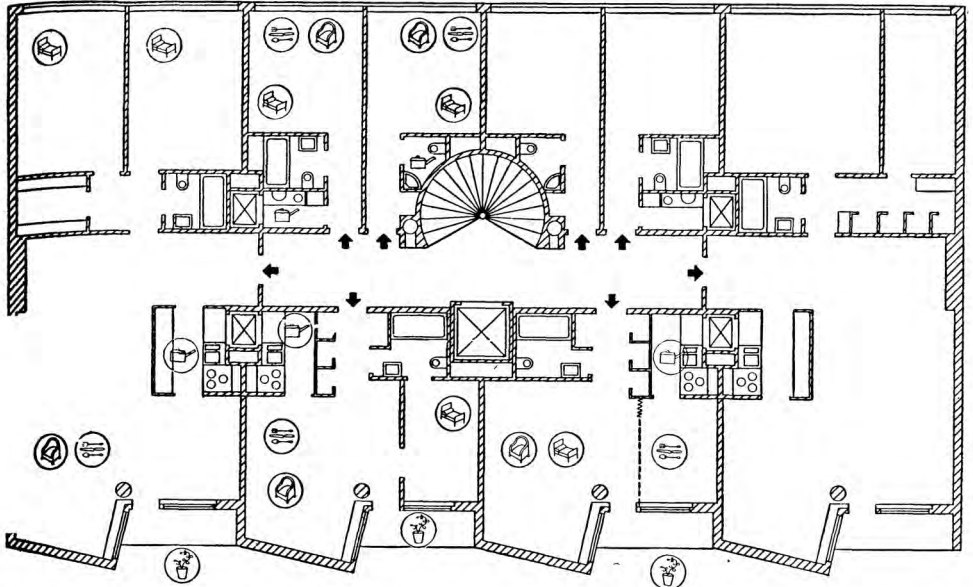




*A nursery school in one of the H.S.B. blocks of flats in Stockholm*



*The H.S.B. holiday estate on the Baltic coast*



0 5 10 20 30 40 50 feet

*Co-operative flats in Stockholm, with common rooms on the ground floor; one-, two- and three-roomed flats above*

*Europe Re-housed*

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F

## SWEDEN

“C,” where the municipality has given low-priced sites, and the tenants are not required to pay any cash deposits. In Stockholm such dwellings may be rented, and not bought.

“D” dwellings which have only been built since 1936, in direct response to the Government campaign for increasing the birth-rate (see page 57). They are being built in thirty towns in collaboration with the municipalities, the State paying 30 per cent of the rent of families with three children, 40 per cent with four, and 50 per cent with five or more children. These dwellings have not been over-simplified; they each have a bathroom, central heating and hot and cold water. In the larger cities a joint nursery is arranged for the children, but families with many children are mixed with those having few.

Tenants are found by advertisement, and must satisfy inquiries as to income and character; where applicants are receiving public assistance, the municipalities must guarantee the rent.

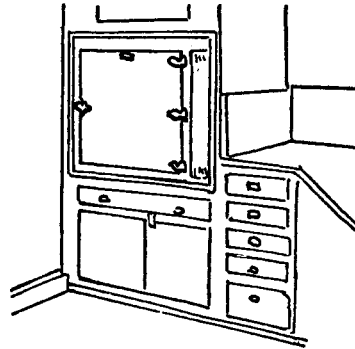
Plans are now being drawn up for one-family houses, which have proved so popular in the new municipal suburbs.

The working capital of the National Union has been raised by the issue of bond loans which are offered to H.S.B. members and “suppliers.” These bonds, which are issued in 50, 100, 500 and 1,000 kr. units, run for ten years, and amortization is by the annual drawing of lots under the control of a Public Notary. Interest ( $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent) is paid half-yearly, and at the end of 1935 the value of the bonds which had been issued amounted to more than a million kronon. There is keen competition from widely different types of people for membership of the society which carries with it the entry to the various social activities on the estates; a share in the savings bank; in the furniture shop where good modern furniture can be bought or made to order and where advice can be obtained

## SWEDEN

on any furnishing problem; in the workshop where people's own designs are made up at reasonable prices; in the beautiful holiday estates which have been made inland and on the Baltic Coast, where bungalows can be rented or rooms taken in the small hotel, where common restaurants and sports grounds are provided and where children can be sent for their holidays independently of their parents. In addition the dwellings are moderately priced; every detail

*A refrigerator is part of the built-in equipment in the newer co-operative flats*

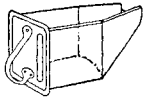
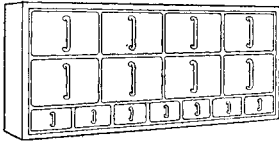


of finish and equipment has been carefully considered; kindergartens and clubrooms have been provided in the estates; theatre-groups, debating societies and keep-fit classes are encouraged for the adult tenants, and young people's sporting clubs have sprung up among the children. Infinite trouble is taken by the administrative staff of H.S.B. to weld the inhabitants of each estate into a community, and efforts have even been made—not very successfully—to induce the tenants of other co-operative societies to collaborate in the lectures, theatricals, etc.

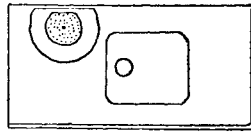
Admirable fortnightly magazines on housing and allied questions (*The House and Hearth*, with a circulation of 32,000 copies) are published by the society both in Stockholm and in Göteborg, while "modern" housing propaganda is also carried on by films and exhibitions.

## SWEDEN

When a new block is put in hand, there is constant speculation as to the improvements likely to be incorporated, and the opening ceremony is thronged with eager visitors. On such occasions several flats are furnished in different styles, and space is given for charts and photographs stressing the economy of light surfaces and simple shapes, the importance of sun, air and space, the desirability of



*Cabinet with glass drawers for storing dry groceries*



*A standardized stainless metal double sink. The circular sink is for washing vegetables and has a perforated base*

good housing conditions and, incidentally, the importance of larger families if the population is to remain constant.

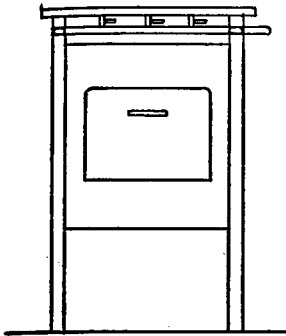
The private balconies provided for each of these flats are often large terraces on which the tenants keep tubs of flowers in the summer, taking them indoors during the long and bitter winter.

Kitchens and their equipment have been standardized, the fittings including a stainless-steel double sink with cupboards beneath, a gas cooker, china-cupboards, household utensils, a refuse pail and a kitchen table. All these items are admirably disposed for convenient working. The w.c. is generally put in the bathroom, which has also a hand-basin. Central hot water and central heating are universal, while common washhouses and special rooms for carpet-beating are equipped with the latest mechanical contrivances.

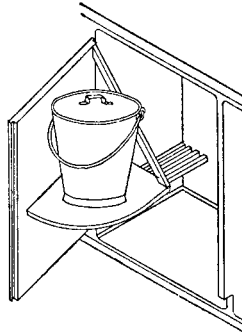
The dust-chute is devised to prevent refuse being emptied into

## SWEDEN

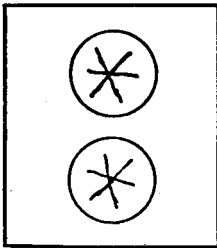
it direct from the pail; it has to be wrapped in paper and special container bags are provided for the purpose; the rubbish is burnt in an incinerator and helps to provide the central heating for the building.



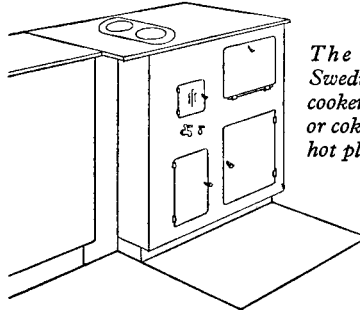
*The refuse pail is generally kept on a special ledge on the cupboard door next to*



*the sink. Ventilation is ensured by simply making the cupboard door too short by an inch at the top and bottom*



*A drop-door to the stove is usual abroad; it is easier to look into the oven, and the door acts as a shelf on to which food can be drawn*

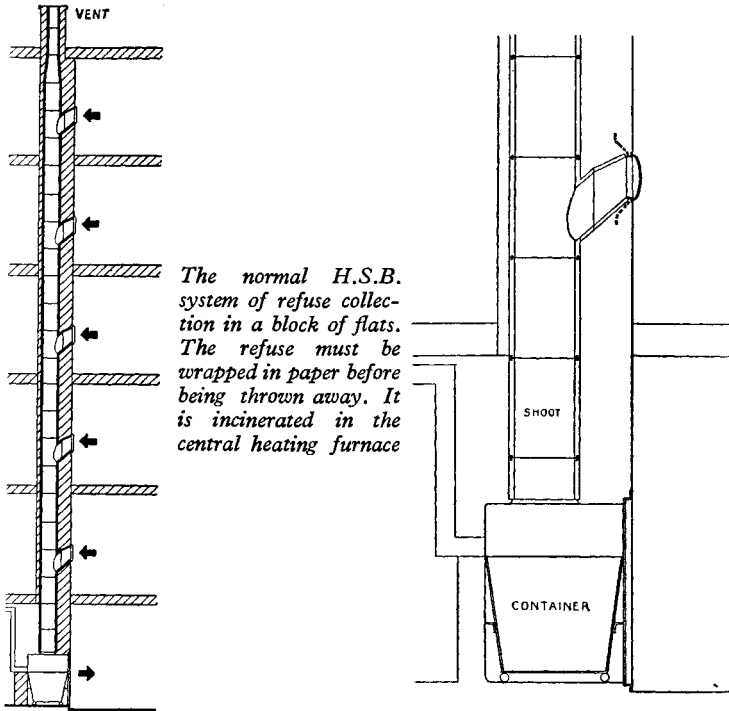


*The traditional Swedish enamelled cooker. Burns wood or coke. Ample ovens, hot plate surface and boiler*

The tenants are drawn from all occupations: in 1935, 60·5 per cent were workmen, 9·8 per cent were subordinate officials in public or private service, 23·8 per cent were shop assistants and 5·9 per cent were professional persons and high officials. This pro-

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portion between manual and brain workers remains fairly constant. In fact, to quote their own words, "the Swedish Co-operative Housing Movement has always aimed at helping all to help them-



selves who are in need of help, independent of opinions and social etiquette." In Sweden, where boys and girls have attended the same schools, irrespective of their parents' incomes or occupations, this is not so difficult as it would be in England.

Another aspect of housing in Sweden which is particularly interesting is the accommodation which is provided for old persons

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with small means. A description of a typical municipal poor-law home for Aged People, not a "show place," may be of general interest, showing as it does considerable insight into the needs of old people who can no longer be bothered with house-keeping worries but who still value their independence and their comforts.

With part of the money collected for the golden wedding present of King Oscar and Queen Sophia, a home called by their name was founded in Stockholm for eighty married couples, one member of each having to be over sixty years of age. The building was completed in 1914 and houses 1,300 persons.

Built on several floors, it has a lift, and is warmed by central heating which is kept at a temperature high enough to warm old bones. The one-roomed apartments open off a very wide corridor, of which the ends and centrally placed bays form common rooms for general meeting and gossip. Music is given twice a week in one of these corridor-lounges, where there is a piano and a radio set given by the Crown Prince for common use. Many tenants have also their own crystal sets, with earphones so as not to disturb their neighbours. Flowers and plants are in all the public parts of the building, and there is a large and popular library.

The apartments are conveniently planned and charmingly decorated. Two divan beds, a table, two comfortable chairs and a chest-of-drawers are provided, cupboards being built in. Tenants provide their own cushions, ornaments, pictures and other personal treasures. Underwear is provided by the State, but tenants provide their own top-wear which, when they die, belongs to the House and is given to needy tenants. The sister-in-charge, who has had a hospital training, is "at home" for an hour every day to deal with minor ailments: this is very much appreciated by the tenants, but there is no suggestion of a hospital atmosphere.

Each tenant has his or her old-age pension of twenty Sw. kr. a



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quarter, with an additional five Sw. kr. a month "coffee money." This regular income gives a feeling of security and independence to the tenants.

There is a common kitchen, and food, admirably cooked and well varied, is sent by lift to a serving-room on each floor. The tenants have a morning meal of milk, butter and bread, and a midday meal of two courses which they themselves fetch from the serving-room. They eat in their own rooms and wash up for themselves in a special washing-up room on each floor. On each floor there is also a small room, equipped with gas-rings and sinks, which is open between certain hours and in which the tenants can boil kettles or do simple cookery. Tenants make their own beds and tidy their own rooms: some need a friendly eye fairly often to keep them up to the required standard of cleanliness, while others need no inspection. Great difficulty is experienced in inducing the tenants to take a monthly bath; it is said that this pressure will be unnecessary in the next generation.

Tenants can go out without question from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., but later than that special permission is necessary. Visitors are allowed at any time in any part of the building.

When one of the couple dies, the survivor must move, as soon as there is a vacancy, to the adjacent "single quarters," which are designed on precisely the same plan as the married quarters. There they share a room with another pensioner, great care being taken to put people together who will be compatible. Men and women are allotted rooms on the same landings, as vacancies occur, this being found to create a much pleasanter and more normal atmosphere than if the sexes were segregated in separate blocks.

The doctors who overhaul the tenants when they first go in and keep a watch on them afterwards, decide when an old person is unable to look after himself any longer: he or she is then moved across to another wing where they live in dormitories each containing

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eight beds. They are still free to come and go as they like, but are generally too feeble to wish to leave the building often. They club together for papers, and the old men seem to spend most of the day reading current events in each of the different political papers.

Although these homes were designed primarily for people with old-age pensions, persons with private incomes are taken, the maximum payment being 1·80 Sw. kr (1s. 9d.) a day. But all tenants are taken in strict rotation of application and have to take identically the same chance of rooms with tenants who have no private incomes; they are all treated exactly the same. The fact that there are many applications from better-off people is a tribute to the imaginative treatment given by the State to the old; but there is no expenditure on a single item which could be called wasteful. These homes are really suited to the needs of the people who live in them.

Another problem in Sweden, which has been given special consideration, is the housing of single women, for whom there is a great shortage of inexpensive accommodation. Special blocks of flats, called "Flower Houses," have been built and managed on a charitable basis in the inner suburbs, but they have the disadvantage of segregating large numbers of middle-aged women in unnaturally isolated communities and cannot therefore be expected to give the same feeling of content and happiness as the State Poor-Law Homes, with their casually friendly mixture of men and women with or without a private income.

The necessary money was raised by donations and legacies, and from money which in reply to appeals was sent to help the home instead of being spent on funeral wreaths—hence the name of the houses. Enough had been collected to complete seventy-five dwellings by 1925 and to put up a similar block in the following year; the "flower fund" contributed 20 per cent of the cost, the municipality gave free land and a grant (to which the Old Age Pensions Com-

## SWEDEN

mittee contributed) of 80 per cent of the capital cost at 4 per cent interest to be repaid in thirty years.\* Very cheap good food can be had in the common restaurant in the basement, which is open also to outsiders, or meals can be served in the rooms without extra charge. No tipping is allowed. These blocks have their own laundry, grocery, restaurant, bakery and confectioners' shops. The organization is admirable, but a really happy atmosphere cannot be created by segregating hundreds of women in hostels.

Philanthropic Housing Societies as we know them in Britain, with funds raised from charitable sources, are rare in Sweden. A movement on somewhat similar lines began, however, when in 1907 a fortune of one million Sw. kr. (£50,000) was bequeathed to build small flats for large families, and especially widows. Ninety families were housed at about half the current rents paid for similar accommodation. Two large rooms and a big kitchen cost 1,080 kr. (£54) a year, and the cheapest one room and kitchenette, cost 420 kr. (£21) a year. The overcrowding permitted in these dwellings would in England be thought acute. Common baths were provided in the basement and four families had to share a w.c., though in the newer buildings each family has its own closet.

\* The management committee consists of the Governor of Stockholm in the chair, and representatives of Medicine, the Law and the Clergy, together with three persons chosen by the members.

By 1932 six houses had been built, each containing about 600 apartments and 1,000 inhabitants, and each with a manageress and a doctor who paid a weekly visit.

In 1935 there were about 1,000 names on the waiting list; the applicants are ostensibly taken in the order of application, but a preference is shown for those "likely to be nice." To qualify for admission tenants must not have more than 2,400 Sw. kr. (£125) a year and must be over sixty years of age, unless they are ill, in which case they are accepted younger.

Rents range from 425 kr. (£21 5s.) for a small room and a kitchenette, to 1,180 kr. (£59) a year for two rooms and a kitchen. A w.c. is provided in each flatlet, but no bath; the common bathroom can be used at half a kronin (6d.) a time, which includes the services of an attendant.

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A big, cheerful common room is provided in one estate, with a piano, a carpenter's bench and a stage; it is used in the mornings by a nursery school and in the evenings by adolescents. The board of management intended originally to put a policeman in control; to their surprise, however, they were approached by a lady, trained in social work, who offered to live in the block and manage the dwellings. This she did for twenty years. Rents are now collected on the methods made familiar in England by Miss Octavia Hill.

Dwellings occupied by careless or very poor families sometimes need disinfection or disinfection—an experience only too common to all Europe. The Stockholm Health Department maintains an *i s o l a t i o n h o m e*, containing forty beds, which is used mainly while dwellings are being fumigated, bedding and clothing being disinfected in a yard behind the house.

A woman and a young girl run the house, clean the rooms and cook when required, in return for free board and lodging, plus a small payment for each adult and each child in residence, and a further monthly payment in cash. Out of the "visitors" payments, if they are in quarantine, the housekeeper must buy and cook their food for them. Washing is sent out to the city laundry, which is run in connection with the men's poor-law institution. If any inhabitants show a poor-law card the caretaker reports them to the Health Department and they are boarded free. Otherwise they pay about a shilling a night (schoolchildren are free) and bring their own food, cooking it in the caretaker's kitchen.

The house is attractively but simply furnished, a typical room having pale green walls, white paint and white furniture, pink and white striped curtains, a pink tablecloth, brown linoleum and beds with white coverlets printed with pale green. The atmosphere is entirely devoid of any frowziness or "Poor-Law" feeling.

This may seem a somewhat scattered collection of impressions of

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the various housing and allied activities in Stockholm; a more critical appreciation would without doubt require much longer and more intimate acquaintance with the country. But many factors contribute to housing and the way in which a people live. The orderliness underlying the apparent casualness of Swedish life, the real democracy, refreshing to a contemporary European traveller, clearly springs from their educational system, free to and used by all, and the comparative equality of incomes, whatever the occupation. The influence of these two factors on housing is direct, for it is impossible in new estates to segregate the population into zones according to "Class"; it is unnecessary to consider the relative income-levels and occupations of next-door neighbours very closely if they have all, as boys and girls, attended the same school, like their parents before them. Education and income combine to produce a much higher general level of taste in everyday things, and makes a steady demand for necessities effective over a large proportion of the population.

The vigour in every town of the co-operative movement, the co-operative estates, the co-operative restaurants, shops and factories, the beauty of design and workmanship of many of its products, are amazing, although there is no reason why the English co-operative societies should not play a similarly progressive and cultured part in our national life. Co-operation, with all it implies of initiative and self-reliance, naturally flourishes in such soil, while the ideals which have produced these qualities have also bred the discipline which controls common activities and directs them into channels which will yield the greatest public pleasure and advantage.

But, after admiring and accepting the fundamental axioms of life in Sweden, there is a curious and apparently instinctive difference in the way in which hand and brain workers choose to live. And because, in this land of almost equal opportunity for youth, there is no rigidity between the classes of professional and manual workers,

## SWEDEN

this tendency is particularly interesting and instructive. The "intelligentsia" are Americanized, they seem increasingly to wish to live in towns, among their fellows, in flats equipped with more and more of the mechanical conveniences of modern life. Men and married women alike want to work outside the home and to avoid the responsibilities of family life and of housekeeping. They live therefore in dwellings with communal equipment, where any children they have can be put into common crèches, common nurseries, can sleep out or go away to holiday camps independently of their parents.

The manual workers, on the other hand, are moving out to the cottage estates, building their own houses, tending their own gardens, weaving their own rugs and textiles, looking after their children with skill and kindness. Diametrically opposite ideals of a happy life, each seemingly content to admit the advantages of the other point of view so long as they can pursue the way of life which they themselves prefer.

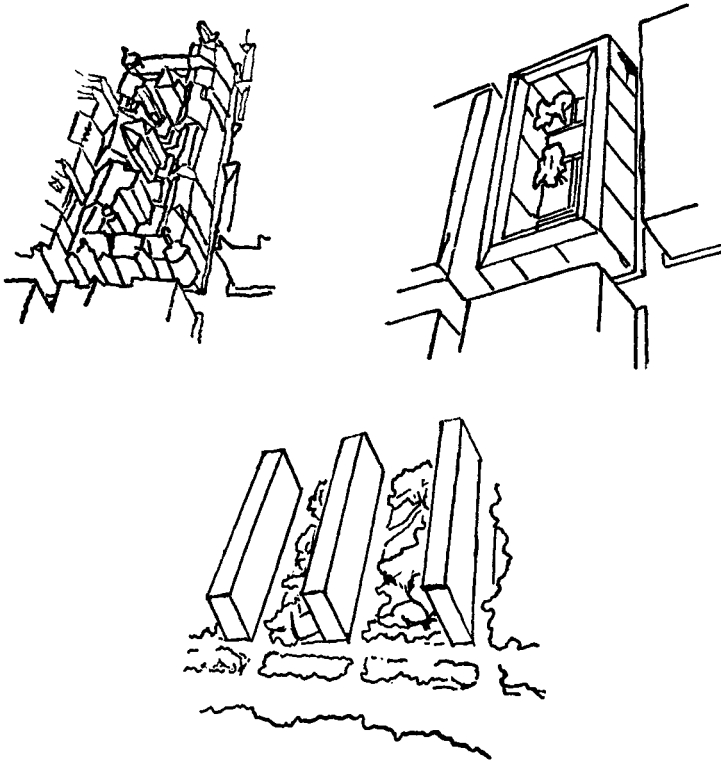
In short, the "professionals" tend to a communal way of life, the "artisans" to an individualistic. It may be that each occupation unconsciously tries to compensate in its home life for the isolation entailed in much professional, the gregariousness of much manual labour; but the writer puts forward this theory with diffidence.

Building in Sweden is interesting on account of its variety. Stockholm is built on granite, which has to be blasted for foundations and for every service; yet skyscraper towers have been built by the H.S.B., and geographical difficulties seem to be treated as challenges to the ingenuity of engineers and architects.

The progression of thought in siting estates can be seen very clearly in Sweden. The closed-courtyard tenements universally designed in Europe in the nineteenth century have evolved during twenty years' experiment into terrace formation, whether built in rows of small cottages, or flats such as the "Manhattan" development

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nicknamed from its supposed likeness to New York. In either case the rows are primarily orientated to catch the maximum of sun, which is essential to health in northern countries, while the costs of development are being lowered by constructing residential streets



only 23 feet wide, with a surface of light covering material and with a pavement on one side only.

It may well be said that Sweden is not in fact solving its par-

## SWEDEN

ticular housing problem, overcrowding, as satisfactorily as might be thought since, of the new dwellings which have been built in the last twenty years (1916 to 1936), 43 per cent contained only one room and kitchen, 28·9 per cent had two rooms and kitchen, while 28·1 per cent were either larger *or* smaller. Yet tuberculosis, the "sickness of poverty," has fallen about 40 per cent during that period, a decrease which is put down unhesitatingly to the increasingly democratic life and raised cultural standards, more outdoor life, better diet, food and homes of the people.

Whatever the criticisms based on lack of personal space and privacy within the dwellings, there is no doubt that the progress of housing technique in Sweden, the development of higher standards of living, the preservation of tradition with the modernization of towns will be worth constant and careful study during the next ten years.



## 5. Holland

THERE IS AN EXTRAORDINARY FEELING of familiarity to an English visitor about the towns and villages of Holland, and understandably, for the grave and mellow terraces of dark mulberry-coloured brick houses and cottages with bright gardens are the originals of the "Georgian" and "Regency" dwellings which first became fashionable in England at the time of our Dutch king William III, and are now rightly regarded as among our greatest architectural treasures.

But bright and happy as such houses look, Holland has, of all countries in Europe, one of the most difficult housing problems. For it has 8,500,000 people in a country of only 12,760 square miles, much of which is marshland, and the population is increasing at the rate of 107,000 persons a year.\* Three-quarters of the population are classified as urban dwellers, of whom 27·2 per cent, that is 2,162,000 people, are concentrated in the six largest towns.

Dutch towns were not developed in high blocks of flats, as were all other Continental countries, because of the difficulty of constructing in water-sodden land foundations capable of supporting heavy buildings, the expense rising out of all proportion to increases in size and weight. Dwellings had to be low but grouped closely together, as the towns were defended by dykes full of water. Living tradition naturally took the form of "one house for one family," as in England, and nearly three-quarters of the population still live in one-family houses, the majority of which are one- or two-storeyed cottages.

Care has always been taken in building development, the density and rate of increase of the population making scientific

\* This increase is said to be due to a longer duration of life, rather than to a high birth-rate; for in common with the rest of Europe, the birth-rate is declining, the rate in 1880 of 34·2 births per 1,000 having decreased to 23 in 1930, and 20·1 in 1936.

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town-planning essential. Towns and villages have had to be compact and orderly, that sufficient open country might be kept for agriculture, while the cost of providing roads and general services in marshland is too high to allow sprawling villas or dormitory suburbs. For centuries, too, local government has been efficient and enlightened and the towns have themselves owned large tracts of land on which they could control or initiate new development. Although some estates were built at too high a density during the nineteenth century, in accordance with the ideas of the time, the speculators who built them were generally obliged to conform to very definite ideas of order and decency.

Almost before they were completed, however, these estates were looked on as "slum areas," and in 1901 an Act was passed requiring each town with over 10,000 inhabitants, and all fast-growing smaller ones, to make a detailed plan for its future growth, including traffic routes, parks and open spaces, which plan had to be revised in every detail at least every ten years. The municipalities were empowered to expropriate slum properties and to purchase any unbuilt areas which were required for housing purposes. This law, which also laid down minimum standards of accommodation, has prevented there being a housing problem in Holland comparable for instance to the British problem;\* and since it decreed that all demolition as well as all new building must be carried out in accordance with the town plan, the municipalities were able to ensure that interesting houses and groups of buildings were preserved or restored.

\* The success of this policy is reflected in the low infantile and maternal mortality figures for Holland and in figures showing the improved physique of conscripts between 1870 and 1936.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Below 5 ft. 1 in. %</i>	<i>5 ft. 1 in. to 5 ft. 2 in. %</i>	<i>5 ft. 3 in. to 5 ft. 6 in. %</i>	<i>5 ft. 7 in. and over %</i>
1870	9·32	13·91	51·78	24·99
1910	1·94	5·86	46·38	45·82
1936	0·79	2·27	29·99	66·96

Jaarcijfers vor Nederland, 1936.

*Europe Re-housed*

## HOLLAND

The main problems in Holland at the end of the War were how to deal with overcrowding, how to catch up arrears caused by four years' cessation of building, and how to provide new accommodation to keep up with the rapid growth of population. A difficult problem to solve in a country which was not only already densely populated, but much of whose potential building and agricultural land had first to be reclaimed at great expense from the marsh or the sea.

This problem of land shortage has led to interesting and ingenious economies of site space, and to a much greater average density of development than has been permitted in recent English schemes. Thus thirty cottages, including parks, gardens and streets, are now built to the acre in Dutch towns, while eighteen cottages are built to the acre in country districts. These figures are interesting when compared with the average English post-War development of twelve cottages to the acre in an urban and eight in a rural area while, as the only alternative in our large towns, central blocks of flats for artisans and their families are constructed at a density varying from thirty to sixty to the acre. Many people consider this not only a wasteful use of English land, but a choice between two unnecessarily inconvenient kinds of urban life.

Great attention is devoted in all Dutch planning to roads and canals; country roads are made short and as narrow as possible, while in the towns only the traffic streets can be of any width. On subsidized residential estates, therefore, the regulations require a minimum space of only thirty feet for streets with one-family houses of two floors; of this, fifteen feet is required for the roadway for traffic, and four feet on each side for the pathways, which are separated by a strip of grass from the road. One-way streets are allowed to be narrow, ten feet being thought sufficient for the road and three feet for each pathway. On the new roads which are being

## HOLLAND

made through the Zuider Zee area, only nine feet of the surface is paved on the country roads, which are forty-eight feet wide, and ten feet on the main roads which are eighty feet wide. The unpaved borders are used by tractors, and are looked on as a reserve for future widening, which will then mean paving. Special provision is usually made for cyclists, who are very numerous in Holland.

Between 1912 and 1922, 92·62 square miles (24,000 hectares) of agricultural land were taken for new house building, roads and canals alone. The work of draining and reclaiming the *Z u i d e r Z e e*, planned in 1918 and begun in 1920, by which 864·5 square miles (224,000 hectares) of land, formerly saturated with salt water, is being reclaimed and converted into fertile soil on which a population of 30,000 persons can be settled, is therefore of great national importance—agricultural, market gardening and housing.

A special Department for Social Economy has been formed by the Ministry of Waterways to take charge of the building, estate management and general administration of this newly created province. The first district, Wieringermeer, covers an area of 77·18 square miles (20,000 hectares) of which 9·64 square miles (2,500 hectares) has been allocated for canals, roads and villages, and 67·54 square miles (17,500 hectares) for crops and pasture. There will be fourteen villages in this district, each with a wharf 328 feet (100 metres) long, a hostel and a cemetery. Farm buildings are grouped on the outskirts of the villages, where land for factories is also reserved. By 1937, three villages had been completed each with a school, a gymnasium (which can be used also as a cinema) and three churches, built by different sects with a small State subsidy.

The building costs of these villages was high owing to difficulties with foundations, to the lack of roads which increased transport costs, and to the necessity of providing housing accommodation for the workmen.



## HOLLAND

Twenty-five different types of dwellings were put up, each with three bedrooms, separate drainage and w.c., electric light and water supply, and 6,693·33 square feet (620 square metres) of garden (additional land can be rented for allotments). But the tenants were so unhesitatingly in favour of one of the types, containing the traditional two living-rooms and a separate kitchen, that a higher rent had eventually to be charged for it in order that the "modern" cottages should not stand empty; for as well as being unpopular, the latter were more expensive to build!\* Electricity for cooking was installed in some of the cottages, but this also was unpopular and had to be abandoned in favour of gas.

The villages are modern, well-planned and compact, a notable feature being that the streets are deliberately designed as such. The inhabitants include professional and business people, farmers and labourers, and in time the villages will become independent communities, electing their own council according to the Dutch constitution. At present, however, the whole reclaimed area is being administered by the Department for Social Economy, committees representing the different interests acting in an advisory capacity for each village.

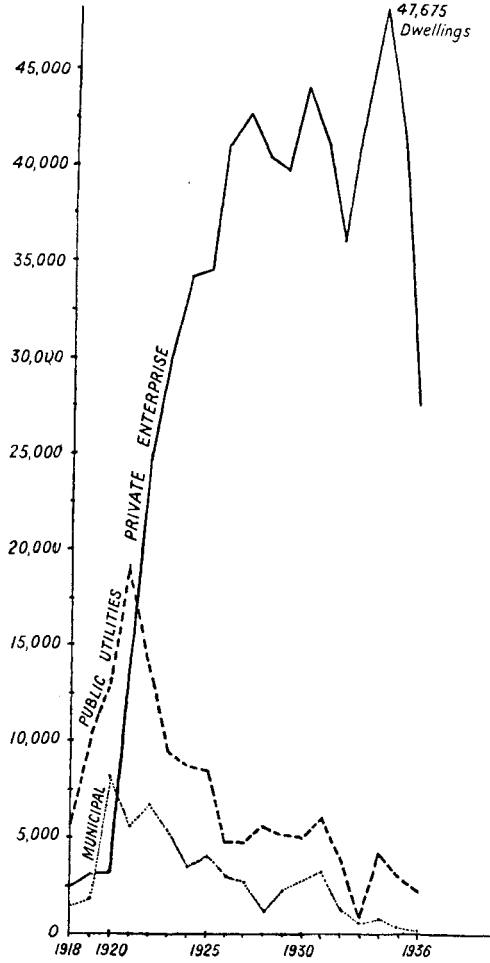
More new houses per head of the population have been built in Holland since 1918 than in any other European country, but only a quarter of this building has been done with Government help, and may therefore be assumed to have been for working people.

The financial policy adopted to achieve this output was initially very similar to Sweden's. At first direct subsidies were granted towards the cost of each working-class dwelling built. This was followed a few years later by a Government issue of loans and credits for housing purposes, the rate of interest being below

\* Rents range from 2·80 to 3·10 guilders a week, the wages of unskilled labourers being 15·67 to 17·25 guilders a week.

## HOLLAND

current market prices, generally for fifty years at from 4 per cent to 5 per cent. But instead of evolving, as in Sweden, a financial



*Annual Housing Output by various bodies*  
(Maandschrift van het Central Bureau voor de Statistiek)

## HOLLAND

system which would eventually be independent of the Government though in close touch with it, housing finance was kept in State hands, and the funds administered mainly through the municipalities. When, therefore, currency and other financial difficulties caused a drastic overhaul of Budget expenditure in 1932, monies for housing, particularly for expensive slum-clearance work, were cut down, housing initiative flagged and by 1935 subsidized housing in any form had practically ceased, although the shortage of dwellings for the poorest and largest families is still acute.\*

Directly, or indirectly through public utility societies, municipalities are responsible for the construction of subsidized housing. This is no new responsibility, for under the Housing Act of 1901 (see page 97) each municipality had been required to see that enough low-rented dwellings were provided in its own area, to find out which dwellings were overcrowded and which in need of repair. If private enterprise would not undertake the work the municipality was expected either to build the necessary houses itself (the State advancing the entire capital, on which interest had to be paid and the capital refunded within fifty years by annual payments) or to delegate its duties to a public utility housing society, lending it the

\* It is said by ill-natured critics, that the Government's policy of encouraging low-rented dwellings was intended to mitigate to some extent their policy of wage-reduction! However that may be, between 1916 and 1927, in which year rents were decontrolled, loans of cheap money were supplemented by subsidies, the State paying 75 per cent and the municipalities 25 per cent of the deficit between the economic rents of the subsidized dwellings and the rents that the workers could pay. In 1920 these rents were calculated on room area, the amount the tenant had to pay varying from 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the economic rent. By 1924 the minimum rents of new dwellings were required to bring in at least 90 per cent of the economic rent. In 1925 80,000 florins were earmarked for annual grants for slum clearance, the State and municipalities each to pay half a maximum deficit of 50 florins per dwelling per annum. In most of the country people live in their own dwellings. It was therefore necessary to enable slum dwellings to be replaced by new dwellings, also belonging to the occupier. An inclusive subsidy was there preferred to an annual subsidy.



## HOLLAND

money against a mortgage on the property. If the cost of construction was unavoidably high and the "economic" rent of the dwelling was beyond the means of the tenant for whom it was built, the interest rate on the capital employed could be lowered by an amount sufficient to reduce the rents to a sum within the tenant's means.\* In other words, the working classes were not expected to pay rents calculated both on dear money and dear materials—the one was made to cancel out the other. This clause was, however, rarely necessary until during and after the War when the cost of building rose steeply. Since 1925 it has been limited to new dwellings built to replace demolished slums, and families have to prove that they are unable to pay the full rent. It is complained that the Government loans are not large enough to bring rents within the means of the poorest families.

Although the principle of municipal responsibility for low-cost housing has been acknowledged since 1901, it has never been wholeheartedly endorsed officially and, since 1921, efforts have often been made to leave the supply of dwellings entirely to private enterprise. Large numbers of dwellings have, however, been built by the municipalities for poor persons with large families. Between 1919 and 1935, Amsterdam built 10,163, The Hague built 7,058, Rotterdam built 6,620, which works out at 143, 176 and 116 dwellings per 10,000 inhabitants respectively. Special estates, as described on page 115, have also been built in Amsterdam and at The Hague as temporary homes for the poorest and least satisfactory families who have been displaced from clearance areas. Municipalities usually manage the estates they have built themselves, but in some areas a special independent management committee has been set up, with members of the municipality elected on to the board of directors.

Public utility societies have built nearly one-

\*  $\frac{1}{8}$  or  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the tenant's income.

## HOLLAND

fifth of all the new dwellings since 1918. Societies are of two kinds: co-operatives which build for their own members, either shareholders, or annual subscribers with no other financial obligation; or semi-philanthropic housing societies which let their dwellings to persons with low incomes. In both kinds of society 90 to 95 per cent of the necessary capital is generally provided by the State and the municipality between them, while civic land is given, leased or sold on favourable terms for the new estates. But, because the societies provide so small a percentage of the cost of land and buildings, they are stringently controlled by the municipal housing committees who supervise the finance, building, upkeep, lettings and general business operations of every public utility society in their area. And when a society is dissolved, its whole estate and property must be offered to the municipality as redemption of the capital invested.

There seems remarkably little variety throughout the country in the type of subsidized dwellings which are being built. An account of Amsterdam and its achievements will give a very fair idea of urban housing, and the capital is therefore described in some detail.

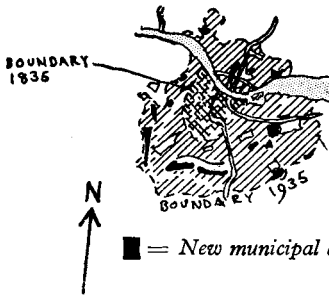
Until 1870 Amsterdam was bounded and restricted by the Great Canal. Between 1870 and 1900 there was a period of great prosperity and of intensive building just outside the city boundary by speculative jerry-builders who were neither controlled nor supervised by the municipality. To check this abuse a plan for the ordered growth of the city was hurriedly prepared by the official city architect, but summarily rejected by the Councillors who at that time believed in private enterprise and free development; houses and tall blocks of flats were accordingly built higgledy-piggledy in open spaces, in back gardens, often back-to-back. These are the slums of to-day.

By 1900 the evils and future cost to the city of this disorderly and often dangerous building was realized, and a committee was

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formed to supervise the development of the town. Under the Town Planning Act of 1901 a completed scheme was evolved which established a green belt and parkways, and safe-guarded from exploitation for commercial development the lovely waterways, crossed by bridges, fringed by trees, bordered by brick paths and flanked by rows of four-storeyed houses with their large and beautifully proportioned windows.

The height of buildings is limited, as in Venice, by the difficulty



### AMSTERDAM

*Superficial area 11 square miles*

1910, 566,000 *inhabitants*

1920, 647,000     *„*

1930, 757,000     *„*

*Average density of persons 110 per acre*

■ = *New municipal estates.*     *Scale: 1 inch to 4 miles*

and cost of making safe foundations. Attics are not worth building because of the extra weight imposed, while cellars are too damp to be healthy. The preparation of the ground is extremely expensive, as the average length of the piles which must be driven into the ground is 48 feet (14.5 metres) and the number and length of the piles which are required to support a building, together with the quality of the construction, are carefully checked by municipal inspection.

The general rule in Amsterdam is that the height of buildings, may equal the width of the street. This is not applicable to Zone A, the kernel of the town, which is excepted from the rule because of the position of the many canals: the maximum height permitted there is twice the width of the street between the buildings, or 40 feet where the width is under 20 feet. In Zone B, the rest of the old town,

## HOLLAND

the height allowed is one and a half times the width of the street, with a maximum of 69 feet (21 metres). In neither area can buildings be erected over four storeys in height, or containing more than four dwellings, one above the other, while in a poor area the permitted height can be reduced at the discretion of the town-planning authority to two floors in very narrow streets. The "garden city" suburbs are developed in terraces of two-storeyed flats and houses which form very attractive little streets.

Until 1890, land in the city had mainly belonged to private owners. After that date the municipality decided to buy at market prices as much as they could acquire or afford, and to permit development only for the public advantage. The possession of this land had considerable influence on the framing of the national Town Planning Act of 1901.

Until the central city areas became too congested for their taste merchants lived on the lower floors of four-storeyed houses built on the banks of the canals, with their warehouses above them. The poles which are still put beneath the eaves are a survival of the beams on which goods were hauled from the pavements to the upper floors. When the rich moved to suburbs outside the town, poor families crowded into many of these fine old houses which, with the jerry-builders' blocks of flats built during the industrial prosperity of 1870 to 1900, now constitute the worst slums. The rents of rooms in these "made-down" houses are high for what the tenants get, but low compared with new dwellings, so that the poorest and largest families tend, therefore, to congregate in the centre of the town.

In 1915 a housing director, with a special department, was appointed by the municipality to deal with all questions concerning the building and management of new estates in the city.

Few dwellings had been condemned as uninhabitable before 1904. But since the passing of the Housing Act of 1901, 1,027 basement and 7,496 other dwellings have been condemned, 5,500 of them

## HOLLAND

between 1926 and 1937. In one area alone, 232 out of 447 dwellings were declared uninhabitable.

Under the Town Plan, slum clearance in Amsterdam had at first taken the same form as in England—clearance and improvement within the same area. In Amsterdam, however, the problem was appreciated sooner than in England and in the words of the housing director the solution was “immediate large-scale replanning combined with demolition, reconditioning, zoning and rebuilding.”

Amsterdam slums are, however, rarely bad enough to make it necessary to pull down and rebuild whole quarters. In many cases thorough repair gives satisfactory results, a comparatively small group of houses is demolished, and neither the traditional character nor the associations of the neighbourhood destroyed.

Before clearance, all the houses in the slum area are thoroughly examined and their defects and requirements noted, to decide how they shall be treated. In “mixed” areas, solidly built or historic houses, shops, offices and public buildings such as schools, are preserved as far as possible, and even for the oldest buildings, as they were originally well-built and are still beautiful, repair is often preferred to demolition.

Clearance is carried out by the municipality, the housing department preparing the clearance measures and everything relating to condemnation and expropriation,\* while the new layout is drawn up by the town extension department in collaboration with the office of public works. Space is reserved for public gardens, playgrounds and storage sheds, according to the needs of the district; and when the new streets have fine frontages, they are used as sites for public buildings or leased to private concerns at profitable rents.

The housing department keeps a careful record of the dwellings

\* The compensation price is agreed, as in England, between the owner and the municipality, any difference of opinion being decided by award of special assessors.

## HOLLAND

which have been condemned in each area, in order that they can estimate in advance the number of disturbed tenants who will require to be rehoused. They also keep an up-to-date list of applicants for new dwellings such as young, newly married people or new immigrants to the town. Well-to-do families turned out of a district which is being replanned, are said to get a suitable dwelling without difficulty in houses built either by private enterprise or by a public utility society, while the poorer or less desirable families are housed in dwellings built for them by the municipality itself.

There has been much new building in Amsterdam since 1918. Between 1921 and 1934, 78,010 new dwellings were built, 48 per cent with Government or municipal help and, therefore, more or less under the control of the city; six blocks of dwellings, containing 900 rooms, for people living by themselves; a hostel for old people; and two holiday homes.\*

By 1937 the housing department owned or managed 32,157 houses, which represented 15 per cent of the total number of dwellings in Amsterdam.

Most of the dwellings even in Amsterdam are, as in England, one-family houses, although blocks of flats have been built too as in all the larger towns. The most usual height for flats is, however, the

\* Joden, a bad district, and Jordaan, another slum area of 162 acres with a population of 44,341 and a density of 435 persons per residential acre, were scheduled in 1930 for immediate clearance: this has been postponed owing to the economic crisis, under which Amsterdam suffered particularly: 50,000 of the unemployed were in Amsterdam out of 150,000 for the whole of Holland.

The holiday homes were established by the Zomerbuten (the Summer Holiday) Public Utility Society—one at Zandvoort which is on the sea, the other at Soesduinen, which is inland heather-country. The buildings are simple, with all necessary furniture and cooking apparatus and also a central restaurant. But the homes have recently been run at a loss because people cannot afford holidays since the general cut in wages and the suppression of the holiday bonus of 30 guilders which used to be given to municipal employees.

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same as that of a cottage, two floors, and they hardly ever exceed four floors, though one experimental block ten storeys high has been constructed in Rotterdam, with a steel frame and wooden filling cased with steel and zinc.

But in Holland, as in England, class feeling is strong. Among the well-to-do inhabitants in the south of Amsterdam, which is mainly middle-class, much ill feeling was created by planting among them families from the slum areas in the "Afrikaanische-Bruent," though the flats are in effect pleasant and not appreciably different from the neighbouring houses. The municipality is hoping that the surrounding landowners and tenants will discover that their middle-class property has not depreciated in value to any extent owing to the proximity of this new estate.

Considerable importance is attached in Holland as in Britain to energetic official housing inspection and to the enforcement of regulations concerning the upkeep of dwellings. The theory that such action will do away with overcrowding has been somewhat shaken by the discovery of the Housing Director for Amsterdam that overcrowding is negligible in those parts of the city where public utility societies and the municipality have built considerably. He puts forward the refreshing conclusion that overcrowding will automatically stop as soon as there are enough large, cheap dwellings. Why then, he asks, should a complicated system of inspection and control be organized, since nobody prefers to live in an overcrowded dwelling?

The housing director also considers that the size of a dwelling is more important than its equipment. Any saving, therefore, which can be made by improved methods of construction or by the economy of large-scale production is spent on increasing the livable area of the dwellings. In view of the large families in Holland, this principle has strong arguments in its favour. But baths are looked upon as a "luxury," although a by-law (which had hardly been used by the

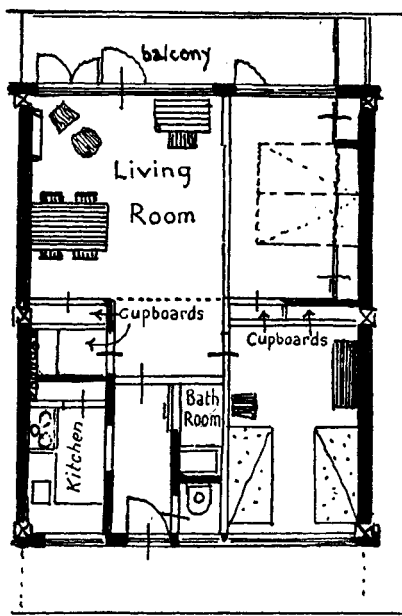
## HOLLAND

end of 1937) decreed that space must in future be provided in each new dwelling for a shower-bath: it is said that municipal baths are built near most of the new estates and are used by the tenants. Common laundries and baths are only provided in the two "slum settlements," Asterdorp and Zeebruggedorp, the extra expense to the municipality being justified by their so-called "educational" value.

Three public utility societies with contiguous estates totalling 600 to 700 dwellings, were permitted in 1932 to experiment with central heating and central coke-fired hot-water supply to serve all three estates. The additional charge on the rent came to 90 cents (about 2s. 6d.) per family per week in winter and summer alike and, although the tenants were middle-

class and better-off artisans earning between 30 and 40 guilders (£3 to £4 10s.) per week, the additional charge was found to be very unpopular. In another estate, the Rotterdam "sky-scraper," central heating was installed for the middle-class tenants, but no hot water was available. It is said that the porter brings a canful on request!

Central supply of hot water at the present cost of installation, and with the high price of coal and coke in Holland, is obviously too



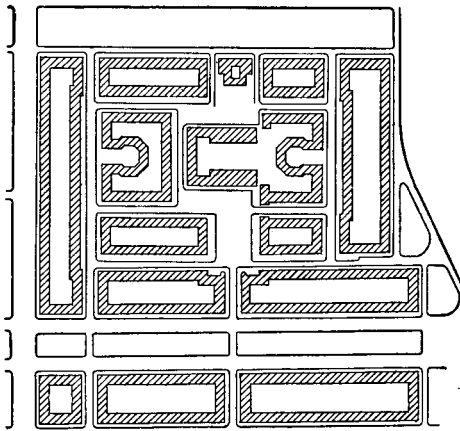
*Plan of the Rotterdam flats, with large private balconies and a common balcony approach. (Scale: 1 inch to 12 feet)*



## HOLLAND

expensive to put into dwellings for families with low incomes, while electricity for heating, hot water or cooking, is also only within reach of the rich.

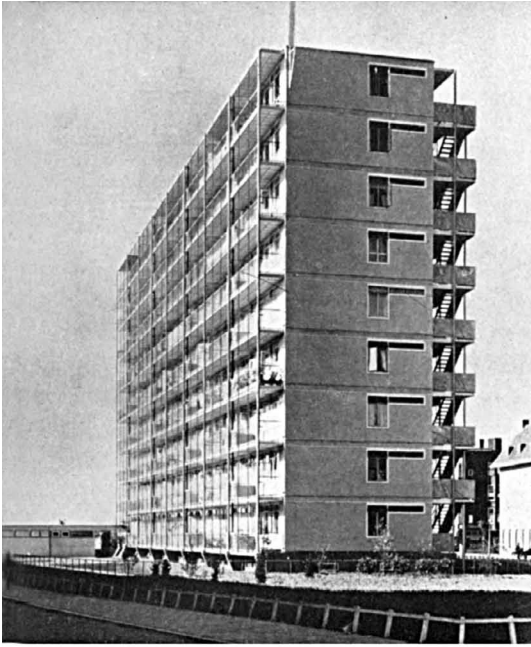
Municipal flats are built in the customary four or two storeys, with small gardens for the ground floor tenants and balconies for the upper floors, where beds and blankets can be aired. Entry is off an internal



*Layout of two- and four-storey flats in Amsterdam. The closed courtyards should be noted*

staircase, often of wood and very steep, which would certainly not be passed under British fire regulations. There is a bell to each flat and the street door locks automatically, but can be opened by a handle from each balcony without the tenant having to go downstairs. Ventilation of these staircases appeared noticeably imperfect.

The flats are well supplied with cupboards. The kitchen, out of which the balcony leads, is equipped with a dresser and a sink with a tiled surround and with only cold water laid on. According to custom, tenants bring their own stoves, generally gas for cooking and coke for heating, a recess with a flue being provided in the living-room. Ceilings are wired for electric light, the tenants bringing their own fittings. Windows are generally sash windows, with



*The experimental "skyscraper"  
for workers in Rotterdam*

PLATE 9

*One of the six rings of canal which pass through Amsterdam, carrying a heavy load of traffic. The trees, the brick surface, and the absence of railings have made the roads bordering them into lovely and popular promenades*





PLATE 10

*The allotment area in the middle of the estate for "undesirable" families, Asterdorp*

*Typical two-storey flats in Amsterdam. The upper flat has a balcony and window-boxes, the ground-floor has a small garden*

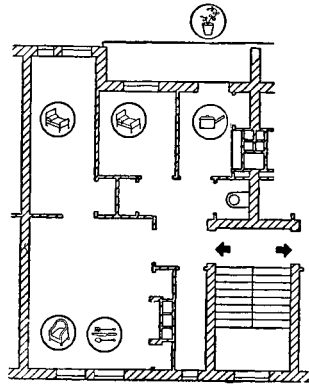


*The "educational colony" at Asterdorp. The narrow road and wide pavements with trees are attractive*

## HOLLAND

wooden frames. Floors are wooden, kitchen walls are painted, all other rooms papered. The water-closet is generally built on an inside wall, ventilated by an airshaft and lighted from the passage by frosted glass panes in the door, and from the kitchen by frosted glass in the partition wall. Gas and electricity are paid for by coin insertion: one guilder pieces are used for the electric meter; and for the gas meter special coins have to be bought, which vary in value according to the price of gas, which is adjusted every year.

The general effect of these new estates is extremely pleasant. The front hedges or garden plots are planted and maintained by the building estate, and the roads in residential districts are made of attractive small hard bricks, said to be adequate for the traffic, mainly bicycles, which passes over them. Special dwellings for old people,\* schools and shopping centres are included as part of each municipal rehousing scheme.



*Plan of flats in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.*

*Scale: 1 inch to 17 feet*

From experience, housing authorities are strongly of the opinion that large families are better housed in cottages than in flats, partly because they are said to damage tenements and turn them into slums, but also because a garden is useful as a playground for the younger children and for growing fresh vegetables for the family. And, as in England, considerable importance is attached to the

\* The upper quarters built for old people generally seem poky, with perilous stairs. However, the only occupant I saw was an old sailor, who seemed to think the steepness of the staircase kept him in training.

## HOLLAND

desirability of building working-class dwellings with three bedrooms, so that parents, boys and girls may have separate rooms. A few blocks of flats have been provided with their own communal laundry, but in general flat-dwellers must go to the central city laundries. This is considered an additional disadvantage in flats in comparison with small houses, which are always provided with their own equipment for washing clothes. The more modern architects are at present engaged in trying to inveigle families out of the habit of eating and living in their kitchens, by the subtle tactics of making them too small for anything but work. This tendency is being stoutly resisted—the “minimum working-kitchen unit” being even more unpopular among the Dutch working women than it is in the rest of Europe.

It is surprising to find that only one kindergarten-crèche has been provided in all these new estates. This is subsidized partly by the municipality and partly by private persons, and only women who are at work are allowed to leave their children in it.

The first public utility society in Amsterdam was formed in 1902 and built its first dwellings in 1906.\* By 1937, twenty-four such societies had built no less than 16,000 dwellings and had received Government loans amounting to 75,000,000 guilders repayable over fifty or sometimes seventy-five years.

In leasing land to public utility societies (on a fifty-year lease, the period of loan repayment) the municipality bases the rent on the original cost-price, plus the cost of laying down roads, gas, sewers, etc., and a share of the cost of the avenues, trees, open spaces and parks provided in that area by the municipality under the town plan.

In spite of the enormous number of new dwellings built in Amsterdam since the War there was still an acute shortage of low-

\* In 1915, public utility societies were the only people to build dwellings for the poorest largest families, that is for families of ten or more persons. These dwellings, together with 306 built by them for aged persons, have now been taken over by the municipality.

## HOLLAND

rented housing in 1937. For from 1929 the number of families in Amsterdam was increasing at an average rate of 2,500 a year; about 500 houses a year were condemned for human habitation, and a further 500 were demolished or converted to non-residential uses. This meant that 3,500 new dwellings were required every year, and the housing director asserts that, for some years, at least 4,500 to 4,700 will be necessary. This view is borne out by a recent census of housing conditions in the city which shows a 9 per cent deficiency of large, low-rented dwellings.\*

“Undesirable” families from slum areas are given the opportunity of moving temporarily to dwellings on special estates, built by the municipality and let at particularly low rents. These estates, which are meant to be educational, are, however, unpopular, as a definite social stigma attaches to those who go there, and in consequence they are not, and never have been, full.

The Asterdorp estate, built in 1926, is a typical example of these Dutch experimental colonies. One hundred and thirty-two houses were built within an enclosing wall and the tenants are under strict control, though not so strict as on such estates in The Hague. But in 1931 there were only 68 families living there; in 1932, 106; in

\* *Amsterdam*

1930 *Census figures*

<i>Number in family</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Insufficient accommodation</i>
2 persons	46,918	1,944 ( 4·1%)
3 persons	45,826	3,435 ( 7·5%)
4 persons	37,610	3,959 (10·5%)
5 persons	22,978	3,010 (13·1%)
6 persons	12,973	1,891 (14·6%)
7 persons	7,173	1,110 (15·5%)
8 persons	4,066	715 (17·6%)
9 persons	2,302	375 (16·3%)
10 or more	2,487	394 (15·8%)
	182,333	16,833 ( 9·2%)

## HOLLAND

1933, 110; while in December 1937 there were only 90 families, totalling 400 persons. Some families were very large, one actually having twelve children.

The general arrangement of the estate with its brick roads and paved paths is very attractive. The houses are one-storeyed, with a tiny backyard. Some allotments have been provided, but not enough for the demand. There are an open playing space, sheds for hawkers' carts, club rooms, a children's library, a building containing baths, and the more popular showers, and a laundry. Central hot-water plant (coke and steam) for the laundry and the baths is under the care of the resident caretaker. A charge of 20 cents a time is made for the use of the laundry, which is divided into separate compartments, each equipped with sink and mangle, and available to each tenant once a week; the apparatus is said to be roughly handled. The laundry itself has pretty white walls and blue doors.

The planning and equipment of the dwellings is similar to that on the ordinary municipal estates, the living-room-kitchen having a tiled recess for the stove, a tiled surround and a granite draining-board to the sink, and ample cupboards. Living-rooms are papered above a painted dado and bedrooms are distempered. There is no flue in the bedrooms and no means of heating them. Dustbins are emptied three times a week.

The clubs meet in winter only and are for the women and children, nothing whatever being done for men or older boys, who seem to spend their leisure standing aimlessly at street corners, spitting. Membership of the clubs averages eighty to ninety children, fifteen girls and thirty to forty housewives. In summer a holiday school for the children is run by voluntary social workers in the estate clubroom, and at Christmas a *fête* is held, at which work done in the clubs is on view. A nurse comes three times a week to attend to minor ailments, and is consulted on the average by some twenty to thirty people. Bedding and blankets can be bought through the

## HOLLAND

estate manager by payment in advance. The woman estate manager's office is beside the clubrooms.

Neither here nor at the other similar estate at Zeebruggedorp are the great doors into the estate shut at 11 p.m., as they are at The Hague; the tenants are free to come and go as they wish. Yet it cannot be denied that they appear antagonistic to their surroundings and that they come into residence with reluctance.

Of the families which were promoted from these "temporary housing estates" into normal municipal dwellings, thirteen left their new quarters—eight of them because they found work in other towns or could not pay the rent, and only four or five because they could not keep up to the normal standard.

The Amsterdam housing department employs fifteen women estate managers trained on the method evolved in England by Miss Octavia Hill. They are responsible for the management of all municipal dwellings but are assisted by men in the actual work of rent collecting, which is done from door to door. These women, in addition, do social work on the slum-clearance estates, they inspect houses and gardens and see that the dwellings are not being unduly knocked about, that sheds are not being built in the gardens, that there are no lodgers, no dogs, no cats or other pets. They also collect the money for beds and bedding, which can be bought through the municipality by payment in advance. There is a local office on each estate, and on Saturday the women estate managers report in person at the head office, which gives an opportunity for discussion. This method of management is warmly recommended by the housing director, who claims that arrears of rent and bad debts have been reduced to a minimum.

Although municipal buildings are put out to competitive tender, the maintenance work is done by the municipality itself, which pays its labour at fixed wages with a bonus for quicker work on



## HOLLAND

special jobs, which brings the wage above that paid by private employers.

A maintenance allowance used to be made of 40 guilders per dwelling per annum: this has recently been reduced to 36 guilders in order to economize on municipal expenditure, but the lower sum is said to be insufficient to keep the dwellings in proper repair, and to be very short-sighted economy.

Brick, which is the traditional building material of the country, became very expensive after the War and experiments have been made from time to time in other methods of construction. Thus in the Tuindorp Watergraafsmeer Garden City, built between 1924 and 1925, nine hundred dwellings were built of concrete. They are in two-storey buildings, whether cottages or flats, their walls are covered with creepers and the estate is very attractive. Yet concrete has been judged on the whole an unsatisfactory substitute for brick.

In 1919 other emergency dwellings were built of wood and stone: they were built to last only fifteen years, but at the end of that time were still in such good condition that a Government loan was obtained for overhauling them, and they were still in use in 1937, giving great satisfaction.

Though in 1935 the cost of building was down to the level of 1908, the housing director maintained that it was impossible to build a dwelling in Amsterdam that would pay for its cost if the rent was below five guilders a week.\*

\* Municipal dwellings have been aided by Government loans and grants, and rents have, therefore, been below their "economic" level. For instance, 32,257 dwellings were built in 1928 either in four storeys in the centre of the town or in cottage estates in the suburbs to let at rents of 3.50 to 6.50 guilders a week. They were composed of the following sizes:

<i>1-bedroom</i>	<i>2-bedroom</i>	<i>3-bedroom</i>	<i>4-bedroom</i>	<i>more</i>
81	612	1,160	716	8

The municipality has built 3,050 dwellings to rehouse slum dwellers displaced from clearance areas. This they were helped to do by a Government

## HOLLAND

As skilled men earn between 20 and 30 guilders and unskilled from 15 to 20 guilders a week, while old-age pensions are 3 guilders for one person and 5 guilders for two, it will be seen that the dwellings described in the schedule below were available only to the skilled artisans. It has been suggested that the way to correlate rents with wages and with the needs of large families is to institute a system of rent rebates, but the idea has been turned down as impracticable and likely to give rise to endless disputes. Instead, dwellings are priced according to their position and their estimated desirability, which gives a certain elasticity to the rents.

To qualify for houses at uneconomic, that is to say subsidized rents, families must either be displaced from their homes by closure or expropriation, must be living in insanitary or overcrowded

loan at 4 per cent interest, repayable in fifty yearly instalments. Half the deficit between the cost of building and the rents charged was borne by the municipality and half by the Government.

	<i>No. of dwellings</i>	<i>Built</i>	<i>Weekly rents Guilders</i>	<i>Dwellings with bedrooms</i>				
				<i>One</i>	<i>Two</i>	<i>Three</i>	<i>Four</i>	<i>More</i>
Buiksloterham (one-family houses)	536	1928-29	3.75 to 6.50	—	—	139	397	—
Afrikaanische (four-storeyed flats)	280	1928-29	4.10 to 5.0	—	19	252	9	—
Spaarndammer (four-storeyed flats)	155	1928-29	3.60 to 5.0	—	66	83	6	—
Buiksloterham (one-family houses)	453	1930-31	3.75 to 6.25	81	78	290	4	—
Afrikaanische (four-storeyed flats)	131	1930-31	4.25 to 5.75	—	12	108	11	—
Afrikaanische (four-storeyed flats)	257	1930-31	3.50 to 6.25	—	187	68	2	—
Het Blauwe Zand (one-family houses)	765	1931-32	3.50 to 6.50	—	250	220	287	8
Totals	2,577	1928-32	3.50 to 6.50	81	612	1,160	716	8

## HOLLAND

dwellings, or be able to prove somehow that their incomes are too low for them to be able to pay the economic rent.

In 1925 the housing department circulated a questionnaire among 14,000 municipal and public utility society tenants and also among 2,825 municipal workers who were not housed in any particular estate. In both cases it was found that the amount paid for rent averaged one-sixth of the total family *expenditure*. As the expenditure on rent in Holland before the War varied between an eighth and a sixth of income the proportion of rent to income does not appear to have altered even when the housing shortage was greatest.

But there is little doubt that private enterprise in Holland, while meeting the needs of the middle and upper classes, is not building for families who cannot afford a rent above five or seven florins a week. This is, however, just the section of the community in which there is the greatest increase of population and the families are largest.\*

\* Eight per cent of all the households in Holland have more than five children. The highest percentage (over 10 per cent) is in towns of one to ten thousand inhabitants, the lowest percentage is in the four biggest towns.

In the 1930 Census returns, the comparatively large homes in Holland are shown very clearly. Out of the 1,885,567 dwellings in the Kingdom only 7·4 per cent had one and 14·5 per cent had two rooms, 34·8 per cent had three or four rooms and 43·4 per cent had five and more rooms. The greatest overcrowding was in small towns with two to twenty thousand inhabitants; the greatest number of empty dwellings were in the big towns.

### *Holland*

#### 1930 Census figures

<i>Number in family</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Insufficient accommodation</i>
2 persons	359,319	12,822 ( 3·6%)
3 persons	370,101	35,064 ( 9·5%)
4 persons	328,788	41,701 (12·7%)
5 persons	235,988	36,599 (15·5%)
6 persons	159,095	27,502 (17·3%)
7 persons	103,764	19,097 (18·4%)
8 persons	66,710	12,932 (19·4%)
9 persons	42,310	8,189 (19·4%)
10 or more	54,669	10,817 (19·8%)
Total	1,720,744	204,723 (11·9%)

## HOLLAND

Unless, therefore, the State and the municipalities step in, the shortage will again become serious. For although arrears have apparently been overhauled, a regular building programme which will keep pace with the annual increase in families, and will replace worn-out, low-rented dwellings, is essential for Holland.

## 6. Germany

FROM BERLIN TO HAMBURG, Frankfurt to Munich, Stuttgart to Leipsic, in every town of any size in Germany, something of architectural importance has been built since the War. It is a significant and encouraging sign that these buildings are generally dwellings for the people.

The population of Germany nearly trebled between 1800 and 1936, but whereas in 1800 over six-sevenths of the people were country-dwellers, by 1936 the proportion had shrunk to one-third. The average number of people to the acre is still only 0.57, or only half the average density in England and Wales, and although density in the towns is still high, ample room exists for extending them without unduly absorbing land required for agriculture and industry.

Until comparatively recently Germany consisted of separate States, each with its own habits of living. There was therefore no national tradition in housing, and the gamut was run between Berlin, the greatest tenement city in the world, and Heidelberg, where in 1905, 76 per cent of the households in one suburb were professional agriculturists working small-holdings within the town.\*

Most German industrial cities had been able to assimilate more or less effectively the rapid growth of population during the nineteenth century, partly by intensive housing in "barrack tenements," and partly through vigilant control of town development, helped by the fact that the municipalities owned much of the land on which their

\* By 1933 the agriculturists in this suburb had dwindled to 7 per cent. This change was regretted, and in the new plan for the town, spaces are reserved for agriculture which must not be built on and which reach as far as the centre of the town. These wedges of green form the lungs of the town, avoid the expense of laying out costly gardens, and maintain the important economic connection between artisans and peasants, as well as ensuring supplies of fresh fruit and vegetables for the townspeople and an alternative means of livelihood.

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towns were built.\* This enabled them to mitigate by parks, open spaces and wide streets the consequences of the deplorably high density at which block-dwellings were built during the nineteenth century, prevented even the most over-built and industrialized German city from reaching an unendurable level of squalor and ugliness, and made it possible after the War to disentangle their over-compactness with comparative success. An extension between 1919 and 1924 of the policy of municipal land purchase, allowed new estates to be developed in the suburbs without the handicap of high land charges. The very compactness of these old tenement towns meant that the new suburbs were not far from the centre of the town, and their inhabitants still within easy distance of their work.

\* In 1901, municipalities in Prussia were officially advised to buy land and themselves to build low-rented dwellings: by 1907 at least half the larger cities had complied, and between 1901 and 1913 forty towns provided 312.7 acres (124.6 hectares) of land for building purposes.

Since 1918 this policy has been widely extended; between 1919 and 1927 four-fifths of all the land used for new dwellings was municipally owned, and they have been buying steadily since.

In 1920, municipalities were empowered to expropriate unbuilt land, when it was required for housing purposes; the Hanseatic towns alone had the power to expropriate by zones. The use of public funds for buying building land at cheap rates has done a great deal to promote house building.

In 1924, fifty-three towns were known to own over one-fifth, while some owned as much as half or three-quarters of the land on their outskirts. In one hundred and seventy-three large towns 11,347 acres (4,594 hectares) of land were allocated to building development. In ninety-two towns, two-thirds of all building land was theirs, while in some it amounted to four-fifths. In seventy towns, each with over 50,000 inhabitants, 45 per cent of their land was placed at the disposal of public utility societies, 32 per cent was used by private builders, while 23 per cent was built on by the municipalities themselves. By 1932, forty-nine German cities (excluding Berlin and Erfurt) had sold 7,445 acres (30,143,000 square metres) of undeveloped land at a price averaging under RM. 2 per square metre (see *Stat. Jahr. des Deu. Reiches*, 1934).

The land was sometimes leased but generally sold, with the right to repurchase. The necessary urban building land has, therefore, been obtained without difficulty, the prices asked by municipalities being sometimes even below the lowest prices in the open market.

## GERMANY

Urban housing in Germany is particularly interesting and instructive because it shows so clearly how a type of development is inevitably a 'slum' area if it denies the elementary needs of space and privacy to the inhabitants. The core of the problem in 1919 was the direct result of the town-planning and by-law regulations of the 1850's by which high tenement buildings and excessive site-density had been deliberately encouraged. In the Berlin town-plan of 1858, for instance, six- and seven-storey flats had been permitted with tiny courtyards, with back buildings and side wings, all designed to save expenditure on road costs and land charges, but resulting in intense urban land speculation and inflated site values. And this form of tenement development had been followed throughout the industrial cities of Germany.

A reaction against this policy of dense building had already begun at the end of the century. The principles of the English garden-city movement were becoming known. A book by Dr. Mattesius, of Berlin, in which he commuted these ideals into a form suitable for Continental use (i.e. a form of urban development more compact than the semi-detached cottages favoured by garden-city enthusiasts in England), was translated into Swedish, Dutch and other languages and was widely studied abroad. Some of the best housing estates built on the Continent before 1914 were attributed to the influence of this English ideal, the estates in Germany being mainly the result of collaboration between trade unions and public utility societies with the most progressive architects of the day.

Although the population in Germany had increased during the nineteenth century faster than in any other European country, about 200,000 new dwellings had been built every year and housing had kept fairly near requirements until the War. The individual dwellings were rarely overcrowded with people, congestion had in the main been site-overcrowding; the land itself had been

## GERMANY

over-used and the plan of the dwellings had cut the tenants off from light, air and natural surroundings.

But after the War the shortage became appalling. Building had entirely ceased for five years, which meant the loss of the million dwellings which would normally have been built, and towns already overcrowded were flooded with refugees from ceded territory. Money was so scarce and expensive that it was almost impossible to raise first, let alone second, mortgages, and private investors were naturally disinclined to put into building money which by inflation might become valueless over night.

Finance was the main obstacle in the way of a new housing drive and the Government, hampered by acute financial difficulties, had at first to encourage emergency building in any form, so long as some kind of shelter was available for the homeless families: between 1918 and 1920, 39,142 such dwellings were provided by municipalities in old barracks or by subdividing large houses. In 1924, in which year the currency was stabilized, the Government levied a tax on old dwellings, and began both to lend the proceeds to approved persons and societies at low rates of interest, and to guarantee first and second mortgages on new housing schemes.

Before 1914 dwellings had mainly been built by private enterprise, but a certain number had been put up by some of the great trade unions, and even occasionally by the German States themselves. During the immediate post-War years, public utility housing societies began to organize themselves on a strictly professional basis, and to become really important in the housing world. This was their chance. For the Government, the States and the municipalities naturally preferred to lend money to stable concerns and, in the uncertainty and chaos then reigning in the money market, public utility societies were more likely to be financially dependable than were private individuals.

In 1924, too, the Government took an important step by appointing



## GERMANY

two State departments for r e s e a r c h into materials and finishes, into building costs, into siting, planning and equipment.\*

This official lead in scientific inquiry was closely followed by architects in all parts of the country. Experiment was general. All aspects of the housing problem inspired the same keen and vigorous approach, and a wealth of material has been collected for the sociologist as well as the architectural student. During the years between 1924 and 1933 the Bauhaus was built at Dessau, in which practical designers and craftsmen were trained in every branch of architecture; in Frankfurt experiments were made in the design, standardization and mass-production of whole units of a home (for instance, the noted "Frankfurt kitchen" was evolved), and a magazine was published on modern architecture and the allied professions which had an international circulation and influence; in Stuttgart the school of architecture roused and educated public opinion by arranging shop-window exhibitions of good and bad decoration and furniture.

Every kind of building material was used in the course of experi-

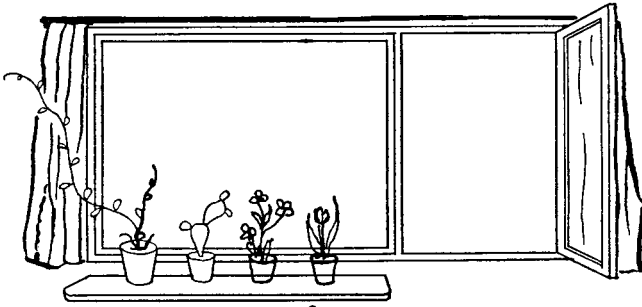
\* The Reichwirtschaftsrat, Ausschuss für Siedlungs- und Wohnungswesen, and the Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau und Wohnungswesen.

Between 1929 and 1930 a questionnaire was circulated to find out what was the total cost of new building in various districts of Germany. A flat of 608·67 square feet (56·84 square metres) useable area in three- and four-storey houses respectively, with two dwellings on each floor, was taken as a basis of comparison. Findings were grouped according to towns with populations of 10 to 50,000; 50 to 100,000; and over 100,000 persons. It was found that building costs for two-, three- and four-storey dwellings were highest in the largest and lowest in the smallest towns, but that it was cheaper to build three storeys in the smaller and four storeys in the larger towns. The annual charges per square foot were nearly three times higher in the largest towns, and were in decreasing ratio to the number of storeys built.

The analysis of land costs were separated according to supply, demand and position. It was found that price depended to a great extent on the amount of public land sold or given in the locality and the price asked for that land. Wages, as was to be expected, were highest in the large towns and lowest in the small ones, but as the cost of living was also highest in the big centres, the rent percentage evened itself out.

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ment, including concrete, but it was found that brick was the most generally satisfactory for domestic building, with its need for economy in maintenance charges.\* "Gagfah," one of the largest building societies, found that brick buildings faced with coloured plaster looked gay and charming for the first few months, but entailed prohibitive upkeep costs over a period even of ten years. As a result of experiment in materials and their costs, tabulated over a number of years, this society found that far the most satisfactory finish was



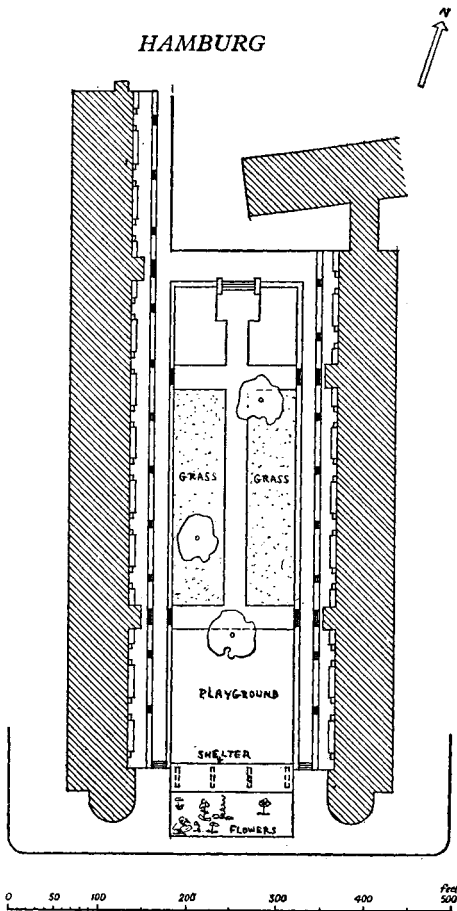
to render the outside walls in thick cement treated with lime, the estates still looking fresh after several years' wear.

Various interesting experiments were tried in collaboration with the tenants of the Baumesse estate, outside Leipsic, finished in 1931. The most popular blocks in this estate were of three and four storeys with large balconies, and, from their own experience, the society was very scornful of the then fashionable craze for housing large working-class families in "sky-scrapers." Thus one block, built six-storeys high without either lifts or private balconies, but with central heating, and with a washhouse and a drying-room installed

\* Everyone who has visited much-photographed concrete buildings will have been struck by the difference between the pictures and the often drab-looking reality.

## GERMANY

in the roof for every ten families, was most unpopular and will never



be repeated; six storeys were found to be too high for children and old people, the tenants all wanted balconies, and central heating was not regarded by them as a satisfactory compensation.

The window generally used in Germany is a large wooden casement, but steel windows were experimentally installed in one block. They were found to let in the rain, the centre mullion was said to be annoyingly obstructive of the view, and this experiment, too, was not repeated.

In the new suburbs which were developed round the towns, each new crop of buildings was designed at a lower density, the courtyards

became larger, trees, flowers and grass were planted in them, and experiments were made in siting the dwellings according to sun and light, until at last the principle was accepted of building, wherever



*Part of the Haselhorst estate. Summer awnings to the private balconies are a feature of German flats. The common garden, grass, and flowers, is open to all*

## PLATE II

*One of the suburbs outside Berlin, Zehlendorf, planned as an urban community. The streets were designed as units; roads are too narrow to encourage through traffic; the pavements are made of sand; pine and birch trees do not require lopping however tall they grow, nor do they keep the sun from dwellings, as do forest trees*





PLATE 12

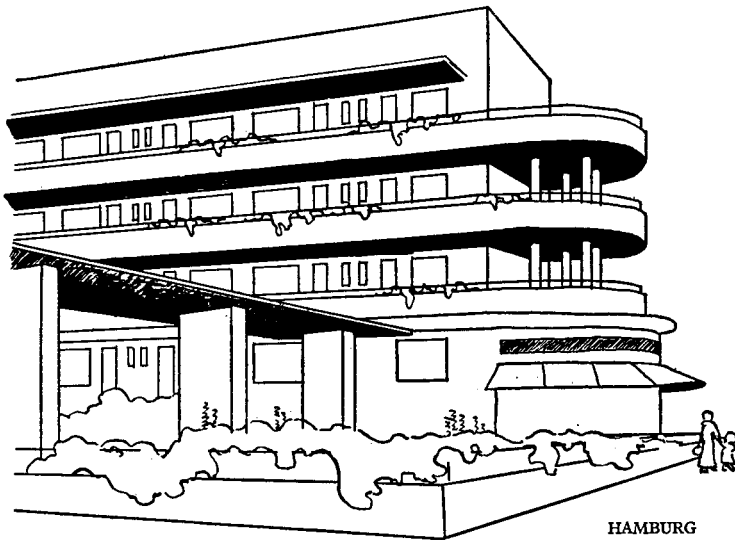
*A living-room with kitchen-recess*

*Details of the kitchen. The refuse bin swings under and the draining board folds over the sink. All the working surface is in alignment, and a shutter draws down over the dresser*



## GERMANY

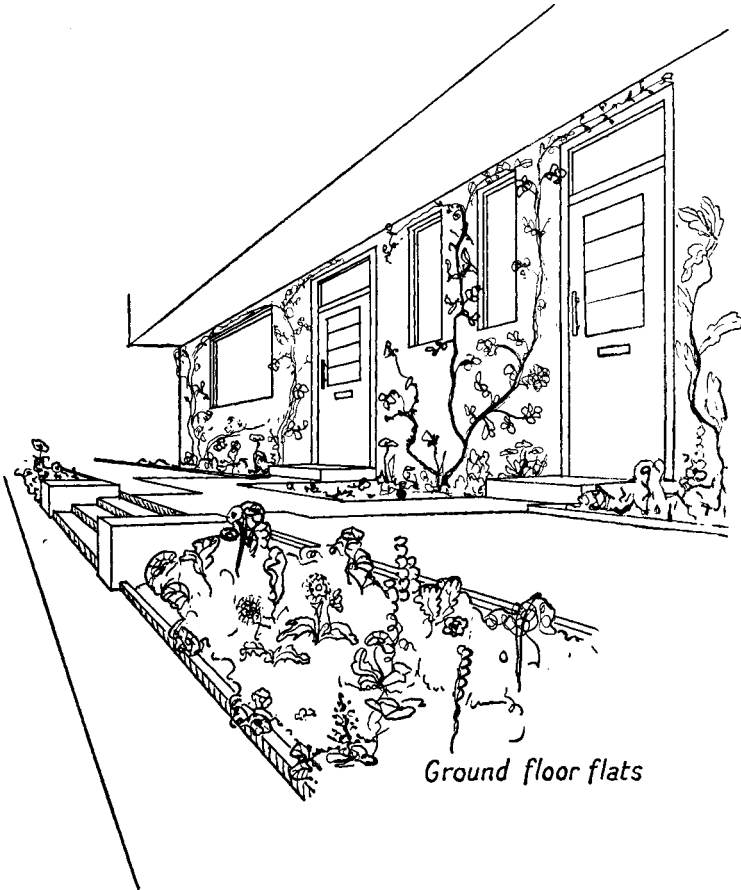
possible, with the dwellings facing east and west, carefully orientated to light, the blocks separated by gardens. For as a result of continuous experiment in the most suitable layout for large estates, it was found that development in rows instead of round a central courtyard allowed every dwelling a better general aspect and more sun and air,



as well as permitting much more varied use of the land between the dwellings and reducing the cost of service and road charges.

One of the most attractive examples of what may be called the transitional period of development is in H a m b u r g . Buildings in this city are generally constructed with a concrete framework, the lovely purple-brown local brick being used as filling: most of the dwellings have large private balconies, and all seem to have window-boxes with cascades of flowers. The dwellings in the pleasant scheme referred to are built on three sides of a large rectangle, with

## GERMANY

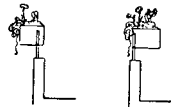


a common garden in the middle laid out with lawns, trees, playground, a shelter, a swimming and a paddling pool.\* Each ground-

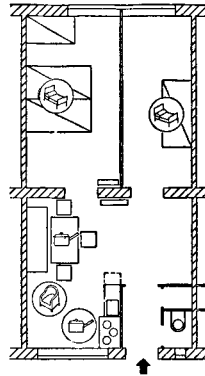
\* A similar estate in Berlin, consisting of five hundred flats in five-storeyed blocks, is built round a very large and purely decorative garden, rather like an English park, but the tenants may not use it. Pleasant as it is to look across a stretch of grass, trees and flowers, the tenants are warmly of the opinion that allotments would have been more useful and could have been made to look nice.

## GERMANY

floor flat has its own terrace and flower-boxes, divided from the common garden by a herbaceous border which is tended by the city gardener. The dwellings are reached by inside staircases with outside approach-balconies, and even those can be made pleasant! They are very wide, with window-boxes clamped on to the edge, and they curve at the southern end into lovely common sun-terraces. The



*Two ways of fixing window-boxes, either into the balcony or away from it*

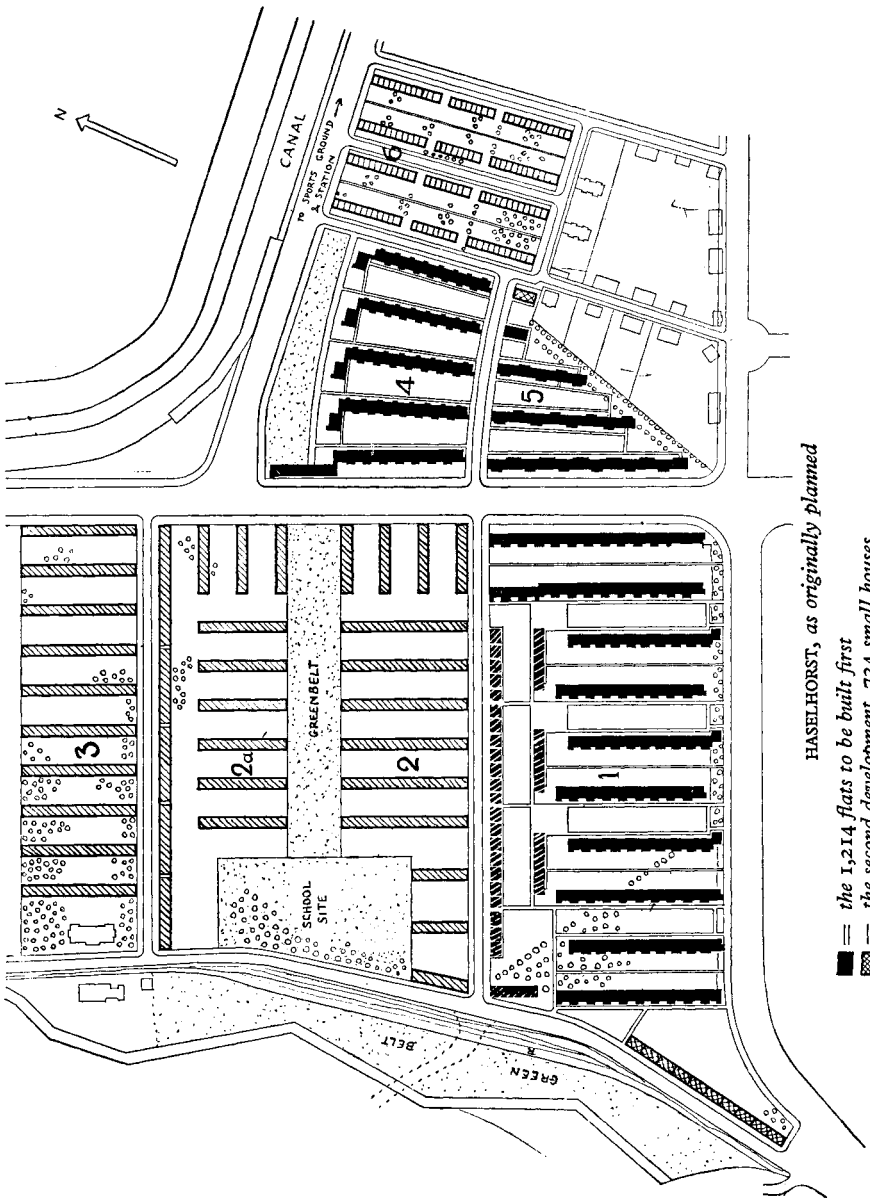


*An economical Hamburg plan  
(Scale: 1 inch to 17 feet)*

roof is flat and partly flagged for sun-bathing and for drying small clothing. Each tenant, as usual on the Continent, has one lock-up in the roof and another in the basement where drying-rooms and a common laundry have also been provided.

The plan of the individual flats could not be simpler. Though very small, commonly a living-room with two small bedrooms leading out of it, the large windows and excellent proportions of the rooms dispel the impression of pokiness. Equipment, too, is of the plainest—an enamelled stove, easy and economical to use, which burns either charcoal, wood, coke or coal, a couple of gas rings, and a sink with cold water laid on. There are neither baths nor bathrooms





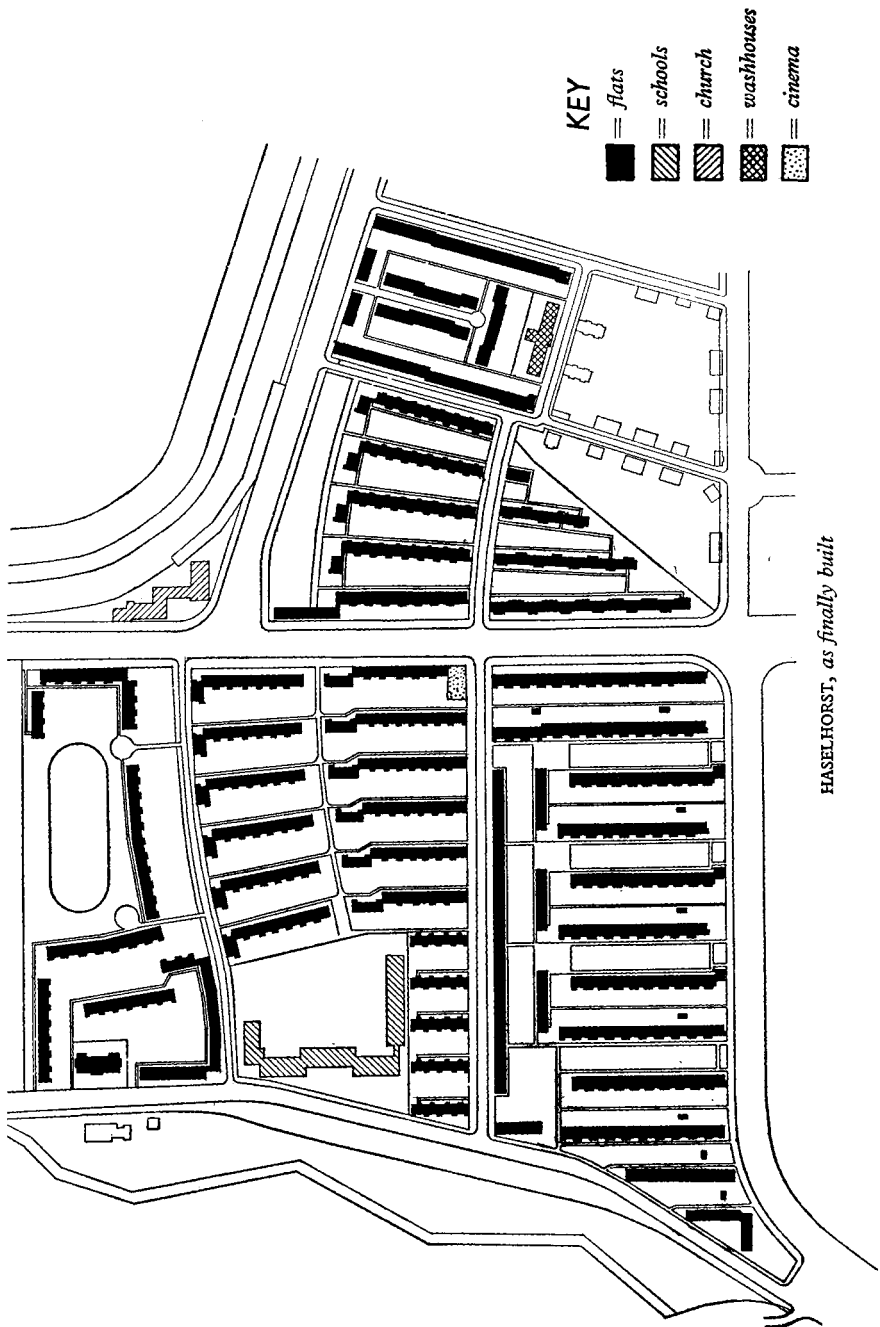
## GERMANY

in this estate. In Hamburg central heating is only provided in blocks of dwellings with rents above forty to fifty Reichmarks per month, and those dwellings are naturally for the more prosperous workmen.

The general spirit of inquiry and experiment was shown to great advantage in a competition held by the municipality of Berlin for the layout of a new estate of over 111 acres (450,000 square metres) at Spandau-Haselhorst. The competitors were given an air photograph of the site and very full data about the surroundings as well as the actual site. The scheme had to include a town hall and other meeting places for the citizens, schools, shops, laundries and accommodation for bachelors and old people, as well as for families. The amount of space to be allocated for streets, squares, schools, playgrounds, open spaces and dwellings was carefully scheduled, as were the relative number of dwellings required of different sizes and of different types of accommodation.

Many eminent architects competed, and the estate was actually developed by several of them, working on an experimental basis, with the addition of outside experts. Different materials, different designs, planning and equipment were tried in the buildings, and the spaces between the blocks were laid out in various ways. The results in appearance, in popularity and in maintenance costs are being carefully watched. The common laundry in this estate is particularly well planned and equipped, and the paths are extremely simple, consisting merely of two tracks of cement, separated by the space that separates the wheels of a cart—a cheap and adequate means of access.\* One block of flats has outside approach-balconies

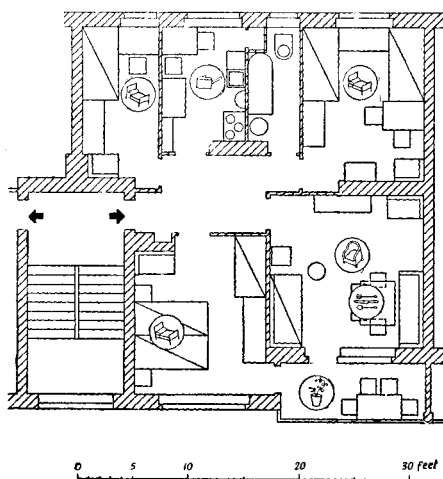
\* It is interesting to see what careful thought was given to road widths and surfaces in the new residential estates. Access roads were made as narrow as was compatible with efficiency, as in Adlers Hof, an attractive estate of small houses and flats outside Berlin, where they were just wide enough for two carts to pass, with a sand pavement on one side only and merely a kerb on the other. Ten per cent to 12 per cent of the total costs of an estate were thought adequate for cost of site, development and upkeep of roads.



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on the usual English plan, but they are not considered nearly as satisfactory as the inside staircases with the doors of the flats opening from each landing.

The one serious but (officially) unnoticed fault, and it is one common to most of Europe, is the inconvenience, in fact the intoler-

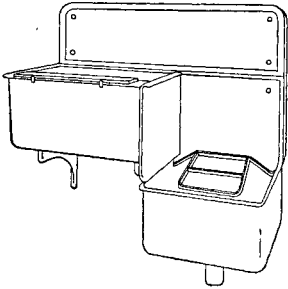


HASELHORST: *plan of a three-bedroomed flat*

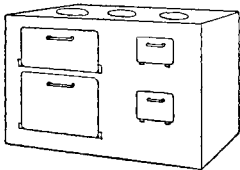
able discomfort, of "minimum planning." Rooms were often so small that families had been obliged to discard their furniture on moving into their new homes and, poor though they were, to buy new; the doors were made so narrow that it was difficult to carry even a tray through them; and by the time that even "minimum furniture" was in place, there was practically no space left for a normally sized family. Two reasons were given. One was the intellectual pleasure which the architect got from a triumphant arrangement of inadequate space. The second was the high cost of building.

## GERMANY

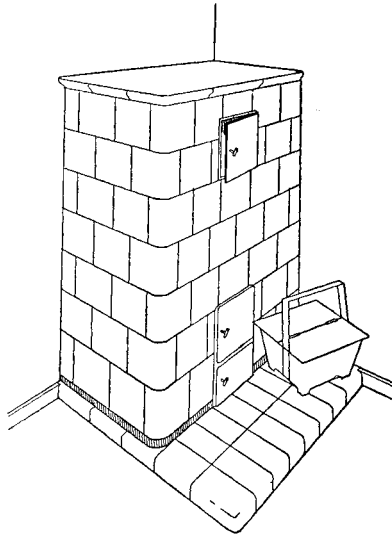
This brings one to the real difficulty experienced in rehousing in Germany—the poverty of the people. The new dwellings were too expensive for the poorer families, which is understandable when one looks at the statistical returns for 1934. They show that 63·33 per



*A double sink, usual in Germany, the two levels being particularly convenient for filling buckets, washing, etc.*



*The Aga type of cooker is usual on the Continent*



*The traditional German stove, in pretty coloured tiles, burning wood, charcoal or coke*

cent of income earners had less than RM. 1,200 (£80) a year, while those who had an annual income of RM. 5,000 (£330) and over, amounted to only 3 per cent of the population. One-fifth of the *net* family income was the amount traditionally put aside in Germany for rent, which on an income of £60 a year was at most a rental of 4s. a week. In theory, therefore, houses had to be built cheaply enough to let at this rent, which was done with a certain measure of success;

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the house-rent-tax was remitted to individual tenants in cases of extreme poverty.\*

Another disadvantage with which really poor families were faced after 1933 was that the kindergartens which had been included in new estates by the Socialist Government had been closed through the withdrawal of official grants, the Nazi theory being that every child is best looked after by its own mother, however large her family.

The policy of encouraging large families is, of course, one of the planks of the Nazi programme, and has undoubtedly arguments in its favour, provided that the children can also be fed.† For the German birth-rate dropped from 38·2 per thousand in 1880 to 19 in 1936. For many decades the decrease occurred in the well-to-do districts, but recently it has become marked in the typical working-class districts.

To encourage marriage and the birth of children, to remove women from competing with men in the labour market, and to stimulate the furniture industry, "Marriage Loans" and "Poverty Loans" have been inaugurated by the Nazi Government.‡

\* It was in Leipsic that I saw my first really poor, large and dirty German families. I was told that in this particular estate they amounted to about one-fifth of the tenants, and that they were dirty by character and not by poverty. Certainly they smelt most disagreeably, yet the families I saw all had flowers in their rooms. The poverty was agonizing, and the larger the family the more certainly were the parents out-of-work. In one exceptionally neat and clean family of thirteen children, the youngest child, six weeks old, appeared to be dying because its mother was too starved to be able to feed it. Yet at that time, the end of 1935, the artificial limitation of families was being severely discouraged, so that it was not surprising to see numbers of starved-looking children in every town.

† Since August 1936 grants of RM. 10 a month have been awarded by the Government for the fifth and every additional child of insured fathers with incomes under RM. 185 a month; in August 1937 this was extended to insured families with incomes up to RM. 200 a month, and to non-insured persons, particularly small tradesmen and farmers, whose assessed income is not more than RM. 2,100 a year (about £170 at the present rate of exchange). By the first Law for the Promotion of Early Marriage, August 1937, extra payment was made to married civil servants, and transfer from the temporary to the permanent staff was made conditional on marriage.

‡ See *Arbeitsrecht-Karten* No. 509. 19.2.35. *Wirtschaft und der Statistik* No. 5, 1936.

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A Marriage Loan, instituted in August 1933, can only be applied for after publication of the banns of marriage. To be successful applicants must give satisfactory proof of being German (Aryan) in origin, must hold uncompromisingly Nazi views, be physically healthy, find sureties for repayment, and have no intention of living abroad after their marriage. The future wife must have been in paid employment in Germany for at least nine months during the two years preceding the application, must give up her employment when the loan is granted, and must not work again until it is repaid unless her husband becomes "necessitous" in the terms of the Unemployment Relief Regulations.

The loan is granted entirely at the discretion of the State, and must not exceed RM. 1,000 (about £80), the average being RM. 600 (£50). The grants are given to the husband in the form of coupons for buying furniture and household articles, excluding clothing and linen. These coupons are for RM. 10, RM. 20, RM. 50, or RM. 100, they cannot be cashed, they are not transferable, nor can they be pawned either by the buyer or the seller. No interest is charged, but redemption must be in monthly instalments of 1 per cent of the amount of the loan; at the request of the Finance Office it may be deducted from the husband's wages by his employer. A quarter of the original amount of the loan is cancelled on the birth of each living child, and repayments of the balance may also be postponed for a year. Repayment of the loan may be postponed or even cancelled when it is genuinely impossible.\*

* Year	<i>No. of loans granted</i>	<i>No. of cancellations due to births</i>
1933 (from August) .. .. .	141,559	13,610
1934 .. .. .	284,619	129,961
1935 .. .. .	156,788	155,060
1936 .. .. .	171,391	186,654
1937 (to end September)	127,949	165,152
Total .. .. .	882,306	650,437

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Of the 29,918 applicants who had been medically examined by May 1935, 97·61 per cent had been approved. Only 693 cases were refused, half due to congenital insanity, the others for various medical reasons.

Since the inception of this scheme over 88,000 marriage loans have been granted, amounting to RM. 530 million (£44,000,000). This resulted in 88,000 men being employed to replace the women who had to resign their employment on marriage, thousands of workers were absorbed into the furniture and household articles industries, causing a reduction in unemployment relief said to amount to at least RM. 325 million a year (about £26,000,000).

At the end of 1935 the policy was extended.\* A ‘‘P o v e r t y L o a n’’ was floated, by which grants of non-recurrent subsidies are made to large families, that is to families with four or more children under sixteen living with their parents, who are too poor to procure necessary household goods out of their own resources. To qualify for the subsidy both parents have to be German (Aryan) citizens with blameless lives and reputations, and both they and their children must be free from inherited mental or bodily defects. Subsidies of RM. 100 maximum (about £8) can be granted for each child under sixteen, but the aggregate grant to a family is limited to RM. 1,000 (£80). The subsidy is paid in vouchers for RM. 10 and RM. 50 (16s. and £4), which can be used to purchase furniture, household articles and linen from those shops which are prepared to accept the vouchers and have been granted permission to do so.

At the end of 1935 there were in Germany 760,000 families with four or more children under sixteen, 329,000 with five or more under sixteen and 200,000 with six children under sixteen years of age. It was not known how many of those were needy families, nor how many would qualify, neither is it yet known how successful the scheme is.

\* *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 30.10.35.



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On the face of it, both these loans appear admirable weapons to stimulate internal trade—ininitely more constructive than either export bounties on goods which the workers themselves lack, or means tests which ration the family expenditure. They might, with advantage be considered in connection with our own slum-clearance and rehousing efforts.

Slum clearance in Germany had been begun before the War but, owing to the exceptionally heavy cost of dealing with dense urban tenement slums, the work had not been prosecuted very vigorously. The most effective method of dealing with such areas was obviously drastic—complete demolition and replanning. All the building plots needed pooling and rearranging, with new buildings covering at most one-fifth of the area. The population needed reducing to about two hundred persons per hectare instead of the thousand often found in the old tenement areas, and one hectare of playground was required for every two thousand persons. This was and still is obviously a council of perfection, mainly because of the inflated site-values since, the workers being housed in the less desirable quarters of a town, it is only possible to sell the vacated sites for commercial or “better-class” residential development if the town is flourishing and expanding rapidly. The value of the sites must otherwise be written down and the owners made to realize that a very much lower density of redevelopment will be permitted in future schemes. A compromise has, in fact generally been accepted of “opening-up” the estates by demolishing sheds, outbuildings and some of the cross-blocks, leaving the main building for continued habitation.

Unsatisfactory as this compromise is to the more ardent housing reformers, the German problem had obviously to be dealt with first by providing additional accommodation and by developing healthy new estates within reasonable distance of the centre of the industrial

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quarters of the cities at rents that the impoverished post-War citizens could pay.

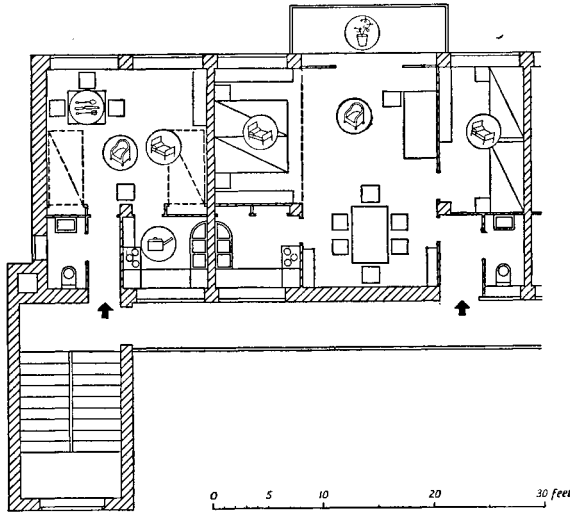
Hamburg, one of the old Hanseatic towns, is perhaps worth quoting here as an example of a city in which considerable clearance has taken place. It is a city of contrasts, due to the difference between the workers' standard of living to-day and that of a hundred years ago. Remarkable beauty and order in the waterways, trees, parks, new estates and picturesque old quarters abound on the one hand, while on the other still exist the areas densely covered between 1840 and 1850 with grim tenement buildings, surrounded by concrete or asphalt "playgrounds."

Three drastic clearances took place in the city before the War. The first in 1842 was automatically due to a great fire in the centre of the town. The second between 1884 and 1888 was for commercial reasons, when thousands of houses in the south of the town were removed to make way for the large new docks required as a result of the Customs Union of Hamburg with Prussia. Between 1887 and 1893 four more clearances were undertaken to provide new streets for traffic: and again, after the War, 1,120 new dwellings containing 3,900 persons, were cleared from an area of 21·24 acres (8·6 hectares). Great commercial buildings took their place, but almost half the land was left clear of building, being used instead for parks and wide boulevards. Thirty-five thousand people have been moved since 1919 from the old slums to new houses on the outskirts of the city, yet it is said that forty-five thousand still remain to be rehoused.

The fundamental importance in redevelopment areas of a good site plan has been fully recognized in Hamburg; for centuries the town has possessed the power of pulling down perfectly habitable houses if their destruction was thought necessary for improving an area, whereas in Prussia individual blocks of tenements can only be expropriated if they have been condemned as uninhabitable. Large areas in the middle of the city are accordingly being replanned and

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rebuilt in three-storey blocks of flats designed for poor families who must live centrally. The city building regulations of 1936 specify that, when land is sold for housing, the new buildings intended for constant human occupation must not have more than four storeys; every dwelling must have its own cellar and a garret;

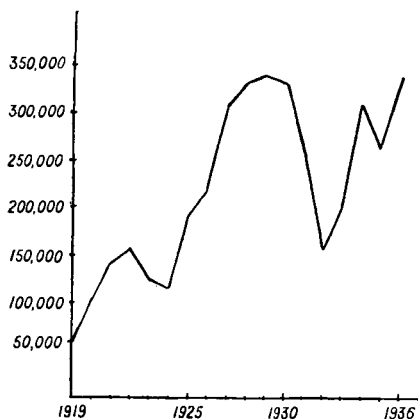


*Flats at Frankfurt with balcony approach. This is a very economical plan*

there must be a common laundry; the design both for the front and the back of the house must be approved by the municipal engineering authorities; buildings may not be erected in courtyards, and courtyards must contain children's playgrounds and green swards. Redevelopment of every area must be strictly according to the town plan, the municipality generally leasing the land for new estates to public utility and private companies for a period of ninety-nine years. One-third of the cost of construction is generally advanced by the municipality, the other two-thirds being raised in the open market.

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What remains to be done in Germany after twelve years of vigorous building? How far has the housing need been met? The Institut für Konjunkturforschung calculated in 1929 that the normal annual



*Annual Output of Dwellings (including reconditioned)*  
*Statistisches Jahrb. d. Deutschen Reiches*

housing requirements for Germany, corresponding to the national increase of population would be:

- from 1927 to 1930 at the rate of 225,000 dwellings per year,
- from 1931 to 1935 at the rate of 250,000 dwellings per year,
- from 1936 to 1940 at the rate of 190,000 dwellings per year,
- from 1941 to 1945 at the rate of 85,000 dwellings per year,
- from 1946 to 1950 at the rate of 100,000 dwellings per year.

But between 1919 and 1931 only 1,800,000 new dwellings had actually been erected as against the 3,400,000 which would have been provided on the pre-War basis.

And in addition to this decrease in housing output, the same thing occurred in Germany as elsewhere—the dwellings built during the first ten years after the War were taken by the better-paid workers

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and the shortage of homes for the lowest income group of the population is still serious.

In 1930 plans had been drawn up for flats of minimum size, hygiene, finish and equipment, which it was intended to build within the means of the unskilled classes. Special funds were earmarked for the work, but both intentions and policy were abruptly altered by the change of Government in 1933.\*

The new orientation is towards the construction of small simple one-family homes, grouped in land settlement colonies on the outskirts of the towns, with minimum conveniences but each with a small plot of ground for food production, especially valuable in times of unemployment or War. The encouragement of large families, the remembrance of War privations, the militant mood of the present Government, has made such a change of policy inevitable and land settlement colonies both reasonable and consistent. Besides, it is possible that the limit of suburban flat-development had been reached by the time the Nazis assumed power, and that the curtailment of urban extension in tenements, however good, was a matter of common sense as well as of economy and policy.

In addition to these semi-rural settlements, the unemployed are being encouraged to build their own dwellings on plots rented from the municipalities, rather on the Austrian model. The plan of these houses is standardized throughout the country, and consists of three rooms with a large loft and out-buildings. A water-pump serves four dwellings, but electricity and gas are generally laid on to each home.

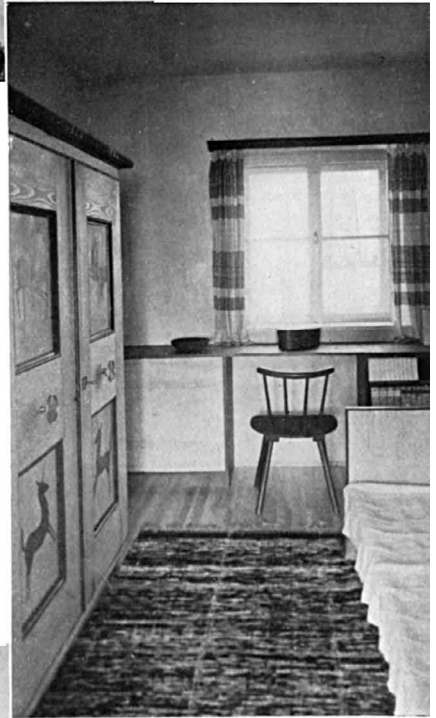
\* Low-rental housing schemes are at present (1937) financed by mortgages up to 70 to 75 per cent of the building value of the houses, obtained chiefly from State insurance and other funds. A State guarantee is required for the second mortgage. The balance of the money must be found by the builder himself. The income derived from the house-rent-tax which used to be lent for approved buildings at 1 per cent interest and was an invaluable source of help, has, since 1931, been used to help to balance the Budget and is not now available for housing purposes.



PLATE 13

*Four types of modern cottage development (two on Plate 14). The density of development varies from sixteen to thirty-five to the acre. Little space is wasted on roads in these residential areas and the surface is as simple as is compatible with efficiency*

*A bedroom-study. Furniture in German peasant homes is often painted in gay designs*





*The upper flats have large balconies, while those on the ground floor each have a small garden abutting the common playground. The layout is very similar to the Ladbroke estate, London, though the development there is in private houses.*



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The gross cost per dwelling is about RM. 3,500 (about £275), and the rents are RM. 20 to RM. 25 a month, which includes amortization in thirty-four years. Three per cent interest is charged during the first year's occupancy, 4 per cent the next year and 5 per cent for the remainder of the period of repayment.

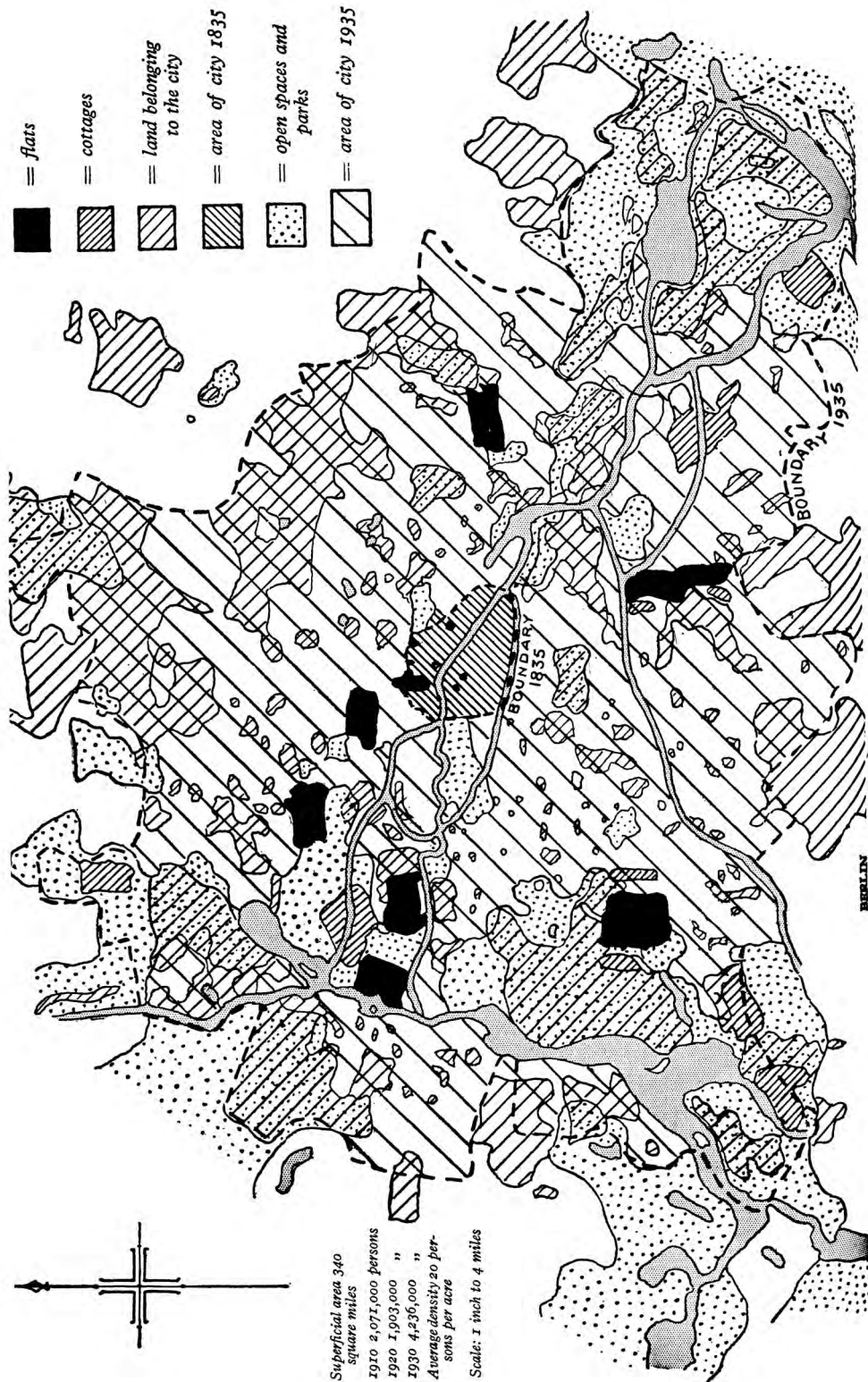
These "peasant proprietor colonies," though primitive, seem flourishing and happy places. Rabbits, chickens, vegetables and flowers are apparently reared by everyone, but no scheme exists for the co-operative marketing of produce, which makes the Viennese schemes so outstandingly practical.

No description of German housing estates would be complete without referring to the far-sighted policy of many municipalities in arranging for the entertainment and health, as well as the housing, of their citizens.

An outstanding example is the great swimming pool created in 1929 by the Berlin municipality at Wannsee, a lake in the pinewoods on the outskirts of the city. The pool itself is a part of the lake; on its borders have been built changing-rooms and sun-bathing terraces, several areas have been differently equipped for exercises and games, while inexpensive restaurants and simple shops have been included. Convenient, efficient, imaginative, inexpensive and inconspicuous, this enterprise has paid for itself many times over, and the profits accrue to the municipality itself instead of to a private speculator.

This side of housing is constantly present to the minds of German town planners. In 1915, for instance, 25,000 acres of State-owned forests within the boundary of Berlin were acquired at a cost of RM. 0.5 per square mile. These were added to the existing forests and parks owned by the municipality and laid the foundation of the lovely Berlin parkway system. In 1920 the incorporation of a large number of adjacent municipalities within the city resulted in further improvement and economy in administration. The population is expected ultimately to reach a maximum of 9,000,000 persons. On





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this assumption, rather over half the city land has been zoned for residential purposes, the permitted number of storeys and the proportion of plot which can be built on ranging from 2 and 10 per cent on the outskirts to 5 and 50 per cent in the centre. Railways will occupy 2,574 acres, waterways and lakes 12,639 acres, permanent woods and forests 31,153 acres (all of which are either State or municipal property) and public and private open spaces 47,172 acres, of which 19,760 acres are public property. The 11,000 acres in private ownership are shown as open spaces in the general plan of the town. To ensure their being retained as such, a plan for each must be drawn up (*Festsetzungsplan*) and a formal decision taken by the municipal council declaring them to be open spaces. When this has been done the municipality has the right to purchase the land, either by private treaty or by expropriatory powers.\*

In 1937 a competition was launched for designs for a new university city, to be built on the western outskirts. The plans have not yet been disclosed to the public, although severe inroads are unfortunately to be made on the beautiful Tiergarten and the Grunewald. It is said that the city when rebuilt will be a capital really worthy of Germany.

New German estates have rarely been designed to include meeting-rooms, gymnasia and kindergartens, as so often in Sweden and in Vienna. But the wider aspects of housing, the need of working people for healthy recreation near their homes, by swimming pools, games tracks and so on, are abundantly recognized. They might well be considered by the British authorities.

\* *Die Entwicklung von Berlin*, by Magistrats-Oberbaurat W. Koeppen.

## 7. Vienna

IT IS DIFFICULT TO WRITE coolly or with detachment about Vienna and the reader will perhaps forgive some preliminary personal impressions. The beauty and mistakes of the past, the tragedy and achievements of the present, the gallant, hopeless struggle of a city against economic and political forces which are beyond its control have created an atmosphere of almost unbearable melancholy.

Such at least was the impression made upon me, a visitor whose first sight of Vienna was in July 1934, within three months of the civil war and the bombardment of the new housing estates. Men were "on the run," many families were again in grim touch with starvation, women walked through the streets with tears streaming down their faces. And everywhere—at the Opera, in the great picture galleries, in the cafés, along the Ring, in narrow dismal back streets, in trams bumping down to the suburbs or the new allotment-settlements—the one topic of conversation was peace, whether peace through Italy or through Germany, whatever party the speakers belonged to, peace was the overmastering preoccupation.

What an odd visit that was, when I look back on it, although at the time it seemed natural enough.

To my discomfiture, the Town Hall was in a state of disintegration. The famous exhibition-library of contemporary pictorial statistics by which the citizens had been educated in civic sense and knowledge, was being carted away to an unknown destination—for the work of the previous regime, it was said, was shown in them in too favourable a light for the taste of the new council. So all that I could see of the admirable charts which have been imitated throughout Europe, was through a hurried glance at one propped upside down against a pillar, and at another while it was being carried to the van between a couple of workmen.

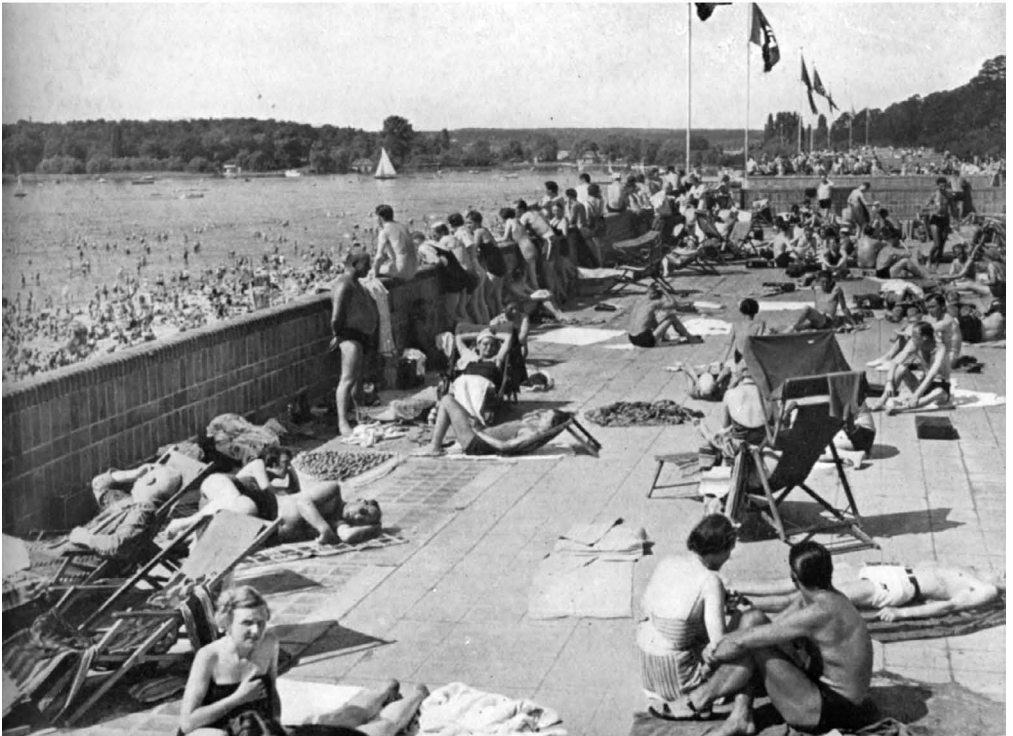
And when I got upstairs and presented my credentials to the housing authorities, even worse was in store. For the Mayor was



*Wannsee. The municipal "lido." Berlin can be seen in the distance, with pinewoods between it and the lake. The extent of the beach, the simplicity and appropriateness of the equipment, the beauty of the setting, is apparent on examination of the photograph*

PLATE 15

*These are the roofs of the changing rooms and shops. Each has its own use: sunbathing, games, exercise, etc. Covered and open-air restaurants and gymnasia are on beach level*

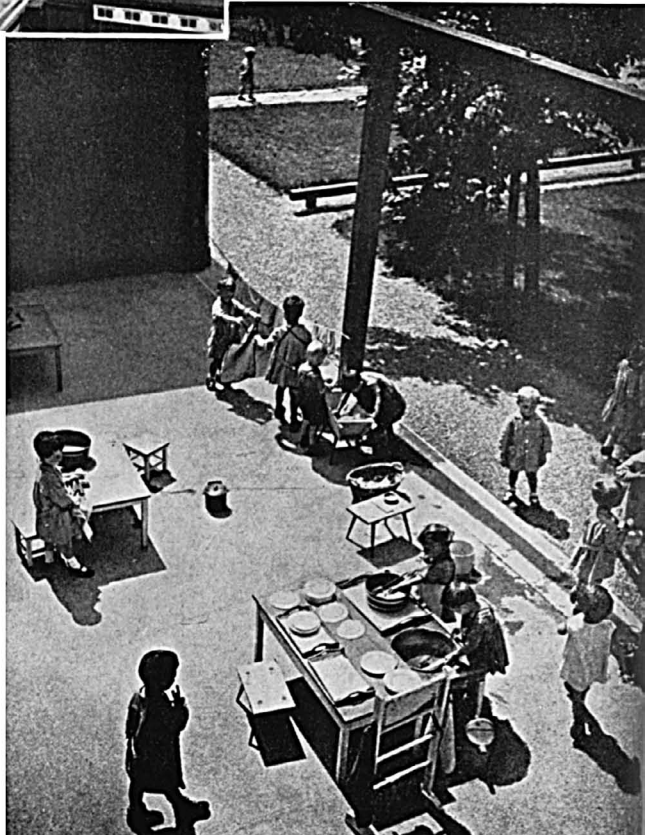


*Vienna.  
A typical estate*



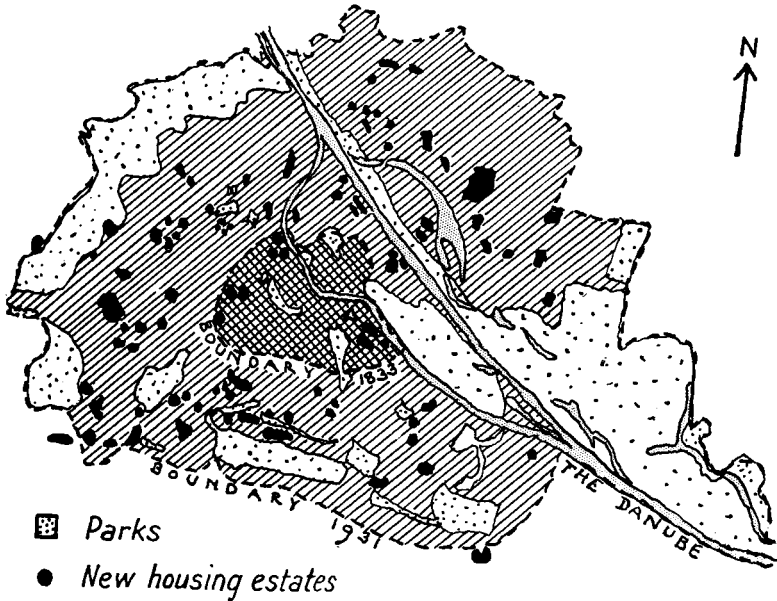
*Open-air baths flanked  
by new flats*

*One of the  
kindergartens*



## VIENNA

“desolated” to be obliged to inform me that it was quite impossible either to facilitate my visit to the new estates, or to explain the



### VIENNA

*Superficial area 107 square miles*

1910 2,031,000 inhabitants

1920 1,841,000     "      "

1930 1,874,000     "      "

*Average density of persons, 27 per acre*

*Scale: 1 inch to 4 miles*

municipal housing enterprises, or even to sell me any literature or photographs as they had unfortunately all been mislaid! No objections were raised, however, when I suggested that I should show myself round, beyond a solemn warning that in these estates I should find “very dangerous people.” Yet I certainly did not come across them. But, passed on from one family to another, I saw most

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of the types of new dwellings which have been built since the War, tried their equipment, gossiped with the housewives and got a very fair insight into the planning, organization and success of the new Viennese estates. For although the clubs and gymnasia were closed and locked for fear of the subversive meetings which might be held in them, although the paddling pools had only a thin covering of rain water, as the municipal supply had not been turned on, although the roofs and walls still showed the scars of battle and tension was acute among the adults, in the gardens there were roses blooming in the borders, children racing about laughing, shouting, splashing, babies cooing in their prams, infants gravely following their games in the nursery schools, while the mothers gossiped and sewed in their balconies or on the garden seats.

How did these amazing new estates happen? is a question which forces itself on every inquiring stranger in Vienna. For the structure of the town is clearly defined, with its hard inner core of narrow streets and high blocks of grim tenements, dank, dark, squalid—a disreputable memorial to the ideals of the nineteenth century. This is surrounded by an area of beauty and gaiety, containing the Ring, trees, flowers, cafés, great public buildings, the Opera House—with trams radiating to the new estates in the suburbs. And here in these post-War estates, though the people are still housed in high tenements, there is a very different spirit informing their plan; and within and behind the estates are trees, grass, courtyards, flowers. Beyond these tenements comes an area of small houses with their own gardens, which are also “municipal estates” containing their own shops, laundries, meeting halls and kindergartens. Further out still are small experimental groups of co-operative “garden-city” colonies, and finally are the allotment estates for the unemployed.\*

\* It makes no financial difference to a workman if he lives in the centre or on the boundary of the city, because tickets by tram or train are 2d. for any distance: he can choose the locality of his dwelling on the grounds of convenience and personal preference.

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In the starvation years immediately following the War, the Viennese had to deal with acute and complex difficulties which affected not only the health but the actual survival of the people. Of these, housing was one of the most urgent and vital, but other difficulties loomed large. The huge size of the city in proportion to the newly dismembered Austrian Empire; great overcrowding caused by the influx of refugees, with high rents charged for unfit accommodation: the unemployment and starvation of the landless tenement dwellers: and finally the prohibitive cost of the money and materials essential for building. As difficult a position in fact as could be imagined.

There was not only an acute shortage of low-rented dwellings, but the dwellings of the mass of the people were a disgrace. In the high rookeries of tenement dwellings which were built for the workers right up to the War, neither sun, light nor air could penetrate into many of the courtyards. The infant mortality was high; tuberculosis and other diseases of poverty and bad housing riddled the poorer quarters of the city.

The action taken by the newly elected Socialist city council at the end of the War was prompt and wise. Between 1919 and 1923, 3,673 new homes were provided by every available means; by housing 1,300 families in old military huts and barracks; by completing a number of dwellings which, begun by private enterprise before the War, had not been finished; by building in 1922 a new colony for 308 families on the old Schmetz parade grounds; while 224 more dwellings were obtained by adding storeys on to existing low buildings.

And as private building enterprise was stagnant and there was no demand for building land, the council began from 1919 to buy large areas of land both within and close to the city at only one-seventh or one-tenth of pre-War prices. This purchase of urban



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land by a municipality was not a new policy in Austria, for before the War every municipality owned large urban areas which, under an Act of 1912, could be leased to approved persons at an annual rent amounting to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent to 5 per cent of the price of the land, the buildings erected on it becoming the property of the municipality on the expiration of the leases, generally of eighty years. The new Vienna merely developed this policy so that the 4,690 hectares (18 square miles) of land owned by the municipality in 1918 had increased by 1928 to 6,411 hectares (25 square miles) and by 1930 almost a quarter of the entire area of the city, or one-third if streets and waterworks are included, belonged to the city.

The problem of where to build was therefore solved by purchase of land sufficient for any number of new estates, but the question of how to finance them was difficult. Private enterprise would not undertake anything so speculative as building small dwellings, for which no one could be relied on to pay an "economic" rent. Domestic building *had* therefore to be done by the civic authorities. But Vienna was too impoverished after the War to be able to raise funds for housing by means of a loan on which interest would have to be paid, for those interest payments would have represented a heavy annual charge on the properties and rents had to be kept extremely low if working people were to pay them without going short of food and the other necessities of life.

But because of the inflation of the currency, the capital value of sums sunk in mortgages had been reduced almost to vanishing point, so that house property became virtually freed from mortgage obligations. Owing to this relief to the landlords, it was possible to introduce in September 1923 a *H o u s e - R e n t - T a x*, the proceeds of which sufficed to finance municipal house-building. This tax, graded according to the size of dwelling, being based on the floor area of all occupied rooms, was in fact one-third lower than the taxes which

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had been imposed on small dwellings and one-fiftieth lower than those on large dwellings before the War.\*

This was the only tax levied on the houses and business premises of Vienna, and as rents in 1934, including the tax, were only 25 per cent higher than rents before the War, it was not considered a hardship.† It could only be used for housing purposes, such as the redemption of the municipal housing loans, the building of houses and the promotion of the garden-city movement, and it was administered entirely by the municipality.

House-owners were later assisted by a new fund, the Improvement Fund, which was inaugurated in 1932; by it long-term loans at 2 per cent interest could be granted to private persons from public sources up to 45 per cent of the capital expenditure on improvements, while new buildings built by private enterprise were exempted from taxation for thirty years. Of the cost of repairing dwellings in private ownership 20 per cent could also be obtained from a special Reconditioning Fund.

Most of the Viennese dwellings were built by the municipality from their own resources, only about 2,500 (one-thirtieth) of

\* Ninety groschen a month had to be paid on one room and kitchen; 10 schillings on two rooms and kitchen; 80 schillings on a big villa; and 4,000 schillings on a palace. The tax on business premises and apartments let in rooms was calculated on a different basis.

As new houses were occupied, they too were taxed and by 1928 the yearly income amounted to more than £1,000,000, which enabled the big civic building programme to be sustained without difficulty.

Twenty-three per cent of this tax was paid by the 527,730 cheap dwellings and business premises in the city, while 44 per cent was paid by the 3,470 more expensive premises. The eighty dwellings (palaces and mansions) which commanded the highest rents paid taxes equal in amount to those paid by 350,000 workmen's dwellings.

The owners were responsible for collecting the tax and were paid a commission of 10 per cent of the amount, with a maximum of 20 schillings a month.

† In England "controlled" rents are permitted to be 40 per cent higher than in 1914. Uncontrolled rents are considerably higher.

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them receiving State assistance under the Dwelling House Promotion Bill, passed by the Austrian Federal Government in 1929.

Ample land, a stabilized currency, and an adequate income for housing had been secured by 1923, and in that year the city council decided to construct 25,000 dwellings within the next five years. These, however, were completed in only three years, and 5,000 more dwellings were immediately begun in 1926, and a further 30,000 in May 1927.\*

From the outset the city council insisted that, although municipal business concerns need not yield any profits, they must pay their way. And in order to prevent any unjustifiable rise in the prices of building materials, the municipality owned its own granite works, paving-stone works, tile works, lime shops and repair workshops, etc., while to ensure the utmost economy, the supply and purchase of materials were as far as possible centralized. Building parts were extensively standardized such as doors, iron and wooden windows, door and window fittings, stairs, banister rails, etc. Private architects collaborated in the plans, but the execution was entrusted to contractors, who tendered in open competition, the municipality providing the building materials.

Such methods ensured real economy and kept down costs. By building in large units and using methods of mass production, and by working to a definite programme over a period of time, the speculative and competitive elements which have wrecked or crippled so many admirable housing programmes, were entirely eliminated,

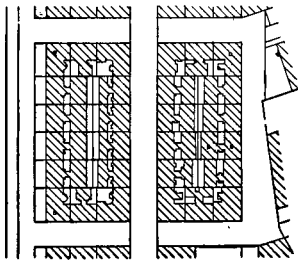
\* Between 1918 and 1934, 180,000 persons, or one-tenth of the total population of the town, were housed in 64,000 dwellings, built out of the city's annual income. Of these new municipal dwellings, 52,000 were five- or six-storeyed tenements generally built on undeveloped land near the centre of the town, and 8,000 were one-family houses with small gardens built towards the outskirts of Vienna

## VIENNA

so that in Vienna is seen the phenomenon of an increasing building programme accompanied by a decrease in costs.\*

It is fascinating to trace the improvements in the layout of estates the planning of dwellings, and the ideas for fuller and healthier ways of living which distinguish the estates built between 1890 and 1930.

Under the old Viennese building regulations, 85 per cent of a site could be built over in tenements of six, seven and eight storeys.



*Ground plan of typical old Viennese tenements, six and seven storeys high, linked by small courtyards, with narrow wells for light and air*

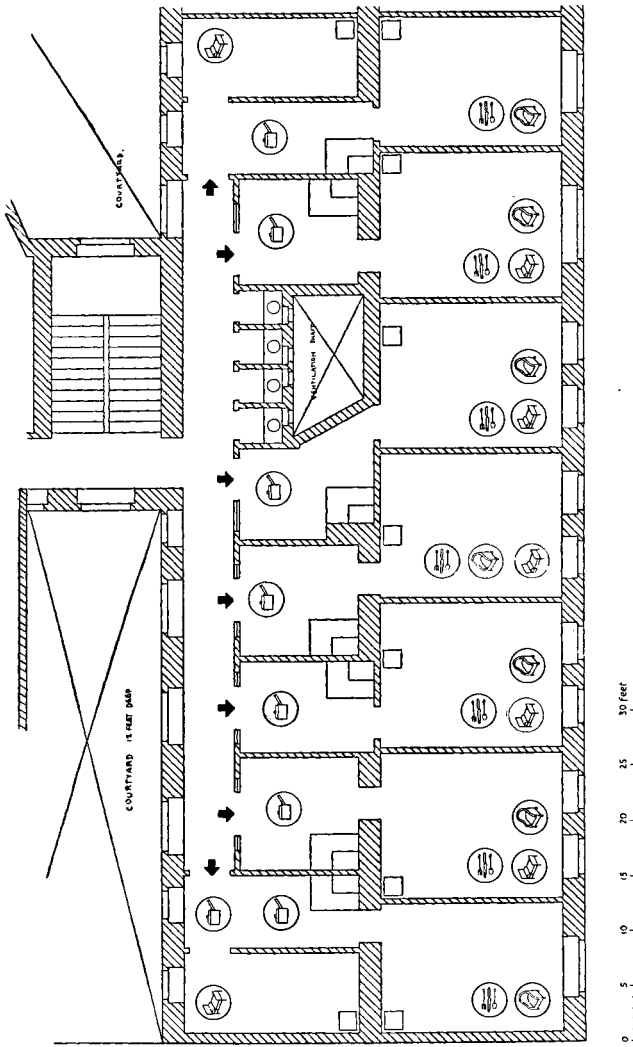
This resulted in such a lack of air and light that in the revised building by-laws issued in 1929 no new building was allowed which had less than  $45^{\circ}$  angle of light, while no more than 50 per cent of the site could be built over. Height also was strictly controlled and no dwellings were allowed to be constructed below ground level!

Of every 1,000 dwellings built in Vienna before the War, 953 had no water supply and 921 had no w.c. on the premises—the usual plan being to group w.c.s in a corridor into which fifteen or twenty kitchen doors and windows opened. Every municipal dwelling after the War had its own w.c. and water supply.

Before the War only 62 out of every 1,000 small flats had a parlour,

\* Orders were given for groups of some 1,500 dwellings at a time. The advantage for the contractor was that the number of inquiries for materials was reduced and the middleman was eliminated. The producer had the advantage of large contracts extending over a number of years, stability and cheapness of production.

# VIENNA



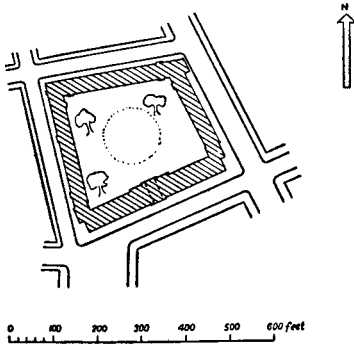
*Typical pre-War tenements. Six, seven or eight storeys high; seven dwellings off one staircase and a long internal corridor; four w.c.s for general use, ventilating into a narrow well. No direct light into any kitchen*

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but now 750 out of every 1,000 of the new municipal flats of the same type possess one.

Out of the first 50,000 dwellings constructed by the town, 54 per cent contained kitchen, living-room and two or more bedrooms, 37 per cent consisted of a kitchen and one room and 9 per cent had one room only. In the majority of the flats these dwellings had also a private balcony.

Owing to the cost of building and the need to economize money,



*The Bebelhof estate; in courtyard formation, but containing pretty gardens and a colonnade*

the new dwellings were small and equipped as simply as possible—the stove, and “luxury fittings” (as is common abroad) being provided by the tenants themselves. But the inevitable smallness of the dwellings was offset by their being surrounded by ample space, since land was cheap, and by the municipality providing the tenants with everything necessary for a full communal life, such as infant schools, clubrooms, gymnasiums, laundries, playgrounds and gardens. That is to say, the city council concentrated on the needs of the children, on the encouragement of companionship and the general health of the tenants.

The kindergartens in Vienna are so well known and

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have been so widely copied, that only a short description of them in relation to the new housing estates is needed here.

During the first terrible years after the War, the children in Vienna were fed by the American and the Dutch Relief Schemes. By 1922 the municipality felt able itself to undertake the responsibility, and kindergartens were established throughout the city for poor, ill or unhappy children under school age. This was both far-sighted and constructive, for housing conditions were deplorable and there was great distress; parents who were unemployed were too poor and disheartened to look properly after their young children, while where both parents had to work in order to keep the home together they were forced to neglect their children.

The accomplishments required in the teachers included such diverse things as guitar playing and gymnastics, and the children, who were in school from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and were under medical supervision, were taught the things which many of them lacked in their own homes, such as order, a community spirit, independence, pleasure in work and play and cleanliness.

Between 1918 and 1931 the number of kindergartens owned by the municipality increased from 57 to 111, and contained 9,600 children between three and six years of age. Only forty-eight of these schools were on new housing estates, while twenty-seven were in special municipal buildings, twenty-nine in existing schools and seven in private houses, for it was realized that children still in bad housing or social conditions needed the schools even more than the children in the new estates.

The children were nominated to the schools by the Youth Welfare Centre of each district, which is the equivalent of English care committees. Classes were co-educational, and the children were put in small "family-groups," irrespective of age, as this was found by experience to be an improvement on the original plan of "age-groups." And although the first schools were planned to hold about

## VIENNA

two hundred children each, the size was steadily decreased in the later schools, between fifty and one hundred children being the size of school found by experience to be best suited to the children's individual needs.

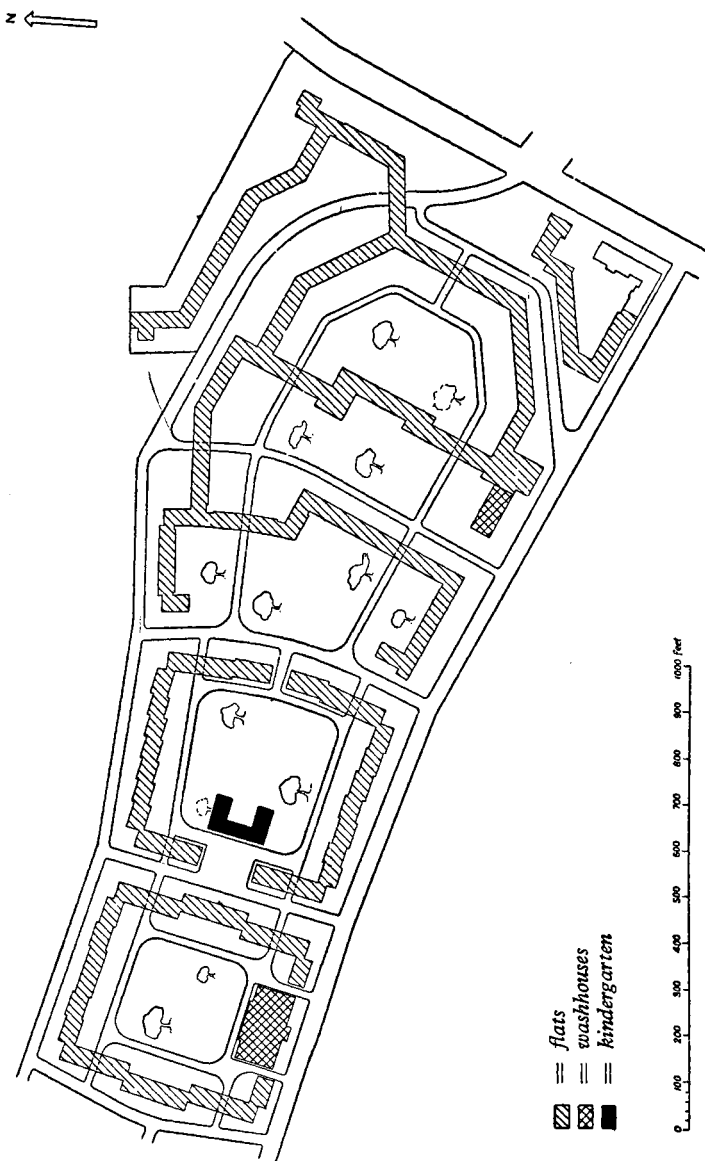
Parents' associations existed at each kindergarten to reinforce and help the teachers. Regular discussion meetings were often arranged between the parents and the teachers of each small group, while parents often helped to make or mend the toys. Many kindergartens held an annual exhibition at which the work both of children and of parents was shown. In this way parents were kept closely in touch with their children's needs and development, and indirectly they learned the lessons which were being taught to their children.

Although the fees for the schools were low, and a stringent means-test was employed, almost three-quarters of the parents were unable to pay the full fees; the deficit was met by the municipality, who considered the expense was justified. For the poorer the parents, the more wretched the home, the more important did the municipality feel it was to transplant those children into healthy conditions where they were well fed, and where they would return to those poor or unhappy homes and unconsciously teach the lessons they had been learning all day. Through these kindergartens, early youth, which is the most tender and impressionable time of life, was not sacrificed in Vienna to economic or domestic tragedies for which the children were not responsible.

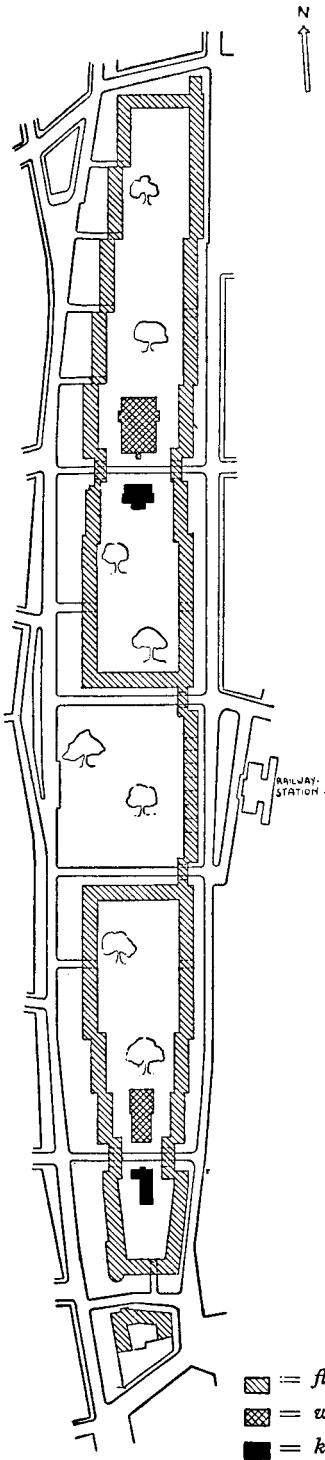
The municipality did not consider it necessary to provide special facilities on such a large scale for any other age-group of the community.\*

\* By 1935 they had provided a number of youth welfare departments and municipal retreats, seventeen ambulance stations (under the health insurance), welfare departments for consumptives, fourteen consultation departments for mothers, eight school dental clinics, sixty-six institutions for education and literature, four gymnastic halls and seventy-four branch depots of the co-operative societies; where necessary, independent shops were also built in the larger estates.








WASHINGTONHOF: 1,085 flats built round large common gardens, each planted with different trees: lilac, maple, acacia, elm

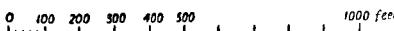


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The layout of the tenement estates was spacious, orderly and quiet. The flats were generally built round vast common gardens, laid out with playgrounds, paddling pools, sandpits and seats. Some of these common gardens have an extraordinarily park-like effect; for example, Washington-Hof has more than twenty-one acres of garden to about eight acres of building; Karl-Marx-Hof has five different garden areas totalling thirteen acres; Engelsplatz has twenty-one and a half acres (86,970 square metres) of garden to nearly seven acres (28,330 square metres) of building. The garden courtyards of the 293 larger estates amount in all to almost eighty-seven acres (351,768 square metres) of open space, all of which was laid out for the use and pleasure of the tenants. This compares well with the pre-War enclosed central courtyards which varied between 1,072 and 1,607 square feet (100 to 150 square metres), and even then were encumbered with small out-houses, sheds and so on. Sculpture, wall-paintings or some decorative work of real artistic quality, was generally commissioned to adorn each estate.

As has been said, different architects were entrusted with the design of

-  = flats
-  = washhouses
-  = kindergartens



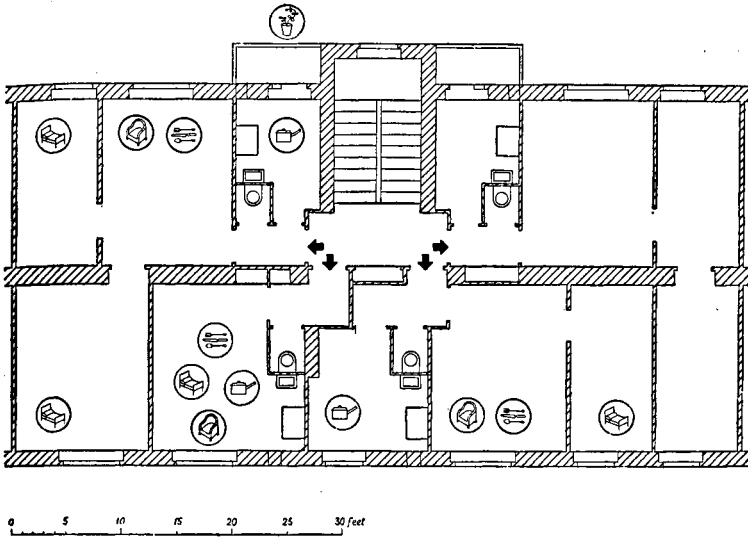
KARL-MARX-HOF, containing 1380 dwellings

## VIENNA

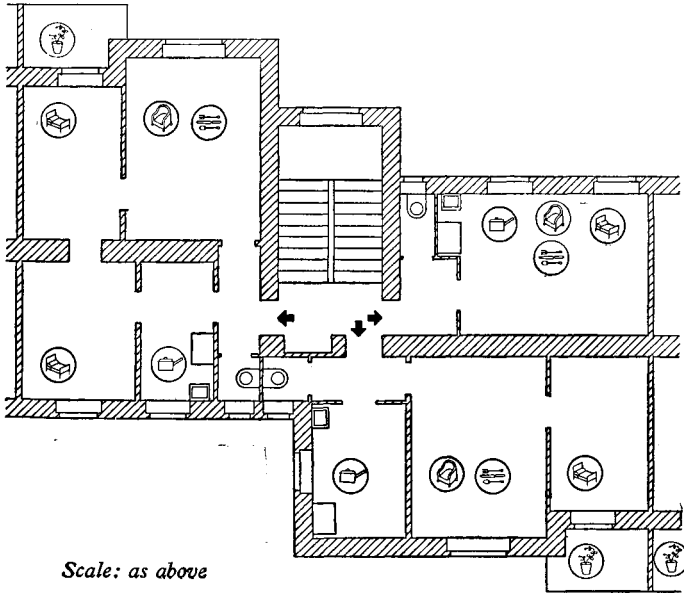
the various estates, and the planning varied greatly in quality and competence. In many estates the siting was careless, some of the living-rooms facing north and larders south for no apparent reason, while there was considerable and unnecessary overshadowing of many of the flats by the angle-planning of the blocks. And although the smallness of the individual dwellings was necessary because of the comparatively high cost of building materials, the small space was often poorly divided. Many of the blocks themselves strike one as rather grim, and gloomily coloured. An experiment to relieve this by the use of coloured cement had, however, been unpopular and was called locally "the Neapolitan Ice." The estates are so enormous, the dwellings so numerous, that one feels overwhelmed, although the homes themselves are often individually charming, especially the ones with balconies and window-boxes, which are much appreciated and which mitigate the cramped feeling of the home to an extraordinary degree.

Access to the flats was always by internal staircases with three or four flats to a landing, though occasionally eight small flats led off the one landing. For, provided that each dwelling was adequately ventilated, there was, in Vienna, no prejudice in favour of through ventilation! Each dwelling had to be provided with its own w.c. and water supply;\* all living-rooms and kitchens had to have outside windows; and "well" courtyards were not allowed. Heating was by the traditional individual slow-combustion tiled stoves, while cooking was by gas, charcoal or wood cookers, with an extra point in the kitchen for a gas-ring. Private baths were not installed, but the municipality either provided easily accessible public baths at low prices, or they installed baths for common use in the dwelling-blocks themselves. In the more recent dwellings

\* The w.c.s were often built on an inner wall of the flat, with the ventilation duct passing over the cooking recess: carefully constructed, it was claimed that this arrangement was hygienic and adequate. It is common in Scandinavian countries.



*Typical planning of one-, two- and three-roomed flats*



*Scale: as above*

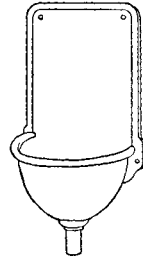
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provision was made for installing portable showers in the kitchens; the tenant himself had to provide the actual equipment if he wanted and could afford to do so. Built-in cupboards were considered unsuitable because of vermin.

The tenants' decorations and furniture were often in excellent modern taste, and the distempered walls were sometimes stencilled



*A typical charcoal- or wood-burning stove, enamelled in pretty colours*



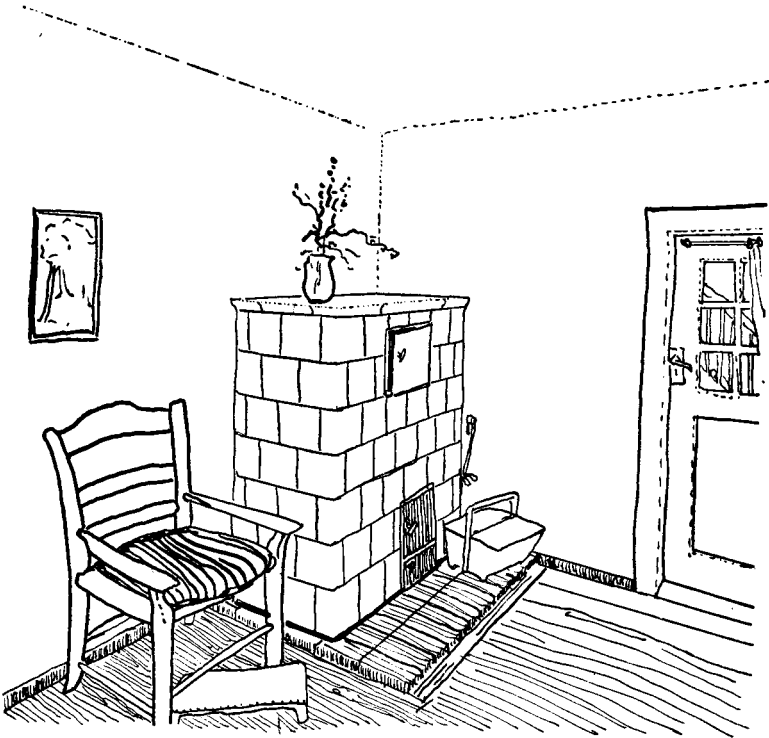
*The simple sink, usual in the cheapest Continental homes*

in charming designs done by the husband, or some other member of the family.

A washhouse with a drying-space was provided for every twelve flats, and in houses over three floors in height, this drying-space was generally put under the roof. Blocks of more than four hundred flats usually had machine laundries, with separate compartments in which the women could do their washing. But washing-day is a less frequent ordeal in Austria than in England, for in Austria a housewife has enough linen and the atmosphere is clean enough to enable her to wash only once a month, instead of weekly as is our custom. Sixty-two of the estates had common baths connected to the

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laundries, which ensured economy both in superintendence and in the supply of hot water. But it is common knowledge that many women disliked using the common washhouse because their clothing and linen were too old to show to their neighbours!



In many of the later schemes libraries, gymnasia and meeting-rooms were provided for the tenants, and were extremely popular.

The housing estates were in admirable repair in 1934, after nine years' hard wear: in fact the shell holes only revealed the admirable quality of the workmanship and the materials. The gardens were still well-kept, though no water had been allowed for the children's

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paddling pools, and all the clubs and gymnasia were closed for political reasons. The children looked well and very happy in spite of the obvious poverty, unhappiness and even starvation of their parents.

In spite of the grandeur of these estates, the beauty of the gardens and the equipment for communal enjoyment, the rent of the dwellings was easily within the means of working people, since the estates were built from the income of the city. For although the rents included a charge for management and for the upkeep of the houses and the ornamental gardens, they had not to bear any charge for interest on, or amortization of, capital.\* This method of finance has never in my opinion been properly appreciated or even fairly described.

Although the majority of the new dwellings built by the city between 1919 and 1934 were in tenement estates, within easy reach of the centre of the town, about 8,000 of the new dwellings were, in the early years, built in cottage estates on the

\* *Method of Calculation of Rents in the Viennese Municipal Estates.*

Between 1922 and 1929, the rents of municipal dwellings were divided by law into four parts:

- (1) calculated to cover the "basic rent," which was fixed at half the pre-War rent;
- (2) a contribution towards the cost of repairs and management, fixed at 150 times the pre-War amount, but able to be increased if it could be proved that repairs were more costly than in November 1922;
- (3) a contribution towards regular maintenance costs, such as chimney-sweeping, cleaning sewers, the caretaker's wages, etc.;
- (4) and lastly, a contribution to cover taxation charges.

The amount of the last two items was determined by agreement between the landlord and the tenants, or, if they were unable to agree, by a special arbitration committee.

These basic rents were calculated on floor space, but varied (according to the cost of the estate and the amount of land used) from 14 to 24 groschen a month in block dwellings, and from 26 to 34 groschen in the suburban cottage estates. Extra charges, which were all shown in the rent book, included use of the common laundry (generally 1 schilling a month for each member of the family), house-rent-tax, and cleaning charges.

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outskirts. These "garden-cities," built in a recognizably English style, were extremely popular among families where the woman was not working: when both parents had to work, they preferred to live in a flat. It was soon found by the municipality, however, that this type of development involved an expenditure on roads, transport and the provision of public services such as water, gas, electricity and drainage, which was quite disproportionate to the rents which could be charged. Building was, therefore, more and more limited to those areas where public services already existed, and the dwellings grouped in the most economical way for the supply and distribution of those services. That is to say, the municipality built fewer cottage estates and more flats, as they gained experience in the cost of development. It should, however, be remembered that they were, by tradition, tenement dwellers.

At the end of 1917 there were about 16,000 applicants registered as "Preferential" in the City Housing Department.\* The selection of tenants from among these thousands of applicants was extremely difficult. A system was worked out by which "points" were given to families on various urgency counts, over nine points qualifying them for the waiting list, while fifteen points made them eligible for immediate relief. Dirty families were not given new flats, but were put into houses vacated in the centre of the town, after these had been reconditioned.

The management of all the estates was, of course, municipal, and a gigantic organization was evolved which worked practically without friction from its inception.†

\* This list included 1,638 applicants in bad or unhealthy homes, 5,560 who needed separate dwellings, 1,763 who were under notice to quit, and 7,039 overcrowded or living too far from their work.

† *The Management of the Viennese Municipal Estates.*

The organization was divided into the four following departments, each section with its duties strictly defined:

1. *Administration.*

The staff consisted in 1934 of 11 heads of divisions, 23 inspectors,



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These municipal estates were intended for and inhabited by families in work, who were reasonably certain to pay their rent. There were, however, many thousands of families who were unable to find work in the city and who were unlikely ever to be employed there again. Immediately after the War, some of these starving families

1,457 housing officers, 25 technical workers, 11 subordinate officials, 26 clerks and 2 lawyers.

The heads of the eleven divisions into which these estates were finally grouped were the real administrators.

Each of the twenty-three districts contained 2,000-2,500 dwellings, and the inspector in charge was available locally at regular hours for consultation with housing officers and tenants who had questions to raise.

Each housing officer was put in charge of one old, reconditioned block of dwellings or of three new ones. The salary was 80 schillings a month, a flat rent-free, and 1 per cent of the rents they collected; their duties were as follows:

- (a) Collecting the rents monthly and paying them by postal order into the Post Office account of the municipality not later than the third of each month.
- (b) Cleaning and inspection of their houses. Cleaning was paid by the tenants themselves, the amount charged being determined by the administrative head of the district.
- (c) Lighting of staircases, yards, etc.
- (d) Safety of houses and tenants.

2. *For receiving applications and letting the dwellings.*

Applications were granted according to urgency, on a system devised to exclude any possible charge of unfairness. It is said to have worked well for the eleven years in which the Socialist administration was in control of the new housing estates.

3. *The technical side of management.*

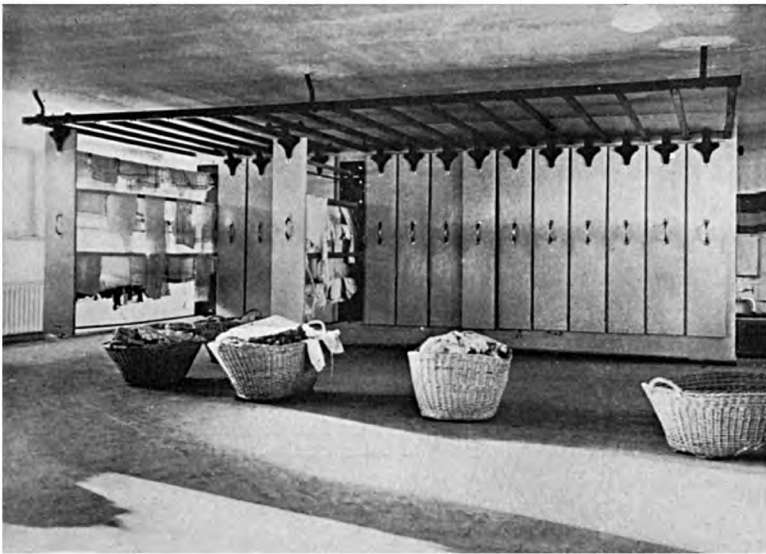
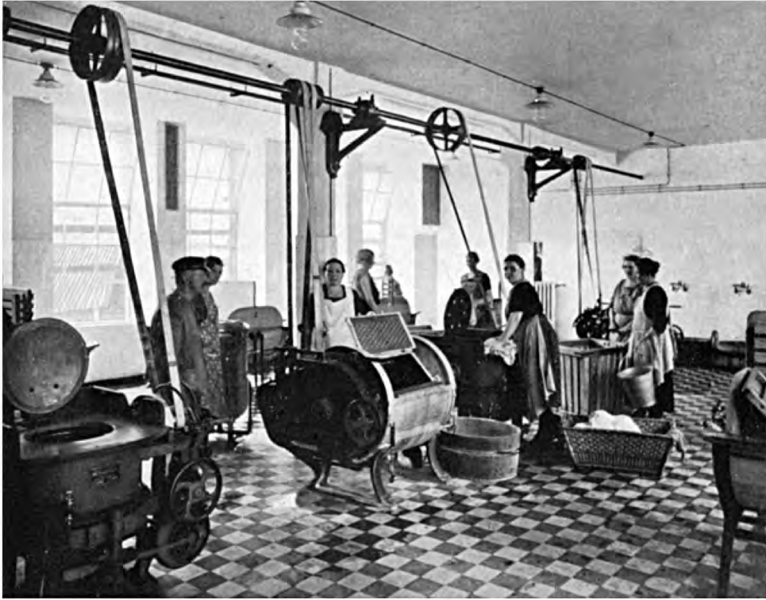
The technical men were in close touch with the housing officers, the inspectors and the divisional chiefs.

4. *Accounts and book-keeping.*

There was a special office for fixing rents, repairs, book-keeping, while the management of central laundries and baths was also dealt with.

It is said that the part taken by the tenants themselves in the administration of the estates contributed very largely to their success, for each "staircase" had also a representative on a committee for the estate. This committee was, however, only responsible for the general welfare of the tenants and was not concerned in general policy or in "lettings."

Arrears of rent were negligible, amounting to 2 per cent in November 1933.



*A common laundry, well equipped for washing and drying with the minimum of trouble*

PLATE 17



*One of the co-operative estates, Aspern, built by the workers themselves on the borders of Vienna. Produce is marketed co-operatively, and the best technical advice is available for the settlers.*

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had moved out of the unhealthy old core of Vienna and "squatted" on any vacant land they could find. But these squatters' settlements very soon became an untidy nuisance, while the families themselves got into endless difficulties, and were unable either to obtain work or to afford the fares into Vienna in search of it.

Until the intense shortage of food during and after the War stimulated a demand for them, allotments were unknown in Vienna. But by 1927 almost 2,223 acres (9,000,000 square metres) of land within the city boundary, about half of which belonged to the municipality, were in use as allotments, and by 1935 there were 400,000 allotment holders within the administrative area of the city; in that year the Mayor gave the unemployed the use of a further 130 acres of city land, on which some 2,000 people were able to grow their own potatoes and vegetables.

From municipal allotments to municipal smallholdings, on which unemployed, casual or short-time workers could live with their families in reasonable comfort, was a short step.

To get the starving and unemployed out of the central core of slums the municipality had since 1923 encouraged and helped co-operative and settlement societies to build on the outskirts of the city, and through a specially formed municipal "Department for Housing Colonies" they had leased land to them on the pre-War terms of eighty-year leases and granted loans at low interest rates from the income of the house-rent-tax. This help amounted in theory to 85 per cent of the total building costs, but in fact reached 98 per cent by the time that the cost of the land, the roads, the drainage and the other amenities provided by the municipality, had been taken into account. The balance of 2 per cent was the tenants' contribution in personal work.\*

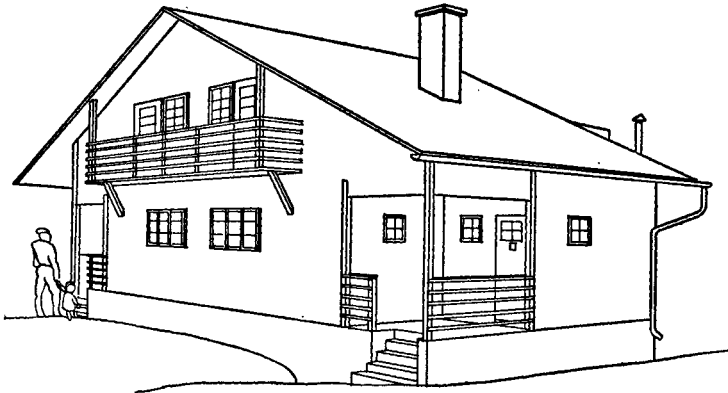
At first the societies built as they pleased, but gradually the department imposed a minimum standard of design and equipment.

\* See *Housing Colonies in Vienna*, by Dr. Ludwig Neumann.

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But building costs were high because the estates were scattered, there was considerable duplication of managerial and technical staff, and the demand for building materials was simultaneous by many competing societies.

In 1928, therefore, the municipality decided to centralize the actual construction work, and to confine the societies' co-operation to administering their estates after completion. A "Public Utility Colony



*A typical Austrian timber cottage*

and Building Material Institution" (abbreviated to GESIBA),\* which had had long and successful experience of resettlement schemes, carried out with the municipality the actual building of all the colonies; materials were bought centrally at prices under municipal control, the plans used were provided by the municipality, and construction was under municipal supervision.

Up to 1935, 2,600 cottages were built by these means. The

\* Founded in 1921 by the Government, the municipality of Vienna and the Federation of Land Settlement Societies. In 1934 it became a limited liability company called the Viennese Land Settlement Company (Wiener Siedlungsgesellschaft), in which 30 per cent of the shares were held by the Government and 70 per cent by the municipality.

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system is said to have been thoroughly satisfactory and to have succeeded in reducing the cost of building to the pre-competitive level.

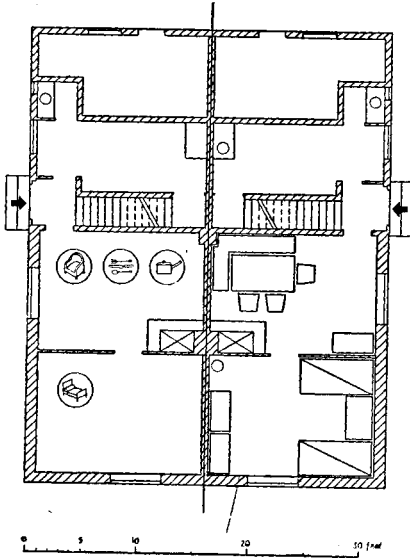
As each estate was completed, it was handed to the co-operative society concerned, which leased the dwellings to its own members. Municipal approval was, however, required for each letting and was only given when the applicant's poverty could be proved, or if his vacated dwelling were put at the disposal of the municipality to help their general rehousing work.

"Gesiba" was in addition allowed to make a special experiment in land settlement which has since been taken as the basis for similar work in Germany as well as Austria. Early in 1932 some of the unemployed in Vienna asked the municipality to grant them fifty acres of land on which they could form a model colony for twenty families. This request was refused, partly because it was felt that valuable urban land should not be monopolized by so few citizens while considerable capital would be necessary to develop it, and partly because the idea, if successful, could not be generally copied on so vast a scale. The principle that land should be used to help unemployed whose doles had expired was, however, accepted and the "Gesiba" was asked to submit a scheme. This scheme, which was adopted, was so well thought out and proved so successful that it is given here in some detail,\* as it may in part be applicable to a solution of English problems.

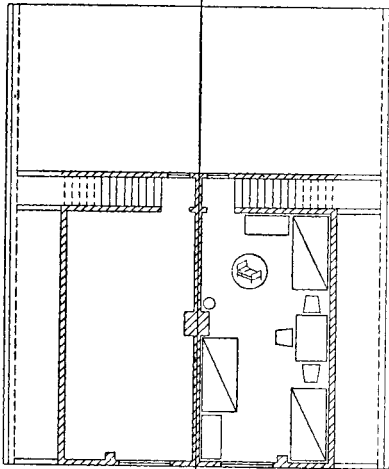
The area which the unemployed wanted was north-east of the Danube beside a village, Leopoldau, within the Viennese boundary and within three-quarters of an hour's tram ride from the town. Before the War it had been intended as an industrial area, but only a skeleton road service had been constructed, and the land was now

\* Description from *Oesterreich hilft seinen Arbeitslosen sich selbst zu helfen* published by Die Randsiedlungsaktionen der Bundesregierung und der Stadt Wien.

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*Ground floor plan of a pair of settlement houses in Leopoldau, showing store-rooms*



*Upstairs*

part of a big municipal holding which was being farmed uneconomically by four tenant-farmers.\*

The "Gesiba" scheme was based on the severest economy, so that neither the municipality nor the settlers should be crippled by debt. Experience had shown that it was wrong to put families into ready-built, fully equipped farms, both because of the heavy interest charges on high capital costs and because the tenants felt neither responsibility nor personal pride in the homes. On

\* Vienna, with nearly two million inhabitants, has within its boundaries 16,000 acres of woods and meadows, 20,000 acres of smallholdings and 8,000 acres of public gardens.

The municipality have a special department concerned only with hunting within the territory of the town and, according to their statistics last year, the following animals were shot by hunters:

Seven stags, 91 harts, 146 deer, 2,160 hares, 6,717 rabbits, 1,790 pheasants, 677 partridges, 23 snipes, 3 wild geese and 35 wild duck.

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the other hand, primitive colonies, with scope for initiative, had succeeded.

The plans submitted were therefore for small houses in brick which could be built by the settlers themselves and could easily be added to when they became more prosperous. Each dwelling consisted of a kitchen-living-room (9 by 12 feet), a small bedroom (8 by 12 feet), an attic (12 by 18 feet) and a wooden stable (7 by 15 feet) which contained the peat-closet and was connected with the house by a covered passage which could also be used as a workroom. The

*Stove in coloured tiles, usual in Austrian living-rooms. Burns wood or charcoal*



houses were semi-detached for warmth and to save cost of construction and repairs, and as rooms could be added on the outside, a full-sized house with several bedrooms could be gradually built from this nucleus.

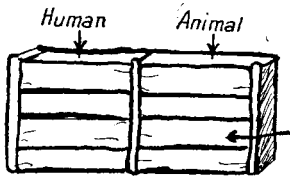
The principle of reducing initial cost had to be applied in other ways. A public water supply to such dispersed homes would have been prohibitively expensive to instal and to use for irrigation. But excellent drinking water was found at a shallow depth, hand pumps could be very easily installed for each tenant and fitted in winter with a special valve to prevent freezing, and a Diesel motor pump combined with movable patent pipes and sprinklers could be provided to enable colonists to water their land co-operatively at a low cost and avoid the heavy physical strain of watering large areas by hand during droughts.



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Electricity could not be considered, even for lighting, both because of the expense of bringing it from Vienna or making it locally, and because people with very low incomes could not be expected to meet a regular monthly bill for lighting charges. Neither could gas be brought from the city, although it was said to be more economic than other fuel for cooking. Oil was considered the most suitable fuel for initial use, with the possibility of installing these other labour-saving services in the future.

Sewage also was dispensed with, not only on account of the very



*Special manure container built in each garden. The boards unhook from the bottom*

high cost of construction but, even more, because every possibility had to be taken of producing manure on this semi-agricultural estate. On each holding therefore a couple of concrete silos was provided, where human and animal excrement, absorbed and rendered inoffensive by peat, could be covered with earth and transformed into manure in six months.

Instead of the twenty families who had originally been proposed on the fifty acres, the plans were made for eighty homes, each with five-eighths acre of land. This acreage was deliberately chosen because it was calculated that the value of the yield in produce would equal the average unemployment dole of the father of a family: if the head of the household found work, the holding was still a manageable size; and the holding was large enough to provide a useful amount of food, and even to support entirely a particularly expert gardener. An unemployed family with a holding of such carefully calculated size had a healthy home, fresh food of the highest nutritive value and a margin of produce for sale.

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Larger holdings would have meant greater capital cost per dwelling and a greater proportionate expenditure on roads and services, while even then the holders could not have been self-supporting. Smaller plots would not have provided a surplus of produce for sale in addition to feeding the family.

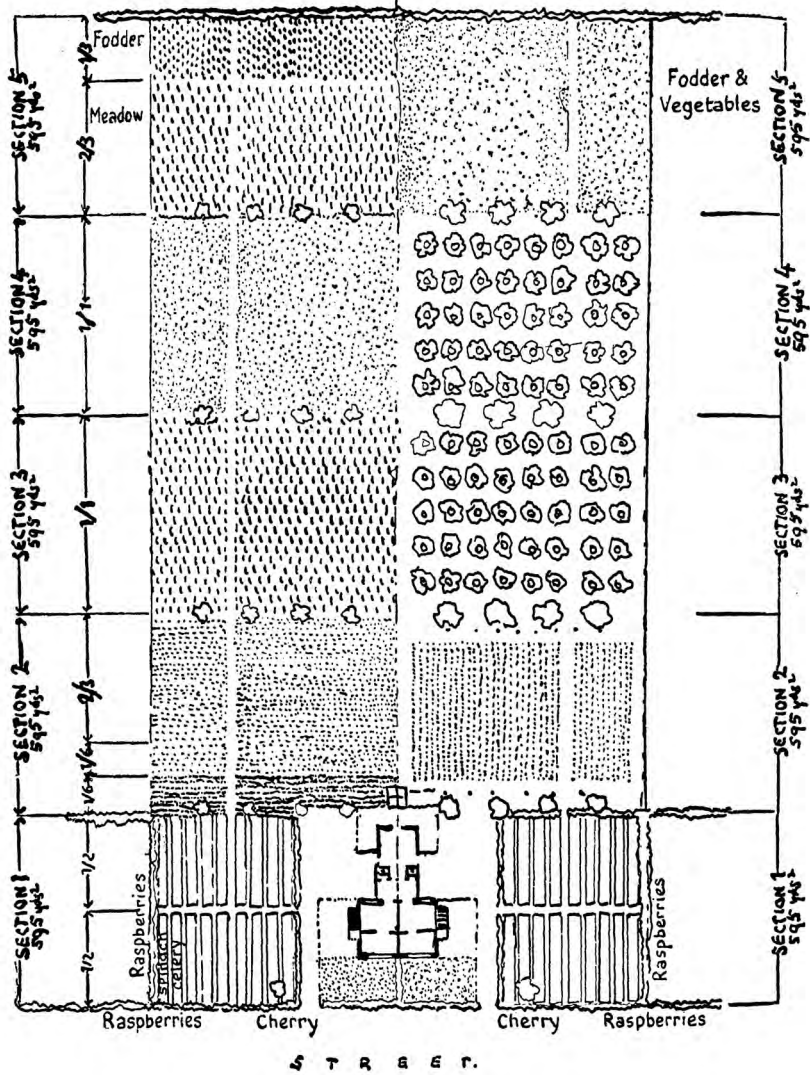
Systematic and organized production was encouraged from the first, as can be seen from the plan. Hedges were only planted near the houses, so that co-operative agricultural machines could be used on the cross strips, nearly three-quarters of a mile long, parallel to the trees. Apart from the fruit trees, about 300 stocks for grafting were planted on each homestead unit to enable the colonists to increase their fruit trees. For good fruit is scarce and expensive in Vienna and is largely imported, especially in winter. Well-organized production and marketing of fruit was obviously by far the safest and most lucrative crop for the unemployed to grow; an additional reason for choosing it as the main product was that it required less constant care and could most easily be looked after by the women of the family when the men found work or were ill.

The municipality, having accepted the scheme, gave instructions for the choice of families. They must, it was said, be unemployed, with preference given to those whose dole had expired: they were supposed to have families and to have had experience in gardening or farming; as most of the construction of the buildings would have to be done by the settlers, a certain number of the men had to be members of the building trade, bricklayers, carpenters, etc.; their flats had to be put at the disposal of the municipal housing office after the homesteads were ready: and finally, each family had to be able to provide their own tools and equipment and contribute something towards such part of the cost of the scheme as was not covered by the municipal and "Gesiba" loans. Yet, in spite of these requirements, 1,600 suitable applications were received in two months!

The financial basis of the scheme is particularly interesting. The

First stage of development

The development as finally contemplated



Leopoldau

Scheme of Agricultural Development

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eighty families succeeded in finding between them 75,000 schillings by putting in their last savings, by selling property such as huts built in their old allotment gardens, by borrowing from friends and relatives. The municipality lent 100,000 schillings (£2,500). The "Gesiba" advanced 121,000 schillings (£3,025). Altogether 296,000 schillings (£7,400) were got together—a total of £125 for each of the eighty homesteads. But not only had this sum to build the actual house, but to cover the other equally urgent needs of water, seeds, trees and fences.

As soon as the eighty colonists had been selected, they were organized under "Gesiba's" supervision, and building was started in October 1932. Many of the men were underfed, but as their families lived in Vienna they would persist in walking to and fro every day.\* They became inefficient through weakness, so "Gesiba" decided to advance money for a midday meal and tram tickets, the cost of which was included in the £125 per homestead. Under the Voluntary-Work Act, settlers whose doles had expired were able while on public utility work to get a maximum of 2·50 schillings a day for two years, while the others continued to receive unemployment pay during that period. The settlers were soon able therefore to concentrate on building, they made excellent progress, and although work was naturally delayed during the winter, the homesteads were ready for occupation in May 1933.

The municipality was so impressed by this achievement that, after inspection, they granted a twenty-five year lease of 265 more acres of land, and capital enough for another 345 homesteads. A minimum contribution of 300 schillings was, however, now required from each tenant, while the total cost of each holding was raised to 4,000 schillings to cover improvements and additions which included a grant for poultry. Work was started in July 1933, and as the new homesteads were finished in February 1934, no crop was lost.

\* In 1937, after eleven years' unemployment, twenty men were given work on a Durham County Council scheme. Only four were able to carry on beyond the second day.

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Systematic cultivation was in fact begun in March, when on one Saturday 5,000 fruit trees were planted.

If the scheme of production as laid down by the experts is carried out, there should be more than half a million small fruit trees in Leopoldau in a few years, the higher trees will act as windscreens and will also, it is hoped, have a good effect on climatic conditions. Meanwhile, four more sets of Diesel pumps and sprinklers have been supplied for irrigation, and twenty-three large wells distributed over the estate in addition to the individual wells and handpumps.

Several large plots have been left unallocated, with a view eventually to building shops and agricultural factories on the estate. Meanwhile these plots have been fenced in and are used for common pasturage for goats, and central nursery gardens.

It is fully realized that the future of the estates depends on the intelligent co-operation of the tenants. Common use of sprinklers, tractors, pastures, maintenance of roads and fences and so on, require public spirit and discipline. These qualities are even more necessary for the joint purchase of goods and marketing of produce, and a limited co-operative society in which each tenant must hold one share has therefore been formed, controlled by the Viennese Land Settlement Company. Also, in order to give the necessary opportunities for lantern lectures, general instruction and discussion the municipality loaned 40,000 schillings for the tenants to build themselves a meeting-room, in which religious services could also be held. The cost of the lectures and of the courses of theoretic and practical instruction which were arranged to improve the quality of the gardening and farming work were incidentally met also from the £125 cost per homestead.\*

Rent is calculated per square metre of land, and amounts to about

\* The staff of the Viennese Land-Settlement Company consists of an architect, an expert on economics, general construction and the technique of colonization, and a sociologist, while three experts are available on a retaining fee to give advice on fruit planting and gardening, vegetable growing and market organization, and cattle, fodder and pasturage questions.

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£1 a month. This sum includes repayment of capital and interest at 2 per cent, spread over twenty-three years (payments are waived during the first two years' tenancy), and a contribution to the cost of administration by the Viennese Land-Settlement Company. This rent is in fact often less than the family had to pay for rooms in Vienna, while the value of the produce is estimated at about £38 a year after deducting all working expenses. Many of the settlers are, however, unable to keep up their payments, and the Company is trying to help them by arranging with the municipality for part-time work, and by introducing better methods of cultivation which will improve crops both for the household and for sale. Very promising results have already been achieved. Wheat planted by hand for seed, vegetables such as salsify, rhubarb and melanzani, which are rare in Vienna, and excellent apricots, pears and apples are being put on the market.

The livestock consists of pigs, goats, rabbits, hens, ducks, etc.; several families are selling graded eggs and the milk supply has been increased by improving the breeding stock of the goats. In fact, these 425 families, many of whom are very intelligent and enthusiastic, have increased the value of the output by at least six times as much per unit of surface as when the land was worked by only three or four families with seasonal help.

About 5 per cent of the settlers have given up their holdings, but a fair price was paid to them by their successors, and their unemployment pay was extended by the time they had been in the colony.

The example of Leopoldau has inspired the Austrian Government as well as the municipality of Vienna to make grants for similar colonies on the outskirts of towns and industrial areas. The financial basis has been adjusted: after three years probation a lease is now granted to the year A.D. 2000, with a loan of 5,000 schillings (4,500 schillings from the Government and 500 schillings from the municipality) which must be repaid within forty years. Production is still being carefully organized, each colony being

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given direction in specialization for sale (merillo cherries and table grapes were chosen for the 1934 schemes) and a co-operative marketing society formed by those producers, who are thus protected from the undercutting and glutting of markets caused by undirected and individualistic farming. Experiments are also being made into the possibilities of combining part-time industrial employment for the settlers with this part-time semi-agricultural work; it is thought that citizens will in this way become more independent of trade fluctuations, healthier, happier. Certainly there is a wide-spread desire among Austrian working men and women not only for greater security against the crude starvation which can face families in urban blocks of flats, but also for some variety and interest in the kind of occupation open to them. Both these claims seem to be met in this land-movement incorporated, as the estates are, within the borders of existing cities.

It is obviously easier to leave the soil than to return to it. Austria does not think that State loans will be adequate for the purpose, and efforts are being made to induce the great building societies to direct public savings into this kind of investment. If they succeed, and if the direction of resettlement continues on its present imaginative yet practical basis, the problem of providing fresh food of the highest quality for urban populations seems at the same time to be reasonably solved.\*

\* The following financial details of holdings in Vienna may be of interest:

The occupations of the 459 applicants admitted to Viennese boundary settlements in 1934 were as follows:

Building labourers	..	..	..	78
Woodworkers	..	..	..	39
Metalworkers	..	..	..	99
Clerical employees, etc.	..	..	..	41
Intellectual workers	..	..	..	3
Agricultural workers	..	..	..	11
General labourers	..	..	..	93
Clothing workers	..	..	..	25
Miscellaneous occupations	..	..	..	70

Total	..	..	..	..	459
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*Continued on page 181*

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Recent statistics for Vienna show a noticeable increase in the health of the city which may properly be credited, in part at least, to the improved housing conditions. There has been a striking drop in

*Continued from page 180*

The following table shows the normal cost of construction for Aspern Settlement in Vienna (containing 199 holdings each of 1,500 square metres area) and the settlement of St. Pölten, begun during 1934:

	<i>Schillings</i>
Cost of land .. .. .	Nil
Net construction cost of dwelling .. .. .	4,909
Net construction costs of "business" part .. .. .	1,728
Road building and fencing .. .. .	180
Water supply .. .. .	344
<hr/>	
Total construction costs per holding at both settlements ..	7,161
Settlers' own work, at Aspern only .. .. .	1,873
<hr/>	
Net cash expenditure at Aspern .. .. .	5,288

The annual charge to the settlers in Aspern is made up as follows:

	<i>Schillings</i>
Ground rent (0.02 schillings per year per square metre) ..	30
Management costs (0.01 schillings per year per square metre)	15
Interest and redemption on the mortgage loan of the Federal Dwelling and Settlement Fund (5 per cent on 4,500 schillings)	225
Interest and redemption of additional municipal loan of 500 schillings .. .. .	25
Land tax and insurance .. .. .	17
<hr/>	
Total .. .. .	304

A settler in the St. Pölten settlement has to pay the following additional charges per annum:

	<i>Schillings</i>
Interest .. .. .	135.0
Fire insurance .. .. .	9.60
Share of management costs .. .. .	6.0
Postage, etc. .. .. .	1.56
<hr/>	
Total .. .. .	152.16

The potential gross yield of a holding of 2,500 square metres drawn from vegetables, fruit, goats and hens, has been estimated by the Austrian Board of Agriculture, at 1,303 schillings a year, from which 305 schillings would have to be deducted for working expenses. Nearly six hours' work a day in

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the mortality and sickness rates. The actual death-rate from tuberculosis per 10,000 inhabitants dropped from thirty in 1913 to twenty in 1926 and to eleven in 1935. The infant mortality rate, too, which was 150 per 1,000 in 1913, had decreased to 64 per 1,000 by 1936.

These figures alone abundantly fulfil and justify—if justification were needed—the aim of the city authorities to give space, sun and air to as many families as possible at the lowest obtainable costs.

This outline of housing activity in Vienna from 1919 to 1934 conveys a very incomplete impression of the courage and resource of the municipality in dealing with a problem without parallel in Europe. The more closely achievements in other countries are examined, the more remarkable does Vienna appear. For in addition to the achievement of providing healthy housing conditions in the city, beauty has been added: every year new parks were opened, while a general environment has been created in the new estates which cannot fail to influence profoundly the people who live in them.

But in spite of the enormous output of dwellings between 1919 and 1934, the post-War problem was so huge that it had not been overcome and many thousands of families were still living in overcrowded, insanitary and unhealthy conditions in the old slum tenements in the heart of Vienna when in 1934 the Socialist municipality

*Continued from page 181*

a 300-working-day year would be needed for this output. If, therefore, the tenant were to get other employment after he had undertaken the responsibility of his holding, his wife would have to be prepared to and capable of carrying on the work. For this reason the settler's wife is officially recognized as a very important partner in the venture.

Experts are pressing for further Government action on the following lines:

1. The establishment of a land-register showing what land is available for settlement.
2. Uniform federal and regional planning for the creation of suitable settlement holdings.
3. The co-ordination in a federal central office of the various functions hitherto executed in separate departments.

## VIENNA

was overthrown. It had not been possible for them to attempt either demolition or replanning of the central areas until sufficient new homes had been provided elsewhere to house the overcrowded inhabitants. Municipal activity is now dead, except for the construction of a few "settlers' colonies" outside the town. It is a real housing tragedy that Vienna's uniquely constructive and intelligent experimental housing machinery should have been smashed before it had completed its task, and that we shall never know how the Viennese would have tackled the problem of redeveloping central tenement slum areas.

## 8. Italy

ITALY AND SLUM-CLEARANCE. What a contradiction in terms. The name of this lovely country calls up memories of olive groves, vineyards, blue seas, villages and townships clustered round churches and town halls, arcaded shops, street markets displaying their brilliant wares under gay umbrellas, cafés, gardens, cypresses, Judas trees flaming on the Palatine hill, cobbled squares and fountains, and of colour everywhere—ochre, pink, grey, white—with the spine of the Appenine Hills rising clear yet mysterious into the shimmering sky.

Warmth, colour, serenity, mellowness. What have slums or slum-clearance to do with such a country? How can anything be touched or changed without also spoiling and changing its beauty?

Any search for “slum-clearance and new, low-rented housing estates” must, therefore, be undertaken somewhat fearfully. But apprehensions are soothed and interest excited by finding that Italy is well aware of the value of its inheritance and is taking great trouble to protect both areas or individual buildings which are beautiful or interesting. Development and reconstruction are indeed being carried out, but on a definite plan initiated in each town, while the problem of compensation for slum areas has been surmounted on a basis satisfactory to the State and the taxpayers, though perhaps not to the slum owners. The housing problem has in fact been recognized, but planning and town preservation are the first consideration of the authorities, while the provision of low-rented dwellings falls into place as an important but secondary matter.

To review the work and estimate the value of the past ten years' housing policy in Italy is to review the policy of the totalitarian State. For the Government has determined, rightly or wrongly, to reawaken the material ambitions of the people; national pride is being fostered, and there is no country in Europe with a more glorious past. But slums had been allowed to creep round and over

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the magnificent forums, temples and palaces; mean dwellings to hide the houses where the giants of the Renaissance lived. To replan the central areas of all cities and base those redevelopment schemes on the preservation or reconstruction of the past is therefore a natural part of the national policy, as is the endorsement of these plans by the citizens themselves. For pride in the city is most calculated to foster pride in the citizens, pride in the State and, by logical progression, to desire for a "place in the sun," Empire, and recognition as a first-rate Imperial Power. It is pointed out that the vast Roman palaces which are now being uncovered, were built at a time when the rest of Europe and much of the known world were barbarian subjects of Rome: the clearance of poor shops from round Dante's house serves to remind them that in the Middle Ages Italian thinkers were pre-eminent over the rest of Europe. Town planning has become an integral part of the Imperial plan. Nothing must stand in its way—least of all the owners of slums. In other countries, the clearance and replanning of central slum areas have been impeded or stopped by the immense sums which have had to be paid to the owners. Not so in Italy where private interests and private rights are negligible in comparison with the Napoleonic future which has apparently been planned for her. Hence the town plans prepared by the towns themselves, hence the emphasis laid on preserving and reconstructing anything of which the nation could be proud, hence the refusal to allow private gain to stand in the way of this aim, and the principle of minimum compensation which has been adopted, which enables this mighty civic programme to be put in hand.

Assume then that the object of the Government is, through reconstruction of the towns, to stiffen the present generation of Italians. The new generation is being bred to step into the role which is being prepared for it. The health of mothers and children is of the first importance. Marriage dowries, new homes where the emphasis is put on space in which large families can be brought

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up instead of on "gadgets" or "amenities" inessential to the breeding of a numerous and hardy imperial race, maternity and infant welfare centres. Slum children are liable to be undernourished, ill-bred, shiftless; so, in the "Hotels for the Poorest," almost any concession is made to induce the parents to remain, in order that a hold may be kept on their children—to feed them, to teach them manners and to eradicate slum standards and the so-called "slum mind," while incidentally the education of these children is the surest and least provocative way in which their parents can also be reformed.

And finally, although a city is a visible sign of past, present and future glories, it is in the countryside that the real stability and prosperity of a race is established, and there that a family can best be bred and reared. In Italy, as elsewhere, the drift to towns is a determined drift, but here it is being counteracted partly by an improvement in rural housing which will reach standards of space and comfort above those of town dwellers, partly by the creation of market towns on reclaimed agricultural land, such as Pontina, Sabaudia and Littoria, in which not only can produce be marketed, but in which the farming people can get the amusement and companionship which mankind now looks upon as its right, and which are rarely available in rural areas.\*

Town planning and the care of mothers and children are then the two outstanding features of the post-War Italian housing policy. What is the problem with which the nation had, or has still, to deal?

The population of Italy grew from 18,000,000 people in

\* On October 30, 1937, Aprilia, the fourth of the rural townships to be built on the reclaimed Pontine Marshes, was inaugurated. Complete with church, schools, town hall, post office, shops and cinema, Aprilia has been built within eighteen months at a cost of 12,000,000 lire (approximately £130,000). About 3,000 persons will live in the town, which has been planned to serve 12,000, the majority of whom will be settled on farms in the surrounding countryside. (See diagram, p. 189.)

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1830 to more than 43,000,000 in 1937, and is said to be increasing at the rate of 9 per 1,000 per annum. There are now twenty-two towns with over 100,000 inhabitants, but the average number of persons to the acre over the country as a whole is only 0·82, or less than half the density of population in England and Wales and, although no figures are available to show the actual proportion of rural to urban dwellers, it is reasonable to assume that Italy is still pre-eminently an agricultural country. But in spite of the hostile attitude of the Government and the Roman Church towards limitation of families, the birth-rate per 1,000 of the population dropped from 37·7 in 1880 to 22·4 in 1936, while the average size of family in Italy decreased from 3·6 in 1911 to 3·2 in 1931.\* Recent propaganda to encourage large families may succeed in arresting this decline which, anyhow, is less marked than in any other semi-industrialized European country. It might well be argued that a campaign to reduce the high infantile mortality-rate (101 per 1,000 living births in 1936) would be a more realistic and less costly policy than trying to stimulate the birth-rate.†

The housing problem arose with the rise of industrialism and was mainly confined to the towns. A very large number of dwellings was required each year to supply current needs: there was, however, no recognition of this need and no attempts were made to meet the demand for low-rented accommodation in the rapidly expanding cities. Before 1900 Naples was the only town with a recognized "problem," and that was due to the terrible scourge of infectious

\* Statistics for 1937 show that, broadly speaking, birth-rates are low in the industrial, progressive north (Milan, 18·6; Genoa, 13·5 per 1,000) and high in the south. The average is about 23 per 1,000.

† Inducements to marry range from a fortnight's holiday with pay, granted to all State employees, to a heavy tax on bachelors. On October 28, 1937, the anniversary of the Fascist march on Rome, 46,155 weddings were celebrated: a prize of 500 lire and upwards is given to working-class couples who marry on that day. In the first nine months of 1937 there were 12,933 more births than in the corresponding period of 1936.

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diseases which spread from time to time from the overcrowded slum areas to the rest of the town.

Perhaps for this reason Italy escaped the "architectural slums" of northern Europe's period of industrial expansion—the "tenement-barracks" of Berlin or Paris or Vienna are unknown. The growing population of the towns crowded into old buildings and "made-down" houses within the fortifications, or lived in huts and shacks just outside the walls—Rome, for example, had 5,000 such huts, while Milan had 1,500—mainly built by the occupiers themselves.

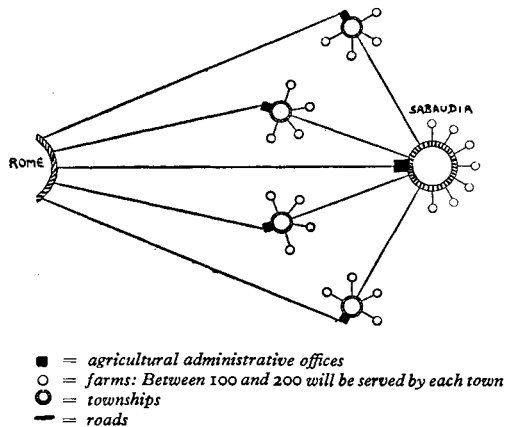
Determined efforts have been made in recent years to stop or regulate the growth of towns by limiting the exodus from the country. Families are required to produce a three-year certificate of continuous residence in a town before they can claim the privileges of citizenship, which incidentally include poor relief. As it is the custom for many of the poorest families to work with relatives on the land in the summer, and to migrate in the winter to other relatives in town, efforts to enforce this policy have led to continuous and sometimes amusing skirmishes with the police. It can hardly be said to have deterred city growth to any appreciable extent.

What then has been done since the War to provide new urban dwellings and to abate overcrowding, that is to say, to keep abreast with current needs and to catch up arrears? Demolition was impossible until large new residential estates had been developed outside the fortifications of the towns to house the displaced population. Although the crisis, which was acute from 1918 to 1927, has diminished, it is by no means solved, though the actual shortage and the structural condition both of urban and rural dwellings is unknown. But encouraging glimpses of the vigour of Italian building methods are given in the north, where villages and towns destroyed in the War have been rebuilt. Public squares and buildings, trees, flowers, arcades and promenades have been incorporated. The schools

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are well-planned, light and gay. The opportunity for rebuilding these villages on convenient modern lines has not been lost (as it has in northern France) although the grace, dignity and colour of traditional Italian architecture have been retained.

The new towns which are now being built in the reclaimed Pontine marshes do not follow tradition so closely, but are essays



in so-called “modern architecture.” They are not regarded as residential centres, but are planned in the grand manner as civic centres for the surrounding agricultural population—that is to say, as markets and offices rather than as domestic settlements. But they, and the rebuilt towns of the northern War area, show that modern Italy has not lost the art of making a centre to a town, a place in which the citizens will naturally congregate. There is no mistaking the central square for anything else—compact, dignified, often amusingly grandiose, generally beautifully coloured—the work of painters as well as of architects.

A visit to the big towns is extremely interesting. Milan, once among the most depressing towns in Europe, has been revealed in



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a new light. The tall and overcrowded jumble of tenements thrusting round the cathedral has disappeared, and has been replaced by a fine open space surrounded by trees, arcades, shops and offices. Vistas have been opened up to display churches and old houses which before had been hidden by slum dwellings. New estates with three- and four-storeyed blocks of flats coloured ochre, pink, green, grey, cream, have been erected in the suburbs of the town and interspersed with parks and gardens, new schools, infant welfare centres, playgrounds for children and for adults. And this may be seen in every industrial city, order being produced from picturesque or squalid chaos, without undue sacrifice of such treasures of the past which may happen to be contained in the slum areas.

Although these town plans seem to function admirably in the redevelopment of central areas, it must be admitted that they are not always equally successful on the outskirts of towns, where the siting is often definitely poor. Blocks of flats are dumped on land used as drying grounds or allotments or play-spaces without any apparent arrangement, these areas in the smaller towns often looking like waste land. The main impression is of an exquisite centre and untidy, badly disposed edges.

As long ago as 1865, municipalities with over 10,000 inhabitants were empowered to expropriate in the public interest areas required for traffic improvement, and to draw up building plans to make living conditions more healthy. Compensation was based on the most recent purchase price and gave rise to many quarrels between the owners and the authorities. In 1919 these powers were extended to cover the expropriation and reconditioning of insanitary houses. In that year, too, the famous Act of 1885\* under which Naples, following

\* I.V.W. 1935. In 1885, following an outbreak of cholera in 1884, the city of Naples was authorized to prepare a general scheme for reconditioning the town. The demolition or alteration of insanitary houses was permitted, improvement in traffic arrangements, the creation of a good supply of

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an outbreak of cholera, had been authorized to buy built-up land in the city for slum-clearance and reconditioning work, was extended to the whole country. The principle of this 1919 Act is, briefly, that the slum areas can be bought by the municipality at a slum valuation and can then either be kept as public open spaces and gardens, or be sold as desirable sites for buildings more worthy of the centre of a city than the slums they are to displace. The difference, which accrues to the municipality, between the buying price of the land and its improved selling value helps to pay for rehousing the displaced families in the suburbs.

At first there was much indiscriminate demolition in central city areas. But it was soon seen that wholesale destruction of bad areas was unwise, as they often contained buildings of great beauty or interest. An intelligent use of thinning-out was substituted, by which the character of old and overcrowded cities is preserved, while their health is improved and their beauty revealed.

The revised policy decided upon in 1928 was similar to that followed in Sweden and Holland. Towns of more than 10,000 inhabitants were required to prepare their own plans for expansion and renovation on the understanding that they would be revised every twenty-five years. Before the War only a few towns had been planned. By 1935 twenty-eight out of the ninety-three towns involved had actually approved their plans, while forty-eight had plans in preparation. The schemes were often a drinking water, and the drainage of the town. Bonds were issued for financing the work, new or improved houses were exempted from taxation, while "institutions" were authorized to grant loans up to 60 per cent of the value of the buildings. Compensation was either the mean between the purchase price and the sum of the last ten years' rent, or the amount fixed by the Inland Revenue Office as the sum on which the land-tax was based. Although these powers were extended to other towns and a few slum clearances were undertaken, money was difficult to raise and proper technical preparations for the work were not made by the authorities. Success was therefore very limited.

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result of public competition, when the best (or a mixture of the best) designs were adopted and submitted to the central Government for approval and for any amendment which might be considered necessary to fit the local scheme into the national plan, particularly as regards roads. For the town is required to bear in mind the needs and future development of modern transport, and experts are available to advise both on transport problems and on the best methods of "thinning-out" an area, or extending the town.\*

Slum clearance has thus begun by the redevelopment of the centre of the town and has worked outwards to the suburbs where the displaced people are rehoused. And the redevelopment of the core of old cities, while protecting their beauty and historical significance, has been combined with a policy of incorporating surrounding small suburban authorities within the larger adjacent city. Naples, for instance, has recently absorbed nine minor local authorities, Milan eleven, Genoa nineteen and Venice seven, while Rome has now acquired ample space for future expansion.

The normal procedure followed may be illustrated by a description of the redevelopment of the capital.

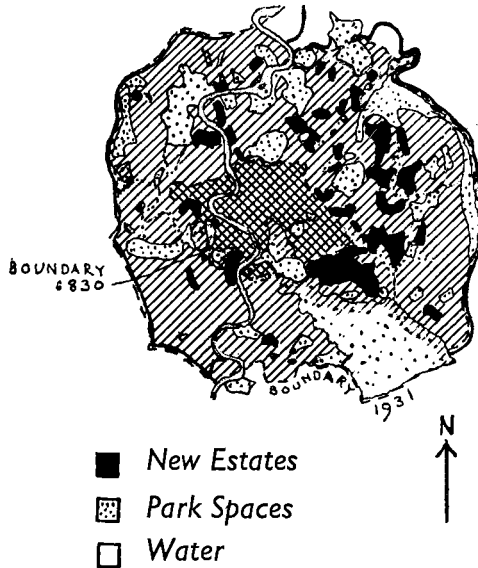
In Rome, a plan intended to cover the growth of the town for the next twenty-five years was officially adopted in 1885 and

\* A typical instance of the care which is being taken to preserve natural beauty is to be found in Asolo, a small town in the foothills of the Italian Alps. There a hill on the outskirts was bought by a speculator for development. The local Planning Authorities raised no objection to the scheme, but the inhabitants of the town protested against it to the Ministry in Rome. Within a few days an official arrived to take evidence from both sides and photographs from many angles. On this data the protest of the citizens was upheld, and it was officially decreed that the little vine-covered hill should remain unbuilt on for ever by reason of its beauty.

*Brescia.*—In 1929 the town plan was approved. Slum buildings covered over four and a half acres (19,000 square metres), intersected with a labyrinth of small streets. Replanned, the new buildings cover only three acres (12,500 square metres), the remaining area being used for fine streets and public gardens.

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duly revised in 1909. But although designed to allow for the estimated increase in traffic and population, as well as for the preservation and extension of the city, the plan was never really



- New Estates
- ▣ Park Spaces
- Water

### ROME

*Superficial area 72 square miles*

1910	542,000	<i>inhabitants</i>
1920	692,000	"
1930	1,008,000	"

*Average density of persons, 23 per acre*

*Scale: 1 inch to 4 miles*

adequate for its purpose. It was not till 1931 that a really business-like commission, consisting of professors of aesthetics, economists, architects, engineers and civil servants, was appointed by the Governor of Rome to co-ordinate existing schemes and from them to formulate one which would, for the next fifteen years, be

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adequate for an estimated population of 2,000,000 people. An agreed scheme based on existing proposals was hammered out in four months, submitted to the Government and approved. Based on traffic routes and on the old fortifications, which have been carefully preserved and laid out as open spaces, the preservation and restoration of historic areas, as well as of the natural loveliness of the surrounding countryside, have been the keystone of the plan. It is said that only two buildings have been pulled down which should have been preserved; and these, as the stones were numbered and kept, can easily be put up again where and when required.

The official report on the plan contains the following words which show the scientific yet humanistic attitude of the commission towards their task: "Ample provision has been made for the creation of new parks, the largest of which includes the vast antiquarian area which lies between the Via Ardestina and the Via Appia Nuova. It also includes the catacombs and tombs of the Via Latina, its axis consisting of the Via Appia Antia, which forms a wonderful green wedge stretching from the southern Campagna to the foot of the Capitol. . . . The clearance of the Archaeological Zone will thus be definitely completed. . . . We have given particular attention to private parks and protected areas where restrictions and special regulations have been naturally suggested by the beauty of the landscape or by ruins of archaeological importance. The Council are confident that in all special surveys of new areas for development, equally careful consideration will be given to protecting those green spaces which are still scattered among the villas and vineyards of the Campagna, and that in laying out new streets and squares the very greatest consideration will be given to preserving views of the surrounding hills and to points of special interest."

The Government of Rome took advantage of the Land Compensation Act to acquire and clear large slum areas in the centre of the

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city and rehouse the inhabitants in the suburbs while, in accordance with the plan, the old slum sites were incorporated in street widening, or used for new gardens and parks in the centre of the city, or sold for expensive building development, either dwellings or offices. The superb grandeur of the Colosseum and other great buildings can now be appreciated; historic palaces which a few years ago housed with much discomfort a family in every room, are now again in the occupation of one family, while archaeologists are happily engaged in recreating the treasures of the past with financial help and a free hand. The completion of the restoration of each area is made into a great civic occasion, with a carefully staged public ceremony at which the citizens are informed of the nature and meaning of the work which has been done.

But, to the contemporary eye, it is the colours, the flowers, the trees, the fountains, the vivid life of modern Rome which enchant. The mingling of centuries contribute to a rich and harmonious present. Perhaps the fascination of Rome is partly contained in its human scale. It is built for man. The new dwellings—whether they are one-family houses or blocks of flats—are generally low and pleasantly coloured; flowering trees and flowers are everywhere; fountains splash in the streets, in private gardens, in the entrance courts of workers' flats: there is no monotony of roof-line, whether the breaks are by spires or towers, cupolas or domes; men can walk or talk or shop under arcades sheltered from sun, rain or wind; they can drink and eat and sit in cafés on the pavement, in gardens, in courtyards, without being dwarfed by towering sky-scrapers, or dispersed among scattered cottages. Here is a city made for the people, and not a people for the city.

Under the plan, the height of new buildings is stringently controlled, decreasing from five storeys in the centre to one or two storeys on the outskirts of the city—with the exception of one regrettable experimental low-rented estate outside the town, eight

## ITALY

storeys high without lifts!\* And great care has been taken in new buildings, as in reconstruction, to retain the character and beauty of the city, the colouring—ochre, biscuit and red—being especially characteristic.

Three new residential districts have been planned on the outskirts. The first is mainly for well-off citizens; the second, which is four and a half miles from the city, consists of inexpensive cottages and villas, of which over 10,000 have already been constructed; while the third is in a rural area, for horticulturists and market gardeners.

In order to do away with “shack buildings” outside the towns, grants are made to the owners of the land to encourage them to demolish and rebuild, while help is also given to the occupants to enable them to return to the country.

The general policy for rehousing displaced families is similar throughout the country. But *slum families* in Italy are not disturbed, nor are their habits of living interfered with until new accommodation can be offered to them. And when an area is cleared, those families which are considered unsatisfactory as tenants for new dwellings, either from poverty, low personal standards, or criminal records, are offered cheap accommodation in palatially designed, municipally owned “hotels” which consist of one-room apartments with certain communal facilities, in particular infant schools, in the building. They are, however, under the supervision of the Fascists and the police, who have the right to search rooms without a warrant: a warden is in charge during the day and the Blackshirts at night.

Four such hotels have been built in Rome since 1930, but they are not fully occupied and one is only opened for emergencies (“such

\* I made the responsible engineer climb to the roof with me, and am glad to say that he was exhausted on arrival and seemed to appreciate the inconvenience complained of by the top-floor tenants.

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as a house falling down," as an official cheerfully remarked to me), or a fire, or some similar catastrophe. There are also four in Milan, housing, in 1934, 513 families totalling 4,000 persons, and although meant as temporary homes, some families in this city have lived there since 1930 and show no inclination to move away. There is also one in Florence and one in Venice. The buildings are finely designed, with magnificent entrance halls, sweeping staircases, and exceptionally wide corridors, which give an atmosphere of space and dignity to the dwellings, small as they are, which lead off either side. They are all one-room apartments, some very large, some small, allocated according to the size of the family. Lodgers are not allowed.

At first common dining-rooms were provided. But in each city where the experiment was tried, fierce quarrels broke out and the furniture was smashed to pieces. These people are intense individualists and prefer to buy and cook their own food and eat it in their own rooms. In one of the hotels in Rome, the dining-room is now a chapel, while another has become a theatre where Fascists entertain the inhabitants once a week. A large kitchen with a pleasant casual atmosphere flourishes, however, in most of the hotels, where food can be bought and where tickets given by local charitable agencies can be changed for food, which can either be eaten there or taken away: it is good and very cheap. The Little Sisters of the Poor run these canteens for down-and-outs and children, and it is a rule that no child in the buildings shall be hungry or even underfed. In Milan for instance forty boys and forty girls are each given two free meals a day.

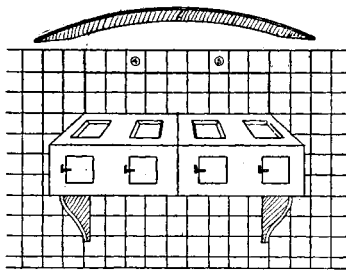
Common kitchens are also provided in each hotel, where the tenants can prepare and cook their own food: one kitchen is allowed for every eleven families and each family has two charcoal stoves marked with the number of their room, while large marble-topped slab tables stand in the middle of the room for preparing food. These



## ITALY

rooms must be and are kept scrupulously clean by the tenants. A common laundry with drying and ironing-rooms and a scullery for general washing-up are also provided.

In Rome, stairs, passages and common rooms are kept clean by the management, and the seven baths provided in each house are looked after by the caretaker. Two foothold w.c.s and two hand-basins are provided in Milan for every fifteen rooms, and in each block there are six baths and three showers, but as the charge is



*Charcoal cookers for two tenants in the "Hotel"; the number of their apartment is inlet in the tiles above, beneath the protective hood*

1.50 lire per bath and 1 lire per shower they are rarely used in any of the cities.

The rent of one room, equipped with a gas-ring, a sink and running cold water, is 76 lire a month in Rome, 30 to 40 lire in Milan, less in the smaller towns. Tenants are drawn from the casual, unskilled classes, but also include some seasonal workers, such as waiters, who earn between 20 and 30 lire a day in summer, but only about 10 lire a day in winter.

Iron furniture, painted to look like wood, and decorated in traditional designs, is lent to families without furniture. The general standard of cleanliness, homeliness and taste seem very high, though naturally one or two families are dirty and they are said to be, on the whole, a blasphemous crowd. But generally speaking, beds and

## ITALY

bedding are good and clean, and the furniture is simple and right both in size and quantity.

In each hotel there is a crèche in which children can be left all day when their mothers are working, or occasionally if they are not. There is generally also a nursery school, run by the Sisters of the Poor, who have their own quarters in or near the hotel. The children running about in every hotel are charming—fat, well dressed and distinctly better in type than their parents. The compulsory civilization of the children of the “undesirables” seems to cut at the root of the problem of the so-called slum character, for this policy of temporarily rehousing the poorest and roughest families is really constructive in its attitude towards these ex-slum children. Attendance of mothers at the infant welfare centres and of children under four years of age at the nursery schools is said to be compulsory, and as this is the most difficult, as well as the most impressionable, period in the life of a child (for later they go to the State schools to which in Italy the children of all classes are sent) the authorities are cutting the slum mind off at its root. A normal standard of behaviour and manners is expected; the colour and design, the decoration and equipment of these infant schools is carefully chosen. The children are certainly very different from their parents. This is one of the reasons why arrears of rent are overlooked in the hotels. Cities would rather face an annual deficit of a few thousand lire than turn undesirable families into the street and allow the children to be brought up again as vagrants and slum dwellers, with their physique undermined by lack of proper food. Another point—very important psychologically—will appeal to everyone who knows human nature. A rough and dirty woman of independent spirit will rarely take outside advice, or even her husband’s suggestions, on the running of her home. But if her own children want and expect cleanliness, order, higher standards of living, she will exert herself to comply, and so protect herself from criticism. And

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by this weapon the most unruly Italian matrons are being civilized.

In Italy a certain amount of domestic building has been carried out by the State itself for its own employees. Direct building of this specialized kind was essential, as expansion of the State services was hampered and sometimes entirely held up after the War by the difficulty of finding accommodation for the key-workers, such as railwaymen, postal workers and other civil servants, in the small and seriously overcrowded towns. Thus the National Institution for Civil Servants' Dwellings has built 5,223 dwellings for its officials in five years, the State Railways have housed one-third of their staff, and the postal and telegraph workers have also built, but rather less. These societies are a form of co-operative building society, through which the members buy their dwellings by hire-purchase payments spread over a number of years—generally thirty years.

Before the War certain municipalities, notably that of Milan, also began themselves to build dwellings for the overcrowded working-classes in their areas. But in 1908, under a special law, the work began to be taken over by public utility societies (Istituti per le Case Popolari), which were recognized by the Government as public bodies for building purposes. Founded in collaboration with municipalities, savings banks, credit banks, co-operative and other societies and private persons, they built dwellings exclusively for the working classes and were granted all official advantages and facilities for getting loans, cheap land and the remission of certain taxes, on condition that no more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent return was paid on the share capital and that the dwellings were in fact built for working people. To ensure the latter requirement, maximum rents were fixed according to the size of the town.

After 1922, when renewed efforts were made to provide more

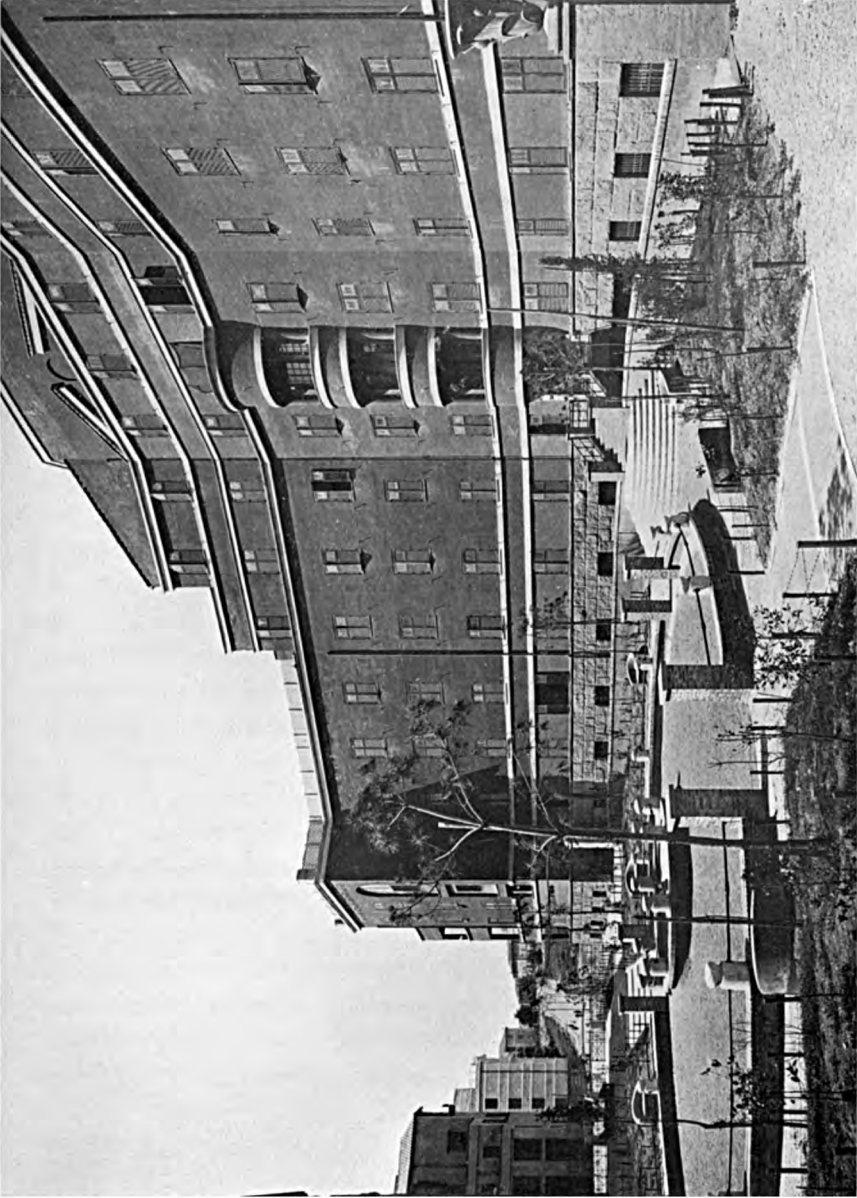


PLATE 19

*One of the Hotels for  
the Poorest in Rome*



PLATE 20

*Ex-slum  
children in  
the Hotel  
Barsotti]*

*The common laundry. The equipment is primitive but very economical, throwing no unnecessary expense on the tenants. A pen is provided in which babies can be parked*



## ITALY

dwellings and clear away slums, the Case Popolari were strengthened and increased until now there is such a society formed by the municipality in nearly every town, the low-rented dwellings for the working classes being built almost exclusively by them.

Although they are called public utility societies and are nominally independent, these societies are actually the agents of the municipalities and get considerable help from them, naturally varying in extent from town to town. Thus the land on which the buildings are erected is generally given, leased or sold to the society at a very low figure by the municipality which, in addition, is required by law to provide free of charge all the essential drains, roads, water, lighting and power services. Taxes are remitted for twenty-five years, and only one-quarter of the rate-taxes is levied.

But in spite of these concessions building costs are so high and wages so low that the rents, which are calculated per room on the liveable area, are far too high for the poorer workers, and these societies must be recognized as building mainly for the better-off artisans and clerks. They collaborate in carrying out the city plan and in many instances have delayed their new building work until the plan was completed and approved. In most of the schemes maternity and child welfare centres and a kindergarten are included, the space being provided free by the society while the staff and service are provided by the municipality. This care for child welfare is based on the old Viennese conception of communal life rather than the Nazi ideal, under which the encouragement of large families has led to the closing of kindergartens in Germany on the grounds that the mother should have entire charge of her children. The resemblance between Vienna and Italy ends here, however, for meeting-rooms for men, clubs, etc., in housing estates have been suppressed as "dangerous."

The official policy, initiated in 1926, of encouraging large families is incidentally proving somewhat embarrassing to the societies who

## ITALY

are charged with the duty of housing them, for large families are generally poor families who need most room and can least afford to pay for it. Rent reductions are sometimes given: in Milan, for instance, up to 50 per cent reduction in rent is allowed where there are eight or more children, and in February 1937 grants totalling 150,000,000 lire were distributed under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works, mainly for popular dwellings to be built in areas with the highest birth-rate. The official marriage dowry is, naturally, often spent unwisely by the somewhat naïve recipients and many stories are told of young couples buying a gramophone or a triple mirror long before they have anywhere but the streets in which to keep it.\*

The ordinary working-class family, displaced by slum-clearance, can get a flat without much difficulty in one of the new estates built by the Case Popolari though rents are so high (175 lire per month for four rooms and bath) that a third of their income has often to be spent on rent. For in spite of much building activity the shortage of cheap dwellings is still acute. One-roomed and two-roomed dwellings in 1934 formed 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the total dwellings because the workers could not afford to rent the larger apartments, and there is in consequence a very high density of persons per room, especially in Southern Italy, slightly mitigated by the rooms being both larger and higher than in northern countries.

The main difficulty in building has been and continues to be the high cost of money. For mortgages from building-credit societies only cover half the value of the building, and the annual interest and amortization together come to about 6 per cent per annum. Private enterprise, which concentrates on middle- and upper-class

\* Extract from *The Times*, April 28, 1937: "Near Sorrento, a bride and bridegroom were delirious with joy because they had been awarded the prize of 10,000 lire destined to the youngest married couple. Together the ages of this couple amount to thirty years two months and thirteen days."

## ITALY

needs, has to pay as much as 6 per cent to 8 per cent interest alone on the capital it borrows. Such help as is given towards building must be provided from the central Budget, for no special taxes are levied for housing purposes, and the chief assistance given by the Government to approved institutes and to companies "useful to the community" has been less by subsidies than by remission of rates and taxes, as follows:

1. Twenty-five years' exemption from housing-tax for all dwellings built before 1935, this exemption including all buildings required for educational and community life, except those used for the sale of alcohol.
2. Exemption from income tax and the reduction by three-quarters of all the small taxes on the sale and rent of land.

Credit facilities up to 75 per cent of the building cost are, however, also given to approved societies by State-subsidized banks, particularly the National Social Health Insurance Bank, and the National Institute for Granting Co-operative Credits, though the latter can only assist those schemes in which the State itself is interested.

The main assistance to low-rented house-building has come from municipalities which, among other concessions, have granted exemption from Octroi tax (local import duty) on the entry of building materials into the town, have reduced the purchase price of municipal land on condition that it is developed within a certain time, and have allowed payment for this land to be spread over a period of years.

One-family houses in towns are rare for all classes, as cottages are too expensive for the workers in a city area owing to the cost of constructing roads, drainage, water, gas and electrical supplies. Building is still, therefore, mainly in blocks of flats surrounded by fairly large open spaces, so arranged that ample shadows are thrown during the heat of the day in summer. Three or four storeys are the most usual



## ITALY

height to which flats are built, though a few have six, and one at least (in Rome) has eight storeys.

The absence of monotony in the new Italian buildings is probably largely due to the irregularity of the roof levels, though that does not explain their friendliness and general lack of barrack atmosphere, in spite of the unimaginative layout of many of the estates. The colour and liveliness of the design perhaps contribute.\*

There are no special regulations for the building of cheap dwellings, beyond the general building regulations which prescribe a separate w.c. and water supply for each dwelling, even if it only consists of one room; while each room must contain at least 86 square feet (8 square metres) floor space per person and 702 cubic feet (20 cubic metres) air space. Separate heating apparatus for each dwelling is usual because it is easy to regulate according to individual needs and pockets; central heating is too expensive considering the short season during which fires are needed. Central baths are preferred on account of the difficulty and cost of installing and maintaining separate hot water installations: but tenants prefer to do their washing in washing-troughs in their own flats rather than in central laundries. Separate kitchens and living-rooms are preferred by the women to kitchen-living-rooms.

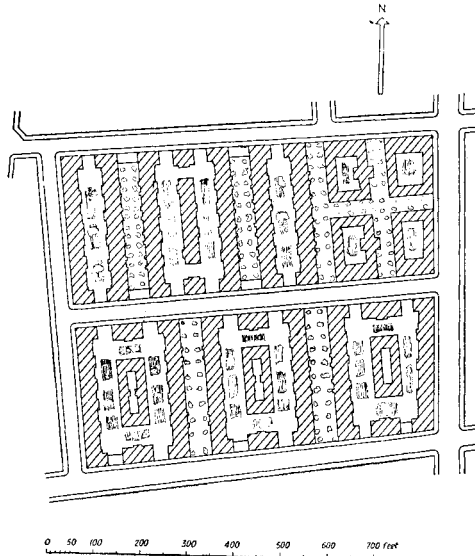
There is little demand for old people's dwellings; the patriarchal system is universal in Italy, and old parents live by custom with their married children who would be ashamed to allow them to live in an

\* My happiest memory in connection with Italian housing estates is of a scene in Florence, illustrative of the Italian attitude towards rehousing. Wandering somewhat disconsolately one Sunday afternoon through an estate which appeared deserted, I came on a park in the middle of the area, into which the whole of the neighbourhood had gathered. Roundabouts, booths, a dance-floor, snack-bars, side-shows, were crowded by hot and happy crowds from great-grandparents to babies-in-arms. I was informed that space was naturally reserved for such festivities—"What would the people think if they moved from the town and found nowhere to enjoy themselves?"

## ITALY

institution of any kind. Besides, grandparents are often invaluable in minding a large young family or looking after the home while the parents are out or working.\*

The new housing areas in Milan are particularly interesting.



*A typical Italian layout in flats, sited for shade, the gardens being well planted with trees*

In 1937 the town had an area of 44,952 acres (18,199·27 hectares) and a population of 1,650,000 people, the normal growth being 20,000 persons a year. Entry of any new residents has recently been forbidden.

A town plan which had been prepared before the War had long been outgrown, and in 1926 a public competition was held; after revision by the local authority, the winning design was submitted to and approved by the Central Ministry.

\* In 1937 there were in Rome 70,305 persons over 90 years of age.

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The workers mainly lived in high tenements owned by private persons in the centre of the town. This area was expropriated by the State at a slum value. It was then replanned for the public advantage and sold at an infinitely higher price by the municipality for offices and expensive flats. Cheap land was bought on the periphery for housing estates, and the local Istituto per le Case Popolari put up on it blocks of working-class flats, separated by broad avenues of green spaces, partly laid out as gardens and partly as allotments. The "honest" families out of the dispossessed are rehoused in these flats, which were built with a State guarantee, the rents being about 550 lire a room a year. No advance deposit is required, but the rent is nominally paid quarterly in advance though, since the financial crisis in 1931, many families are allowed to pay monthly. Tenants either take their rent up to the central office, or pay it direct into the account of the Case Popolari at the local bank.

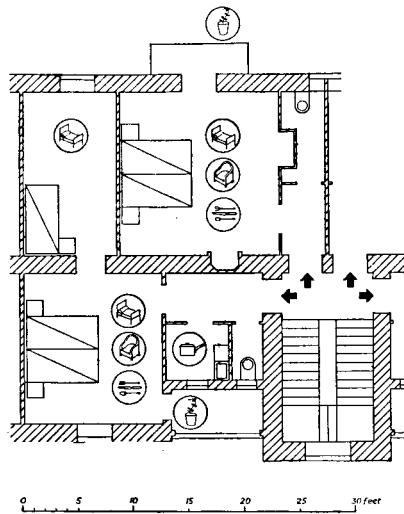
The Case Popolari area has been divided into north and south zones. The technical department in the central office has an officer in charge of each zone, while a "repair" man who lives in each area collects the complaints which have been lodged with the caretaker, usually a married woman whose husband is working. She lives rent free and is in addition paid a salary of about fifty lire a month. She is responsible for discipline, cleaning, putting letters into the letter-boxes, etc.

Before the advent of Fascism there was a committee of tenants (to which men only could be elected), for every group of buildings. They arranged everything, including lettings. These committees were, however, swept away in 1926, as were all clubs for amusement, sport, etc., which were considered subversive. But maternity and child welfare work flourishes and there are many centres in Milan, the institute giving room rent free in each building as its contribution to this municipal work. There has been a noticeable decrease in infantile mortality since the inauguration of these centres.

## ITALY

The new dwellings are built in brick, which is said to be considerably cheaper in maintenance costs than any other form of construction. They are generally rendered with charmingly coloured plaster which is redone "when necessary."

The central gardens are pleasant, with grass, trees and tubs of



MILAN. *A typical plan*

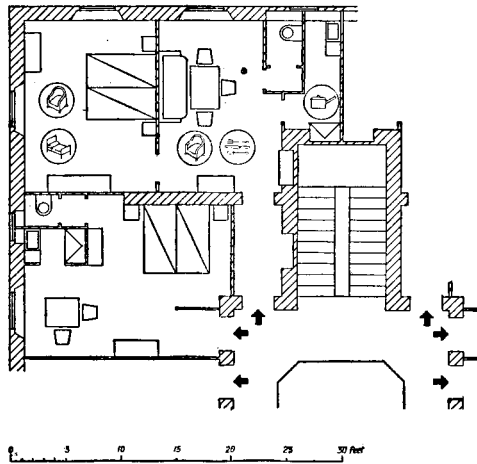
flowers. At first it was thought necessary to guard flowers against raiding children, and, as in Rome, they were encircled by barbed wire. But in both cities the children grew undestructive, and the protection was soon abolished.

The rooms are much larger and higher than in equivalent English dwellings, but this is essential in such a warm climate. Each tenant has private storage space in attic and cellar. The climate makes both central heating and the provision of hot water an unnecessary expense. Common balcony entrances have been abolished, but there are many private balconies, while some flats have terrace gardens.

## ITALY

The endeavour in planning is to spend the money first upon the size of the rooms. The tenant has to provide extras as and when he can afford them.

The entrance-hall of the flat is generally square and large and contains the only heating stove, so that in cold weather the doors of



MILAN. *In the ends of the blocks six small flats lead off the one landing*

all the rooms can be opened and the hall stove heats the whole flat. There is no direct light into this entrance.

Floors are tiled throughout, and sinks have tiled surrounds. Gas and electric light are brought to the wall surface of each flat, but the purchase of equipment is left to the tenant and is expensive. The poorest families have coke, charcoal or wood stoves and oil lamps, and the better-off families equip themselves with increasing luxury according to income. Gas-rings without ovens are generally used for cooking by artisan families, supplemented by coke or charcoal stoves.

Rooms are colour-washed and decorated by the Istituto per le Case



*A typical new estate for workers in Rome*

*A new low-rented estate outside Venice*





*The listless "skyscraper" outside Rome*

PLATE 22

## ITALY

Popolari when the tenant goes in, after which he is responsible for their decoration, and any tenant who wants his rooms papered must do so at his own expense. Furniture is, as a rule, extremely nice, painted in delicate colours and decorated in traditional flowing designs.

Baths are not provided for flats with less than three or four rooms. For the small one-roomed and two-roomed flats, four baths and four showers are generally provided to every fifty dwellings and one bath a month is included free in the rent. Extra baths cost 1.50 lire each and are not much used.

In Florence low-rented building is done entirely by the Case Popolari, the bulk of the funds being provided by the municipality at about 3 per cent interest, while the balance is raised on mortgage at anything between 3 per cent and 6 per cent interest (but generally 4 per cent).

Work was held up until the town plan was complete, after which the Case Popolari collaborated in carrying it out.

A whole-time architect was employed and there had been a considerable change for the better in the general design of workmen's dwellings between 1908 and 1936, particularly in the layout of the blocks. Although an experimental block of flats was built on six floors, without lifts, it was not considered successful and four floors are now usual, while often no more than two or three floors are built. The majority of dwellings consist of two or three rooms, although there are some with four rooms. Each flat has its own w.c. and cooking arrangements. Hot water is not provided nor are private baths installed, although common ones are provided in each group of dwellings. Rents are 250 lire a room a year. An infant school, a laundry, common baths and a welfare centre (the room provided by the Case Popolari, and the centre run by the municipality) are part of each modern scheme, and the common gardens are well laid



## ITALY

out and quite pleasant. These blocks are agreeable, pleasantly coloured, typically Italian. They are built on the periphery of the town and in 1936 there was a waiting list of 5,000 families. Some blocks of a better type are built by this society for sale in individual flats to the tenants themselves. The income from all types of dwellings is pooled, and such transactions therefore help to reduce the cost of the dwellings built for artisans.

The poorest families have been provided with rooms in a "hotel" on the usual Italian pattern, but it was "disliked," and only forty rooms were occupied out of the eighty provided, although the rent was only 3 lire a day. Attractive furniture is lent to those who want it, and there are separate tables in the common dining-hall.

Although there are some admirable new areas on the islands just outside the town, the Venetian estates are, generally speaking below the average work of a Case Popolari of equal size and importance. Some blocks, built ten years before, were only just having their courtyards made up. There were no trees, no flowers, no grass. Everything looked desolate. The entrances and staircases were in poor repair and rather dirty. But the individual apartments were charming, neat and well furnished. One very poor home had the iron bedsteads painted to look like wood, and then decorated. This tenant had one picture in each room—one a Byzantine Madonna and Child, another a copy of a Raphael painting. Here, too, the rooms are decorated by the Case Popolari when the tenant moves in, but he is subsequently responsible and may indulge his own taste without question. Palest shades of colour wash are chosen, picked out with darker shades in excellent taste.\*

Each apartment is provided with a w.c., which is large enough

\* I watched a living-room ceiling being distempered, and after the surface had been coloured, the workman proceeded with lightning speed to add cherubs, garlands, clouds to his personal satisfaction, while I wondered what would have been the reaction of a British housing official!

## ITALY

to contain also a bath or a shower if the tenant cares to install one at his own expense. This room in some flats also serves for washing clothes and is then constructed with a drain in the floor and water perforations in the wall—that is, the water enters through a sort of rose flush in the wall. Electric light and water are laid on, and the kitchen is supplied with a large hood, a cement table and a gas point, but no larder. The tenant then provides the apparatus, generally a gas-ring placed on the table and a small stove, coke or charcoal or wood, for winter use, with oil, gas or electricity for lighting, according to his taste or pocket. The entrance halls are dark but large, while the rooms are large, bright and lofty. In the newer, larger flats the washing-up and cooking arrangements are generally put into a curtained recess.

The rent of two rooms is 80 lire a month paid in advance on the first of the month.

In contrast to the unpopularity of the local family hotel for the poorest, a hostel for men and women students, clerks, etc., is always full and is a source of local pride. Baths and showers are installed, there is a large restaurant and the rent of a room is 4 lire a night.

In R o m e the dispossessed families from the slums round the Forum have been mostly rehoused in one area—the Garbatella. This estate was built as a result of a competition. Each flat has a separate entrance and there are some large private balconies. Hot water is not laid on, although a gas point is provided from which a tenant can if he wishes provide his own heating apparatus. The floors are paved throughout with coloured concrete tiles—both for cleanliness and for coolness. The furniture is good. The flats are allocated by the authorities according to the size of the family: when more babies come they are moved into a larger dwelling; no sub-letting is, therefore, allowed. The maternity and child welfare centre in this estate is very agreeable: children are taken from one to three and from

## ITALY

three to six years of age in two separate departments, and there are also free beds for maternity cases.

If families are of a rough type and cannot afford to be particular they may move to blocks built on cheap land on the outskirts of the city, where the rent for two rooms and a terrace is 105 lire per month. But these experimental "engineers" blocks have been generally criticized and apparently regretted. They consist of eight storeys, built in concrete. The laundries (supplied with cold water only) are in the basement, while the drying-rooms are in the roof! There are no lifts. The entrance hall is dark and plaster in 1936 was peeling off the interior staircase, which is lighted by huge unglazed windows. The nursery school is small, with inadequate ventilation, equipment and staff for the large number of children attending—for it must be remembered that the cheapness of the flats is calculated to attract families with the lowest incomes and the most children. Also, though rents are comparatively low, the fares to work are high and transport was neither near enough nor frequent enough to be of real service to this estate. Any advantages in rent are, therefore, offset by the cost of travelling reckoned in terms of money, time and fatigue. Each flat has, however, a fine front door, which is kept well polished by the tenant and is generally fitted with a bell and nameplate, while the entrance gardens have a pleasant fountain or piece of sculpture which redeem the estate from real ugliness. A doctor comes every week to the maternity and child welfare centre, but many mothers prefer to go to the adjacent "garden city" for treatment.

This estate is generally regarded as a warning against "building-down" when cheapness is considered more important than human comfort and convenience. But, nevertheless, families are living there and must continue to put up with the discomforts.

The outstanding impression left by an examination of Italian

## ITALY

housing is the high quality of the work accomplished in urban reconstruction. The treasures of the past have been appreciated, preserved, restored; the knowledge and the local pride of the inhabitants has been used and respected, and the happiness of the people has been increased thereby; the possibilities for health of future generations has been improved; while the policy adopted for compensating slum owners whose property has been compulsorily acquired has been based on the rights and needs of all classes of citizens and not only on the owners of unused or worn-out property.

The siting, planning and equipment of the new dwellings do not, however, show any particularly interesting features, and the general quality and organization of the production of new dwellings cannot be compared with that of, say, Sweden or Vienna.

## 9. France

IT SEEMS ODD TO-DAY to think that in 1801 France, with twenty-seven million inhabitants, had the largest population in Europe, for not only have many of her neighbours now exceeded her in the number of their inhabitants, but they are increasing much more rapidly. It is often said that the reason why the population of France is almost stationary is because she has an exceptionally low birth-rate, but that is not now correct, for while a declining birth-rate is common throughout Europe, the French birth-rate is actually decreasing much less rapidly than that of her neighbours. This is interesting from many angles, for while fifty years ago the number of births in France were certainly the lowest in Europe, in the period 1880 to 1930 they had only fallen from 23·9 to 18·0 per 1,000, that is a decrease of 25 per cent, while the birth-rates in England, Germany, Austria and Sweden had been halved in that time and many are now less than hers. The population in France has not, however, yet begun to show an increase corresponding to the facts because of the infant mortality-rate which is high compared with Holland and the countries with a lower birth-rate. (See table, page 32.) For, speaking generally, France has been content with a lower standard of sanitation, public health services and housing than have other nations of comparable culture.

Out of the twenty-seven million inhabitants in 1801, only about one million people lived in towns, and by 1936, when the population had increased to forty-two million, twenty millions (nearly half) still lived in the country. But this high proportion of country to town dwellers, the highest among the great European Powers, is a proportion which is decreasing rapidly. In fact, as may be seen in the diagram on page 23, France is the only big nation whose rural population has not remained constant in numbers during the past fifty years, and in this also, France is unique. But although from one point of view, the slow increase of population during the nineteenth

## FRANCE

century made it appear that there was no need to rush through a big building programme after the War, to catch up any serious discrepancy between dwellings and families, yet the dwindling rural population and the steadily increasing urban population made urgent the need for a steady supply of new dwellings in the towns. And in addition, the existing standards of housing and sanitation both in town and country needed drastic overhauling and replacement. This need does not yet appear to have been fully recognized by the State, and only a few housing schemes exist to show how brilliantly experimental is the work French minds can create when they wish.

In France, as in all countries on the Continent, the towns were primarily constructed for defence. Encircling fortifications limited their size, so that within them buildings were necessarily close together, the wealthy living in tall, narrow houses, the less well-off in tenement flats. This resulted in intense and growing overcrowding in any flourishing city, and now that fortifications are no longer an adequate protection against attack, they should be discarded and the towns should spread in planned new suburbs.

During the nineteenth century little new domestic building was undertaken in French towns, and by the beginning of the twentieth century the shortage of satisfactory dwellings for the workers in the great cities was acute. In spite of the need, however, housing activity in France even since the War has been much less than in any comparable European country. It is interesting to see how indifferent the French were to architectural and sociological opportunities: the contracts for the reconstruction of many of the villages which were demolished in northern France in the War were actually given to a foreign firm and the villages rebuilt in a style completely alien to French tradition—little shiny red-brick villas from the English industrial north being put among the poplars of Picardy.

## FRANCE

There is no denying it. The authorities did not face the housing problem with either interest or enthusiasm. Difficulties arising from the private ownership of urban land had been systematically neglected for generations, while the lack of any town-planning policy led to abuses which were sometimes so serious that they had eventually to be checked by *l e g i s l a t i o n* — legislation generally half-hearted. And while in theory the problem was recognized and analysed by all the experts, who each propounded his solution, ideal or immediately practical, almost nothing was in fact done to translate these theories into practice! Thus in 1915 local authorities were empowered by law to expropriate any unhealthy houses or groups of houses which had been declared unfit by the municipal council concerned: compensation was to be paid to the landlord at market value, less the amount required to put the dwellings into proper repair; if they were too bad to repair, compensation was to be for the land value alone; evicted tenants were to be given three months' rent, with a minimum compensation of 30 and a maximum of 300 gold francs. Under this law, the valuation of slum areas was settled by three experts—the presiding judge of the county court, together with a representative of the town and the owner. If the owner refused the town's offer, an expropriation jury of persons from the district was instructed to decide the market value for expropriation and to deal with the question of unearned increment. What happened in fact? Frenchmen rallied to the defence of their neighbours, "Expropriation Juries" regarded themselves as defenders of private property, the dispossessed landlords saw an opportunity for enriching themselves justifiably, as they thought, and the expelled tenants were considered wronged citizens who by way of compensation could claim a new dwelling on practically the same spot and for the same rent, not to speak of damages for the inconvenience caused them!\* Consequently, the whole community was

\* See *Suppression des Taudis*, Paris, 1935.

## FRANCE

heavily penalized whenever it attempted to make improvements or clear slum areas; it is hardly surprising that this Act, and a similar one passed in 1918 introducing expropriation by zone, were rarely used.

In 1922 housing laws were codified, but it was not until the Loucheur law of July 13, 1928, that a serious effort was made to stimulate a supply of low-rented dwellings. By this law a five-year building programme was laid down, larger loans were permitted for the construction of cheap houses, special subsidies were granted for rehousing large families, and the middle classes were enabled to borrow from the State at a low rate of interest for building their own homes. The Bonnevey law, June 30, 1930, carried the principle farther by allowing a slightly better class of building to be subsidized also.

The first positive housing action enforced after the War had been the decree that rents for old dwellings might not by law exceed their pre-War rent by more than two-fifths: this still left rent at about one-seventh of a workman's income. At the existing cost of money and materials, however, the "economic" rent of a new dwelling consisting of three rooms with kitchen, could not in 1929 be less than 1,061 francs a year, which was approximately half the earnings of an average worker. With the abatement of rates and taxes, which was allowed by law on such buildings for fifteen years, this rent could be reduced to 875 francs per annum, but this would still be nearly one-third of a workman's average earnings. To cheapen rents sufficiently the State therefore decided to lend to housebuilding corporations or public utility societies 90 per cent of the building costs at 2 per cent interest repayable in forty years. By these means rents could in theory be reduced to about 327 francs or the traditional one-seventh of the average worker's income.

What resulted from this policy in fact? Exorbitant prices were asked for slum areas as soon as they were suspected of being ripe



## FRANCE

for clearance and redevelopment, and the same tendency applied to the price asked for suburban land, while the cost of building from 1925 onwards has never been less than six times higher than before the War. Is it surprising that the Government was not anxious to encourage building which would require so large a subsidy, and that thoughtful people were not prepared to press for official action, without some control being exercised over both land and building costs?

Perhaps the most successful attempt made by the State to stimulate new housing was for people of limited means who wanted to acquire their own homes, a policy which combined a housing subsidy with a substantial bonus for children. Through the Sociétés de Crédit Immobilier, which were founded and controlled by the State, such applicants received building loans from the State at 2 per cent interest, repayable within twenty-five years. Each applicant had to pay 4,000 francs towards the cost of his home, but this sum was reduced to 2,000 francs if the family contained one child under eighteen, and to nothing if there were two such children or if the applicant was a War invalid. For families with more than three children a subsidy was given of 5,000 francs, with an additional 2,500 francs for each further child; but the total grant could not exceed 15,000 francs in all. Between 1929 and 1931 the State provided nearly four thousand million francs with which approximately 100,000 houses were provided, the subsidy being the difference between the rate of interest at which the State could borrow and the 2 per cent at which it lent.

But the official hope was that private enterprise would meet the demand for dwellings and Government policy was, and still is, based on that assumption.\* But as the chief inducement offered to building

\* Some of the big industrial enterprises in France, notably the railway companies, have built in congested areas for their own employees. The Chemin de Fer du Nord has built about 18,000 dwellings since 1870, of

## FRANCE

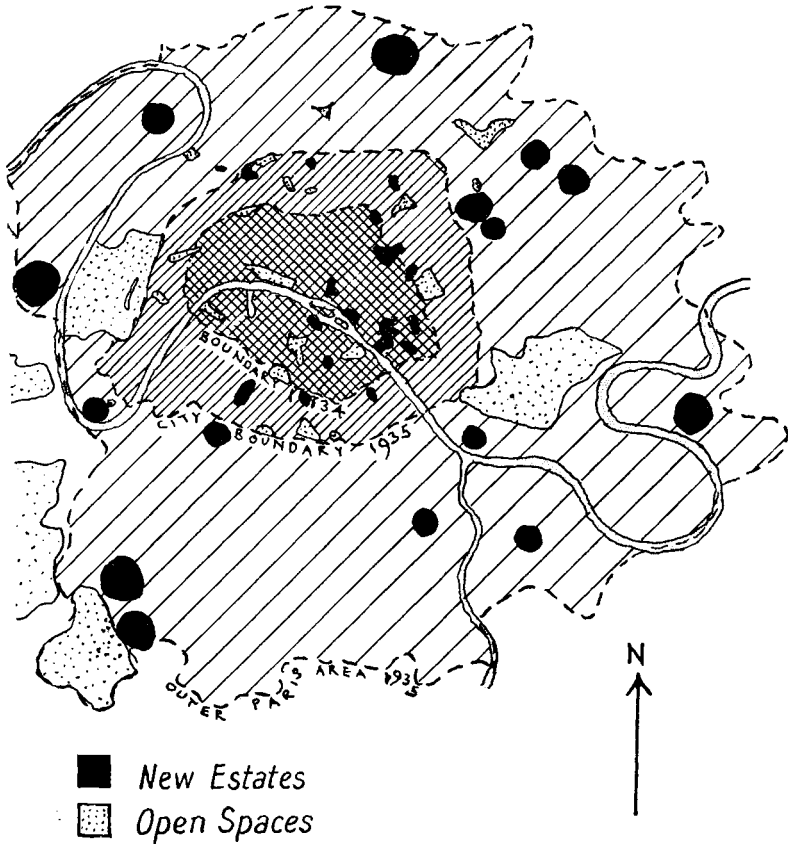
agencies was a remission for some years of certain taxes on the new dwellings which were constructed, and in view of the high cost of building and land and the low rents which the workers could afford this was obviously an inadequate bait. An improvement in the housing conditions of the lower-paid workers in towns and villages needed much more drastic and constructive action than this.

Those who have read so far in this account of French housing policy will hardly be surprised that housing research in that country should be considered a waste of time. The new suburb at Lyons, where the density is 192 dwellings to the acre is quoted. The new working-class dwellings on the fortifications in Paris are said to be even worse than this. Yet in the new towns round Paris there are, if not ideal estates, yet some of the most exciting new ideas in Europe. And while the French attitude at its worst is well illustrated in many of the attempts at slum-clearance and rehousing in Paris itself, the townships surrounding the capital show it in such a good light, that both these areas are here described in some detail.

The ancient city of Paris, capital of France, contains 2,891,020 out of the total national population of 41,500,000. During the last fifty years the population has grown rapidly, increasing by 50 per cent between 1861 and 1896 alone, while in the surrounding area, which is included in the administrative department of the Seine,

which only 400 were constructed in the first forty years. Although some of the dwellings were built for sale to the workers, about 11,000 of them are still the property of the Company and are managed by them. About one-eighth of the Company's employees are housed in these schemes, and large families are particularly catered for; no dwelling has less than four rooms, one in every twenty has five rooms, and one in twenty has six rooms. Most of the dwellings are detached houses with gardens, but some tenement blocks (about 300 dwellings) have been built on the outskirts of Paris. Building has normally been carried out in brick and stone (13,500 dwellings), but between 1919 and 1921, 4,500 dwellings were constructed of timber.

# FRANCE



## PARIS

Superficial area 40 square miles

1910 2,888,888 inhabitants

1920 2,906,000     ,,

1930 2,891,000     ,,

Average density of persons, 113 per acre

Scale: 1 inch to 4 miles

## FRANCE

it increased by 200 per cent.\* The last open spaces round the city grew, during this period, into overcrowded towns on no particular plan, providing excellent examples of the evils of unregulated suburban growth.

Any changes which have taken place in the structure of the city have, as the citizens themselves are the first to admit, been entirely haphazard. Even Hausman's great replanning schemes between 1854 and 1871 were based on the simple expedient of driving broad streets through the city, regardless of the dwellings demolished in the process, or the need for rehousing the displaced people. As no new homes were provided, dispossessed families had to crowd into other dwellings in the neighbourhood, creating the congestion which produces slums, even when the original structure of the dwellings happens to be good.

O v e r c r o w d i n g both of dwellings and of sites in the centre of the city is now acute: buildings are high, streets are narrow, there are few open spaces for the mass of people. Relics of medieval times are jumbled with early industrial workshops and modern commercial buildings, and as the main city was contained within the restricting fortifications until their demolition in 1919, a deplorable muddle of huts, bungalows and shacks grew up outside, often without sanitation, water or artificial light. The majority of the families in the city were housed in one- or two-room flats, and the unhealthiness of

\*

	1801	1851	1901	1921	1931
France .. .. .	27,500,000	35,800,000	38,980,000	39,240,000	41,834,923
Paris .. .. .	547,756	1,053,262	2,714,068	2,906,472	2,846,923
Department de la Seine (not including Paris)	84,052	368,803	955,862	1,505,219	2,086,932
Marseille .. ..	111,000	195,000	491,000	586,341	783,218
Lyon .. .. .	110,000	177,000	459,000	561,592	562,545
Lille .. .. .	55,000	76,000	211,000	200,952	194,824
Bordeaux .. ..	91,000	131,000	257,000	267,409	252,236
Toulouse .. ..	50,000	93,000	150,000	175,434	185,318

*See Giraud: International Congress 1935.*

## FRANCE

each area is faithfully reflected in the mortality and sickness rates for the different districts.

A census of Paris taken in 1917 revealed that more than one-fifteenth of the population (186,000 out of the 2,890,000 citizens) lived in slums; but this was an underestimate, for many of the quarters not officially classified as slums in that census would be considered so to-day. Between 1894 and 1918, 4,750 out of the 90,000 houses in the city had had ten or more deaths from tuberculosis. Before the War this incidence had been concentrated in six areas; by 1917 it had spread to seventeen areas, three in the centre of the old town, the remainder in the workers' districts to the east, south and north: all these areas had had the same distinguishing features—narrow streets, almost sunless courts, bad condition of common stairways and offices, bad state of repair and bad sanitary equipment. The average density of population in these districts was 150 persons per acre, while in many parts it was 243, and near the town hall it rose to 405 persons per acre. The death-rate in these slum areas due to tuberculosis alone was twice the average death-rate of all Paris.\*

Before the War, 5,000,000 francs had been voted for the acquisition and demolition of the most insanitary blocks of flats, but little had been done until an outbreak of plague in one of the worst areas not only forced the authorities to take action in 1921, but incidentally exposed the defects of the law in a striking manner. The district contained eighty-five houses, of which forty-seven had to be expo-

* The estimated value of the land comprising these	<i>Francs</i>
seventeen areas was .. .. .	683,462,300
Estimated compensation to tenants .. .. .	467,752,592
Gross cost .. .. .	1,151,214,892
Estimated sale of plots .. .. .	159,000,000
Net cost .. .. .	992,214,892

## FRANCE

riated, and 30,000,000 francs had been put aside by the city for dealing with them, the original valuation being 1,760,000 francs. The Jury now, however, fixed the compensation for expropriation and eviction at 7,105,735 francs, i.e. four times the assessed value.

In May 1930 a second small clearance scheme was begun with a loan of 9,000,000 francs. Here too the estimated cost of expropriation for forty-four houses was greatly exceeded, the valuation reaching 25,763,334 francs, not including "extras."

In the words of an official report at the time:

"It was found that all the experts acting for the expropriated owners had submitted estimates which on the whole were as high again as those of the legal experts, and that the owners themselves had filed claims which exceeded the estimates of their own experts, claims which in many cases the jury granted in full. It was also found that whereas all the experts had declared all the houses, with one solitary exception, to be insanitary, the jury decided that with two exceptions they were all fit for tenancy, and even went so far as to include in that category a house in respect of which all three experts had applied for an order prohibiting occupation altogether. As the jury was legally held to be capable of judging the habitableness or otherwise of the houses, the public was in fact robbed of all the benefits to which it was entitled under the law of 1915.

"At the instigation of the council, the Prefect of the Seine quashed the findings of the jury and in the new proceedings before a jury from the Department of the Seine et Oise the exorbitant claims were reduced by 2,000,000 francs.

"The first expropriation, however, cost about 23,900,000 francs; the second expropriation of forty-six more houses cost 23,950,000 francs which, with a further 2,000,000 for demolition and other expenses, made a total of nearly 50,000,000 francs for a total of about one hundred houses in Slum No. 1.

## FRANCE

“The new dwellings which replaced them consisted of:

- 6 dwellings of 4 rooms—rent 1,806 francs per annum, area 60 square metres (645·85 square feet).
- 479 dwellings of 3 rooms—rent 1,506 francs per annum, area 51 square metres (548·97 square feet).
- 219 dwellings of 2 rooms—rent 1,254 francs per annum, area 36 square metres (387·51 square feet).
- 93 dwellings of 1 room—rent 876 francs per annum, area 28 square metres (301·397 square feet).

“The improved area cost the city 2,554 and 2,113 francs per square metre respectively for the two expropriations, excluding the expenses of tenant eviction, or 3,000 to 4,000 francs per square metre including that outlay.”

The jury had, of course, based its assessment for the property on an inflated estimate of its potential market value as a cleared site, and had not taken into consideration its actual value with the pestilential and tumbledown houses that were there.

Such decisions showed the necessity for a revision of the law which would make abuses of this kind impossible. A bill was introduced with the following provisions, and was passed in 1931:

1. Restriction of choice of experts by the parties interested, so that valuation should be entrusted only to capable and unbiased men.
2. Strict regulations to be drawn up governing the payment of compensation to owners of insanitary property.
3. Prohibition of owners filing claims higher than the estimates of their own experts.

Fantastically high sums are, however, not only still claimed by dispossessed slum landlords and expelled tenants, but are granted



*The new flats built on the site of the fortifications of Paris by L'Immobilière Construction de Paris in collaboration with the Municipality*

PLATE 23



PLATE 24



*The new Villeurbanne outside Lyons*



*A typical  
street café  
in France*

## FRANCE

to them, and the sums allocated for rehousing have naturally not succeeded in providing many houses. Between 1919 and 1934, for instance, 435,000,000 francs raised in loans by the city for slum clearance (i.e. 5,000,000 francs in 1914, 30,000,000 francs in 1921; 100,000,000 francs in 1928; 300,000,000 francs in 1934) was used entirely for the expropriation and demolition of slum areas, while money for the actual construction had to be taken from a special additional "fund for cheap dwellings."

The difficulties confronting the authorities are admittedly great. The individualism of the average Frenchman is one of his strongest characteristics. Discomforts such as inadequate sanitation, unhealthy dwellings or lack of sun and air, are tolerated, but any infringement of the supposed rights of the individual, even those of the slum-owner, is resisted passionately. Citizens seem to be much more immediately concerned about their communal rights and amusements, their cafés, market-places, and so on, than about the individual discomforts of family life in one-roomed apartments at the top of a six- or seven-storeyed house without sanitary conveniences. This indifference makes housing reform a difficult job, although life itself has no doubt compensations, and both the appearance and the general comfort of a French town is refreshing to an English visitor.

But the Paris City Council appears baffled by the steadfast refusal of penniless slum dwellers to move to new houses in the suburbs, for which they will have to pay higher rents. But as "projects are still being explored," and "some of the schemes are being put into partial operation," the situation is obviously not yet beyond repair. For instance, about 138 "houses" (i.e. tenement blocks) comprising nearly five thousand tenancies, had been demolished by 1931; but they were tenancies mainly let in furnished rooms to single persons, and as they were not the type of occupants who would wish, or could afford, to move from the centre of the city, they have mainly stayed near their old haunts.

## FRANCE

Argument still rages as to the use which should be made of these small slum sites after demolition: some experts urge that they should be utilized as open spaces for the densely populated areas which surround them; others wish to rehouse the same tenants on the same sites, although these areas are already so overcrowded both with dwellings and with people that such a policy would merely perpetuate the slum; others point out that if tenements, cheap enough to be within the means of the occupants, are built on these or other expensive central sites, they will be of such inferior quality and so lacking in modern convenience that their value will depreciate uneconomically soon.

Meanwhile, it is debatable if the few new blocks of workers' dwellings which have been built in the city are much better than the old; many of them are certainly little better than the 1870 "slum" areas that are now being cleared in Stockholm and other Continental cities.

The city council were naturally anxious to sell the central slum areas, which had cost them so much, for remunerative purposes such as the Flower Market which has been built in one former slum area and which will become the property of the municipality on the expiration of the fifty-seven year licence which has been granted to the private owning-company. The municipality had themselves built too few new dwellings to provide enough alternative accommodation for the evicted people, so in 1930 they therefore made an agreement with a private firm—L'Immobilière Construction de Paris. By this agreement the company undertook to build 20,000 dwellings in Paris, of which half were to be for the workers and half for the middle classes, and the municipality provided the land (partly on the site of the old fortifications): on this security, 518,000,000 francs were raised for the building by a public loan.

The company agreed to pay the city:

## FRANCE

One million francs a year for the use of the land.

To administer the dwellings for fifty-five years, paying building taxes and fees, and interest and amortization on the loan taken up by the city after which the city would resume the ownership of land and buildings.

To provide middle-class dwellings at rents of 1,500 to 1,800 francs for one room, up to 9,000 to 10,000 francs per annum for four rooms, kitchen and bath.

To provide dwellings for evicted tenants at 1,000 francs for one room with running water; 2,000 francs for two rooms and kitchen; 2,700 francs for three rooms (the rents being reduced by surcharge to the prime-cost price of the middle-class flats).

The company hoped to make its profits through the great economies that would result from building and managing properties on so large a scale; and indeed in 1934 they claimed, on the experience they had gained, that they were able to build low-rented dwellings profitably for workers only, and no longer needed to build simultaneously better-class dwellings commanding a higher rent, in order to get an adequate return on the total capital expended.

The cheaper dwellings built under this agreement proved, however, to be far too expensive for the families evicted from slum areas, for whom they were intended. Of these flats, 85 per cent were subsequently let in the open market at higher rents than were stipulated by the municipality, thus adding to the glut of medium-rented dwellings in the city, while the shortage of low-rented dwellings for workers continued unabated.

The more expensive flats provided under the agreement were built on six or eight floors, with underground garages, open to the public as well as to the tenants. Pleasant shops were provided on the ground floor facing the street, the entrance halls were spacious and well planned. But the density of development was excessively high

## FRANCE

according to modern standards, the flats had neither balconies nor gardens, and many of the rooms looked on to narrow, sunless "wells."

The workers' flats also had internal staircases with fine entrance doors and halls containing mirrors and plants. Tenants had their own keys, and a resident caretaker was on duty to answer the door to visitors. Wood-block floors were provided throughout the dwellings and there was central heating; but neither balconies nor hot water were provided, while the finish and the kitchen equipment seemed shoddy. Rent did not include water, gas or electricity charges. The flats are generally tidy and pleasant, decorated in artistic pastel shades. It is said that the tenants were mainly from slum areas in Paris, and that the great improvement in conditions shocked them into good behaviour, while a further safeguard was afforded by the frequent inspections carried out by an official from the main office of the company. The site seemed unbearably overcrowded, though it is said that only sculleries and lavatories overlook the wells. Shops line the ground floors and look cheerful and prosperous. These flats are said to be often better equipped and finished than the municipal agreement required, the company finding the extra outlay eventually saves on upkeep costs. Neither central heating, central laundries, nor bathrooms were, however, provided (they are not often found in workmen's dwellings in France). The traditional closed stove, burning charcoal or wood, was installed in each dwelling.

These blocks of flats certainly look much more prosperous than those built by the city itself at great expense for rehousing slum tenants, a quarter of which are apparently empty. The rents of the company's flats are, however, much higher than municipal rents, and they undoubtedly get a better class of tenant.

It will be seen from the foregoing account, that the ownership of land is a serious obstacle to better housing in Paris.

## FRANCE

Not only does the municipality own no land, but there is no way of securing part at least of the enhanced land values which should accrue to the community. Bitter but unavailing protests were made before the War against such scandals as the public extension of the metropolitan railway, which gave unearned fortunes to the owners of land at Vaugriard and Grenelle whereas, it was urged, the land should have been bought years before by the city, to whom the increased value should have belonged.

The formation of a Greater Paris Regional Planning Committee in 1932 may do something to remedy this state of affairs. They have worked out a scheme that covers the whole of the area within a radius of twenty-two miles from Notre-Dame, a scheme which was presented to the Home Minister in May 1934. It is based on a survey by air photographs taken by the geographical service of the Army, and although it is mainly concerned with the improvement of transport and traffic facilities, open spaces, zoning (including agricultural areas) and public utility services are also included within its scope. It is to be hoped that this opportunity of improving the city will not be wasted in the same way as was the dismantlement of the fortifications. This is another scandal, which still rankles in Parisian hearts. For as early as 1912 frantic efforts were begun to ensure that when the old fortifications surrounding the city were demolished they should be preserved as open spaces and used for parks and playgrounds. In 1919 over 148 acres of this land were duly cleared of the fortifications and put at the disposal of the city. Yet, by 1934, most of them had been built over at a very high density, while the remainder is shown as "desert land"—a lamentably true description.

This gloomy picture of housing conditions in Paris would be misleading if attention were not drawn again to the relative smallness of the city, the ease of access to the wooded country which surrounds it on every side but the north, and the wealth of communal

## FRANCE

amusements and open-air meeting places to which Parisians can go with their families at a very low cost. Perhaps this vivid social life is one of the reasons why housing conditions are treated with comparative indifference. And, say some, one should not forget that saving is such an ingrained characteristic of the French that they will put up with every sort of discomfort and bad conditions of light, air and lack of room to save a *petit sou*!

A very different attitude towards housing is apparent in the district surrounding the capital. From the map of Paris it will be seen that this area is in the hands of one authority—the *D e p a r t m e n t* of the *S e i n e* which, although the smallest Department in France, contains one-ninth of the total population of the country. This area is under the control of one authority for housing purposes and it is possible to apply to it a single unified scheme of development; this is being done, since fortunately the control is in very capable hands.

In 1912 there was a great indictment in Parliament of the Parisian policy of extension by drift.\* It was pointed out that although great care had been devoted to the development outside Paris of a new wealthy quarter, Neuilly, the new poorer districts had been allowed to develop anyhow—one area of 771 acres (312 hectares) containing 35,000 inhabitants and no open spaces.†

\* See Report of the Conseil General de la Seine, 1934.

†		1896	1926
	Houille .. .. .	3,000	15,000
	Argenteuil .. .. .	15,000	44,000
	Sartrouville .. .. .	2,000	11,000
	Livry .. .. .	4,000	17,000
	Gournay .. .. .	4,000	17,000
	Arnouille .. .. .	480	4,000
	Vigneux .. .. .	400	5,000
	Le Blanc Mesnil .. .. .	170	11,000
	Aulnay-Sous Blois .. .. .	1,900	21,000
	Villeneuve-le-Roi .. .. .	800	8,000

## FRANCE

Such crowding resulted in a high death-rate. The death-rate for France in 1900, 1901 and 1902 was 2 per cent, but in the workers' quarter of St. Denis it was 2·2 to 2·68 per cent, while for every 100 deaths from tuberculosis in France, there were 157 in Suresnes, 168 in Pantin, 173 in Les Lilas, 181 in St. Ouen and 206 in Pré St. Gervais.

The Department itself was mainly rural, the great increase being concentrated in the villages immediately adjacent to Paris. Land in the suburbs increased in price from between 1 and 100 francs per square metre in 1885 to between 10 and 400 francs per square metre in 1912. Two rooms with kitchen which fetched 180 to 200 francs in 1885, could be let at 300 to 350 francs by 1912, in spite of twenty-eight years' additional wear.

As a result of this Parliamentary exposure of health and housing conditions in these mushroom towns, the Department of the Seine formed a special housing section in 1912 to deal exclusively with the area round Paris, 10,000,000 francs being voted for acquiring land on which to build garden cities. Work was of course suspended on the outbreak of war, but from its inception the Housing Office was unique in that it was formed not merely to build cheap dwellings, but also to regulate the extension of Paris and to make new towns outside the city boundary, in which reasonable, pleasant and healthy lives could be enjoyed by all kinds of people.

In this task the new office evaded the obstruction of high land charges for, realizing that success depended on preventing speculation in land values, they bought more than 494 acres (two million square metres) of land at a very low price during the War. More has since been acquired, sufficient altogether for eleven towns which, separated by wide areas of woodland and cultivated farm holdings, will ultimately cover some 906 acres of land. Of the area which has been reserved for the actual cities it has been decided that a third shall never be built on, the open area actually varies from 67 per cent



## FRANCE

of one town to 86 per cent of another. The buying price was 58,126,855 francs, but the unoccupied land alone has now increased in value by more than 80,000,000 francs.\* This enhanced value accrues, of course, to the department to which it belongs, and not to private individuals. It has now been decided to buy more land very near the boundary of Paris itself, since, owing to bad transport facilities, it is still available at agricultural prices. Properly developed, great financial profit and revalorization are expected ultimately to accrue to the Department, as has happened in those German towns where for generations a similar policy of the municipal ownership of city land has flourished.

Ten million francs (about £150,000) were voted in 1920 towards developing these new cities, but progress was slow until 1928, when the passage of the Loucheur Act (see page 217) gave more adequate credit facilities for building cheap houses. Improvements and development to the value of 14,000,000 francs were begun in 1929, and the expenditure of another 21,000,000 francs was under consideration when work had to be slowed down in the economic slump of 1933.

The population of the new towns is being drawn mainly from Paris and the adjacent suburban areas, and although the towns do not yet contain their own industries, they are in the neighbourhood of industrial areas and are near enough to be used also as dormitories for people working in the capital. It is never forgotten that these new towns are a social and not a philanthropic experiment, that is to say, that they must include all income levels, the consequently wide range of rents and general expenditure helping to stabilize the annual budget of the towns.

Administration in the Department's offices is divided into three parts:

\* At Suresnes, 420,000 square metres of land were bought at an average price of 6 francs per square metre, being 1/30th of the actual value.

*Chatenay-Malabry. The shopping centre. Flats for single or unmarried people are built in high towers; there are also flats for small families; cottages and small houses for big families*

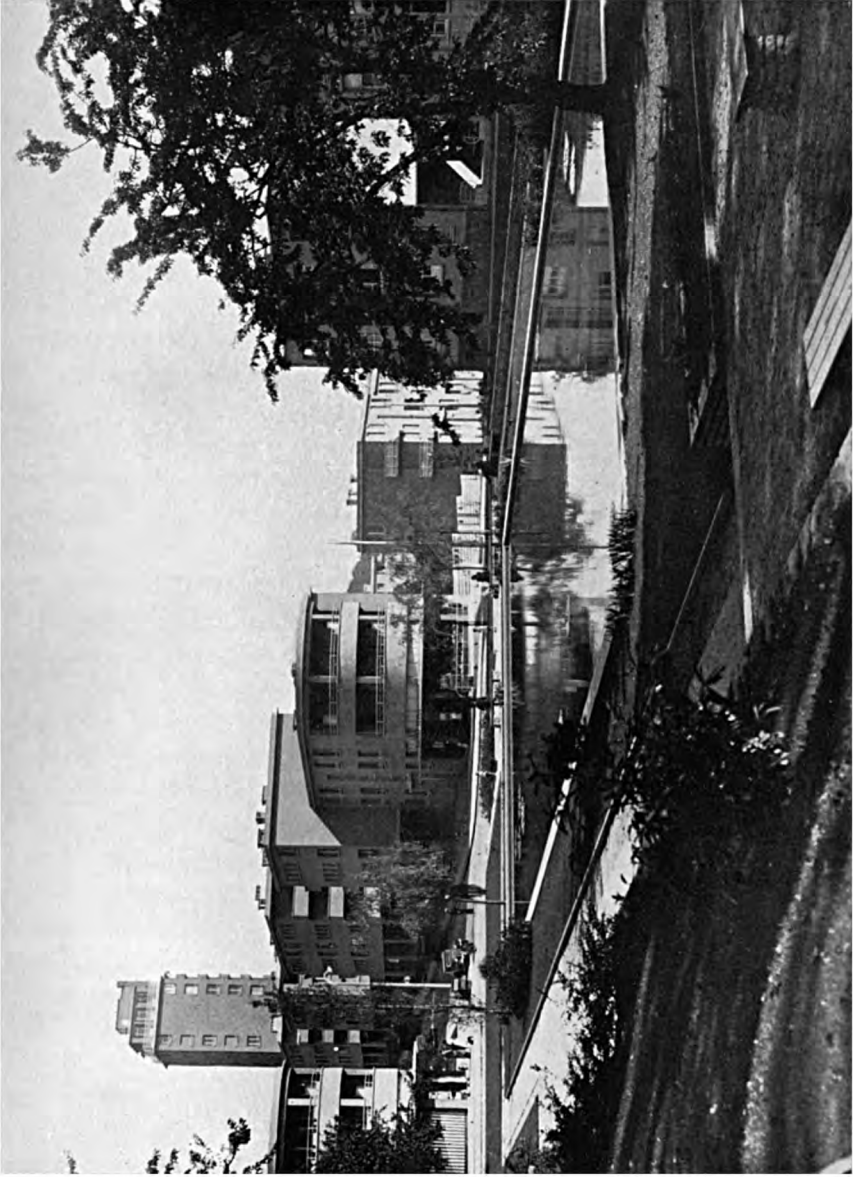
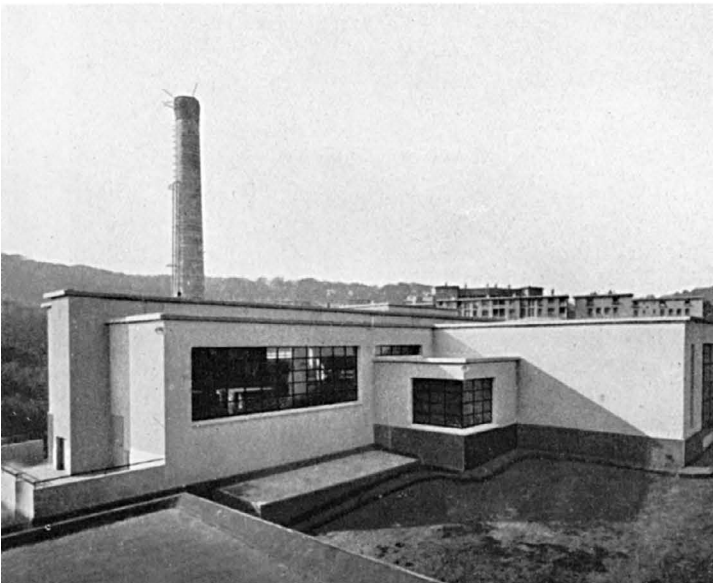


PLATE 25



*The central square of the new town, Chatenay-Malabry, outside Paris*

PLATE 26



*The incinerator, in which the refuse of the whole town is destroyed without coming in contact with the air from sink to fire. The heat generated is used to warm the water for the public swimming pool, which is in the same building*

## FRANCE

1. Research and statistics.
2. The general planning and layout of the land, together with the actual building.
3. The general management of and responsibility for the towns and dwellings after they are completed.

The first development was made in experimental romantic Anglo-Saxon semi-detached cottages—an amusing contrast to the latest ultra-modern schemes at Drancy-la-Muette, Chatenay-Malabry and Maisons-Alfort, for twenty years of research and experiment have led to marked changes in the structure of these new towns. It has, for instance, been found that although families generally prefer small houses, flats are without doubt the most convenient dwellings for certain groups in the community, including those who do not work for long in the same district and who, consequently, cannot undertake the responsibility of a *pavillon*, as a cottage is called, and a garden. And since flats are needed, careful research has been made in order to avoid past mistakes on such subjects as height and density, hygiene, ventilation and sunlight, comfort and aesthetics.

It is rare now in these French towns for flats to be built on more than four floors, except for aesthetic or topographical reasons. “Sky-scrapers” as at Chatenay-Malabry and Drancy-la-Muette, of twelve or fifteen storeys, are sometimes built to make a focal point in a town, such as might be made by a church tower, and the flats in such lofty buildings are designed for single or childless people, and not for families.

Research into communal needs has evolved notable results which are a triumph of common sense and logic. For instance, schools and other services are grouped nearest to the *pavillons* and family flats, open markets are put near the shopping centre, while the type of dwelling most likely to be rented by “brain-workers” have been guarded as much as possible from noise.

## FRANCE

Competitions have been held to evolve the best types of doors, windows, systems of ventilation and heating plant, interior planning, etc., which, if they are used in many of these new cities, can be made by mass production at a considerable lowering in cost. Inexpensive variety between the dwellings themselves is obtained by slight modification in inessentials—that is to say, in the placing of doors or windows, the height or slope of roofs, the colour schemes, the species of trees which are planted, the climbing plants, and the layout of the gardens. Another constant source of variety is, of course, in the fact that these towns are not planned for one class, but as complete social structures, from which variety naturally springs.

The first low-rented blocks of dwellings were cheapened in the usual way, by omitting baths and other amenities. Now that the Housing Office has got into its stride, it is no longer necessary to do this. Standardization and mass-production have made it not only possible, but actually cheaper to use the same kind of equipment in every dwelling, whatever the rent. For instance, the efficiency of the Evier-Vidoir method of refuse collection and disposal (see page 239) depends upon its being installed universally and not partially—otherwise an expensive duplicate municipal sanitary service would be necessary. Heating and lighting a whole town is obviously cleaner and more economical from one plant than from many sources, and this has been the subject of experiment at Plessis Robinson.

Another economy, now universally practised, is to put the sanitary equipment on the inner walls of dwellings, generally without direct ventilation. This was only adopted after exhaustive research had been undertaken into the adequacy of the new methods of ventilation and plumbing which had been adopted. This seemingly slight concession has freed the whole plan of the dwellings which, as architects know to their cost, can be crippled by the necessity of reserving an outside wall for the sanitary arrangements. Similar

## FRANCE

plumbing economies are in use in Sweden and other Continental countries.\*

An interesting evolution, based on experience, has led the Office away from the provision of common laundries and drying-grounds, back to the installation of an efficient private wash-copper in each dwelling, a "water-room" being frequently provided, leading out of the kitchen, in which all washing-up, laundry and other wet jobs can be carried out. The change of policy was amusingly demonstrated in Suresnes, one of the earliest "garden cities," where common laundries which were proudly installed in the first section are now used as a warning to all who happen to see the exhausted housewives struggling home with their baskets of clean linen, after half a day in the damp, hot air of the washhouse.

The original staff of the Housing Office, working under the direction of the Administrator, included ten first-rate architects, whose numbers have since been supplemented by the winners of some of the public architectural, town planning and allied competitions. Their remuneration is 5 per cent of the cost of the work.

Each town had been handed to a group of architects to develop in their own way, subject to certain rules, common to all, which govern the proportion between built-up and open spaces, the width of streets and height of buildings, the number and types of dwellings, the provision of schools and street markets adequate for the proposed population, the uniform system for the collection and disposal of refuse, etc. The common rules laid down for all towns by the Office include:

Differentiation in the height of buildings in order to eliminate the monotony of one-level roofs.

Rhythmic design of streets, which must be planned as a whole.

\* The writer would personally regret the loss of a bathroom into which sun and air can enter direct.

## FRANCE

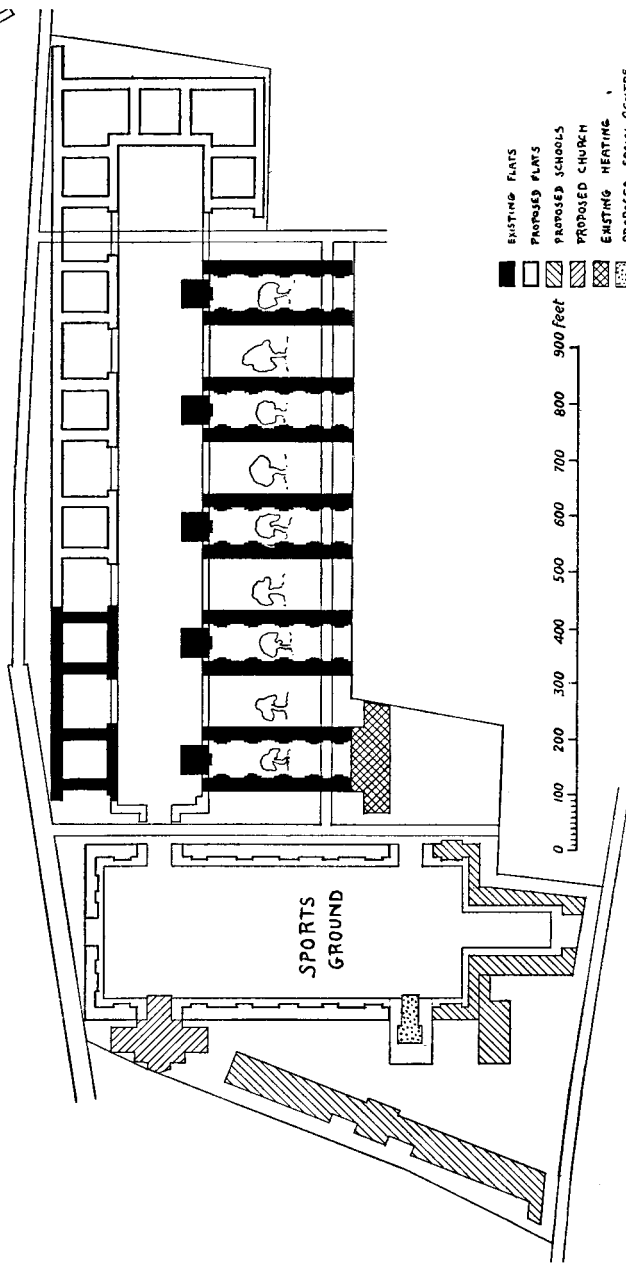
The height of the houses bordering a street must not exceed half the width of the street.

Living-rooms must be at least 100 square feet when there is one bedroom, and must be increased by 33 square feet for every extra bedroom.

This deliberate attempt at "street-planning" is producing extremely interesting results, for wide roads are flanked by high buildings, narrow streets by low ones, a natural variation of fundamental importance.

Each city is planned to contain as many social organizations as possible, as well as all social groups and classes. Studios are built for artists, and workshops for artisans; hostels, with restaurants and reading-rooms, for unmarried people; shops, promenades and street markets, allotments and playing-fields, schools and infant welfare centres are included in every scheme. Rents are low and rebates up to half the rent are allowed for large families, that is to say, for families with four or more children under sixteen years of age.

Many of the French housing experts insist that the height of buildings is immaterial so long as they are surrounded by sufficient space for the sun to penetrate into all the rooms. This theory has been put into practice in one of the new areas—Drancy-la-Muette—where development varies between three- and four-floored blocks of flats and fifteen-storey towers with lifts. Useful experimental work has been carried out here in construction as well as in planning and equipment: reinforced-concrete slabs manufactured under cover on the site have been used for building, with a finish of grey-white pebbles—very ugly, but claimed to be quicker, cheaper to build and less open to delay from weather conditions, than any other method of construction. A more agreeable example of this material can be seen at Bagneaux, an estate completed in 1926 by a public utility society, "Pax," where the finish of warm brown pebbles



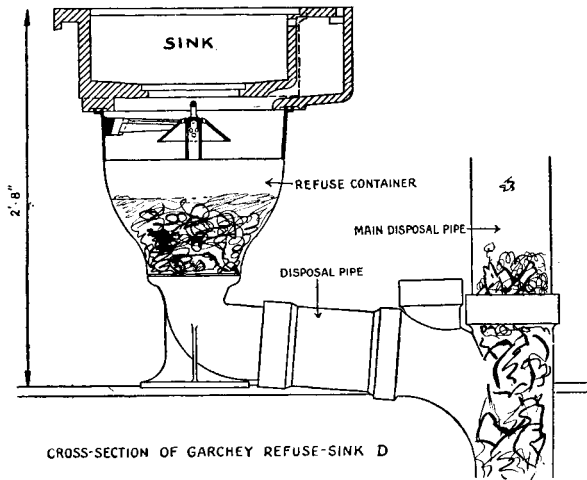
*General layout of the Drancy estate*



## FRANCE

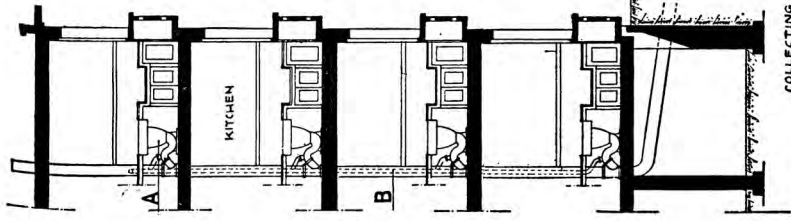
decorated with bands of light plaster is not only very pleasing but appears to be wearing admirably.

At Drancy the layout of the estate is sensible and good. The four-floored blocks run from north to south and contain large "family-flats." They are widely separated by gardens bordered by steps which can also be used as seats, under which are ingenious shelters



for prams and cycles. The dwelling towers are built at the north end of each low block, spaced so as to cast least shadow on the other dwellings, and containing the small, better-equipped and more expensive flats designed for single and childless people. The whole estate is linked by a covered colonnade which leads to a swimming-pool and sportsground.

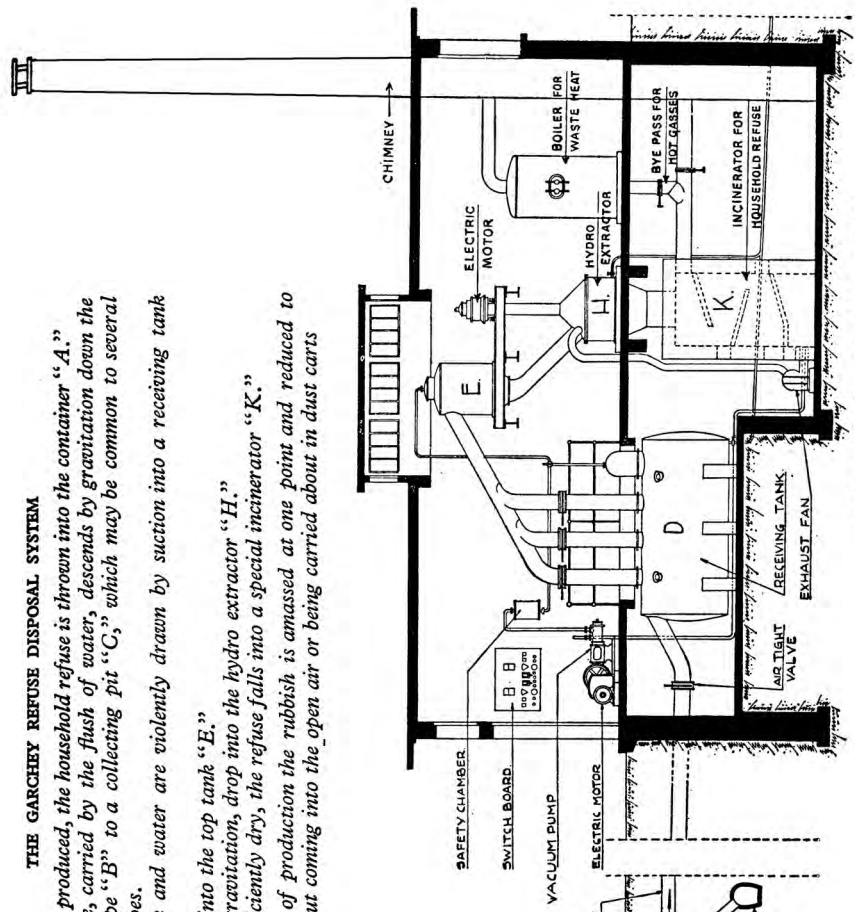
In each of these new towns the efficient method of refuse collection and disposal, called the Evier-Vidoir or Garchy system (widely used in France in the past ten years) has been installed. The sink aperture is also the refuse bin; anything which is too large to go into the receptacle must be broken into smaller pieces, and as the pipe



SECTION OF A BLOCK OF FLATS

THE GARCHEY REFUSE DISPOSAL SYSTEM

- 1st As soon as produced, the household refuse is thrown into the container "A."
  - 2nd The refuse, carried by the flush of water, descends by gravitation down the chute pipe "B" to a collecting pit "C," which may be common to several chute pipes.
  - 3rd The refuse and water are violently drawn by suction into a receiving tank "D."
  - 4th Lifted up into the top tank "E."
  - 5th Then, by gravitation, drop into the hydro extractor "H."
  - 6th When sufficiently dry, the refuse falls into a special incinerator "K."
- From the place of production the rubbish is amassed at one point and reduced to ashes without coming into the open air or being carried about in dust carts



SECTION OF THE DISPOSAL STATION

## FRANCE

connects with the bath, w.c., and other disposal wastes, it is constantly flushed and cleansed by soapy water. There was no smell from

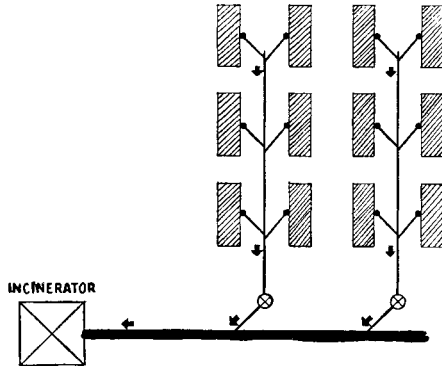
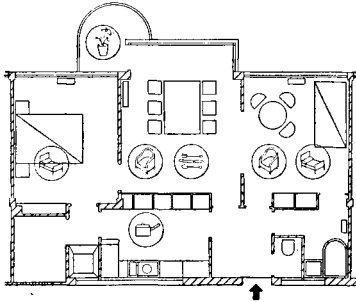


DIAGRAM OF REFUSE COLLECTION FROM HOUSES OR FLATS

the sink in any of the many inhabited flats seen by the writer in Bagneux, nor had the tenants any criticism, although the system



*DRANCY. A flat, showing the private balcony, the two rooms which can be thrown into one, the drying balcony, the water-room, the kitchen, bathroom and many cupboards. In addition there is storage space in the attics and the basement*

had been in use there for over six years. The pipes from each block link up at or just below ground level and the refuse is then drawn by vacuum suction until it passes over a grid through which the



PLATE 27

*The new suburb outside Paris, Drancy la Muette, where family flats are on three floors and small flats in towers sixteen floors high with lifts*

*How they learn geography in the new schools at Suresnes*



*The paddling pool and nursery school in the new town of Suresnes*

*Plessis - Robinson.  
Each flat has a  
private balcony.  
Allotments separate  
the flats from the  
children's play-  
ground*

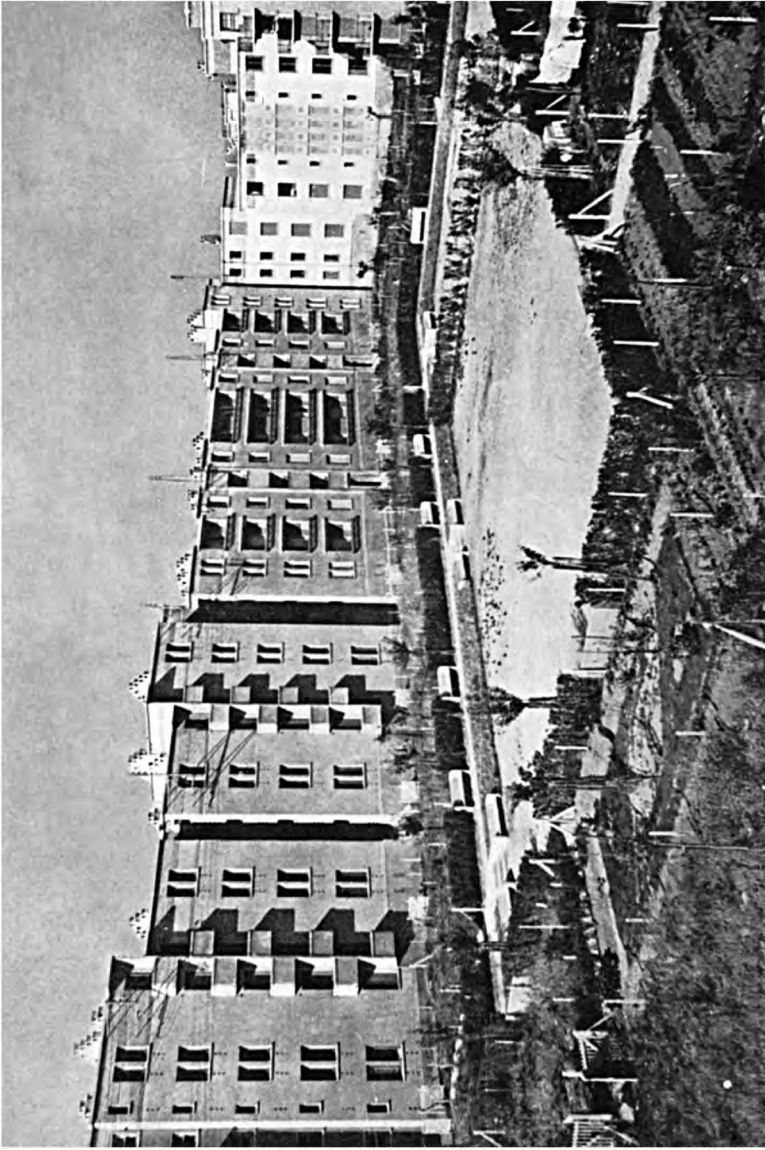
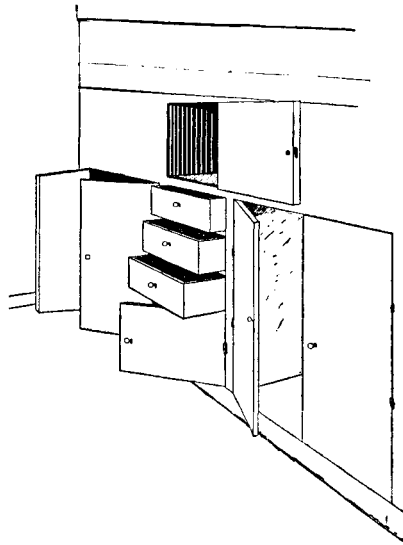


PLATE 28

## FRANCE

liquid matter is drained away, while the solid refuse is finally fed, alternately with fuel, into the furnace at the disposal station. In Chatenay-Malabry the water for the public swimming-bath is heated from the furnace, and there are many other uses to which the heat can be put. The expense of dust-carts, the unhealthy work of dustmen, the bother of disposal, are all eliminated in this admirable method.

Outside staircase and "balcony" approaches to the flats are not used in any of the towns. But practically every flat has a large, private balcony leading out of the living-room on the sunnier side, while in the latest schemes sculleries and airing balconies lead out of the kitchen. Tenants have their own keys to the front door of the spacious common entrance halls, which contain the letter-boxes for each tenancy.

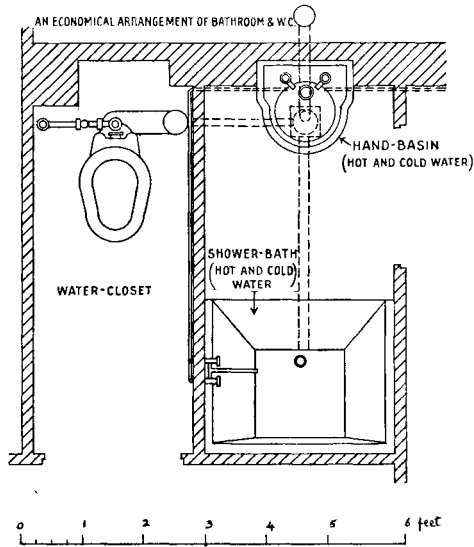


*The living-room side of the cupboard partition*

Several interesting experiments in planning and equipment are incorporated in Drancy, but, although good in idea they are sometimes unequal in finish and unfortunate in colour. Lap, for instance (an imitation marble which is hardwearing and which, like the outside walls, is fabricated in units on the site), is used in all sculleries and on the staircases, but in a dark and gloomy shade of grey. The scullery floor is mosaic, which does not show marks but is also in dingy colours. The kitchen equipment has been carefully thought

## FRANCE

out; the sink (containing the refuse-bin), the stove and draining-boards make one working unit; the small gas-cooker is enamelled and well lagged, with a drop-door to the oven so that it can be used as a shelf, and the oven is easy to look into. All pipes are recessed and generally hidden: the central supply of hot water to each flat is rationed, four gallons at a temperature of  $100^{\circ}\text{C}$ . being thermo-



statically stored each morning in a white enamelled container, any additional water used being measured on an automatic meter and a charge made at the end of each quarter for the extra amount used. Central heating is paid per annum per radiator.

The shower and w.c. are generally put on to an inner wall, as is the "water-room"—a small, tiled room with a hot tap in the wall, a sunk floor and a run-away gully in one corner. Laundry can be done or a shower taken in this room without fear of flooding the passage or messing up the rest of the flat.

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At Drancy the windows slide sideways to open, as do some of the doors. Walls are panelled in light coloured woods\* and the entire partition between the scullery and the living-room is formed by a cupboard-unit of which the upper cupboard opens into the living-room and the lower one into the scullery, while the drawers open into both rooms. The halls, too, are lined with cupboards, while doors are flush and floors jointless.

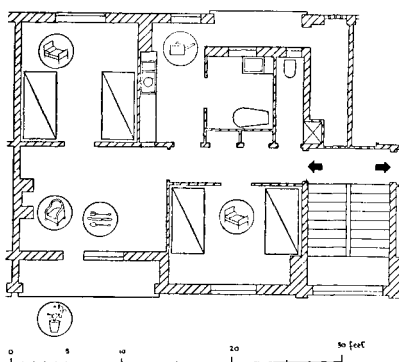
A wine "cellar," but no special larder, is provided for each flat.

Some of the latest dwellings have kitchens recessed from the living-rooms, but which can be screened off by a curtain. Bedrooms lead out of the living-room, as often on the Continent, and in some of the flats a fireplace is installed in the corner of one bedroom and

connected with that adjoining, so that the one fire can be used to warm both bedrooms. Generally speaking, however, dwellings are warmed by radiators, a flue with an open fireplace being provided in the living room for extra warmth. Walls in the flats are often painted to a height of 5 feet 6 inches, with a line of patterned paper running just below the ceiling; pale pastel shades are generally used whether the material is paint, paper or distemper. Ample private storage space is provided for every flat in the attics and the cellars.

With regard to the choice of tenants, applications are dealt with in order of date with, however, preference given to families whose

\* This is said to be a very unsuitable finish, because it harbours vermin so easily.



PLESSIS-ROBINSON. *Three-roomed flat with two balconies and a drying-room*



## FRANCE

breadwinner has been injured in war or in industry. Applicants are entered for the localities in which they wish to live, and are further grouped according to their personal standards of cleanliness and character. The number of persons in the family is carefully checked up with the size of the dwelling required, on the understanding that the living-room may not be used as a bedroom. The waiting list is revised every nine months.

Leases for shops, offices, etc., are granted for eighteen years only, in order that the Department may not lose the advantage of any big rise in values for too long a period. Rents are paid monthly, as is usual on the Continent, and the Office defrays all taxes and other outgoings as well as undertaking all internal and external repairs to the properties.

There are two main classes of dwellings in these new towns—cheap dwellings (*habitations à bon marché*), for which 90 per cent of the capital cost can be borrowed at 2 per cent interest, and rather better dwellings (*habitations améliorées*), when 3 per cent interest must be paid on the borrowed capital. Building schemes are carried out by tender; three hundred and fifteen contractors had worked for the Office up to the beginning of 1937.

Each new town visited has its own distinctive character. Here is no regimentation, but lively development on a convincingly rational plan. The main criticism is aesthetic—the apparent insensitiveness of many French architects to the quality of building materials. But this experiment in urban living is being slowed down by hard economics. It was expected originally that the rents the tenants could pay (based on wages and the cost of living) would amount to a return of 4 to 5 per cent on the cost of construction. Such a return, it was estimated, would have paid the interest due on the State loan (90 per cent of the building cost) plus all other outgoings. But in 1937 building costs were six and a half times what they

## FRANCE

had been before the War, and the rents the workmen are able to pay only amount to 1·25 per cent on this swollen total capital outlay. No special housing subsidy has been given to the new towns by the Department of the Seine, because it was felt that the cost of the Housing Office was a heavy enough burden on the Department, responsible as it is for the cost of management and of installing drainage, water supply (in private hands and very hard bargainers) and social services for the new towns.

But perhaps the greatest difficulty which the Housing Department has had to face has been that of transport, which is in private hands. It was hoped—in fact a “gentleman’s agreement” is said to have been made—that the tube would be extended to Drancy and the other new towns and completed by the time they were ready for occupation. This has not been done, and the bus companies, also privately run, are disinclined to work up a service which, as soon as it is beginning to pay will, they say, be taken over by the rival concern! Many dwellings are therefore still vacant.

In Plessis-Robinson the situation became so acute that arrangements were finally made with the Minister for War for the Gardes Mobiles and their families to be billeted in the town, occupying all the dwellings on one side of the market-place. A similar arrangement was made for the whole of Drancy-la-Muette, but here the local town council were opposed to the scheme and this great estate is still uninhabited.

A strange country!

## 10. Summary and Conclusions

WHAT EMERGES FROM THIS SURVEY of the housing needs, policies and achievements of six European nations? What use can we make of their experience? Which ideas, which experiments might be applicable in Great Britain? How far would adaptation be necessary to make them fit the special needs and difficulties, traditions and prejudices of the British people?

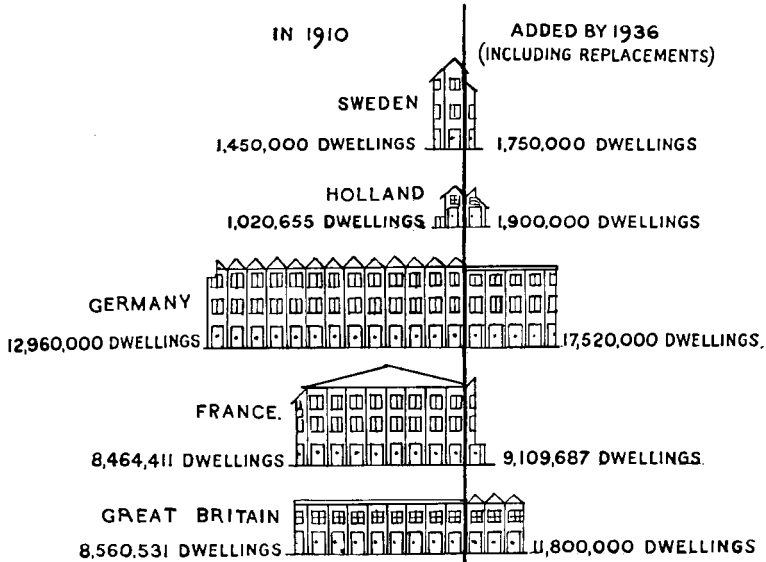
That Great Britain has much to learn is apparent to the most casual traveller who troubles to observe the newly developed areas, the quality of modern urban life at home and abroad. But readers may here have noticed how often the ideas which are animating the most progressive Continental housing work are of English origin. Co-operatives; saving-societies from whose funds are advanced the sums required for financing new homes; garden cities; modern sanitation and sewage systems; by-laws and inspection; all are English by birth, all have been changed, modified and greatly improved by their sojourn abroad, all are ready to be brought back and used again for our advantage.

Let us examine the general results of the housing policies followed during eighteen years' strenuous activity by the countries which have been described in previous chapters. The first question which must occur to every student of European housing is whether the shortage has been overcome? What still remains to be done? A diagram of the achievements of these countries, together with the comparative figures for Britain, will throw some light on the answer.

It will be seen that France is the only country whose records are available where the housing shortage has not technically been overcome. Yet this apparently satisfactory outcome of 18 years' work is misleading. There is everywhere actually a glut of medium-priced dwellings, but the shortage of low-cost houses, and particularly ones for poor families with many children, is still acute. Also,

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

NUMBERS OF DWELLINGS  
(One house represents one million dwellings)



## SHORTAGE

FOR EVERY 100 DWELLINGS  
THERE WERE

IN 1910 IN 1936  
THE FOLLOWING SURPLUS FAMILIES

IN

~~in~~ SWEDEN

~~in~~ HOLLAND

~~in~~ GERMANY

~~in~~ FRANCE

~~in~~ GREAT BRITAIN

A pair represents a family

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

especially in Great Britain, many unhealthy or worn-out dwellings need replacing by good ones at equally low rents. Efforts cannot therefore be relaxed, but policies must be given a new twist, if the needs of the people are to be met.

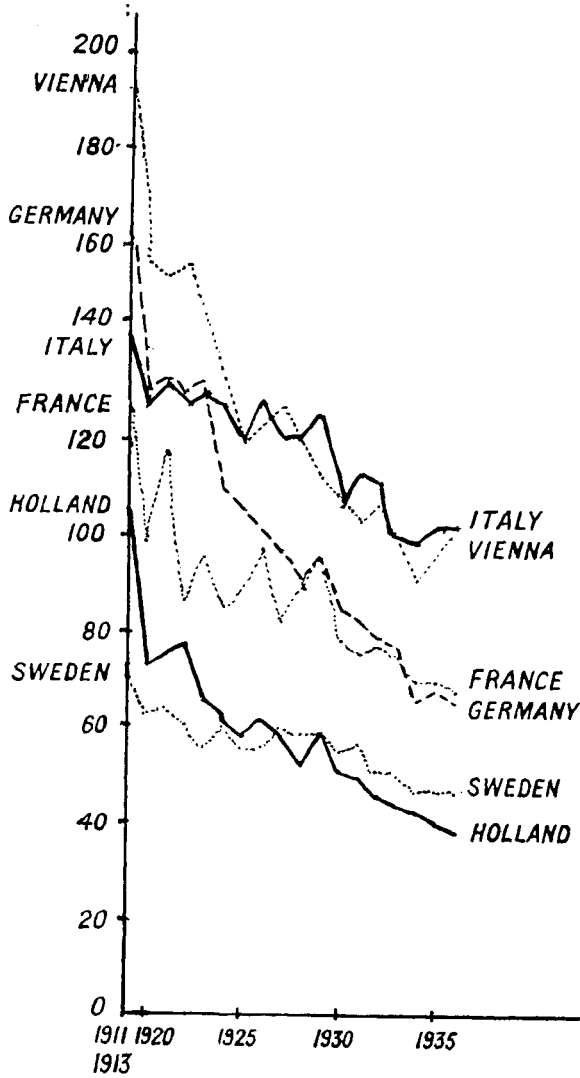
It may of course be assumed that housing accommodation can theoretically be increased indefinitely, according to the needs of the population, but on the other hand, it must be remembered that land is a constant, and that a certain proportion must be preserved in each country for agriculture. It is therefore interesting to note that the density in 1935 of the five most populous countries in Europe was as follows:

	<i>Number of Persons</i>	
	<i>per square kilometre</i>	<i>per square mile</i>
England and Wales .. .. .	269	697
Belgium .. .. .	268	694
Holland .. .. .	249	645
Germany .. .. .	140	363
Italy .. .. .	139	362

a curious implication being that, of these five, the two who make most fuss about lack of space have most, and that of the three most overcrowded countries, apparently Holland alone realizes that her countryside can only be preserved by the careful planning and control of urban areas.

From the point of view of increasing populations, the position is of course improving, because the fantastically high rate of reproduction during the nineteenth century is decreasing to more reasonable proportions. In France, for instance, with a population practically stationary in numbers over some fifty years, the birth-rate has decreased proportionately less than that of any other country, and she seems to have reached stability. In Sweden the birth-rate has decreased too rapidly and is causing alarm. The housing-bonus and rent-rebates given to encourage large families both in France

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



*Infant Mortality (under 1 year) per 1,000 live births*

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

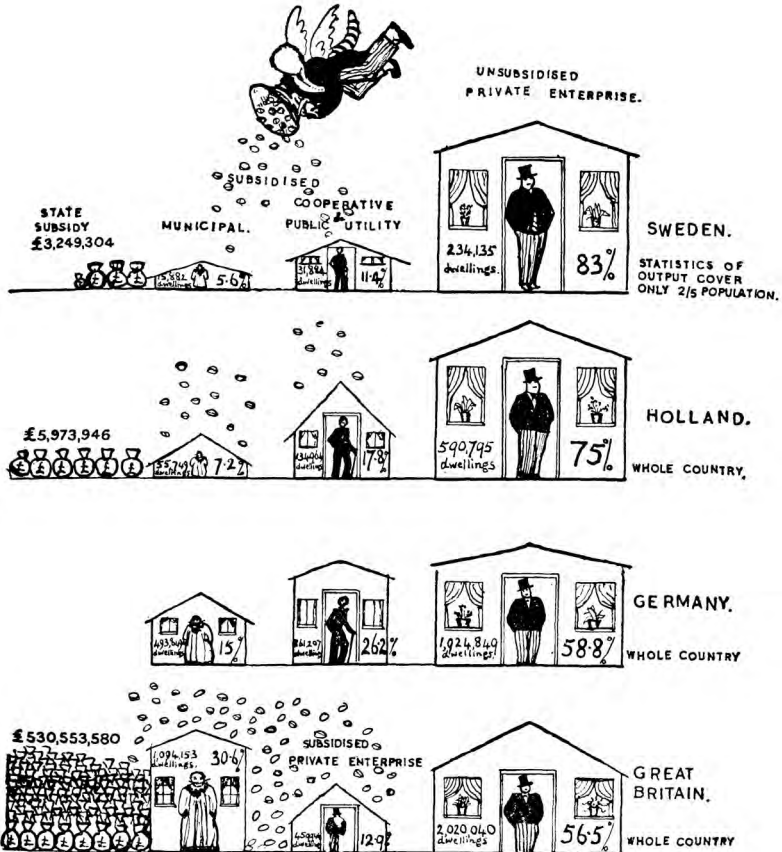
and Sweden are therefore understandable because these countries quite rightly wish to maintain their populations at the present level. This small fixed annual demand might make of France a model country from the housing standpoint, but one can understand that the pressure from the people themselves being less acute than in other rapidly expanding countries, there is less incentive for the Government to act. The attitude of the French is quite different from that of the vigorous inhabitants of Sweden which is indeed becoming in many respects a model country.

On the other hand, the campaign of the German, Italian and British Governments to increase the birth-rate will, if successful, worsen their problem; and although such increasing populations *may* possibly be admirable from other points of view, it is arguable that the general conditions of life should first be made more tolerable and the infantile death-rate reduced, and that populations should be stabilized below the peak number which was reached in a century's artificial industrial expansion. (See diagram, page 23.)

As far as the lag between demand and supply is concerned, then, Britain has not much to learn. Can anything be learnt in other respects? Let us consider which nation has got the best value for the money it has spent on housing.

The diagram opposite is revealing. In every country the greater part of the new housing work has been carried out by private enterprise, without public funds. Financial help from Governments has been mainly in the form of loans at low rates of interest, or help with land, or exemption from taxation. Great Britain has in fact spent far more per dwelling than has any other country. And while it is true that the British problem of large industrial slum towns was greater than that of any other nation, the policy of granting a direct subsidy for land and buildings has been surprisingly extravagant. It can be justified only if these expensive new British homes surpass those of

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



1919 to 1936

BUILDING AGENCIES AND SUBSIDIES

*Note.*—State subsidies only have been shown. In Sweden (financial figures relate to the whole country) another £2 millions were granted by the municipalities. In Great Britain the National contribution has been calculated by taking the sums actually spent, and reckoning an average annual expenditure (promised on the dwellings already put up) of £14 millions for the next 20 years—an admitted underestimate. Municipal subsidies are an additional burden but are unknown.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

every other nation, incorporate every requisite for happy and healthy lives, and combine to form new areas which will wipe out the ugly heritage of the old industrial slums.

On analysis this is, however, not so. The expenditure has been chiefly on land and materials, which bulk larger than in any other official housing costs but France. And it is with French housing policy that our own is most closely analogous, not in direct finance so much as in the compensation of owners of land occupied by slums,\* our rather touching reliance on the salutary effects of free competition to lower prices, and our belief in the ultimate competence of unregulated private enterprise to solve the housing problem. In this process a home intended for families with low incomes and built to a comparatively low standard of quality and accommodation, too often costs eventually as much as a middle-class dwelling and, even with the heavy subsidy, is let at a rent which is considerably higher than an artisan family can easily afford. And apart from a few exceptional areas, such as the Department of the Seine in France and the two garden cities in England, neither country has succeeded in effectively controlling the speculative forces they ultimately let loose with such an infinity of trouble and expense, because neither country required its housing to conform to intelligent plans formulated for the development of new and worn-out areas.

Private enterprise has its place in the low-cost building programme (a big profit on the sale of a small number of articles is often less in the long run than a small but quick turnover on a large number, as Ford, Woolworth and any of the popular multiple stores have successfully proved), but it is a place that must be very carefully controlled, and if necessary subordinated to serve the public good. The wholehearted control by the Viennese municipality over every

\* The amount of subsidy which may be claimed depends in Britain on the price paid for the land which is to be used for rehousing. There is, therefore, a direct incentive for the building authority to pay more than he needs, because he will thereby qualify for a higher rate of subsidy.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

aspect of housing practice—standardization of plans, employment of direct labour, rationalization of the building industry, purchase of cheap land, and funds from income on which no interest charges had to be added to costs and so to rents—was without doubt more effective as a method of organizing the output of satisfactory low-rented housing.

In fact, taken in its broadest aspect, the writer has little doubt that the Viennese policy not only contributed most to human happiness, but was most closely and intelligently adapted to the particular problems it had to solve. It was, for instance, first recognized in Vienna that shelter is not enough, that human beings need companionship and recreation, need beauty in environment, need the help that can be given to parents still in slums by taking their children into nursery schools. It was there that education in responsibility was given to the tenants through their "Estate Committees," there that allotments were given to starving families within the borders of the city, there too that smallholdings were first tried with expert technical tuition and with invaluable machinery for co-operative marketing. All this imaginative help to a poverty-stricken people was given at a cost which was so carefully watched at every point that prices were constantly lowered as the programme expanded. Profiteering was permitted neither in land, nor in building materials, nor in money, and though these new estates are only indifferently good in architecture and planning, and though the equipment is extremely simple, by putting first things first, Viennese housing may still be claimed as the greatest housing achievement of the century.

More interesting to England than Vienna is perhaps the Swedish financial policy. It is more flexible, more suited to a prosperous, free and vigorous people. For in Sweden where cheap money is available through a semi-State co-operative bank, the people band themselves together in co-operative societies, and themselves commission the

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

dwellings they wish to live in. The social stability created by financing a great national need with the co-operation of the tenants themselves, and the regularization of output obtained by relying on effective demand from the prospective owners, has been masterly. Though comparable with the British building society movement, it is superior to it, in that the Swedish co-operative housing societies, being themselves responsible for building as well as financing the dwellings, have much greater control over the quality of the workmanship, and the dwellings are not only built and equipped to the tenants' satisfaction, but the expenditure on maintenance is carefully watched by the tenants themselves. Another point of superiority, though this is dealt with later, is that the educated control exercised over all siting and town-planning matters by the Swedish housing and town-planning officials prevents any development which is not in the interest of the towns as a whole. It is odd that Britain, home of the co-operative movement, has done so little to develop this most civilized, self-reliant and admirable way of housing.

Have the right vision and the right action will follow. As this is true of the city of Vienna with its sweeping imaginative grasp both of the need and its satisfaction, so is it true of those countries which had to deal with less acute personal problems, and were able to require each town to conform to carefully prepared local plans in all housing and redevelopment work. Sweden, Holland, Italy and Germany by these means lessened the risks of anti-social speculation in land, prevented much of the thoughtless vandalism which shocks visitors to every British city to-day, and ensured that the best use was made of urban land.

Look at the new estates which have been built in these Swedish, Dutch and German towns. Look at the renewed beauty of Italian cities. Look at the new satellite towns round Paris. It does not much matter who was responsible for the actual building—municipality,

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

co-operative, public utility society or private enterprise. Transcending the agency the unifying factor was the quality of the directing plan and the intelligence of the control; for wherever there is informed control, wherever there really is a plan, the finest and most intelligent work is being done. It is in this respect that Britain can perhaps learn most. Here certainly the inferiority of British to Continental housing is most apparent.

Take countries such as Sweden, with their initiative, courage and resource; with a supple financial policy, severe town-planning, civic ownership of large tracts of land and the priceless possession of a people with universal free education (therefore comparatively classless), and with only slight income variations between rich and poor. None of these advantages was a gift from heaven, they had all to be gained by thought, hard work and common sense. The Italian stimulation of local interest in local plans too is admirable because the citizens themselves become keenly interested in their surroundings, alive not only to the possibilities of civic development and improvement, but to historic and aesthetic values. They realize that although the housing problem is national, solutions must be local.

Two things are essential—really informed and sensitive official standards of urban planning and of taste,\* and adequate protection of the community against land speculation, to ensure that the city itself benefits from any rise in land values due to its replanning policy, and that “development” is not merely short-sighted exploitation.

Cities, whether ugly or beautiful, must exist; and the larger they are the more essential it is that they should be well and interest-

\* Public opinion in Britain is more and more concerned to protect local buildings and areas, such as Bath, Newlyn, Esher Common, Selborne, Stiffkey, to mention only a few names. It is increasingly disturbed to find that the vandal is as likely to be the Government as the private speculator or the big landowner.

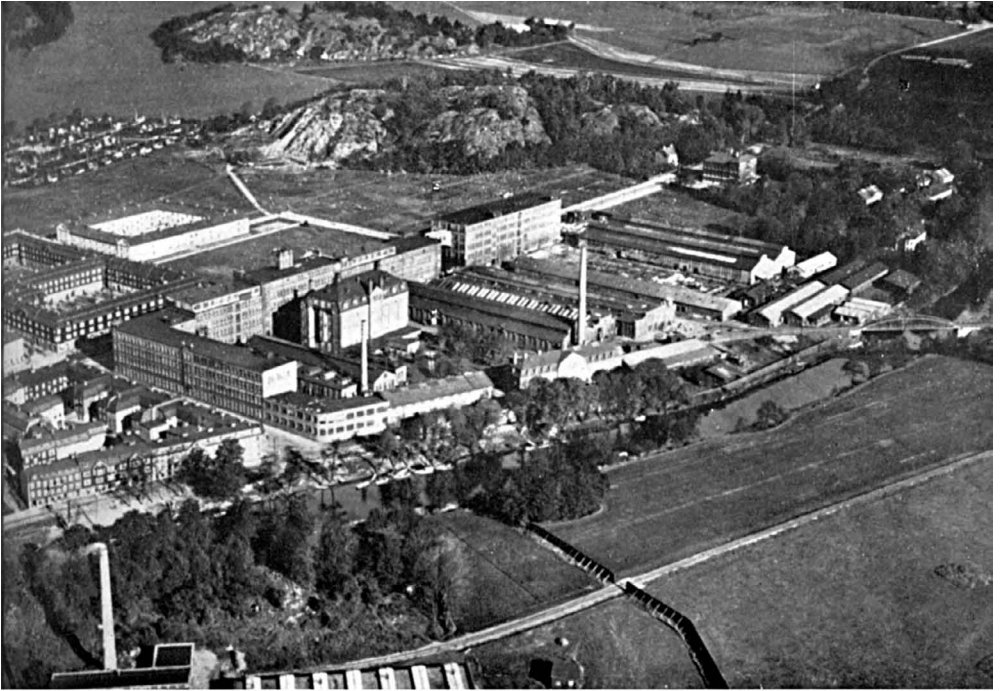
## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

ingly planned. The maximum size for efficient working is exercising the wits of many Governments to-day, and scientific analysis and experiment of great value is being undertaken in Russia, where a definite limit has been put both to the area and the ultimate population of such cities as Moscow.\* In Italy a law restricts civic rights to citizens of over three years' continuous residence; the new towns built in the reclaimed marshes are designed as civic and not as residential centres; many of the enjoyments of the town are brought into the countryside, and country dwellings are made larger and more attractive than town dwellings. In fact it is the usual policy abroad to try to improve rural housing conditions so much that their inhabitants will not be tempted to leave the country districts.

What are the chief questions before a city authority which is considering an intelligent plan of development or redevelopment? First there is the question of size. Is there enough room for the population? Then there is the problem of traffic, its present and its future needs.† The third consideration is the provision of everything required for civic government, for health and education, for marketing and cultivation. Again there is the appearance and atmosphere of the town: in appearance, perspectives and the element of surprise should be kept in mind in all development, without loss of harmony, while all classes and all ages should be able to find enjoyment. Finally there is the necessity for safeguarding the citizen against exploitation by the landowner.

\* The last official attempt to limit the size of London was in 1592.

† Every town plan must be based on transport, since that is the national framework which links each area to its neighbour. But transport should not be considered in the spirit of the British Ministry, whose motto is, "It is better to travel than arrive" and "The devil take the hindmost," but rather in the wiser attitude which subordinates mechanics to life and enjoyment; which considers that it is more important to make a town fit to live in than easy to race through. The aim should be how few and not how many roads are needed in such a small country as Britain.



*The factory of the largest existing manufacturer of ball and roller bearings, a co-operative enterprise. There is no smoke, or disfigurement of the countryside, the adjacent towns and villages are lovely*  
SWEDEN

PLATE 29

*Sheffield, "taken on a spring day when the smoke had been partially cleared away by wind and a light fall of snow"*





*Hanover uses the banks of the river for swimming pools and restaurants. English rivers should be used for healthy recreation in the middle of our towns*

PLATE 30

*Hamburg. A port comparable with Liverpool and Southampton. The beauty of this town disproves the assumption that industry and ugliness are inseparable*



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

What kind of towns are being made abroad under such planning and development schemes? What kind of life do the citizens expect and get? What are naturally included as components of urban Continental life?

In considering this question, the tradition and habits of England and Continental countries must not be lost sight of because they have had a profound influence on the form of cities. Centuries of tenement life have forced the Continental citizen to make his social life outside and not inside the home. Cafés, restaurants, fun-fairs, playgrounds and parks have long been thought essential in every town, a necessary compensation for the lack of privacy, of home-life and home-entertaining which has been possible to the humblest English cottager. In French towns it is estimated that 40 per cent of all meals are eaten in restaurants; this would be true over most of Europe but certainly untrue of England. And because home-grown garden produce was an impossibility in tenement cities, street markets were commonly provided where the peasant-proprietors from the surrounding countryside could sell their fresh produce, while at the same time many of the tenement dwellers in the smaller towns had allotments on the outskirts.

It is this English cottage and garden tradition which has given life so different a twist from that abroad. Our urban dwellers needed very little "compensation" before industrialization. The blind industrialists of the north did not see, when they built their factory towns, that they were altering the whole balance of English life and living tradition.\*

\* Even in England to-day the only "amenity" which is generally replaced in a redevelopment area is neither the garden, the tool-shed, nor space for pets, but the public-house. Traffic is the first consideration in re-planning, industry the second, humanity only third—and even then divided into zones according to social status. Between 1919 and 1936 no fewer than four hundred thousand allotment holders were dispossessed of their land, mainly for building purposes.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

For the dearth of little private gardens has meant in practice that most Continental cities are well supplied with public gardens.\* Compare Manchester, Wigan, Stoke, Birmingham or any of our industrial towns with the plans on pages 149, 146, 61, 193, of Vienna, Berlin, Stockholm and Rome. Observe the great wedge of park coming into and running right through the centre of Vienna by the banks of the Danube, with more woods and parks outside the inner boundary. Look at the regions of pine forest planted in great masses almost in the middle of Berlin and stretching out to the lakes on the borders; forests with pine needles underfoot which make an unspoilable carpet for walkers;† lakes to which access is free and on whose shores the city council has built lovely *and* remunerative centres where working people can exercise, play, eat, drink and laugh. Look at Stockholm, intersected by waterways studded with wooded islands to which public access is preserved; remember the sailing, the skating, the central inexpensive restaurants, the provision made everywhere for recreation, for healthy amusement and exercise for the mass of the people. We have no right to be smug, when we consider the kind of life which is available in the big British cities to people with little money. Laughter is a gift of the gods, and we have been without it too long.

The encouragement of health through exercise and entertainment, access to forests and lakes have been marked in Continental city expansion and redevelopment, and the municipalities have either themselves or through others provided the necessary buildings or facilities. Not "community centres" with their flavour of patronage

\* One of the sorriest indications of the depths to which we have sunk is the automatic universal encirclement by iron "hairpin" railings of every privet bush, every scrap of open space in modern English towns. In Continental cities the open spaces are freely open to all, and are respected. They would be here, too.

† Imagine what pleasure and health pine forests would give planted around our great industrial towns on the north-east coast and stretching, between them, to the sea.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

and "social service" which are to-day being sponsored in Great Britain; not "educational settlements" where people, exhausted after a heavy day's work, are supposed to improve their tired minds—but places for exercise, free companionship and family enjoyment. City atmosphere abroad is often easier and sweeter, less strained than here. In Britain, families cannot suitably go together to the normal public house; the kind of café provided abroad is their natural gathering-place. Why should anyone try to "do good" to citizens who happen to be below a certain income level? Is it perhaps a guilty conscience? Once we were known as "Merry England." If there *is* a crime against the poor to be expiated it is the theft of gaiety.

What kind of town do the rehoused citizens themselves want to live in? Centred round industry or humanity? Let us consider for a moment what combines to make the charm of a city, what makes some particular town linger in the mind? Its shapes, or smells, or sounds? Why is it agreeable or disagreeable? Why for instance do families from the surrounding countryside flock in hundreds into Prague or Brno on Sundays and summer evenings? Is it their new and exquisite central parks and swimming-pools, their open-air cafés, their dash and fun? Why do the French seem so comfortably at home in their towns? Is it the enchanting alleys of trees trained but not mutilated, the public gardens unguarded by a vestige of railing, the innumerable little street markets where peasants sell the fresh cheese, butter, eggs, fruit and vegetables they have brought from their farms, the inexpensive little restaurants sheltered behind a box-grown hedge? Is it because women sit comfortably knitting, sewing, gossiping on chairs on the pavements, happy family groups drink coffee or wine in the cafés which in summer overflow on to the pavements, fishermen brood over every pool of water capable of holding a minnow? Although the courtyards, pitch-black passages and steep narrow stairways lead to homes which are undoubtedly

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

both overcrowded and sanitarily deficient, there is no sense of constraint, but a general and profound air of content in these towns.

Where have we, one of the greatest nations in the world, gone wrong? What has happened to our wealthy cities to make them so hideous? For British industrial cities are in fact proverbial abroad for their excessive size, their wasted land, their lack of civic dignity and beauty and of opportunities for enjoyment. Beauty with us is too often sacrificed to utilitarian ends and financial gain. Numbers, output, is our blinding passion. Money is spent on schemes which are slums before they leave the drawing-board.

At the root of the trouble may be this—an industrial city is looked upon as a place in which everything is subordinated to money-making: only the unfortunate live there. Money is spent in it but not on it. Surely it should express the country's civilization? Possibly, too, we in Great Britain to-day are still dominated by the tradition of the men who said, "Where there's muck there's money," and proceeded with vigour and success to make both.

The real nature of the British housing problem has not even yet been recognized; the advantages England possesses over every other country have not been properly appreciated in dealing with it. For industrial towns in Europe have had to deal with intense over-development in blocks of high tenement flats; they have been compelled to loosen the texture of their cities and provide new accommodation for their people in areas outside. In England, on the contrary, the problem is how best to tighten the sprawling fabric of the towns, how to rehouse the people within existing boundaries in planned humanized communities, how to eliminate unnecessary roads, sewers and other services, how to subordinate industry to its rightful position and refuse to allow it to dominate living conditions, how to restore the people's self-respect.

In other words, it is easier to demolish and replan miles of two-

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

storey cottages interspersed with derelict yards and factory sites than it is to demolish and rebuild acres of six- and eight-storey tenement flats, solidly constructed at a hundred to the acre. But it is an infinitely more delicate and difficult task to create a new and satisfying environment for families bred for generations in the joyless murk of a British manufacturing town than it is to rehouse Continental families with their unbroken tradition of communal amusement, their comparatively smokeless skies, their countryside within easy reach of the centre of the town.

From their structure, therefore, Continental cities obviously had to form new satellite towns or suburbs in which to house their population surplus from the central tenements. In England we fortunately need consider no such drastic action, for although our individual cities are badly planned, considered as units they are not overcrowded.\*

Compare English industrial cities with the densely developed towns on the Continent, six hundred persons to the net residential acre in parts of Paris, of Berlin, of Vienna, where families are housed in high blocks of flats. It would be impossible to rehouse anything approaching the same number of persons on any of those areas with any pretence to modern standards of living. British slum areas consist mainly of jumbled cottages, disused sites, abandoned factories, intersected by unnecessary roads.

In Birmingham there are only twenty persons to the acre averaged over the whole city; in Leeds twelve; in Manchester twenty-eight.

\* London, with its rapid expansion, is a special case which should be dealt with intelligently and drastically. The construction of new factories on the periphery should be limited and not encouraged. The amorphous mass of new featureless, sprawling suburbs should be reorientated into planned communities, each with their special characteristics, each with their own provision for enjoyment and recreation. A "green belt" should be a trim affair rather than an uneasy definition of "elderly spread." Better still would be a system of "green wedges" as in Vienna and Berlin.

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In these so-called overcrowded towns, there is ample room for replanning and rebuilding within the existing city boundaries with ample space for every kind of activity. For example, Vienna, with 1,800,000 citizens, has 14 square miles built-up area to 93 square miles of woodlands, meadows, gardens, vineyards and allotments, while Manchester with only 759,000 inhabitants covers 43 square miles, under 4 square miles of which is open space. How absurd for questions of existing city density to be disregarded. How lazy to advocate decentralization and the creation of new satellite towns! Is there not a good case before redevelopment begins for examining the structure of each town and relating the new areas to the best traditions of the past, instead of indulging in the extremes of *bee-hive-building* in the centre and *chicken-coop* building on the outskirts of the town; of new estates spread over agricultural land, and of densely developed tenements for working-men and their families in central city areas?

For to advocate contraction is not to advocate the rehousing of English working-men and their families in blocks of tenement dwellings and think that is the end of the matter. That would be to ignore every lesson drawn from the Continent\* where, although flats are still the homes of the majority of working people, this congested city life has always been mitigated. Thus in Finland, Sweden and Denmark, the workers who live in central flats without a garden of their own, often own also a weekend hut on their own allotment, or on the coast, or on the borders of a lake or forest where they can go for holidays, weekends or odd summer nights. They make their own sailing-boats; they have many inexpensive

\* British experience, too. Many of the tenements built before 1914 in London, Manchester, and Scottish cities should be demolished; the dwellings are infinitely less healthy than much of the condemned cottage property, but their construction complies so adequately with the by-laws, so many families would have to be rehoused, that they remain undisturbed by slum clearance or redevelopment schemes.

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but attractive meeting-places; in most of the later housing schemes they have as a matter of course a large private balcony to each flat, while terraces are included in many estates in southern European towns. Workshops can be made out of pram-shed lockups, there is always ample additional storage space in the roof, and many ingenious personal additions are made to the home which would not be permitted in any new English tenement under "competent" management. This important amelioration of flat-life has unfortunately escaped attention in England, and the majority of the new tenement estates put up in England during the past eighteen years incorporate few of the palliatives which are recognized abroad as essential to the life of a working-man and his family. These English tenements are four, five and six storeys high, yet they rarely provide for the storage even of prams and bicycles at ground level; they rarely contain a balcony at all, and still more rarely one which is big enough for family use, for growing flowers or having out-door meals. The flats are rarely surrounded by the private gardens and allotments which are essential to the health and happiness of at least some of the men and women on each estate; they rarely contain some meeting-place or workroom in which those things can be made which it is impossible to undertake in the confined precincts of a flat. In Britain "flat-life" is interpreted at its crudest and lowest level.

But even if every advantage which is now installed abroad were incorporated in their design, are flats in fact necessary in England for rehousing ill-housed families? Consider the density figures of an English town. If high flats, with common service and common amenities were built for the childless, the unmarried, for anyone who wanted to live in that way, ample space would remain within the existing borders of the cities for traffic and industry and for rehousing the workers and their families in cottages with small gardens, with allotments, with playing-fields, restaurants and all the requirements of a civilized community. This does not mean, of

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course, that the housing would sprawl at twelve cold and draughty, detached or semi-detached cottages to the acre, in estates banished to the periphery of the town, far from friends and work. Why not cut out the romantic sentimentalism, the pseudo-refinement of the early twentieth century as resolutely as the materialistic wastefulness of the nineteenth? Why not return for inspiration to the traditional English squares and terrace cottages with small gardens, built during the early nineteenth century at thirty and forty to the acre in the centre of the town? Holland still builds in this way with great success, Sweden and Germany are both experimenting in this type of urban development. Every European country looks at the old parts of Bermondsey, of Chelsea, of Cheltenham, with admiration and envy. On the Continent, even though the needs of family life have been respected in many of the pre-War and most of the post-War schemes, the manual worker hankers for a cottage of his own as stubbornly as many an English slum-dweller clings to his central worn-out cottage in preference to the sanitary efficiency of a new tenement flat or a distant cottage estate.

The present change-over in English policy from the one-family house to tenement development is interesting, coinciding as it does with a change-over on the Continent from tenement to cottage estates! Neither has learnt as much from the traditional mistakes of the other as one would have expected. Many of our flats are barracks, just as many of their cottages are chicken-coops. But England's education is the more urgent, because it will be much easier to demolish, replan and rebuild contemporary mistakes in open cottage development than it will be to thin-out densely populated city tenement areas, as Europe is finding to its cost to-day.

Another lesson, very obvious to the traveller abroad, is the weakness in practice of the so-called 'garden-city' type of development. Whether these estates are outside Salzburg, Zurich,

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Amsterdam, Prague or London, the phrase is interpreted as an incitement to individualism in its rashest and least attractive form, although it is only fair to say that, however scattered these estates are abroad, they do include most income levels, most occupations. But in England we are caste-ridden to an extent undreamed of elsewhere; the classes are sorted out by our traditions and educational system according to income and occupation; increasingly they are being segregated in the new areas developed under the so-called "Town Planning" Act, while the Housing Acts perpetuate the cleavage. Instead of the mixed development usual in England until mid-Victorian days, where the difference between expensive and inexpensive dwellings was one of size and not of planning, pleasantness or locality, we now have "zoning," in which whole regions are allocated to be developed at one house to the acre, or four houses, or twelve houses—a deplorable system which inevitably divides families according to their incomes. This is not only anti-social, but also extremely dull, for every community should contain within itself as many occupations and interests as possible, including the semi-agricultural element which comes from retaining smallholdings and allotments within or near the city. In the opinion of the writer the equality of opportunity, the real democracy in Scandinavian countries is more likely to produce lovely cities, greater diversity of life, more happiness, more beautiful products and greater prosperity than this class-division we are pursuing in Great Britain.

In another particular, that of the preservation and protection of historic or lovely things, we might also learn much from the Continent. English life is (perhaps "was" would be truer) particularly rich in the records of many generations, domestic life was more varied, beauty quieter but no less real than that abroad. Yet no effort is made to stop the destruction and redevelopment by municipalities and private individuals alike of irreplaceable treasures,



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in the pretence that something better is being substituted. What other nation would allow the destruction for public "improvement" or private profit of Whitehall Court, of Abingdon Street, of Berkeley Square, of the Adelphi and Norfolk House, to mention only a few recent cases in London? Which nation other than England would have built a Wickham, a Slough, a Hatfield, not only on rich agricultural land, but actually under that mockery the Town and Country Planning Act?

And too often in the new British housing areas it is as though a workshop were equipped with medieval tools instead of the most efficient available machinery. The time-and-motion studies which have often been made into the wasteful effects of a badly planned kitchen might well be translated into the running of a town where traffic, houses, workplaces, schools, shops and playgrounds are not in the right relation to each other. We might well think more experimentally and scientifically about municipal house-keeping, and particularly co-ordinate the various departments—housing, town-planning, sanitary services, transport and so on—in which civic enterprise is often too strictly canalized.

In the new towns round Paris the opportunity of building on a big scale has been seized to eliminate the wasteful insanitary old ways of collecting and destroying refuse, the efficient new method being linked with the system of heating the public laundries or swimming baths. The enormous economy and increased efficiency consequent on such an installation is self-evident. Have we in Britain, with our 3,500,000 new houses built since 1918, our £530,000,000 spent on "housing" out of national funds, one single scheme of sanitation which can compare with, say, Chatenay-Malabry in efficiency, economy and scientific enterprise?\*

\* Leeds is experimenting with this installation, which will cost £23 per flat capital expenditure, but will be maintained free of charge by the installing company for thirty years. The progress of the experiment should be sympathetically watched.

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barges or even destructors serving our new estates seem in comparison archaic and expensive contrivances.

In Czechoslovakia the West Moravian Electricity Works constructed a new plant in Brno for heating by steam and electricity at a distance, which did away with no less than sixty-seven factory chimneys. This plant with a single chimney 328 feet (100 metres) high, consumes the coal entirely and the waste gases are neither injurious to health nor do they affect the appearance of the town. Have we even begun to tackle the smoke problem, with its blighting effect on human beings, animals and plants? How many of our new dwellings are smokeless?

In Stockholm, it will be remembered, the owners of buildings are required to keep the façades fresh and attractive; the effect is dazzling, stimulating, happy. If smoke were once abolished, we could do the same thing here.

Before leaving the question of the town as a whole it would be as well to consider briefly the provision of roads. Roads forty feet wide through estates built in two-storeyed dwellings, where the occupants are visited at most by the baker or the milkman and where motor-bicycles are the most luxurious forms of private transport, would be considered wasteful both by the taxpayers and the authorities of Continental towns. Such wide roads would also be considered unfair temptations to lorries and motor drivers, inviting them to detour through quiet residential areas from the streets meant for heavy traffic. Holland and Germany have paid particular attention to the importance of having a few good main roads, capable of taking a heavy load of traffic; adequate but minimum roads where traffic is slight; paths alone where they serve the purpose. Quite narrow streets where only low buildings are erected, saves in construction and upkeep, lighting and policing, and wastes less land. The proportion of road width to building height is of prime

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importance, and the square section (forty-five degrees angle of light) of newer London streets has done much to ruin their appearance. The traditional narrowing and turning of the entrances into English towns provide a natural safeguard against fast through traffic, and their removal by a national or local desire for modernization is often to be regretted. Shopping is generally thought on the Continent to be best served by narrow streets, as women hesitate to cross a wide traffic street and, a fact which has recently been very much neglected in Great Britain but is nevertheless extremely important, the "promenade street," where traffic is not allowed, should be restored to us. The restoration of real "street" architecture, one of the fundamental pleasures of urban life, would incidentally be another advantage likely to result from a break-away from "twelve to the acre" both in urban and rural development.

The modification of old housing standards abroad has led to great changes in the appearance of the industrial suburbs, which are now enlivened and softened by trees and glimpses of gardens and flowers, instead of tarmac and concrete. Buildings are, of course, sited for shade in the south of Europe by means of courtyards, and for sun in the north by parallel blocks carefully orientated to catch the sun and avoid the prevailing winds. Not only is it generally possible to arrange for bedrooms to face east and for living-rooms and balconies to face west so that the afternoon sun can be enjoyed in the family's leisure, but a better, because more varied, use can be made of the strips of open ground separating the buildings. Several small public gardens are infinitely better than one large one: adults may appropriate one section, boys another, and so on, and if each section is equipped differently it will be found that the age-groups will instinctively separate and play more happily than if they were herded together. For, in the writer's experience, it is definitely harmful for many children of varying ages and tastes

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to be obliged to share the same playground. When that "playground" is merely an expanse of tarmac or concrete the damage to the children is almost criminal. All sensibility must be stifled in the ugly atmosphere of such barrack yards, the crudest type of school playground. Space should not be planned for only one age-group (from 7 to 14 years old) of the inhabitants, though no other age could perhaps be induced to be so impervious to their surroundings, so eager for exercise, that they would accept this travesty of a playground. The area round tenements should be designed as part of the home atmosphere; it should be domestic, suitable first for the use and pleasure of the women, young children and old people. Railed-off lawns alternating with concrete "playgrounds" are poor substitutes to offer the man, his wife and young children who have come from a cottage, worn-out but with a garden in which they were able to make and mend, keep pets and grow vegetables and flowers. Even when the family comes from less agreeable surroundings it is no more excusable; for the justification of "slum clearance" as of all "redevelopment" is that the new dwellings shall be in every respect better than the ones they displace. If every flat had a sunny private balcony, big enough to have meals on in summer, it would only be necessary to provide allotments for a proportion of the tenants, leaving most of the garden for general enjoyment.

In cottage development, too, most families only want a small private garden, but with additional specially laid-out allotment areas for those who want them, as well as common space for rest and recreation for all ages in the community.

In both kinds of development, flats and cottages (which the writer would like to see combined in every urban scheme), meeting- and games-rooms, swimming pools, restaurants and shops, theatres and cinemas are essential as a focus of common interests, to encourage companionship and direct the varied talents of the neighbourhood into social instead of anti-social channels.

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Finally, the dwellings themselves. What kind of homes have been built? Do the people like them? Can they afford to live in them? Are the new estates as a whole functionally and economically successful?

Statistics show that, on the whole, families throughout Europe pay very much the same proportion of their incomes on rent, heat, light and other essentials as they did before the War. But figures are deceptive for, rents being based on floor area, families are compelled to take the home that they can afford and not the one they would like to have, or that they actually require. In every country the paradox arises of the smallest because the cheapest dwellings being inhabited by the largest families, because they have least money to spare for rent.

Only in Great Britain and Holland is the desirability officially recognized of providing a living-room, with separate bedrooms for parents, boys and girls; only in the new towns round Paris do regulations require the size of living-rooms to be in proportion to the number of bedrooms in the dwelling. With the possible exception of Italy, where dwellings are often planned to include lodgers (generally grandparents), there is little doubt that the floor area of new dwellings is below that normally built in 1900. This curtailment of space is greatly to be deplored since the possibility of spacious, quiet and comfortable family life is made more difficult.

Equipment which is both economical and efficient is as important as a low rent. The internal planning, the quality and design of equipment in the home has greatly improved in recent years, particularly in Scandinavian countries which are rapidly reaching an almost American standard of plumbing and kitchen arrangement. Central heating too in those countries is now looked on as a necessity rather than a luxury, which is doubtless true in northern winters. In Germany, however, where central heating was installed wherever possible in the immediately post-War schemes, it was found that the

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weekly running cost was often too severe a drain on the family income, and that the traditional tiled stoves installed in each dwelling were equally efficient at half the cost.

The English housewife would note with envy the absence abroad of the black-leaded stove which here is considered so essential to her happiness. Stoves enamelled or tiled in charming colours replace them. Electricity for cooking is extremely rare, even in countries such as Sweden and Switzerland where the cost of current is negligible. Gas is the usual cooking fuel, or stoves which will burn gas in summer and coke and wood in winter, while the poorest, in the south of Europe, use wood and charcoal.

The installation of central laundries and drying-rooms in tenement estates was a fashion in Europe which is being abandoned in more modern schemes in favour of better equipment in each individual home, aided by an increasingly cheap and efficient commercial laundry service. This tendency is warmly welcomed, for working-women find it difficult to leave their cooking, cleaning, mending and shopping at stipulated hours even if they can put their baby meanwhile in a crèche or nursery school. Continental women, it is interesting to remember, with cleaner air and better supplies of linen, rarely use the laundry more often than once a month, so that an individual arrangement is even more labour-saving for British women with their weekly washday.

The installation of lifts in low-rented Continental dwellings is also a decreasing problem, because the new blocks of family flats are rarely more than four floors high, except in France and Sweden where (possibly because families and therefore dwellings are smaller) more money is available for luxuries, and experiments have been made in interesting tower blocks with adequate lift services.

Both the Swedish co-operative societies and the German public utility societies have carried on energetic and successful propaganda among their tenants on the importance of light and light surfaces, the

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advantages of a return to the greater simplicity in furnishing and in living which is advocated to-day. Such propaganda has of course been easiest in Scandinavian countries, because there standardization and mass-production of really well-designed goods is possible since most of the citizens can afford to buy them. The products of the co-operative societies lead, instead of follow, public taste.

T o s u m u p , Britain has been jockeyed by the force of public opinion into using her wealth to stimulate the building of a vast quantity of new small dwellings, of which few can compare for quality with the output of any other European nation. Except when they are being thought of and extolled as a numerical record, Englishmen themselves deplore the ribbon-rash, the ruined country, the shoddy ugly dwellings which have sprung up to meet the urgent needs of the people; hundreds of thousands of the poorest citizens have been segregated in lonely estates without adequate shops, without enjoyment, without sufficient anticipation of the help which they, as ex-slum dwellers, so urgently need.

Much of the national income must now be devoted to defence; it is unlikely that official expenditure on housing can continue on the same reckless scale. The opportunity has come to revise housing policy, to bring it into line with the hard facts of the English problem as well as the needs of the people, to survey and take full advantage of our resources. In short, to spend brains instead of money. In that task the Government needs the collaboration of the people themselves, of existing societies and of experts, not merely in finance, or building or surveying, but in the different arts and resources of civilized living.

Look at our wastage of national resources during the past century, the fouling of industrial towns, the flight of wealthy families to new residential areas outside the towns, the destruction for the poor of healthy enjoyment in urban life. Although this anti-social trend has



*In Copenhagen the people live out-of-doors as much as they can. Their climate is no better than ours*

PLATE 31

*The garden area is laid out for the pleasure and use of all. The kindergarden is for young children in the daytime, older children in the evening and weekends*







*The river bank in the middle of Frankfort is laid out with three swimming pools alternating with roller-skating rinks surrounded by restaurants and snack-bars. Prices are low and the place is crowded, winter and summer*

PLATE 32

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

been recognized, the remedy proposed has been either to abandon existing towns and build new "garden cities" on agricultural land, or to house the workers on new estates on the periphery of cities at an average density of twelve houses to the acre in urban and eight in rural areas!

A refusal to face facts is inherent in both these solutions, advocated by garden-city enthusiasts, which have set the fashion for all speculative builders. But these solutions strike at the heart of compact, orderly, intellectually stimulating urban life, sacrificing as they do the positive gains of companionship to the negative ones of segregation, isolation and loneliness. And in addition, with the probability of a decreasing population, it is in the writer's opinion a real waste of public money to trail a vast fringe of new houses over the countryside, to create workers' suburbs which may be unoccupied in twenty years' time while the core of the town stands empty, rotting.

There is no doubt about it. The mass of evidence shows that the British housing problem has been cruelly over-simplified. Good housing is not the absence of slums any more than good health is just the absence of disease. Slum clearance in Britain is not merely a question of substituting a clean box for a dirty one. It is not a problem which can be solved by better plumbing.

There is an obvious danger in advocating a detailed policy for any problem as complicated as housing, but it would be cowardly to conclude without indicating which of the experiences of other countries might, in the writer's view, be worth examining by our own Government and incorporating, with suitable amendments, into British policy.

The quality of Government direction should be improved. First-rate schemes will only be inspired by first-rate people, prepared to analyse the problem, and deal with facts instead of theories. People who will make themselves conversant with every modern invention

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and its applicability to modern urban life, who will inspire a vigorous campaign among citizens and municipalities, informing, helping, stimulating them to recreate civic life at the same time as they demolish their slums.

Every town, even every rural area, should be required to think out and submit within a stipulated period its own scheme for development or redevelopment. This method has proved successful in Sweden, Holland\* and Italy. Invaluable help could be given by people particularly interested in the area—artists, archaeologists, men's and women's institutes, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, the National Trust, societies formed to protect local beauty. These should determine what to protect, repair or demolish. The proposed changes should be freely shown to and discussed with the citizens themselves. The existing density and disposition of the population, of industry and commerce, of civic offices, of places for education, health and enjoyment should be carefully recorded. Traffic and transport should, of course, be kept in mind, but in its relation to other human needs. In a small and congested country like Britain the least and not the greatest amount of land should be devoted to roads. Towns are to live in and not to rush through, and historic buildings should not be destroyed for the convenience of persons who have neither associations, interest nor concern with them, nor should unnecessary encroachment on commons or common land be permitted for the benefit of tourists or commerce. Better a few good arterial roads than a network of expanded by-ways.

A small commission consisting of, say, an economist, an engineer, an architect, a town-planner, a doctor, a sociologist, an artist and an administrator might travel round the country, as was done in Sweden, discussing local problems with local people, advising both the officials and the general public. This would give both the Minister of Health and the local authorities the advantage of fresh minds

\* Particularly in requiring builders to contribute to the cost of new open spaces, avenues, and parks. See page 114.

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trained to consider different aspects of life. The needs of Glasgow, Wigan, Durham and Newlyn are too different to be met by the application of the same official standards.

Meanwhile, too, the Government would need to consider the whole question of land acquisition and compensation which is obstructing many schemes for the central replanning of slum areas. Derelict factories for example encumber central land. The owners, who may have made fortunes from them, do not clear up before clearing out. They require too high a price from the impoverished and often unemployed citizens who have been left behind. In many cases, particularly in the distressed areas, the gift of that land to the town would be a graceful act.

The Government would need to revise its attitude to density and adopt a more reasonable and traditional view of urban planning and development. Thus family cottages with small gardens should be permitted in central areas at thirty or forty to the acre, while blocks of flats to any height might be built for the unmarried or childless. All income levels should live within a town, so zoning snobberies should be abolished, not only for dwellings but for those industries too where their processes are clean and quiet. This would encourage a welcome return to "street architecture" in Great Britain. The formal effect of all proposals could well be tried out by means of scale models as in Sweden; such care would add greatly to the probability of fine redevelopment, while the enthusiastic help which would be available from architectural schools throughout the country would incidentally train the students in civic design.

Official guidance would be needed in planning for all the needs of a civilized community. It is perhaps too little realized how great are the possibilities of municipal initiative in schemes affecting the pleasure as well as the education and shelter of the citizens.\* Children,

\* The writer would not recommend such arid "improvements" as the recent reconstruction of the lovely old market-place of Nottingham, formerly the hub of the city, where a bleak lawn and flower-beds, with

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young people and adults will all spend something on pleasure. If the city authority provided facilities, whether run by itself or outsiders, the income could help to relieve the ratepayers. There is no reason why the ratepayers should bear all the unremunerative part of new housing work while the profits go to the cinema owner or the brewer.

Nor should these two provide the only recreation. More could be done for simple enjoyment in most of our cities. Such open spaces as the Lea valley for instance could be made recreation grounds instead of rubbish dumps. The Forestry Commission might plant there some of their conifers and be praised for it. The climate of London is no worse than that of Paris, that of most of England is as pleasant as Copenhagen, yet we make no serious attempt, as they do, to have open-air cafés in the parks or the streets, open-air swimming-pools and stadiums. Where land is to be reserved for allotments and market gardens, its choice should be based primarily on the nature of the soil.\* And even though work there were that of individual tenants, collective marketing might be encouraged and assisted, as in Vienna.

Another matter, already mentioned, is smoke abatement. The general use of crude coal should be prohibited by law in favour of smokeless fuel, after a period of, say, five years. Such action would conserve national resources in coal by extracting the various by-products from the entire output, and at the same time the national waste of health and wealth through the effects of smoke would be eliminated. The development of cheap hydro-electric power in suitable parts of the country might well be extended.

It must be admitted that expenditure on improving the delights deserted concrete paths and kerbs, have been substituted for the cobbled flooring and the lively vigour of the market stalls.

\* In 1936, at Bebington, in spite of a petition signed by 2,200 residents, the Urban District Council decided that allotments which had been cultivated for seventy years should be used for building land.

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of the town is seldom directly remunerative, but on the other hand, great economies can be made by improved services. Economy in road construction, scientific refuse collection and disposal and rationalized servicing for water, gas and electricity can all save money.

The regeneration of the town, however, is not enough. Too often the people who inhabit it have lost confidence in themselves, they have forgotten, through generations of slum life, how to live to the full. From the experience of Vienna and of Italy, the writer would urge that the quickest and cheapest way to teach them, to restore their self-respect, is through their young children. Beautiful but very simple nursery schools should be established immediately in every slum area; the parents should be encouraged to keep in close touch and to help in every way they can. On the long view the expense of establishment would be negligible, so much would be saved on the medical treatment now made necessary by the crippling life of the slums. The parents would be educated at the same time to move into their new environment without losing its advantages through ignorance. The writer has incidentally often been shocked by the unappetizing food in some schools in Great Britain, the careless service, the ugly surroundings and the low standard of cleanliness and behaviour expected from children having free meals.

The writer feels strongly too that dirty families should not be segregated as they are in Holland, nor should they be given new dwellings until they are able to keep them properly: well-repaired old dwellings should be let to them.

Finally, it should be remembered that thousands of the poorest families are being required to move from one or two rooms into three or four. Without the money to buy sufficient new furniture they either find second-hand and sometimes verminous stuff, or get it on hire-purchase terms which are generally a severe strain on their slender resources. The German experiment of Family Loans might well be combined here with the establishment, especially in the

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distressed areas, of new factories for cheap, strong, well-designed furniture.

All this may seem a counsel of perfection, or it may seem an unfair criticism of the good work which is being done by many municipalities and public utility societies in Great Britain, but the writer does not want to praise other countries at the expense of her own. She would like to see this country setting a new standard in housing by realistic handling of the problem, and a better return obtained for less money.

Success will be achieved only when citizens, whatever their incomes, no longer want to escape from their city at every opportunity; when once again "to live within his own family, free from interruption, contest or intrusion, to have apartments that are clean and warm, adapted to their several purposes and in every respect convenient, is the Englishman's delight"; when working men and women all over the country no longer say, "My God, we've got to move," but "Thank God, we're going to move."

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