

Rent Strike in Berlin (1932)

Abstract

Since the onset of the Great Depression poverty had steadily increased. Mass unemployment, a lack of affordable housing, and food shortages resulted in squalid living conditions, especially in the cities. In 1932, tenants of several Berlin tenement houses whose complaints about the dilapidated, hazardous condition of their apartments were continuously ignored by the authorities (while they were charged disproportionately high rents) decided to go on strike and only pay rent once their apartments had been improved. This photo shows the courtyard of one such tenement house during the rent strike. The slogan “First Food – then Rent” is painted on the wall in the background, illustrating the struggle for bare survival among the impoverished parts of society. Both Communist and National Socialist flags can be seen hanging from the windows. While the KPD supported the tenants from the beginning, it was mainly the NSDAP that eventually profited from the ongoing social hardship. After the National Socialists came to power, the rent strike ended and most Communists were arrested and deported.

Source



Source: The tenants of Köpenickerstr. 34/35 have gone on strike to protest against the excessive rents and the dilapidated condition of the building. Their slogan is “First the food, then the rent”. The strike slogan is painted on the wall of the building. Some of the tenants have hung out communist flags and some swastika flags. September 23, 1932, BA, collection of repro negatives, image 146-1970-050-13, available online on Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1970-050-13,_Berlin,_Mieterstreik.jpg

Bundesarchiv

Recommended Citation: Rent Strike in Berlin (1932), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:image-4069>> [March 16, 2026].