

SHD/004/0104/20

09/06/87

UNCHS SEMINAR "SOLVING THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE G.D.R."

9 - 24 June 1987

STATEMENT BY THEMIBISILE MAJOLA AND ZAMA MVUSI ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN
NATIONAL CONGRESS

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is our proud privilege to represent the African National Congress at this Seminar on Housing, hosted by, and held, in the German Democratic Republic, a country which from the ruins of fascism has done so much to raise the living standards of all its people and has always been a staunch supporter of our struggle. On behalf of the South African people we wish to express our gratitude for this opportunity to learn from the experience, not only of the GDR, but also of the many others represented at this seminar. The ANC is fully conscious of the enormous housing problems to be tackled in our country after the defeat of Apartheid has been accomplished.

On May 6th, in what can only be described as a grand show of racism, the white population of South Africa went to the polls to reelect P.W. Botha and the Nationalist Party. Commenting on the ruling Nationalist Party victory, the President of the ANC(SA), O.R. Tambo, said: "The election results blew the whistle for the ANC to intensify the armed struggle... This is a greater challenge than before. The results are saying it is alright to have a state of emergency, the results are saying it is alright to continue with detentions, even of children." He went on to pledge that the whites-only election would be the last ever held.

For the oppressed and exploited majority of our people, Botha's victory at the polls means increased repression. It means brutal beatings at the hands of the fascist police, mass arrests, detention without trial, torture...

This is because in apartheid South Africa, unlike in any other country, the government is engaged in a massive programme of social engineering that directly, and adversely, affects the lives of all the black citizens. The apartheid ground plan pivots on tight control of black labour through restrictive legislation and the movement of vast numbers of the black population into areas designated as homelands, or 'independent states', from areas arbitrarily designated as white. The overall strategy for retaining exclusive white control in 87% of South Africa, hinges on the concentration of political, economical and military power in white hands. According to government statistics, a total of 3.5 million people have been evicted in

this way since 1960₁. 64 180 blacks were uprooted and resettled in 1986 alone₂.

In 1975, the fundamentals of the Nationalist Party policy were reiterated in Parliament when one of its members of Parliament, referring to Africans in white areas said: These people are here, as far as we are concerned, for all time, but on a casual basis; they are here because they come to work, but without land ownership rights and without political rights... These people are here on a casual basis, it does not matter for how long."₃

For communities that are 'temporary', albeit permanent, there is no need to provide family housing, no point in granting freehold tenure, no sense in administering them other than as labour camps, with a bare minimum of facilities. Indeed to administer them otherwise is to undermine the basic aim of apartheid strategy.

The consequences of this policy and practice in the field of housing, are homelessness, over-crowding and squatting. A recent statistic, states that blacks in the urban areas occupy an average floor space of 4m²₄. In locations like SOWETO, some 30km from Johannesburg, small family houses accomodate 15 to 17 people₅. Separately built are the infamous migrant labour hostels, a recent statistic numbers them at 222, in which half a million men and women are caged behind barbed wire₆. Overcrowding is the most important factor involved in the socio-economic related disease - rheumatic heart disease, the incidence of which in SOWETO is nearly 18 times greater than anywhere else in the world₇. There is a shortage of at least 365 000 homes for blacks in South Africa₈. Only 20 177 houses were built in 1984₉.

Inmense squatter communities have sprung up near most of the main urban areas eg. Winterveld, near Pretoria, where there are thought to be between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ million people₁₀. Another $\frac{1}{2}$ a million people camp outside Durban and Peitermaritzburg. As a result of constant harrassment and bulldozing of these squatter camps, people have resorted to overnight shelters made of plastic sheeting.

The shortage and inadequacy of housing for black people and its high cost have been major causes for conflict. The local Administration Boards and Community Councils, imposed on the people in the townships, have depended heavily on rent as one of their major sources of finance. Rent hikes of between a 100 and 200 percent have not been uncommon in recent years and have done much to sharpen the conflict between the people in the townships

and the apartheid Administration.

For the past 11 months, hundreds of thousands of tenants in some 50 black townships across the country have refused to pay rent to back a long list of demands, including the withdrawal of security forces from the townships and the release of political prisoners.

The current rent strike is not only a massive gesture of defiance to the regime - it has cost authorities an estimated R190m in lost revenues. According to research groups monitoring the boycott, at least 450 000 households, of 4 million people nation wide, were refusing to pay rent at the beginning of this year. At least 36 black councils have collapsed because of the financial loss from the rent strikes₁₀.

The living conditions of the urban blacks, which are barely human, are infinitely better than those of the rural black population.

Farm workers have been the worst victims of the government's strategy of so called reform. The already deplorable conditions on South African farms have deteriorated dramatically in the last 10 years and can only be described as being worse than slavery. For example, on a sugar plantation in Natal, 9 young girls were found sleeping on a bare floor in one room. On a Greytown farm, 6 workers live in a 2.5m² hut. A 10 year old child, who worked 9 hours a day and 7 days a week for 6 months, earning R1 a month, ran away twice, and each time was caught and flogged₁₂.

Working and living conditions on Bantustan farms, are as bad, if not worse than on white farms outside the Bantustans. More than 1 million people have been forcibly removed from white farms in the last two decades and driven to poverty in the Bantustans. The penetration of big business interests into homeland agriculture and the resulting takeover of large portions of land from labourers, coupled with drought, have reduced peasant production to relative insignificance. In these fragmented arid areas even subsistence farming has become impossible.

The conditions of extreme poverty, squalor and misery, which are the daily experience of the vast majority of South Africans, contrast dramatically with those of South Africa's 5 million whites. In 1977, this 14.3 percent of the population earned an enormous 64% cut of the total income distribution in the country. In 1985, the average household income of white families was more than 6 times that of blacks₁₃. It is estimated that last year 37 000 houses were vacant in white areas. If each of these houses was 120m², then at least a million people could be accommodated at black housing

densities¹⁴.

These are but mere examples of the political and economic injustice that the people of South Africa seek to redress in the popular struggle against apartheid.

When apartheid has been destroyed, a major challenge in a free South Africa will be the erradication of inadequate housing, squatter camps and homelessness. These must be replaced by housing which benefits the people, the creators of South Africa's wealth. This challenge can only be met by a strategy for large-scale and systematic construction which encompasses not only housing but also hospitals, schools, sport and recreational centres; in other words, all that which contributes to the well-being, security and comfort of a people; all that liberates the greatest natural resource of any country - its people. The ANC looks forward to the day when this great work can be tackled. But first Apartheid must be razed to the ground. And to achieve this task our people, under the leadership of the ANC, have taken up arms.

Today we are in the midst of death-defying feats of heroism, where combat groups supported by the people, are erecting barricades, stringing barbed wire across roads, digging defense trenches, driving enemy forces into death traps, raining petrol bombs onto armoured vehicles, arming themselves by dispossessing the enemy of his weapons, riding the townships of informers and collaborators, eliminating enemy personnel. Places like Port Alfred, Lingelihle, KwaNobuhle, Mamelodi, Alexandra and others have virtually become 'NO GO' areas for the regime's terrorist forces. These areas are already implementing forms of self-government, having transferred authority from the Administration Boards and Community Councils to the street and area committees. In these areas the people are answering the ANC's call to make the country ungovernable and apartheid unworkable. For, the ANC in its 75th anniversary year, is in the vanguard of the mass democratic movement to rid South Africa of the scourge of apartheid.

Indeed, the ANC, banned and outlawed by the government in the 1960's, emerged as the central issue of the recent white only elections. In no election in South Africa has the ANC been such a prominent participant. Never before has an election been fought on what the ANC represents.

Mr Chairman, the ANC of South Africa is currently undertaking projects in Tanzania, Zambia and Angola aimed at self-reliance and including education, health, agriculture, small industry and housing, for the thousands of our people forced to flee the racists regime's brutality.

The massive construction programme at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Morogoro, Tanzania, launched in 1978, is nearing completion. Almost 55 000m² have been constructed, including a secondary school for 1000 students, a primary school for 250 pupils, a Children's Centre consisting of day-care and nursery facilities for 250 pre-school children, a health centre, farm complex and over 100 family housing units. This complex currently accomodates close to 2 000 people.

Presently, on new land granted by the government and people of Tanzania, close to 2 800 hectares are being developed at the ANC Development Centre, Dakawa, close to Morogoro.

This centre is planned to accomodate 5 000 people in 10 villages of 300-400 people, with each of these villages being able to consolidate itself into a dynamic and highly organised community, once settled. Individual projects within this complex include: ~~the first village~~ a vocational training centre for over 200 trainee students, a student orientation centre, an agricultural complex, schools, cultural facilities, small industries attached to the villages and approximately 800 housing units. Support services such as health care facilities, stores, supplies distribution, vehicle maintainace, etc. are also planned. At present, farming is underway as works continue on the infrastructure, vocational training centre, and the first village. Unlike SOMAFECO, where the main construction method consisted of the simple load-bearing blockwork technique, highly advanced prefabrication systems have been incorporated into the construction process at the Development Centre, Dakawa, to ensure economy, a faster pace of implementation, and the ANC's readiness to meet the demands of our struggle. Our special "Thank You" must go to our hosts, the government and people of the GDR, who, through the UNCHS (Habitat), have donated a package of technical equipment and expertise, all aimed at the production of prefabricated concrete buildings, an invaluable contribution in the IYSH.

Both the above mentioned projects correspond with the concept of ANC settlements, not as traditional refugee 'camps', but, rather, as development centres, or dynamic multipurpose projects involving training and production, in which emphasis is placed on self-reliance. These development centres will provide vital training grounds for young ANC cadres in the multiple tasks of reconstruction and development that lie ahead in a democratic South Africa.

Such projects as these do not necessarily serve as models for a future South Africa. However, they do indicate the current thinking ~~within~~ the

liberation movement on the problems of shelter and human settlement. Admittedly, errors have been made along the way and we take cognizance of these in our daily experience in the construction field and in the ongoing debate within the ranks of our movement.

However, despite all these endeavours, the main contribution of the ANC in the IYSH must be the intensification on all fronts of the onslaught for the total destruction of the apartheid crime against humanity. For as the white population of South Africa reaffirms its faith in the Botha regime and its policies, we can confidently assure the distinguished participants of this seminar that for South Africa, and indeed the whole southern african region, there will be no respite from the racist regime's policy of harrassment, sabotage and destabilisation. For South Africa's neighbours, in real terms, this implies the continued, and even increased, disruption of economic activity, increased support of bandit opposition movements, sabotage and direct assault. These have already had the effect of distorting social and economic priorities in these countries as already limited resources have had to be shifted from urgently required development projects to national defense. Regional problems, inherited from the colonial past, have been further exacerbated by the Pretoria regime's economic strategy as scarce manpower is drawn off national priorities.

It is in view of this situation that we call on the people of South Africa to advance from ungovernability to People's Power. It is in this light that we call for mandatory and comprehensive sanctions to isolate the racist regime internationally. It is in this light that we reaffirm our pledge to liberate, at whatever cost, our country of Apartheid. It is only then, upon completion of this task, that we will begin to build the free and democratic South Africa, as envisaged in the Freedom Charter, where "there shall be houses, security and comfort for all."

Thank You.

NOTES

1, 2, 4, 8, 12, 14: ANC News Briefings

3: "Whirlwind Before The Storm." Brooks and Brickhill

5, 7, 9: ANC Sources

6, 10, 13: "Race Relations Survey: 1985" S. African Institute of Race Relations

11: Daily News (Tanzania) 18/5/1987