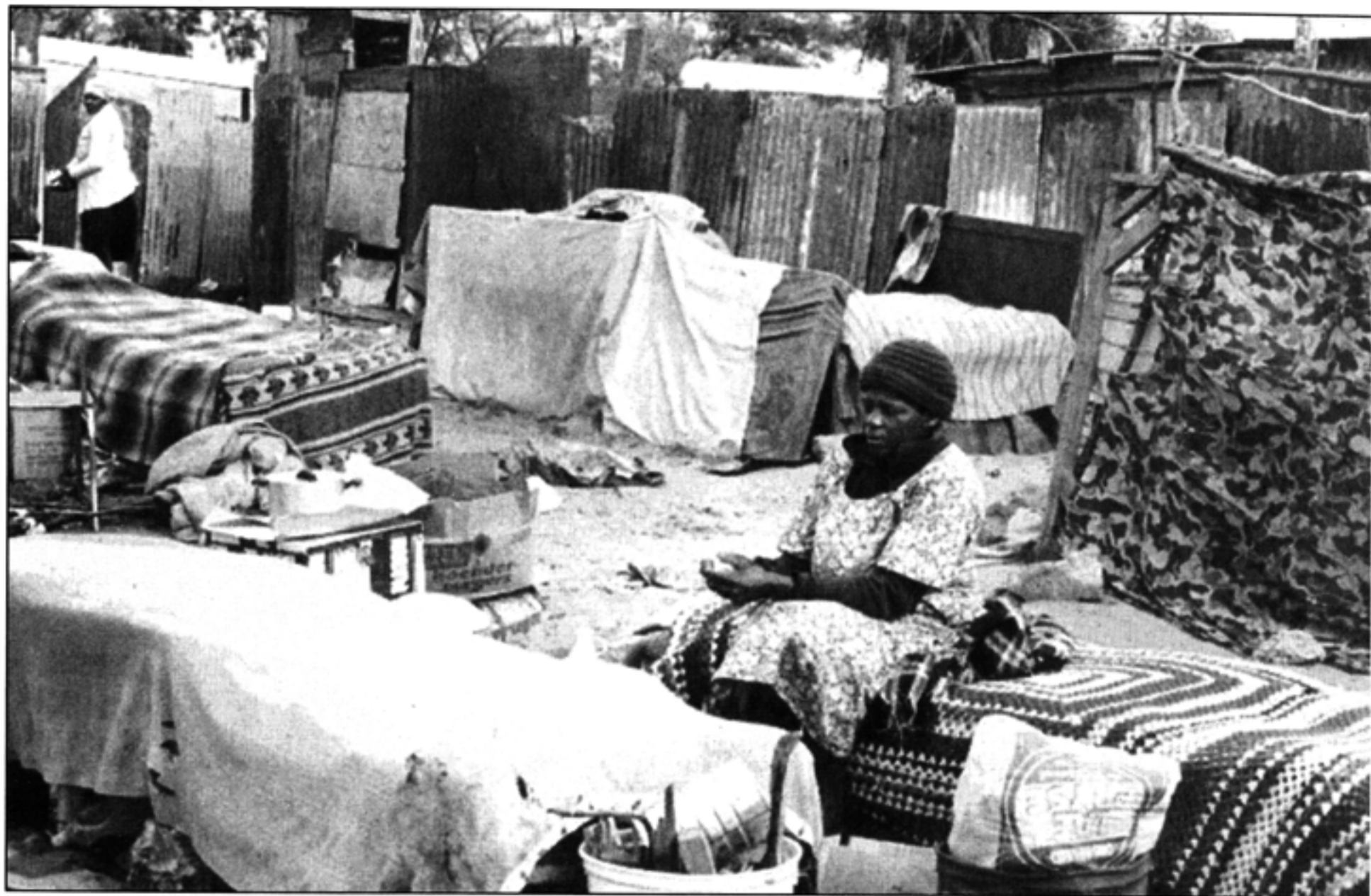


The Freedom Charter, adopted at the Congress of the People in 1955, declares: "There shall be houses, security and comfort for all." This article is the first in a series, looking at the crisis in housing prevailing today.



Shelter for all

The housing crisis is caused by government's failure to provide adequately for the needs of the black community. The accompanying box shows how government legislation concerning housing and settlement has been used to control the movement and settlement of blacks.

Changes which have been made to these laws have been forced by a combination of mass pressure, the needs of big capital and the racist ideology of those in power. As the economy moved from an agrarian-based one to one requiring more and more labour in urban areas for the manufacturing sector, the laws were changed or overlooked to

allow for that.

This meant that there was little logic and even less consistency in the policies followed. Thus for example the people of District 6 and Cato Manor had freehold rights and yet were forcibly removed from their homes.

The lack of consultation with communities and the racist ideology on which the policies were based meant that most of the policies implemented were met with intense resistance. This resistance was often forcibly crushed.

A democratic government will inherit a housing crisis of immense proportions. It is estimated that there are 7.5 million peo-

ple living in informal ("squatter") settlements. 2 237 000 housing units were required in 1990. Three and a half million housing units will be required by the year 2 000.

These are the stark figures. And what makes it even more frightening is that these figures do not include the so-called independent homelands.

The average cost per site to develop a township is R7 500. The site would consist of a plot which is 250 square meters (about the size of the average Soweto plot); have water, sewerage, pegging of the land, roads, sites for recreation, and provide ownership. This cost does not cover an elec-

tricity line or a house.

Until very recently ownership of land by black people was severely restricted. It was virtually impossible in major white metropolitan areas where the need was greatest.

The 1991 Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act has opened up ownership to blacks. But this has left ownership in the market orientated arena. This excludes all needy communities and only provides leverage for the few wealthy blacks who can afford to play the market.

Many of the wealthy have already bought houses where it has been legally possible or used the nominee system — that is buying a house in a “white area” under the name of a white person.

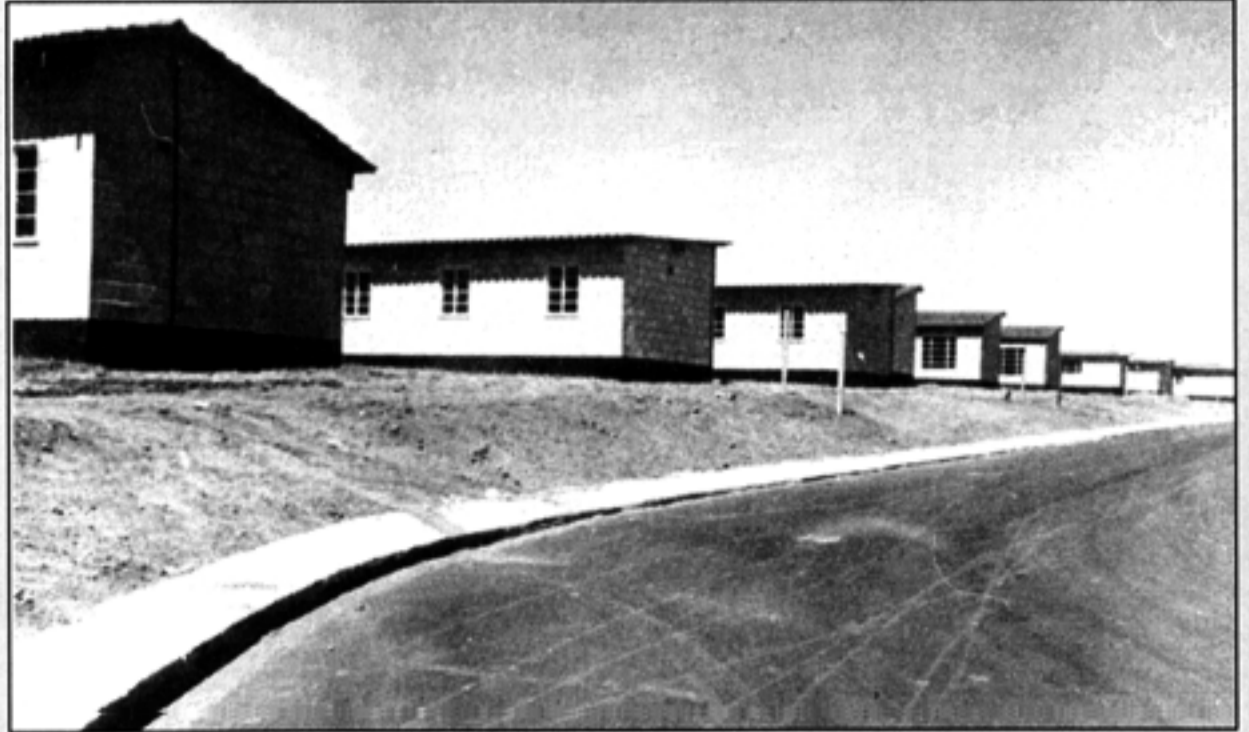
SUBSIDIES

First-time home ownership subsidies never really help the needy because they are so poor that they are unable to enter into a contract to buy a house which will allow that subsidy to be applied.

Low-cost developers have only managed to go as low as R20 000 for a house. Building societies provided the finance. However, with default in payment the house is repossessed. Even if this does not happen, most people's houses start falling apart within two years due to the cheap material used and poor workmanship.

Thus, the owner of the house has less value for money and huge debts leaving him/her poorer than when s/he decided to buy a low cost house. Yet because of the crisis most people who have the slightest belief that they can afford a low cost house will sign a contract for one.

Local authorities, provincial administrations and government continue to resist calls by communities to pass ownership of council-owned houses and land to their occupants. Township tenants argue that they have already



The causes

The following factors have contributed to the crisis:

- **rapid unplanned urbanisation.** For example during the Second World War when there was a need for semi-skilled labour more and more blacks were allowed to settle in the urban areas. They usually sub-let at exorbitant prices from those already formally housed in the cities. The “squatter movements” were forged out of this exploited sub-tenant class. The camps themselves became autonomous social and cultural units as a reaction to the housing crisis and as an attempt by Africans to exercise some control over their lives and their cost of living.
- **the notorious influx control laws.** The Urban Areas Act of 1923, which made it compulsory for African males to carry passes, laid the basis for the development of the influx control policy. The extension of the Pass Laws to women was finally enforced in 1960. The abolition of the Influx Control Act in 1986 and even the more recent scrapping of racial determination of settlement areas cannot contribute to solving the crisis for the reasons outlined in the main article.
- **natural expansion of families.**
- **apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act and forced removals generally, which destroyed communities rather than develop them and which destroyed entire sub-economies.**
- **priorities of the private sector where banks and building societies concentrated on building houses for the middle class. This was to satisfy their own profit motives.**
- **The government decision about two decades ago to deliberately stop building houses for African settlement to control influx has directly contributed to the huge backlog which is the main cause of the current crisis.** ◆

paid for the cost of the houses they live in — in some cases several times over.

The government resisted all forms of informal (“squatter”) settlement unless it fell within its broad strategy of urbanisation. It earmarked state informal settle-

ments where communities were settled without any proper township development. Apart from local councils numbering shacks for control purposes little else was done.

After many lengthy delays and bureaucratic processes a few scat-

Brief history

- 1913 **The Land Act bases ownership of land on race. African allowed seven percent of the land. In 1936 this is increased to 13 percent. The Act prevents total landlessness so that reserves may marginally support migrants families. Reserves now the only areas where Africans could lawfully acquire land. "Law, not war, was the final means of conquest."**
- 1923 **Urban Areas Act controls the influx of Africans into towns. Africans working in town now have to live in segregated urban locations.**
- 1939 **During the Second World War influx laws relaxed. Vast squatter settlements grow around the industrial cities.**
- 1947 **Sauer Report of the National Party becomes the blueprint of apartheid policy — advances long-term territorial segregation.**
- 1948 **NP comes to power on ticket of racial exclusivity at social, political and economic levels. Sets in motion legislative process:**
- **Group Areas Act as amended (1950) — segregated areas where specific race groups can live and conduct business.**
 - **Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (1951) — allows state to set up resettlement camps for "surplus" people evicted from white farms. (A 1977 amendment allows officials to demolish illegal structures.)**
 - **Section 10 of the Native Laws Amendment Act ((1952) allows local authorities to differentiate between urban dwellers and migrants — the latter being housed in single sex hostels.**
 - **The Blacks Resettlement Act (1954) provides for the removal of Africans from any area in the Johannesburg Magisterial District — enacted primarily to effect the removal of Sophiatown.**
 - **Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959): the bantustan policy!**
- 1979 **Riekert Commission: final acceptance of urban Africans. But sharp distinction between "insiders" or "settled urban Africans" with residence rights under Section 10 and "outsiders".**
- 1982 **Black Local Authorities Act, Black Communities Development Act and the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill, known as the "Koornhoof Bills", tabled.**
- 1984 **Black Communities Development Act allows land to be acquired for African settlement in urban areas by ministerial approval.**
- 1986 **Abolition of Influx Control Act grants a degree of freedom of movement to South African "citizens", but "non-citizens" including workers from "independent" bantustans actually lose rights. At the same time control is retained through a number of other Acts including the Aliens, Land, Group Areas, Slums, Illegal Squatting, and Trespass Acts. ♦**

tered water pipes were installed and chemical bucket toilets were provided at random.

When people settled on vacant pieces of land without government permission, every measure was used to forcefully remove the communities. When all else failed the area was grudgingly declared

a squatter camp in terms of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act. Water and chemical toilets were provided at random with the intention that people will be moved at some future date. The state therefore bears full responsibility for the haphazard settlement of people and for the grave

crisis that now looms.

In the coming issues of *MAY-IBUYE* we will be looking at how various agencies and organisations are addressing the housing crisis.

In the next issue we will look at the struggles for housing and the ANC policy on housing. ♦