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NEW HOMES FOR OLD

Public Housing in Europe and America



by William V. Reed and Elizabeth Ogg

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THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

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NEW HOMES FOR OLD
Public Housing in Europe and America

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PUBLIC HOUSING IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

by
WILLIAM V. REED
and
ELIZABETH OGG

ILLUSTRATED WITH
79 PHOTOGRAPHS
AND 16 DRAWINGS

THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

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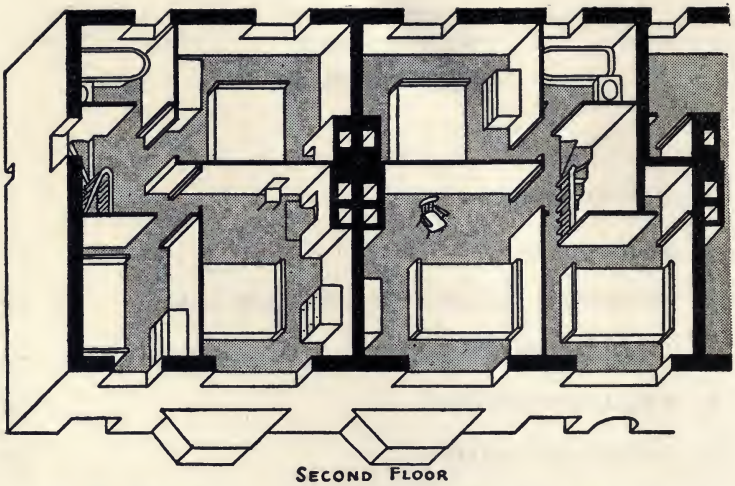

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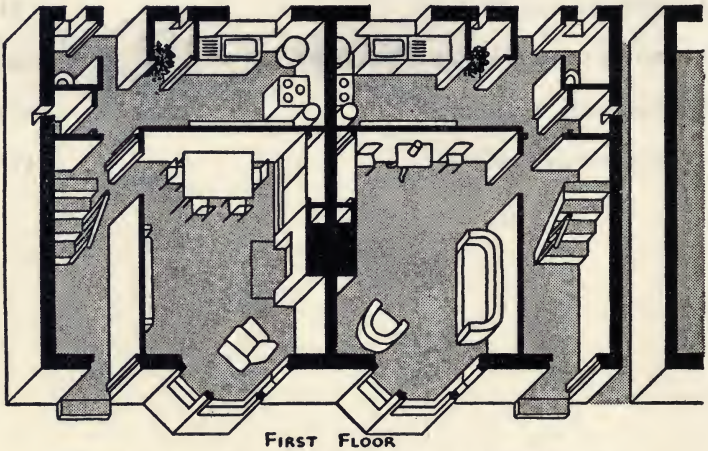


FIRST FLOOR

TYPICAL GROUP HOUSES BUILT BY MUNICIPAL HOUSING DEPARTMENT OF LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

I. Why Housing?

In Europe homes are blacked out. Before long, many of them may be ruined by aerial bombardment. In belligerent countries, building—except for the building of bombproof shelters, barracks and munitions plants—has ceased. Even in the neutral countries of Europe house building is going to become increasingly difficult: the shortage and high cost of building materials, the general disturbance of trade, will see to that. The building of homes is essentially one of the arts of peace. In war it has to go by the board.

But America is not at war. America is far from the scene of the struggle. And Americans are still free to cultivate the arts of peace.

AMERICA BUILDS

It happens, moreover, that America has already embarked upon a big home-building program. Part of that program—to provide homes for low-income families—started under the PWA in 1933. But it only really got under way in 1937. In that year, when Congress passed an act establishing the United States Housing Authority (USHA), we officially accepted the challenge of the slums. The USHA was authorized to make loans and grants to municipal and county housing authorities and to set up minimum standards for the construction and maintenance of "public" housing.

So in various parts of the country today, from Massachusetts to California, from Michigan to Mississippi, new USHA homes are going up. At the foot of Main Street or across the railroad tracks in many a small town, in the slums or on the outskirts of cities, you can see the new buildings in various stages of construction. Some of them are already completed. John Jones moved in the other day and can't stop talking about all the space and air and light in his new house: never before could he find more than three rooms for his family of six at a rent he could pay. Mrs. Smith no longer toils over an

old-fashioned washtub in a cold-water flat—she has an apartment in a public housing project with a hot water faucet over her laundry tub. And her children play in a safe playground where she can keep an eye on them from her kitchen window. The Johnsons have left the tumbledown shack their landlord refused to repair and are living in a trim little semi-detached cottage with modern plumbing. They think Uncle Sam is pretty fine, because they know they wouldn't have a home half as nice without his help.

THE SIZE OF THE HOUSING PROBLEM

But there aren't nearly enough USHA homes yet. Bert Thompson and his young wife are quite annoyed because they still have to double up with Mrs. Thompson's father and mother. Sally Ryan still worries about her invalid mother, cooped up on the top floor of a ramshackle tenement with only a vertical fire-escape. And the Antonellis go on somehow squeezing themselves and their seven children into a two-room shanty—the best they can afford. On the basis of recent surveys experts estimate that 10,000,000 families, or about 31 per cent of the American people, are living—like the Thompsons, the Ryans and the Antonellis—in substandard homes. Obviously if these estimates are correct, America still has a big housing job ahead.

WHY *PUBLIC* HOUSING?

But if you haven't followed the beginnings of public housing in this country, perhaps you're wondering why we need public housing at all. Why can't the Thompsons, the Ryans and the Antonellis be left to buy or rent homes for themselves in just the same way that they buy clothes or food?

The answer is that the Thompsons, the Ryans and the Antonellis don't earn enough to be able to pay the price—or the rent—of decent housing. They can't afford homes with plenty of fresh air and sunlight, with modern sanitation and cooking equipment, heating, refrigeration, running hot water and elec-

tricity. They can't buy space and privacy for the various members of their families. In their present homes they haven't even any reasonable protection against fire. Yet all these privileges we commonly associate with our idea of the American home. Housing experts go further and say that modern housing must have outside as well as inside improvements—trees and gardens, recreation grounds, pleasant outlooks from the windows, surroundings free from industrial encroachments. But the Thompsons, the Ryans, the Antonellis and lots of other people as well can't afford any of the inside improvements—let alone a garden.

What it boils down to is that modern housing to rent at less than $25 a month is needed if the poorest third of our population is to have decent shelter. But in most places even small modern homes cannot be rented for less than $25 a month and still yield a profit. In rural districts and in the South, it is true, some reasonably up-to-date small houses do rent for less than $25, but in those regions most of the workers have such low cash incomes that they can't pay even $10 a month rent.

WHY BOTHER?

"Tough luck for the Thompsons, the Ryans and the rest," you may say. But it's really tough luck for you, too. If you'll look a little deeper, you'll see why. For the slum problem is the problem of all of us. The slums cost us money. They may touch our health or our safety. It costs the city of Boston, for instance, $48 a year per slum-inhabitant just to keep up police and fire protection, public health work and other municipal services in the slums. (For people in the city's other residential districts, the cost of such services is less than $11 per person.) So actually the city has to subsidize every slum-dweller within its boundaries to the tune of $37 a year, and get nothing in return. Other cities, adding up their slum ledgers, likewise find them way out of balance. That balance "in the red" comes out of your pocket and mine in the form of taxes.

Getting rid of the slums will cost us money too, of course (though probably not as much in the long run as keeping them would). And getting rid of the slums will cost more or less according to the amount of intelligent planning we help to put into the government's program for getting rid of them. But if American tradition means anything, having set our hands to the plough, we won't turn back. We'll finish the job.

WHY STUDY EUROPE?

In the doing of that job, Europe's experience can be a great help to us. As we map out our future national housing program, it's only common sense to choose methods that have stood the test of time in Europe and to reject experiments that Europe has already shown to be failures.

For European countries have been in the business of rehousing their people and clearing slums for a long time. England's official housing policy, for instance, dates back to 1851, Holland's to 1901. Germany is the home of some of the most original and imaginative housing ever built. France, too, although she has built proportionately less housing than the other countries, has produced some very ingenious schemes. Vienna did wonders with housing on a shoestring. The Swedes have shown what can be done to get good cheap houses by using cooperative methods. The great bulk of this new housing in Europe appeared in the years following the Armistice of 1918. For after the World War Europe found itself in much the same kind of housing dilemma that was forced upon our attention during the depression. Though they didn't by any means finish the job, between wars some European countries did go a long way toward cracking their worst housing problems. That's why we shall do well to find out what their experience has been.

II. How Modern Cities Grew

Before we can understand how Europe tackled its housing problems, we need to know something about how those problems arose. That will take us back well over a hundred years, to the days of the hand loom and the one-man forge, to the home of a typical cottage weaver.

In 1812 a prosperous master weaver named Charlie Briggs was living in a village in Yorkshire, England. He had a picturesque little cottage at the end of the village street, with a sheepfold behind and a workshop where he and his two apprentices bent over the hand looms. Up over the hill stretched the moors, where Charlie's sheep grazed.

BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

It's true that by our standards Charlie and his household were not so comfortable. They had to carry water from the spring, and they seldom took a bath. They had no central heating. Mrs. Briggs had only an open wood fire to cook on. At night she and her "spinster" sister sat spinning by the flickering light of a candle. And by day the rooms were dim because the windows were too small to let in much daylight.

But the air that blew in through those windows was sweet country air. A meadow came right up to one wall of the cottage, and young Jerry Briggs, aged six, already knew the delights of riding on a haywagon, watching a sheep shearing, and other country pursuits. Both he and his sister Peg were apple-cheeked youngsters with the energy of young colts.

Once a month or so Charlie Briggs loaded his pack horse with bales of woolen cloth and took an all-day journey along muddy country lanes to town. He was known among the merchants there as a craftsman who gave fine quality and good measure. His wares sold well.

It did not seem to Charlie Briggs that the tales he heard in the market place about the new power looms some rich men were setting up boded him any ill. Such looms were few and

costly, and they were practical only in certain places—places where there were iron deposits and blast furnaces, forges to make the machines and coal to provide power to run them with. It was true that one machine could do the work of many men. But that would mean more cloth, which people needed.

A NEW ERA

But the power looms spelled the doom of Charlie Briggs and his kind. The cloth those looms turned out undersold his by a wide margin. There was no longer a market for his wares. As the woolen mills multiplied, the independent cottage weavers disappeared one by one. So did other kinds of craftsmen—shoemakers, tanners, tinsmiths and the like. Charlie Briggs, along with the rest, was drawn irresistibly to the city, to become a slave to the machine.

He went to Leeds—a city born of the Industrial Revolution. In exchange for his solidly built country cottage he got a shoddy house in a row—just a couple of narrow, dark rooms, one above the other. Instead of the sweeping vistas of the moors he could see only a huddle of grimy roofs, pierced here and there by mill chimneys, under the smoke pall. Though he had never minded going to the spring for water, he minded now, after his sixteen-hour day in the mill, trudging to the well at the end of the street and finding the water polluted. Absence of drainage had mattered little in the country; here, where so many human beings were crowded together, the damp walls and mounting piles of filth threatened life itself. His own third child, born in the city, died of a fever in infancy. From the time of his coming to Leeds, Charlie Briggs felt himself a prisoner.

The worst of it was—there was no escape. His miserable wage barely paid the rent. To eke it out he had to let his wife and children work in the mills too. When their wages were reduced, or paid in food from the master's shop at the master's price, they had to submit. No wonder Charlie Briggs felt there was no escape.

TOO BLACK A PICTURE?

Is the picture of Charlie Briggs and his family painted too black? Hardly. If he had gone to an older city, like London, he might have found himself within reach of a green open space—the historic garden of some great man, with the sign "Private" on its gates. He could have walked along wide stately avenues lined by fine houses and through squares with trees and lawns—the heritage of the eighteenth century. But his own living quarters would have been much the same as they were in Leeds.

In Continental cities (many of them confined within the walls of ancient fortifications), to which industry came somewhat later than to England, the workers were crowded into tall tenements near the factories, just as in England they were crowded into shacks and row houses. If the land was already built upon, additional tenements were run up in the alleys and backyards of existing houses. Look into the histories of the time and you will see that Charlie Briggs and his family were typical of thousands upon thousands of workers, not only in England but on the Continent of Europe as well.

BAD HOUSING NOT THE ONLY EVIL

Of course bad housing was not the only problem the Industrial Revolution put up to Charlie Briggs. Terrible working conditions, the arbitrary power of the factory owners, the absence of any court of appeal for the workers and poverty also contributed to his family's unhappy plight.

Whose fault was it that such an appalling way of living came about? No one's in particular. The record of the nineteenth century in housing its people is a record of failure rather than of any deliberate lowering of standards. Before any one realized it, the close-packed buildings were there, and it was hard to get rid of them and start all over again. If we summarize now the chief stages of housing development after industrialism took hold, we shall see that the changes came so thick and fast that no one grasped where they were leading.

First, there was an almost wholesale shift of population from the villages to the towns. At the same time there was a tremendous increase in population throughout Central and Western Europe. All the people who were now crowded into the towns had to be housed somewhere near the factories. For the factories were their sole source of livelihood and they had to live within walking distance of them. As the factories jostled one another near the coal mines, the builders were in a sense obliged to crowd the incoming hordes of workers there too.

But though they may have begun by obeying what looked like the demands of necessity, the builders soon found that there was a great deal of profit to be had in making the situation still worse. Out of their poor wages the working families could pay only small rents. Such small rents, the builders said, would not pay for even elementary conveniences or any but the flimsiest construction. Yet, as these same builders ran up more and more houses to the acre, squeezed more and more rooms into a house of a given size, and crammed more and more people into every room, the small rents began to pile up into attractive profits. In all the capitals of the Western world landlords customarily got a 12 to 15 per cent net return on slum properties.

WHAT HAPPENED TO LAND

As it became apparent that land could be "cultivated" so intensively, people with land to sell put up the price. Higher prices for land in turn cut into the builder's or landlord's profits, and so the landlord and the builder increased the overcrowding to get more rents to make up the difference. As a result, land values soared still further. Thus began the vicious circle of high land costs and crowded homes we are still trying to get out of today.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, there was no curb on the builders whatever. But even later, when laws were passed establishing minimum building standards for the sake of health

and safety, the standards themselves were none too high. In fact, though better than the worst, the houses built according to these standards were only typical of the average houses in existence at the time. Thus what the adoption of standards did at first was not so much to bring about good housing as to make legal and permanent the mediocre housing of the day. In this way the so-called "built-in slum" came to stay. Architects even won prizes for designs of "model" tenements which were slums from the moment they opened their doors to the tenants. Some of these buildings covered 90 per cent of their sites.

THE CITY EXPANDS UPWARD AND OUTWARD

After the middle of the century came new turns of events which established the dismal city way of life even more firmly than before. The invention of the elevator and the development of steel as a building material made it possible to put up higher and higher buildings. More people could then be crowded on to a square foot of land and so land became still more valuable. Another new factor was the introduction of steam transportation. Instead of drawing people out of the congested industrial centers to country homes, the new railways actually made it possible to extend the areas of congestion still farther. Industry could now establish itself farther from the sources of fuel; the builders had more land to exploit.

As the city expanded, speculation in land went to even more fantastic lengths. No one knew where land for some profitable enterprise would be wanted next. It might be in the suburbs, or it might be in some older part of the town. In the suburbs what happened was that speculative builders threw together flashy, poorly built homes and sold them on the instalment plan. The speculator took the profit and left the buyer holding the bag. For within a few years the poor construction began to tell and decay set in. Landlords in the older parts of the city, on the other hand, thought that sooner or later they would be able to sell their land for a fabulous price. So why should they "waste" money on keeping up the houses that stood on such valuable land? Thus, while new and shoddy houses went up

on the city's rim, whole neighborhoods nearer the city's center were allowed to decay. These central "blighted areas" became the enforced homes of the poorest workers of all.

With rising land prices went increased building costs. For although the new sanitary and building construction codes of the latter half of the century represented some progress, they did make building a more expensive business. As the century wore on, interest rates on borrowed capital went up too. All these added costs were passed on to the tenant in the form of higher rents. But wages did not climb nearly as fast as the rents. Consequently more and more people were forced to crowd into the poorest kind of housing—in other words, the slums. As we have seen, this gap between the income of large numbers of people and prevailing rentals is the heart of the housing problem.

HUMANLY SPEAKING

What happened to the people condemned to live in the slums? Well, Charlie Briggs and his family give you some idea. No one thought of gathering statistics in his time to show that bad housing helped to drive young people into lives of crime and gravely injured people's health. But any number of surveys made in recent years do point unmistakably to a connection between housing and morals, and housing and health.

Nineteenth century folk, however, were only dimly aware of all the troubles they were piling up. The majority of them accepted the kind of housing that grew out of the welter of the new industrialism. Even the workers were for the most part resigned to their fate.

But a few pioneer minds revolted against the situation and preached a new way of life. Others tried to reform the worst evils of the slums for fear of the consequences of letting them be. From these early theories and these first patchwork reformers spring practically all our ideas about modern housing. In the next chapter we shall see who the early reformers were and what they accomplished.



An English built-in slum



Industrial chaos in the English Midlands



Negro shacks in Florida



A shanty town in California



A central blighted area in Chicago



Haphazard building on the rim of Pittsburgh



Krupp company housing
at Essen, Germany (1872)



Workers' houses
at Bourneville, England (1879)



An Amsterdam slum street
before clearance



The same street in 1935 after clearance and rebuildin

A Berlin slum quarter



Post-World-War housing in Berlin



III. Patchwork Remedies and Promising Plans

As early as the first decade of the nineteenth century Robert Owen was running a successful cotton mill in Scotland along unusual lines. He gave his workers shorter hours, higher wages, education, good working conditions and a well-planned village to live in. Yet his profits increased.

NEW IDEAS

Starting from an idea he had for coöperative communities for the unemployed, Robert Owen worked out a blueprint for society as a whole. He accompanied it with a drawing of the sort of village, half industrial, half agricultural, he thought ought to be the basic unit of such a society. Land, factories and houses were to belong to the people in common. There were to be a community kitchen and dining room, public nurseries and children's domitories, as well as lecture rooms and libraries.

At the same time in France the philosopher Fourier was working out on paper a very exact system of community living in what he called "social palaces." These "palaces" were planned not only for shelter but also for work and play.

Whether we agree or don't agree with the elaborate community living plans drafted by Owen and Fourier is not important here. The point for us to notice is that they both saw the need of making *some* kind of plan if large numbers of people were to live together to the satisfaction of each and all. Both men limited the size of their communities and put them in public ownership so they could be managed in the public interest. Both men, of course, were far in advance of their time.

TORY REFORMERS

While Owen's and Fourier's ideas were beginning to excite the imagination of a few people, more practical and less idealistic reformers saw that something must be done at once to better the plight of the poor.

Many acted out of a real desire to help the working class. Others were spurred into action by fear. For in 1850 a great cholera epidemic in England carried off fifty thousand people. The disaster dramatized the reports which medical officers and others had already begun to send in to the government on the relation between slums and disease. About the same time there was a wave of revolutions on the Continent. Ruling houses, feeling their thrones tremble, suddenly decided that they had better try to ease the lot of their more miserable subjects. And wars and rumors of war suggested that it might be good national policy to guard the health of those who would have to fight in the nation's defense. Better housing would lessen the danger of epidemics, the chances of revolution and the possibility that in time of war there might not be enough healthy men to defend the nation.

GOVERNMENTS TRY TO PATCH THINGS UP

Concerned thus about national welfare, governments became interested in housing. In 1848 the first English public health act was passed. Three years later came the first housing law of modern times. This law *permitted* but did not *require* local governments to build dwellings for the working classes. Additional laws expanding these powers and laying down minimum standards for building followed later in the century.

In Germany also there were laws regulating building. From 1880 on, a number of the German states began to set up standards to prevent the crowding of buildings on the land and to safeguard them from fire or collapse.

Cholera took its toll in France too. And there, as in England, it started people thinking about the connection between bad housing and disease. But France did not pass any laws at that time. Instead private "housing societies" were formed, the first of them in 1853. The housing society idea also took root in Germany and England. In England they were called "public utility societies," but on the Continent they were more often known as "limited dividend companies."

PHILANTHROPY PLUS SIX PER CENT

Although they embarked on housing reform, these private housing societies expected to make a profit. In order to put up decent houses that would be cheap enough for workers to rent or buy on the instalment plan, they had to limit their profits, it is true. But because of the vast market for such houses, the investments of the societies were safe and the returns on them pretty well guaranteed.

These societies met a real housing need. But the houses they built were too expensive for the lowest-paid working people to rent or buy, and were often sold and resold at a profit until they became middle-class residences. Indeed, the very fact that so many of these houses were built for sale and not for rent put them out of reach of all but the most prosperous skilled workers.

Even when private housing societies got a great deal of help from their governments, they did not succeed in providing the sort of homes the poorest families could afford. Thus in 1894 the first French housing law authorized public loans to such societies and relieved the cheap dwellings they built from the obligation of paying taxes. But the dwellings put up by the French limited dividend companies were still essentially middle-class homes, and there was no law in France authorizing local governments to house their poorer citizens until 1912. Even when it finally came, this law proved just as ineffective as the same kind of law had been in England. The chief reason was human inertia: under the early laws the municipal governments in both countries *might* legally take housing action, but most of them did not.

CHARITIES LEND A HAND

Just as governments and housing societies began to concern themselves with the housing of the working class, so did many private people with a zeal for reform. But they mostly confined themselves to minor remedies. Instead of attacking the heart of the problem—the fact that too many people were

crowded together in a small space under outrageous sanitary conditions—they put up "model" tenements and cottages which were somewhat more sanitary than the old ones but which did little or nothing to relieve the congestion of the slums. And practically all of them believed that the wretched condition of the poor was entirely due to laziness and liquor.

COMPANY TOWNS

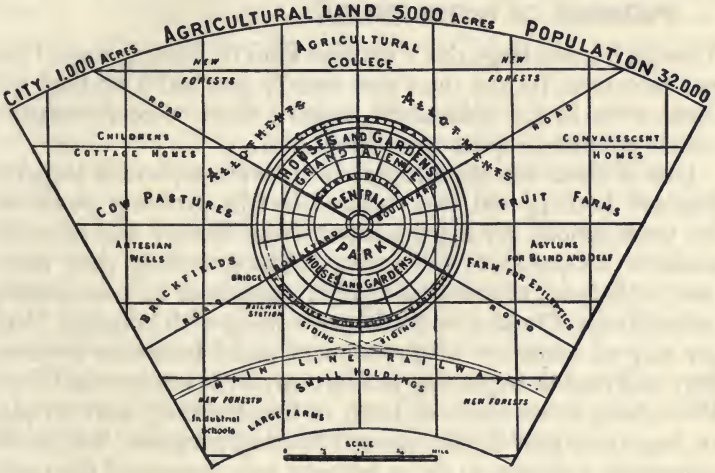
A more realistic reformer than either the "philanthropic" housing societies or the charities was the employer who had begun to see the relation betwen his workers' housing and their health and efficiency. To meet the problem this type of employer sometimes provided dwellings for his workers near his factory or mine. Even if we have never seen a company town, we can readily imagine what opportunities for exercising tyranny it offers the employer. He controls everything in it. He can force the workers to buy at his store at the prices he sets. He can deduct from their wages whatever they owe for rent and store bills. He can throw them out of house and job if they protest. Furthermore, the kind of house he builds may be and often is pretty much the same as the average slum type. America is scarred by some particularly bad examples of such company housing.

But the best of the employers who built company towns were not tyrants. In 1865, for instance, Friedrich Krupp started building homes for the workers in his steel plant at Essen, Germany. Those homes were among the most soundly planned in Europe before the World War. Other "model" factory towns were Bourneville, near Birmingham, England, founded in 1879 by the Cadbury firm of cocoa manufacturers, and Port Sunlight, near Liverpool, England, established by Sir William Lever, soap manufacturer, in 1877.

Such company housing set examples in planning and construction that were a great advance on the housing standards of the time. But company housing was so open to abuse that many workers would have preferred freedom in a slum to employer supervision in the most model of company cottages.

What was the sum total of progress of all these efforts on the part of thinkers, governments, housing societies, charities and private employers? For the moment, very little. In some cases, a minus quantity. For, as we have seen, the laws regulating building construction and sanitation tended to raise building costs; and because these additional costs were charged to the

HOWARD'S GARDEN CITY DIAGRAM



The exact plan cannot be drawn until the site is selected.

rents, more people were obliged to double up in order to save on rent. Furthermore, because it helped to prevent cholera, better sanitation made crowding safer. But better sanitation could not take the place of light and fresh air. Because they lacked these last, many people still suffered from tuberculosis.

Yet, however faint, there *were* signs of progress. The government investigating commissions and the charities working in the slums did turn up a lot of ugly facts and they did put the spotlight on the housing problem. The reformers also

evolved the useful idea of the housing society with limited profits as a semi-public service. And they caught on to the idea of large-scale planning. For in the first place they saw it as a means of lowering construction costs. And in the second place they began to realize that it was the only way of guaranteeing that a whole district would remain a pleasant place to live in. Lastly, in England, at least, the reformers of this period put a key housing law on the statute books—the law which permitted local authorities to build and rent inexpensive houses.

PROMISES OF BETTER THINGS

Though by and large the Victorian kind of housing stayed put and reformers for the most part merely patched it up here and there, even in the nineteenth century there were movements which pointed in quite new directions.

One of these was the coöperative movement, which began in England in 1844 and was fostered by the growing power of the trade unions. By buying direct from factory and farm the workers' coöperatives had succeeded in providing their members with food, clothing and other necessities at considerably reduced cost. Could they do the same thing with housing? With the help of loans out of government social insurance reserves, they had made a beginning in Germany even before the World War. And, as we shall see later, in Sweden they were to play an important part in the national housing program. But, in the nineteenth century, so far as housing was concerned the coöperatives were little more than a promise.

GARDEN CITIES

Another promise lay in the Garden City movement launched by Ebenezer Howard. As a young man Howard had seen the Chicago fire, and it had set him thinking of the possibility of planning whole cities from the ground up. In 1898 he published a book, called *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, in which he set forth his idea of a sensible city plan. Like Owen and Fourier, he sounded Utopian. Yet his idea was really very practical. In

fact, two complete English cities—Letchworth, begun in 1902, and Welwyn Garden City, begun in 1920—demonstrated its workability.

Briefly Howard's idea was of a working city with the residential, industrial, shopping, public building and park areas all clearly laid out from the start, and the whole thing surrounded by a permanent "green belt" in which there would be farms to supply the town with food. As you can see from the plan on page 23, instead of cutting the whole place in half, the railroad was to hit the town at a tangent and send spurs to the factory district. Howard allotted a thousand acres to the town itself and five thousand to the "green belt." And he limited the town population to 30,000.

If Howard were alive today, he would find in Letchworth the justification of his plan. For Letchworth is not only a well-laid-out city, free from land speculation and neighborhood blight; it is also a paying concern, with successful industries. Moreover, it is healthy. After it had been in existence for thirty-five years, a survey showed that its "insured" workers (that is, all its industrial workers) lost only half as many workdays through sickness as insured workers in other English industrial towns. And the death rate for all England was 50 per cent higher, the infant mortality rate 84 per cent higher and the tuberculosis rate 100 per cent higher than at Letchworth! Welwyn Garden City is likewise a "going" town.

MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP OF LAND

To guarantee the success of his plan, Howard advocated public ownership of the land. Even in Howard's time, municipal ownership of land was by no means new. Certain German cities owned large domains which wealthy families had bequeathed to them. And around the turn of the century many Continental and Scandinavian cities began to buy up land both inside and outside their boundaries. They had in mind the possibility that the population might increase and the cities expand, and they wanted to be able to control that development.

When town governments began to undertake on a big scale the job of housing their less prosperous citizens, those cities which already owned a certain amount of land faced a much easier task than those which did not.

TOWARD A NEW ERA IN HOUSING

By the turn of the century all the confused efforts at reform which we have sketched in this chapter were beginning to shape themselves into a real housing movement. The patchwork reformers had begun to realize that some more fundamental attack on the problem was needed. And the idealists who had drawn up thoroughgoing plans of attack no longed seemed so impractical. Housing reform ceased to be a matter of providing shelter for paupers and became a matter of providing a decent environment for everybody.

And people had not only begun to *think* differently about housing—they had also begun to act. In 1901 Holland passed the first European law *requiring* town governments to see to the housing of their citizens. That act not only set up regulations for new buildings but provided for the improvement of old ones. It gave towns the right to buy slum properties or vacant land for new housing, regulate overcrowding and demolish slums. And it said that all towns of 10,000 or more inhabitants must draw up an orderly plan for their future development. The initiative was to be with the towns, while the national government was to set up housing standards and help with financing.

Under this law Holland had done a great deal to remodel her towns even before the World War. But her population was increasing so fast and she had so little "living space" that it was difficult to prevent overcrowding both of dwellings on the land and of people in the dwellings.

Furthermore, though such other housing laws as existed in Europe before 1914 permitted but did not require public authorities to build low-rent houses, a few of the authorities did act on the permission. Coöperative and public utility housing



New apartment houses in London. Note nursery school on site of gas tank



Cottage development at Roehampton, England. Each cottage has a garden



Modern suburban housing built under the Socialist regime in Vienna



Back gardens of municipal houses in Holland



Cooperative apartment houses in Sweden



Terraced apartments and cottages for the workers in a Swedish flour mill



Day nursery in a Swedish cooperative apartment house



A Swedish living room and kitchenett



Playground outside a workers' cooperative house in Sweden



Play room for children living in Swedish cooperative apartments



The "Frankfort" kitchen, mass-produced in Germany to sell as one unit



A community laundry in a Socialist housing project in Vienna

societies were also beginning to make their mark. By 1914 these various agencies had built about as many modern low-rent dwellings in Europe as the United States had built by 1938.

None of the action taken really got down to the roots of the problem, however. When the World War began in 1914, all the underlying difficulties of housing remained untouched.

IV. The Heart of the Problem

We have seen how the nineteenth and early twentieth century reformers thought about housing, and what they did. We have seen too that they failed to remove the biggest stumbling blocks in the path of housing reform. What were these stumbling blocks?

THE COST OF BUILDING HOMES

First, the high cost of city land. For the uncontrolled land speculation of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had boosted land values out of all relation to the actual use to which the land was put.

Second, the high cost of building. While improvements in most industries had made them more efficient and cheaper to run, the building industry had become more and more complex. In fact it could hardly be described as a single industry: it was made up of many different crafts and scores of different industries. None of the crafts or industries was interested in coöperating to simplify house production. For simplifying it might take away the need for a particular craft or material. The plasterers, for instance, wanted to promote plastering, the brick manufacturers the use of bricks, the roofers roofing, and so on. To this day, houses are expensive handmade products put together about the same way they were a hundred years ago. No one has come along to organize the construction industry from top to bottom, thus providing a good cheap dwelling comparable to a good cheap car.

THE COSTS THE RENTS HAVE TO MEET

Now expensive land and high building costs meant high rents. For rents had to pay interest on the money invested in the land and buildings and also pay back the investment itself in fixed instalments. And interest rates had been steadily rising throughout the pre-World War period. Added to these charges, rents had to pay the costs of maintaining, repairing and managing the houses as well as some profit to the landlord.

All these costs which entered into building and maintaining homes made the rent of a decent house extravagantly high. But it was not these costs alone that made the housing problem. It was the high costs plus the fact that so many people couldn't pay them.

At the beginning of the World War, in spite of all the housing reform that had been discussed and tried, no successful move had been made either to lower rents by bringing land and building costs down or to raise the incomes of working people so they could afford to pay the high rents charged for decent homes.

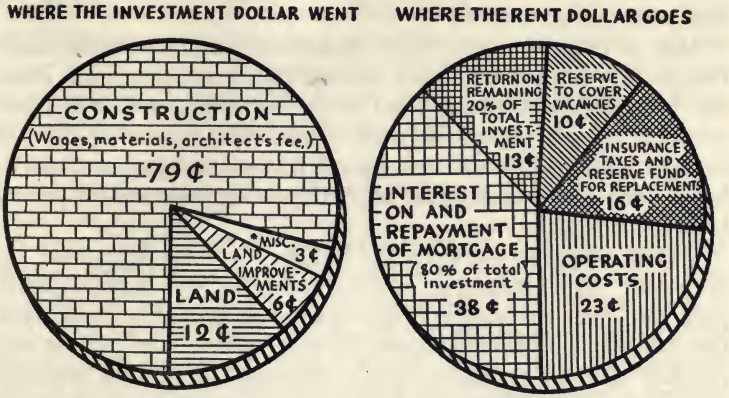
THE WAR AGGRAVATES THE HOUSING PROBLEM

This was the situation in 1914. Then came the World War. It stopped home building for four years. Even in the neutral nations great housing shortages appeared. For much of the regular business of these nations was set aside in order to supply the wants of the nations at war. Even without the war it is probable that sooner or later the nineteenth century reforms would have developed into a really fundamental attack on the housing problem: things couldn't have gone on in such a chaotic way forever. But the housing emergency left behind by the war brought the housing problem to a head. And it showed up all the contradictions and difficulties that had been piling up for years to make housing one of the hardest problems in the world to crack.

Governments have been known, of course, to dodge hard problems. But there was no dodging this one. The returning

THE HOUSING DOLLAR

(Based on costs and rents at Arlington Village, Virginia)



Though Arlington Village is one of the most economical and well-planned private housing developments in the U. S., construction costs took a high proportion of the investment. Note how financing charges and return on the investment likewise take a high proportion of the rent.

soldiers demanded something better than slums to come back to, and the people at home flocked to their support.

THREE WAYS OF ATTACKING THE PROBLEM

There were three possible ways of dealing with the housing problem: raising the general level of incomes; lowering the rents by reducing land and building costs; or providing a subsidy from public funds to bridge the gap between the rents the workers could afford to pay and the rents that were being asked.

How to raise the general level of wages without at the same time raising the cost of living is still a major puzzle for most governments. In 1919 wages were much higher than they had been in 1914, but the cost of living was higher still. So there

seemed very little hope of solving the housing problem by raising the workers' incomes, at least for a long time to come.

What about lowering rents by reducing the cost of building and maintaining homes?

One of the reasons for high rents was the high cost of land. But getting land costs down looked like a hopeless task. Land for new buildings was needed in so many places that it commanded a high price. Only in Continental cities which had bought up land in order to control its uses and prevent speculation was there any possibility of getting reasonably priced land for housing.

There remained the building industry as a possible field for economy. That industry, as we have seen, was already complex, but after the war it was in a state of complete confusion. Every kind of building material was scarce, and prices had jumped sky high. There was a shortage of skilled building workers: many of them had died or been maimed on the field of battle, and many had lost their former skills.

WAR ON A NEW FRONT

Thus low incomes and high building and land costs were difficulties no government could hope to overcome then and there. So most governments, harassed by the post-war crisis, turned to the third method of attacking the housing problem—government subsidies.

The ways in which governments could subsidize housing varied. One way was to provide loans at low interest rates. For the reduction in the interest rate was in effect a subsidy. Almost all governments in Europe aided housing thus after the World War. Sometimes they lent money to private builders, sometimes to housing societies, sometimes to the cities. But they also gave direct subsidies to housing. Although these direct subsidies were usually reserved for city governments and housing societies working under public supervision, in the worst part of the crisis some governments gave direct subsidies or grants to private builders too.

But because the shortage of dwellings was so acute, emergency measures were necessary in most countries to prevent profiteering on the homes that were already there. Rent restriction acts were passed which forbade landlords to raise their rents much above the pre-war levels. Measures of this type were of course temporary. When the housing supply began to catch up with the housing demand, governments usually abandoned rent restriction laws.

THE GOVERNMENTS' ROLE IN HOUSING

In very few instances did governments actually construct houses. What they wanted to do was, first, raise money for housing; second, choose a responsible building agency, either public or private; third, see that this building agency spent the government money so as to produce the greatest possible number of houses of good construction and design; fourth, see that these houses were let at low rents to the people who could not afford decent homes at regular commercial rents.

Contrary to what many people think, slum clearance was only a secondary objective of government housing programs in Europe after the war. It was secondary not because governments did not want to clear the slums but because it would obviously have been folly to tear down slums in the beginning and thus add to the shortage of homes. Building thousands of houses was the first necessity. Slum clearance came later.

At first, too, the new homes went up exclusively in cities and towns, where the need was greatest. But sooner or later most governments began to give financial aid for new or renovated rural housing as well. In this book, however, we shall not have room to deal with rural housing schemes.

VARYING STANDARDS

In carrying out the government programs there was, of course, room for endless variations. Each country had its own ideas about what kind of houses should be built and where. Flats,

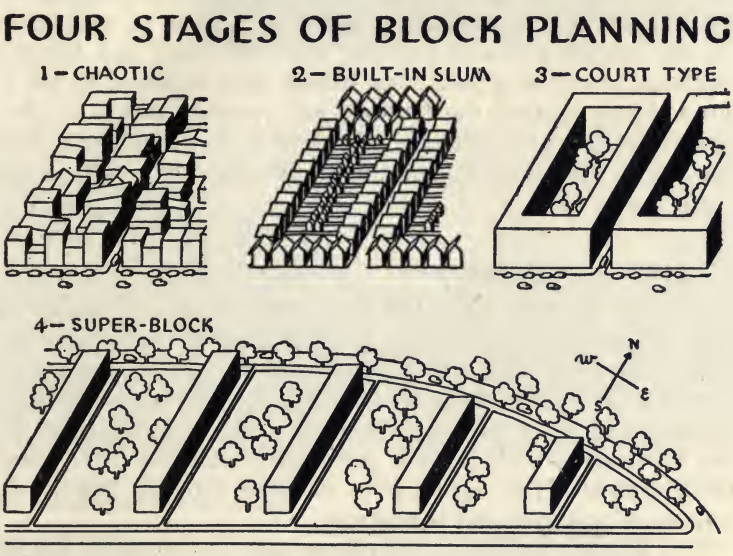
or small houses in rows, or single or semi-detached cottages—in the cities, in the suburbs, in the country. The kind of building materials that were plentiful within its borders, the kind of climate it enjoyed, and what its people wanted and were used to—these factors also helped to determine how a country would build.

A Frenchman, for instance, wants to live near a boulevard café where he can sip his coffee or cognac and gossip with his friends. An Englishman, on the other hand, loves a garden to putter in and is willing to spend hours every day traveling to and from work, just so he can live far enough "out" to have one. He also likes space inside as well as outside his house and an open coal fire in his living room. To a Swede, however, the amount of houseroom an Englishman thinks proper seems extravagant and the coal fire messy: his taste is for a small snug apartment or cottage with central heating. In Austria community baths are a regular thing, so the Austrians don't as a rule demand private baths in their apartments. And so it goes.

COMMON STANDARDS

The new houses in Europe do share certain common standards, however. Proper ventilation is one. Light is another: more and bigger windows—in northern lands placed wherever possible to catch the sun. There is also a general attempt to use the space inside the dwellings as efficiently as possible. Kitchens are planned to save steps, sleeping quarters are often made small in order to leave space for bigger living rooms. Although its amount and quality vary in different countries, labor-saving equipment is also general. Running water and toilets within the dwellings are practically universal in all the later European housing. And connections for gas and electricity are usually provided even if it is left to the tenant to install the equipment for making use of them. Finally, plenty of open space and greenery around the new houses distinguishes them more clearly than anything else from the sort of houses the nineteenth century handed down.

The idea of providing open spaces around the new houses was really part of a much bigger idea—the idea of city planning. In arranging large groups of new houses, governments could and often did set excellent examples by adopting sensible street lay-outs, providing recreational facilities for both children and



grown-ups near their homes, and including shops and community services. And the examples set by some of the new public housing in such neighborhood planning sometimes had an influence on whole city plans. Indeed, in a few instances housing developments involved the construction of whole new towns. Sometimes, too, governments stipulated that the cities should gradually rebuild according to a more orderly and convenient plan and should work out methods for controlling their future expansion.

Not all government policies were as far-reaching as this, of course. And not all cities could have made themselves over

according to a better plan except at an appalling cost. In France, for instance, most of the land was in private hands, and it was often impossible for the city governments to buy it except at exorbitant prices. Frenchmen, moreover, resisted the idea of government control of land use. So there were only spotty attempts at neighborhood planning in France. In Vienna and the German cities it would have been extremely expensive to thin out the well-built but overdense blocks of tenements in the central districts. But the fact that they had bought stretches of outlying land long before they expected to use it for building enabled the German and Austrian towns to plan orderly suburban neighborhoods. And in Sweden, which had few really congested districts, open, sensible town plans were quite practical.

HOW MANY HOUSES?

In Europe between 1919 and 1939 approximately seven and a half million low-rent homes were built with some kind of government aid. Their rents are low not only because the government subsidies help to keep them so, but because interest on the public loans invested in them is low, because they are not expected to yield a profit and because the cost of building them was as a rule appreciably reduced through large-scale buying of materials and equipment.

The benefits of the program have been unmistakable. Quite apart from their value to the tenants, the majority of whom formerly lived in slums or overcrowded homes, Europe's new low-rent dwellings have provided countless hours of employment for workers in the building trades and in the factories which turn out building materials. For this reason both England and Sweden believe their housing programs were major factors in pulling them out of the post-World War depression. Because they have provided so much employment, the housing programs have undoubtedly slashed expenditures for public relief, though no one can say exactly how much. And though detailed and accurate statistics on the past and present health



Oaklands Estate, a London County Council project (front view)



Cottages at Becontree, a London County Council suburban project



More cottages at Becontree



Oaklands Estate (rear view). Note the balconies for access to the apartments



Public housing in England follows traditional styles (China Walk Estate, London)

But there are occasional excursions into modern architecture (Kensal Rise, London)

of their rehoused slum-dwellers is not available in all countries, investigations made in Great Britain show that the health of people who have moved from slums to public housing has vastly improved. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that Europe's housing programs have cut not only public relief expenditures but public health costs as well. Because they have provided a healthier and happier environment for thousands of young people, sociologists claim that the housing programs have also reduced crime and juvenile delinquency.

Of course governments have not accomplished these benefits without cost. But the cost of subsidizing housing programs in Europe has been regarded as an investment in the welfare of the people.

Without going into too much detail, let us look at some of Europe's post-World War government housing programs. In as brief a book as this we haven't enough space to deal with housing in every European country. But in the next three chapters we'll take six representative nations: two that came out on the "winning" side in the World War—England and France; two that lost—Austria and Germany; and two neutrals —Sweden and Holland.

V. England and France

As we visit our six representative countries, we'll want to find out who actually built the low-rent houses, what the houses were like, what they meant in terms of human betterment, and how they were paid for. Since England is perhaps the country most nearly comparable with the United States, we'll start there.

MAKING ENGLAND OVER

In England since the Armistice of 1918 over four million new dwellings have gone up—about one and a half million with and two and a half million without public aid. Of the one and a

half million which received some form of public aid, one million were built by local authorities (that is, the governments of towns and rural districts). Mostly suburban cottage estates with gardens and green spaces, the dwellings built by the authorities have changed the face of England. The traveler approaching her towns today is much less likely to be greeted by closed ranks of dingy "back-to-backs" than he was before the World War. And even when he reaches the center of an industrial town, he will be amazed to find that some of the densest slums have been thinned out by new blocks of many-windowed flats, standing in ordered green spaces.

How was it done? Well, it was not done overnight and it was not done without mistakes and headaches. But the fact that all political parties were in favor of a housing program was more than half the battle. The Conservatives, it is true, believed in government aid to private enterprise rather than to local authorities, but Conservative, Liberal and Labor Party men all agreed that the government should do *something* about housing. So, despite shifts in the make-up of national or local governments, the program kept on going.

The story of England's post-war public housing falls quite naturally into three periods. In the first, which lasted till 1930, the government's chief goal was to get as many new houses up as possible, to relieve the shortage. In the second, between 1930 and 1935, the biggest drive was on moving families out of the slums. And in the third, from 1935 on, greater emphasis was laid on relieving overcrowding. Let's look a little more closely at these three stages of the program.

RELIEVING THE SHORTAGE

With houses already scarce, it was plainly no use tearing down old dwellings until new ones had been built. So, with the Housing, Town Planning Act of 1919, the British government launched a big program of low-rent house production. The Act took three long steps forward, but also created some pitfalls.

The three steps forward were these: (1) the Act not only *permitted* but *required* the town governments to see that their towns had sufficient low-rent houses of modern standard to meet the needs of their citizens; (2) it laid down a new method of fixing the price of land the government took over for housing: if slum dwellings occupied the land, the government was to make no payment for the rotten structures any more than it would pay for rotten foodstuffs; in fact, the owner had to clear them away at his own expense; (3) the Act required every town with a population of more than 20,000 which had not already done so to prepare a town planning scheme for the approval of the national government. All these provisions spelled progress.

THE GOVERNMENT PAYS

But a fourth provision, which looked like progress too, actually invited abuses. Under this provision the national government made outright grants of capital to local authorities for building low-rent houses or gave them annual subsidies to make good their operating losses on such houses. The only contribution the local authorities had to make toward operating losses was the revenue from a small local tax. So they had little incentive to economize. As a result costs, already high on account of the shortage of labor and materials, went higher.

But England soon saw her mistake and took steps to correct it. Two years after it was passed the government stopped approving schemes under the 1919 Act. In 1923 and 1924 new laws were passed which required the towns to contribute a share of the subsidies granted for low-rent housing. After this the local authorities began to take their housing responsibilities more soberly. Although there was still room for improvement, better planning, greater economy, sounder building became more general.

The principle of sharing the financial burden between the central and local governments has been followed in Great Britain ever since. At the same time, the responsibility for

actually planning and carrying out the housing program has been left in the hands of the local authorities.

A GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT

One thing which helped British housing on to its feet was the so-called "gentlemen's agreement" arranged by Mr. Wheatley, the Minister of Health in the first Labor government (1924). Wheatley succeeded in persuading the building trades unions, the building contractors and the building materials manufacturers to coöperate with the government in keeping building costs down. He was the better able to do this because he could promise in return for such coöperation a steady long-term program of building. The trades unions therefore agreed to train more apprentices to relieve the shortage of building labor and to stabilize wages on government housing jobs for six-month periods. The contractors agreed to keep their bids as low as possible. And the materials manufacturers, afraid of government price-fixing laws, or even government-operated plants, likewise toed the line. The concessions these groups made, together with the increased production of materials and equipment (such as bricks and slates and standardized bathtubs and stoves) that followed, helped considerably to bring the cost of houses down.

By 1930 England had built enough homes to relieve the shortage somewhat, so she was able to turn her attention toward wiping out the worst of her slums. In that year the Slum Clearance Act was passed. It provided for subsidies to help rehouse people taken from the slums. And in 1933 the government stopped approving new housing projects unless they were to be the homes of former slum-dwellers.

CLEARING ENGLAND'S SLUMS

There were, however, plenty of snarls in the problem of clearing the slums. If a town government set out to clear a slum and rebuild upon it, it usually found that because of its central location the land commanded an exorbitant price. It is true

that the national government offered an extra subsidy for rehousing slum-dwellers in central districts if the price of the land came to more than $15,000 an acre. But even if the local authority could afford to buy central land, it still had to cope with the puzzle of where it was to put the people it cleared out of the slum in the period between the clearance and the completion of the new buildings. To solve this puzzle, many local authorities built some of their "slum clearance" houses on vacant outlying land and moved people from the slums into them.

REHOUSING SLUM-DWELLERS

But moving people out to the suburbs had its own complications. The children in the new housing developments had to have schools, and the fathers had to have transportation to and from their work. The towns also had to meet the expense of extending their sewers, street paving, gas, electric and water mains to the new suburbs—a burden central housing schemes didn't put upon them. So it was and still is a question whether public housing on cheap suburban land costs a city less in the long run than public housing on expensive central sites.

When town councils chose to shift their slum people to the suburbs, however, they could order the owners of the vacated slum properties to tear them down or make them "fit." If the owners chose to tear down, they could then rebuild only in accordance with the city plan. Since 1930, 273,000 slum dwellings have either been torn down or closed, and 273,000 new "slum clearance" houses have gone up. In the same period 189,000 slum dwellings have been made "fit" by the authorities at the expense of the owners and 562,000 by the owners themselves as a result of warning notices from the authorities.

All this is quite impressive at first sight. But making a house "fit" in England may mean merely repairing the plaster or exterminating the vermin. As a matter of cold fact, many houses which were repaired ought really to have been torn down. And about 4,000,000 houses are still standing that are nearly a hundred years old. They cannot be repaired and

brought up to date except at such high cost that it would no longer be possible to rent them to wage workers. So slum clearance in England still has a long way to go. The evacuation of city children to the country when war broke out brought this fact sharply home to many English middle-class people. For they found that the health, habits and outlook of the slum "evacuees" quartered on them left much to be desired.

With the housing shortage somewhat relieved and the slum clearance program under way, in 1935 the British government turned its attention to another aspect of the housing problem—overcrowding.

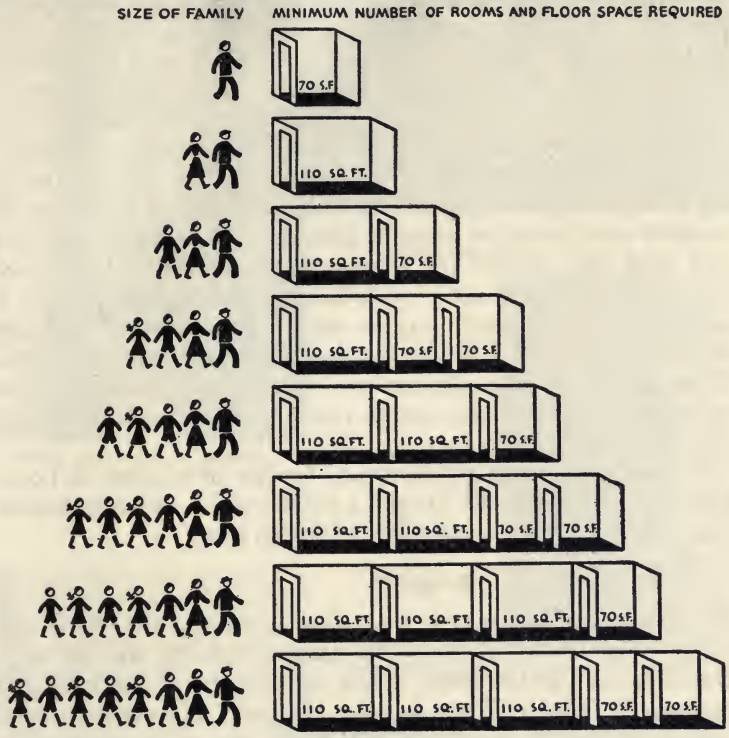
RELIEVING OVERCROWDING

Overcrowding isn't of course confined to slum neighborhoods. But it is safe to say that where decent well-built houses are crowded with too many tenants, not only are living conditions bad for those tenants but the houses are likely to become slums sooner or later. To remove such conditions, in 1935 the British government began offering the local authorities a subsidy for dwellings built to relieve overcrowding.

To help local authorities decide what overcrowding is, the national government set up a "standard of occupancy." Look at the chart opposite and you will see what this standard is. Using it as a yardstick, the local authorities made a survey and found that nearly 4 per cent of the families in England and Wales were "overcrowded." Some housing experts say the standard is much too low and that it should not permit living rooms to be used as sleeping quarters. If it hadn't permitted this, the percentage of "overcrowded" families would have been as high as 10 per cent. But in the opinion of other critics, it will be a long time before England will be able to live up even to the modest standard she has set. This, they say, is because she hasn't enough houses yet to provide all her people with roomy quarters. When she has enough houses, the government's standard of occupancy will be strictly enforced.

But that desirable prospect is now very far away indeed. Today the shadow of Hitler falls across the hopes of the fam-

HOW BRITAIN MEASURES OVERCROWDING



For each room in excess of five, provided it is at least 110 square feet, two additional persons are allowed. Rooms under 90 square feet may accommodate only one person, under 70 square feet only a child of one to ten years. If under 50 square feet, a room does not count at all.

ilies still living in England's slums. In 1938 the slum clearance subsidy was reduced to match a slightly increased "relief of overcrowding" grant. The practical effect of that adjustment was to cut down national aid for slum clearance by about one-third. When war finally began, in September 1939, the public housing program came to an abrupt halt.

But the low-rent houses built by the authorities up to that time were still occupied, of course, and still supported by the government's annual subsidies. For houses completed by 1939 in England and Wales the national treasury was committed to pay some $75,000,000 and the local authorities some $17,500,000 annually. That is a lot of money. Yet the national subsidy is very little more than the cost of a single battleship. Moreover, the British subsidies probably will not always be as high because after 1943 the twenty-year grants which were allowed on the earlier housing schemes will begin to run out, and after 1964 so will the forty-year grants allowed on those built later. Unless there is wide destruction by air raids, it is unlikely that there will ever be such a great rush of building to pile up new grants as was necessary in the nineteen-twenties. As a matter of fact, almost half the housing subsidies now charged to national taxes are in support of houses built during that decade.

What has England got in return for her investment in housing? For one thing, she has got a million and a half new homes that working people really can afford to rent.

THE QUESTION OF RENTS

Wherever public money goes into housing, the rents are required by law to be low. The national subsidy and the local contribution (which today is half the amount of the national) reduce the rents by from 20 to 40 per cent. The rents charged vary in different parts of the country, but as far as possible each local authority keeps them in line with the rents charged for slum quarters in its area. The authority does this because it knows that, however fine and hygienic a new house may be, if the family that moves into it has to pay more rent than it did before, the health of that family will suffer. Wage workers' budgets are not elastic, and the additional rent would reduce the amount left for food, clothing and medical care. Indeed, investigations have shown that where rehousing has forced families to pay higher rents, the disease and death rates have actually gone up.



Screened drying balconies at Drancy



An air view at Cité-de-la-Muette, Drancy, new Seine Department town near Paris



A serving hatch connecting dining room and kitchen, Drancy



Suresnes, new Seine Department town near Paris



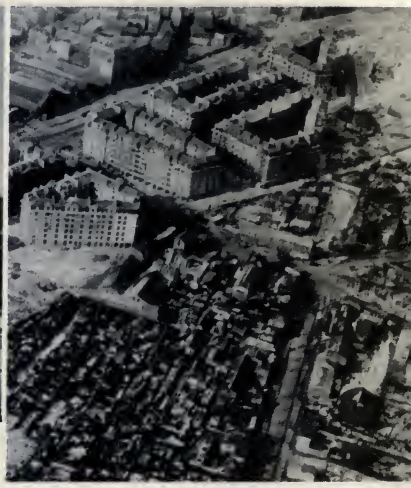
Another view of Drancy



An air view of Plessis-Robinson, another of the new Seine Department towns



The Karl Marx Hof, built by the Socialist government in Vienna



New super-slums built on the site of the old Paris fortifications



Maternity and child welfare clinic, Karl Marx Hof, Vienna



St. Brigitta Houses, Vienna, for families on relief

Yet, though rent scales in the new houses are on the average much the same as slum rents, they still do not fit *every* family budget. This is particularly true of large families. Because it has so many mouths to feed and backs to clothe and feet to shoe, a large family has less money to spare for rent than a smaller one. In the slums it has probably managed by squeezing into two or three rooms. But in a new housing development it cannot do that. There it must take one of the four- or five-room dwellings. And that is just the kind that, according to the regular rent scale, it can't afford.

DIFFERENTIAL RENTS

Some English cities have tried to remove this difficulty through a system of "differential" rents. This system suits the amount of housing subsidy per family to each family's need. Tenants are charged only as much rent as the authorities think they can pay without skimping on other necessities. If a family's income goes up, so does its rent. But if a new baby comes along, the family's rent goes down.

People who support this idea say it is the fairest way of arranging for a housing subsidy from public funds, for the subsidy is used "only for those who need it and only for so long as they need it." People who are against the idea say a tenant has little or no incentive to earn more money if he knows his rent will go up the minute he begins earning more.

There are certainly endless difficulties in keeping the system going: investigators have to be constantly checking up on the tenants' incomes and keeping elaborate records. For this reason many critics of differential renting say it mixes up public relief and housing. They argue that public relief for large families should be left to some other agency than the housing authorities. Nevertheless many English cities have arranged for a certain amount of differential renting.

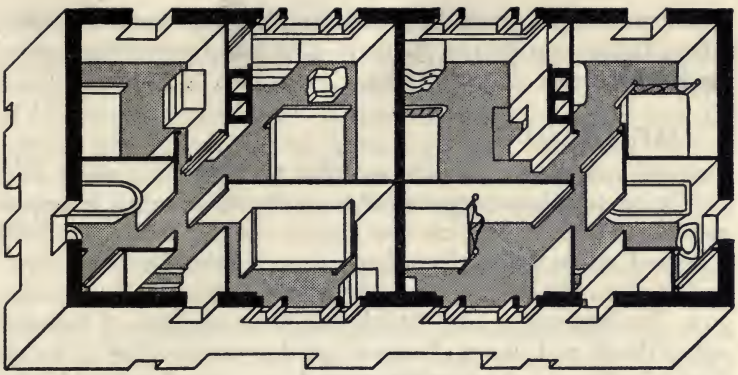
What do all these English families who have got new homes in the last twenty years think about them? What have the new homes done for their tenants?

The new homes have given people who couldn't otherwise have afforded such things space, fresh air, light and privacy. They have made it easy for these people to keep clean. As one tenant said, "When you go straight from a slum to a housing estate, you feel as though you had had a bath on the way."

There is no doubt too that the majority of English housewives who now live in "council" houses or flats appreciate their sanitary and labor-saving equipment. In practically all cases they have some kind of system to provide running hot water, although they have to fuel it themselves. As a rule they also have gas and electricity "laid on," with a choice as to which they will cook by. Each home has a bathroom and an indoor toilet, either a large living-kitchen or a kitchen and parlor, and a sufficient number of bedrooms to provide separate sleeping quarters for parents, sons and daughters.

Since an English family wouldn't say thank-you for central heating if it deprived them of their open coal fire, central heating has not been tried in English housing developments. Most houses as well as apartments have an open fireplace in the parlor and both gas- and coal-burning cook stoves in the kitchen. But if there is only a small kitchen-scullery, a gas or electric stove alone serves for cooking. In some houses there is an ingenious fireplace-stove combination, arranged so that the fire in the living room fireplace heats a cook stove and boiler on the opposite side of the wall in the kitchen. This device saves fuel as well as work. On the opposite page there is a plan of this type of house.

New methods of garbage disposal also save the housewife work. Most London apartments have refuse chutes on every floor that lead directly to a container made to fit the city garbage trucks. But a recent housing project goes one better and provides an outlet for garbage in the kitchen sink: the garbage goes through large pipes direct to a central incinerator, where it is dried out and burned to heat water for the community laundry.



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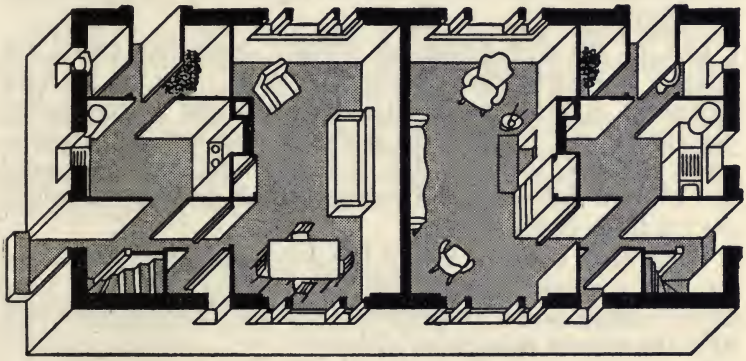


FIRST FLOOR

MUNICIPAL GROUP HOUSES AT SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND
(Note connection between kitchen and living-room fireplaces)

You can well imagine what all these tools and services mean to the busy housewife. She begins at last to have time to call her soul her own.

The children have been given a place in the scheme of things too. No longer swarming in dirty streets where there are constant traffic dangers, they can run out to play in gardens or

green recreation grounds. Even the city flats have balconies where babies can be put to air in safety and big asphalt playgrounds for the older children.

BETTER HEALTH

England's experience has shown that, *provided the move does not force additional expenditures on them*, amazing improvements in health, cleanliness and general standards of living have followed when people have been moved from slums or overcrowded conditions to properly planned houses. Take Glasgow, for instance, a city which was formerly one of Britain's unhealthiest and worst housed. In the years 1932-34 infant deaths in the city as a whole averaged 102.3 per thousand births. But in Knightswood, a large new housing scheme in Glasgow, infant deaths in the same years averaged only 49.4 per thousand births.

Out of the first group of military conscripts called for training in Great Britain in the summer of 1939, 83 per cent ranked as in first-class health; in 1917-18 the corresponding percentage was 36 per cent. Although this striking improvement in health is partly due to better feeding, better social services and national health insurance, Britishers give much of the credit to better housing.

Well, that's the good side of Britain's post-World War housing. But you can't uproot thousands of people and shift them about without some complications and some complaints. What have the tenants themselves to say?

THE TENANTS SPEAK

Two women—neighbors in the new St. Helier housing estate on the outskirts of London—were scrubbing their front doorsteps one day not long ago. Said Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Brown, "It's wonderful. Henry's got a job on the railway, now they've made a station for St. Helier. He bikes down to work and he can get a free ticket to town for both of us any time. And our rent's ten shillings a week less than we paid in Poplar." (Poplar is a slum district of London.)

Mrs. Brown looked a little envious.

"I wish I could say the same," she said. "You've been mighty lucky, because there aren't but a few jobs to be got out here. My George still has to go to town to work. So what with his railway fare and all, it costs us six shillings a week *more* to live here than it cost us in Limehouse. And I do miss having the shops handy, and the pub, and the chapel at the corner, and all."

So what's sauce for the goose isn't always sauce for the gander. There are lots of "rehoused" people who feel like Mrs. Brown: they liked the clubbiness of the slum; they miss their old pals. And when they can't get jobs in the neighborhood, the men find that traveling to and from their work sends their expenses up in spite of the "controlled" rents in the new housing project.

Still, even mothers who sigh a little for the "mateyness" of their old slum alley are glad to see their children healthy. And it is the coming generation which will show the real benefits of the change. Perhaps when that generation grows up it will be able to remedy the drawbacks of the new suburban developments by relating them more closely to opportunities for work and social life.

PAPER PROGRESS IN FRANCE

We have spent some time in England because there is a lot of public housing to see there. We go on now into France. But we shall find less to dwell on there, for the simple reason that France has comparatively little new housing to show for the twenty-year period between wars.

The biggest task France faced in 1919 was to rebuild her northern regions, devastated by four years of modern warfare. There almost a million buildings had been wholly or partially destroyed. So it is hardly surprising that, with only war-worn economic and human resources to bring to the task, France should have neglected housing conditions in the rest of the country.

Not that the *subject* of housing in the country as a whole was neglected. A complicated set of housing laws was passed. These laws took up where the law of 1912 left off. They *permitted* government loans at low interest to municipal housing agencies and limited-dividend building societies. They also *permitted* direct subsidies for housing large families. Unfortunately, the laws neither *required* any one to act upon them nor provided any money for such action. So for the time being they did very little actual good.

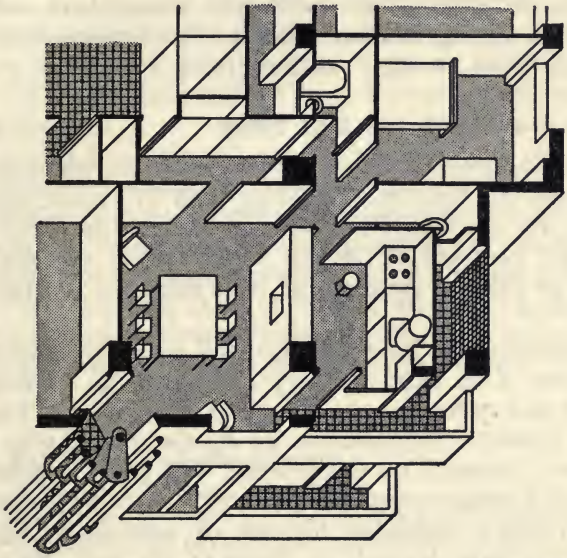
TRANSLATING LAW INTO ACTION

But the Loucheur Act, passed in 1928, did finally get down to business. It authorized long-term low-interest government loans up to 90 per cent of the cost of "cheap" dwellings and somewhat less liberal loans for building homes to let at "moderate" rents. It provided for special grants to help war veterans and families with more than two children buy their own homes. And, last but not least, it appropriated funds sufficient to build within five years 200,000 of the "cheap" dwellings and 60,000 of those at "moderate" rents. Now that the money was there as well as the law, new houses began to dot the French landscape. By 1932 about 180,000 low-rent and 15,000 medium-rent dwellings had gone up under the Loucheur Act.

Pretty soon, however, the money the government had appropriated for housing gave out, and no more was provided. Instead, in 1934, the state undertook to help public and limited-dividend housing agencies meet the interest on money raised from private sources. But since private capital could make more profits in other fields, very little went into housing.

Meantime, as a bait to builders, the French government had granted tax exemption to low-rent housing ever since the end of the World War. Approved housing schemes are still exempt from all state and county land taxes for the first fifteen years of their existence. But, unfortunately, the cities have put a tax on all building materials, and this tax more or less cancels out the savings the builders make from tax exemption.

The new dwellings the French government program has made possible vary in quality. The blocks of flats put up on the site of the old fortifications of the city of Paris, for instance, are only a little better than the grim nineteenth-century tenements. They have neither balconies nor gardens, and they are packed very close together. Many of the rooms look out on narrow



A FRENCH APARTMENT IN DRANCY SKYSCRAPER
(Note the screened drying balcony)

sunless wells. On the other hand, out in the suburbs of Paris stand spacious apartment buildings and family cottages of striking design, surrounded by ample green lawns and gardens. But the rents in these suburban developments are higher than those of Paris slums. And they are far removed from the boulevard cafés and the vivid social life of central Paris. Consequently few Parisian slum-dwellers can be lured into them.

Nevertheless, despite the sketchiness of the French housing program as a whole, some ingenious housing notions have come out of France. It was a Frenchman, for instance, who had the clever idea of using dried-out garbage as fuel for heating water. As we have seen, the English are now using this scheme in one of their big developments. And in one project in France garbage actually helps to heat a swimming pool! The French have also invented a variation on the conventional bathroom—a small tiled "water-room" fitted with shower-bath and laundry tub. A drying balcony adjoins. This arrangement is becoming popular among French working families.

BUT THE SLUMS ARE STILL THERE

But ingenious notions do not remedy a housing shortage. Unfortunately the low-rent dwellings built in France since the war fall far short of filling the need. Since the shortage of homes has persisted, it has not been possible to clear many slums. For clearing slums would have made the shortage even worse.

Nevertheless, the Paris City Council made two attempts to clear some of its most unsavory areas. But the owners from whom it had to buy up the properties were legion. They demanded fantastic compensation. So did the tenants who would have been displaced by the project. The juries appointed to pass on the claims suspected state interference with individual liberties. And as individual liberties are particularly sacred in France, the juries backed the claims to the limit. As a result the City Council had to give up the bulk of its program. And what it did accomplish was terribly expensive.

WHY DID FRANCE FAIL?

All in all, the French housing record is scarcely a brilliant one. The chief reason for the failure is that, despite the progressive laws it passed, the Chamber of Deputies did not vote enough cash for housing loans. In recent years France's heavy rearmament activities provided the Chamber with a convenient ex-

cuse for not doing so. But before the Hitler menace put France on the spot the deputies could have done a great deal more for low-rent housing than they did.

If the national government was negligent about housing, the towns, on the other hand, were handicapped by the high values of city land and the fact that much of it was held by hard bargainers.

Today, however, there are Frenchmen who are saying that after the present war is over France will have to buckle down to a really comprehensive housing and rehousing program. For building will be the only peacetime industry large enough to take in all the workers released from war service and the armament industries.

So, of our two "victor" nations, we have seen one making sure and steady progress in rehousing her low-income citizens according to modern standards, progress none the less real because cautious and somewhat unimaginative. And we have seen the other, officially half-hearted toward housing, produce at least a few bold and original housing experiments that point the way toward a more inspiring future. Now let's see what Austria and Germany accomplished between wars.

VI. Austria and Germany

If the victor nations had difficult economic and financial problems after the war of 1914-18, the vanquished nations had even worse ones.

Austria, in particular, was in sorry straits. In addition to the upheaval of her industries, high prices and a shortage of labor, she suffered from appalling inflation of her currency. The Austrian crown would buy next to nothing, and yet workers earned very few more crowns than they had earned before the war. So starvation threatened half the population of Vienna. Something had to be done to keep prices—at least of necessities—from soaring way out of sight. And housing was a first necessity—something had to be done about that.

Rent restrictions—the stopgap measure most governments used after the war—came first. Indeed it came before the war had actually ended. But rent restriction didn't build new houses. The refugees who crowded into Vienna from the parts of the Austrian Empire which the peace treaties gave to other countries all needed houseroom. More marriages took place after the soldiers came home from the fronts, and the new families also needed houseroom. More flats, more houses were the pressing demands.

Since the rent restriction did not apply to new buildings, and new buildings were exempt from land taxes for thirty years, we might suppose that private enterprise would have been eager to supply dwellings for such a certain market. But no business man knew what his money would be worth from one day to the next. A carefully calculated return might be worthless long before it came in. Besides, though rents of new buildings were not restricted by law, they had to be fairly low to be within people's capacity to pay. So it was practically impossible to get any return at all on an investment in a new building. In those uncertain days it was no wonder the builders fought shy of building.

CHANGING THE FACE OF VIENNA

So the Vienna city government itself set about building homes. Altogether it put up about 64,000 dwellings, rehousing about one-tenth of its citizens. Although in the early post-war years the city built some cottages in the suburbs on the English model, it concentrated for the most part on five- and six-story walk-up apartments built around spacious garden courts. Archways cut through the buildings lead into the courts, providing pleasant vistas, and stairways lead from the courts to the apartments. The apartments themselves are simple, with small rooms heated by the traditional Austrian colored tile stoves and without baths or running hot water. But the simplicity of the apartments is made up for by excellent community facilities—playgrounds with paddling pools, kindergartens, club-

rooms, gymnasiums, bathhouses and mechanically equipped laundries. To the community-minded Viennese, public baths and laundries are perfectly acceptable, especially as the blocks of flats are such a vast improvement on the tenements they have left behind.

GARDEN COLONIES

On the outskirts of Vienna are some cottages which were undertaken during the 1931-32 depression especially to help the unemployed. They were grouped in garden colonies on vacant land which the city had bought earlier at bargain prices. Unemployed workers and their families were encouraged to form coöperative societies to help build these colonies. The societies were then responsible for managing the colonies and paid the city's investment back over a period of years from the rents charged to their members. Other Austrian towns copied the scheme.

The cottages in these colonies were of the simplest, so that neither the cost to the town nor the debt of the settler would be burdensome. But they were so constructed that the settlers could build additional rooms if they became more prosperous. No electricity or sewage disposal was provided, and the water supply had to be pumped by hand. Primitive though they were, these Austrian colonies rescued families from actual starvation and gave them both shelter and a means of keeping alive. For each family had a garden area where they could grow vegetables and keep goats, pigs or chickens. And the town government helped the colonists start coöperative farms.

To the coöperative farmers the city offered expert advice on choice of crops, cultivation and marketing. Most colonies organized fruit farms and got good returns from them. The women of the families could easily look after the fruit trees if the men found other work or became ill, and the fruit was easy to market because it was scarce in Vienna.

There were thousands of applicants for both flats and cottages in Vienna. How was the City Housing Department to choose

among them? It worked out a system of giving "points" on various counts having to do with the urgency of a family's need for new housing—the number of children, sickness in the family, the state of the quarters the family was living in, and so on. The families with the largest number of points were then accepted as tenants.

How was a bankrupt city like Vienna able to accomplish this miracle?

THE BALANCE SHEET

The main prop of the Viennese housing program was a tax on all rents from real estate. This tax was graduated much like our personal income tax: smaller rents were taxed at a lower rate, bigger ones at a higher rate. The proceeds of the tax, with a grant from the national government and some other occasional taxes, financed one of the most ambitious and successful housing ventures ever undertaken by a city government.

One reason for the success of the venture was that the tax money used for building the houses was never intended to be paid back. So the rents had to cover only operating and maintenance costs and could be very low. On the other hand, the rents did have to pay a small contribution to keeping up the housing program. For as the new houses were completed, they in turn became subject to the rent tax.

Then, too, the plan of sharing the expensive facilities like baths and laundries among many families, instead of putting them into every individual apartment, made for economy. Furthermore, the city owned its own granite, paving-stone and tile works, lime shops and so on, and organized the central buying of other materials. So it was able to keep costs down and make its funds go farther than they would otherwise have done.

VIENNA PUTS THE CLOCK BACK

Unfortunately, the Vienna housing program was not destined to go on very long. The government which had carried it out was a Socialist government, and in 1934 the Socialists were

forcibly ousted by the Fascists. Because the workers' apartments were Socialist strongholds, many of them were subjected to artillery fire in the course of the fighting. Although the buildings were quickly patched up, the bombardment sounded the death knell of the "new" Vienna. The government which followed gave up building large-scale blocks of flats on its own account. Although it gave some help to private builders, the amount and quality of new housing put up in Vienna since 1934 are scarcely worth mentioning.

Furthermore, what little was done for the poorer classes after 1934 was done in a grim spirit of charity. *Familienasyle,* or family poorhouses, were built. The St. Brigitta houses, for instance, built in 1935 under the Dollfuss regime, are rented only to families "on relief." They are barrack-like apartments grouped around two courts with outside balconies for access. The apartments are all identical—a kitchen and one other room —but they must house large and small families alike. There are no electric lights, but there is a community bathhouse and laundry. All in all, these "family poorhouses" have the cold atmosphere of institutions.

As far as slum clearance goes, Vienna has little to offer. For the Viennese housing program was smashed before the city could begin to tackle the clearing of its slums. It is a great misfortune for the working people of Vienna that the machinery which did such an excellent job of building up was not allowed to go on to the next stage and clean out the old pestilential parts of the city. Although after 1934 the city government helped real estate owners demolish or remodel buildings which were inconveniently placed and obstructed traffic, this policy resulted only in a little street widening. It had nothing to do with really effective slum clearance.

REBUILDING GERMANY

Like Austria, Germany was in a desperate plight after the World War. For, like Austria, Germany suffered from dislocation of her industry and commerce, from shortage of money, materials and manpower, and from inflation of her currency.

In addition, she had to pay reparations to the Allied powers. Along with all her other problems, this crippled nation faced a shortage of over a million homes.

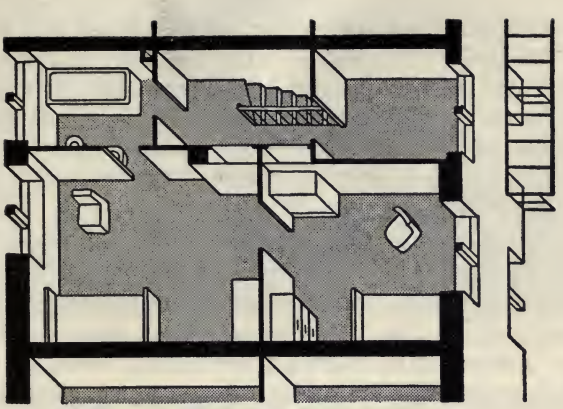
STOPGAP MEASURES

With the German mark sinking to a value of one 5,000,000th of a dollar, and with living accommodations scarce, rents were bound to go up. A general rent restriction act, however, kept them down to fairly reasonable levels. But the rent restriction act did not solve the problem of the shortage. Inflation had swollen building costs to fantastic amounts, and, since pre-war fortunes worth thousands of dollars had shrunk to the value of a postage stamp, there was little or no private capital to invest in building anyway. The government had to do something and do it quickly.

Subdividing old houses in a makeshift fashion and building temporary barrack shelters were two stopgap measures employed. Granting subsidies to builders to make up the difference between "normal" construction costs and the current high ones was another. After getting the benefit of such a subsidy the builder was supposed to charge his customer a "normal" price for the house. But that measure was a failure. For inflation kept right on and made one day's calculation of costs look like pure fancy the next. So national, state and town governments all pitched in and helped the coöperative and public utility (limited-dividend) housing societies to build inexpensive homes. For the coöperative and public utility societies had already had experience in building such homes before the war with money borrowed from social insurance funds.

FOREIGN LOANS HELP

But because of the inflation of German money, the social insurance funds, like the rest of German capital, were now greatly reduced in value. Money had to come from abroad. And during the nineteen-twenties it did come from abroad. Because Germany needed wholesale reconstruction, it looked



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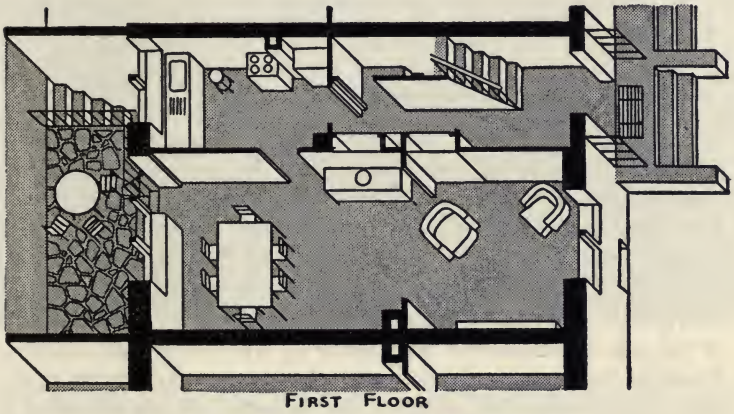


FIRST FLOOR

A GROUP HOUSE AT RÖMERSTADT, GARDEN SUBURB OF FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN

like a fertile field for investment. So foreign loans kept pouring in until the world depression shut them off in 1931-32. Supplemented by a house-rent tax similar to Austria's and introduced after the Germany currency was stabilized in 1924, part of these foreign funds went into modern housing for

German workers. They had to be paid back, of course, but where a coöperative or public utility society undertook to build for small families of limited means, the government made the loans on a long-term basis at much lower interest rates than would otherwise have been obtainable. Furthermore, certain tax exemptions granted to such housing amounted, in effect, to a subsidy from the state.

Although in Germany the town governments did not go in for building houses themselves on any great scale, as they did in England and Vienna, they did as a matter of fact keep the bulk of the working-class housing program in their own hands. For many German cities owned a controlling block of shares in the local coöperative or public utility housing societies and could therefore decide on the type and cost of the dwellings to be put up, the tenants to be housed, and the way the housing estates were to be managed.

NEW HOMES IN GERMANY

What were the results? Between 1925 and 1930 Germany was a beehive of building activity. In fact the traveler there could scarcely get out of range of the sound of hammer and saw. The English garden-city idea plainly had an influence on the lay-out of the new developments. For though most of the dwellings are in blocks of apartments, they look out on wide courtyards with trees, flowers and lawns—in striking contrast to the tall, close-packed tenements of the nineteenth century. To make such generous standards of space possible, most of the new apartments were built in the suburbs, where the land in many German cities already belonged to the city government.

As for the dwellings themselves, they show a wide range both of design and equipment. The national government encouraged experiments by setting up two departments for research into materials and finishes, site plans and dwelling plans, and the relation of planning and equipment to building costs. The best architects in Germany became keenly interested in the problem of how to house people well at a low price. As



Apartments built under the German Republic at Römerstadt, garden suburb of Frankfort-on-the-Main



Post-World-War housing in a Berlin suburb



Apartments for workers, Afrikanerstrasse, Berlin



Hoffeld Siedlung, near Stuttgart, for unemployed and part-time workers



Goldstein Siedlung, pre-Nazi development for the unemployed near Frankfort



A Nazi Siedlung near Mannheim

a result of all the experimentation that went on, Germany produced some of the most practical and pleasing designs any country had yet seen. She also showed that by standardizing and mass-producing whole units of a home, such as kitchens, costs could be cut considerably.

Sometimes the desire to cut costs led to cutting space in the individual apartments to a somewhat cramped minimum. Sometimes, too, community baths and laundries took the place of washing equipment in the home. But practically all of the housing developments built under the German Republic are of attractive lay-out and design. Balconies, window boxes and flat roofs arranged for sun bathing are common. Nurseries and kindergartens as a rule form part of the project. And there are gardens for the grown-ups' recreation.

In spite of her defeat in the war, Germany was enjoying a housing boom: by 1931, between two and three million new dwellings had gone up. This figure includes private as well as public utility, coöperative and municipal building. But it was not enough: there was still a shortage. Furthermore, even semi-public housing in Germany, carefully planned to save costs, was rarely within reach of the poorest families. They carried on, as usual, in the slums.

So, in 1930, plans were drawn up for building flats of minimum size and standards at even further reduced cost. These were to be let at very low rents to unskilled workers. But world depression and Hitlerism came along, and housing policy in Germany took a different turn.

ANOTHER STOPGAP

With the coming of the world depression, German housing construction came to a halt. The number of unemployed grew to 6,000,000. Many of them, despairing of finding jobs in the cities, migrated to the country. People who had been farming small plots on the outskirts of the cities moved out to them and lived in tiny huts originally designed as tool houses.

As these makeshift colonies grew, they created such a tremendous sanitation problem that the government finally had to

intervene. What it did was to abandon financial aid for the construction of city apartments and give aid instead for the construction of dwellings on plots of land big enough to provide at least partial subsistence. At first many of these *Randsiedlungen*, or "settlements" on the "edge" of cities, were built by and for the unemployed.

BACK TO THE SOIL

A typical settlement for the unemployed was Goldstein, on the outskirts of Frankfort-on-the-Main. There a group of unemployed rented city land and, under supervision, built cottages for themselves. Each cottage has a living-kitchen and small bedroom downstairs, and three bedrooms upstairs. A loft and stable adjoin. The house is wired for electricity, but has no plumbing. The tenant has to carry water from an outside pump. Outside privies are the rule, and the streets in the colony are unpaved.

As in the Austrian colonies, the settlers raise rabbits, chickens, vegetables and flowers, and sometimes keep goats or pigs. But, unlike the Austrians, the Germans have stuck to the idea of individual garden plots. They have not gone in for marketing their produce coöperatively. Consequently, what they get out of their little farms is not a means of livelihood but only a supplement to their unemployment relief pay or, if they get jobs, to their regular wages. Some settlers are at times unable to pay even the small instalments the state requires on the loans invested in their homes, livestock, tools and seeds. If, on the other hand, the settler does succeed in paying the loan back in the stipulated thirty-four years, the house will belong to him. The land, however, will remain the property of the town.

Originally the building of *Randsiedlungen* was thought of purely as relief for the unemployed. It was soon extended, however, to employed workers, so that they could augment their earnings with the produce from their gardens. Many city workers were eager to get back to the soil and have little

cottages of their own instead of living in city flats. In *Randsiedlungen*, or "edge-settlements," they could enjoy at least a semi-rural life and still be within reach of jobs in the towns.

THE NAZI VIEW OF HOUSING

When the Nazis came to power they seized upon the depression-born idea of *Randsiedlungen* and made it the keystone of the government housing program. The idea appealed to them because it fitted in with their theory of "blood and soil" to a "T." German workers, in their view, must renew their kinship with the soil and learn to live the simple life again. Thus the Nazis have continued to grant loans at low interest to settlers who build *Randsiedlungen* under government supervision. They also exempt such settlements from taxation and in some instances actually subsidize them.

The policy of settling workers on the land, as long as they are within reach of varied sources of employment, is fundamentally sound. So, in the present state of Europe, is the idea of scattered subsistence colonies which can produce some of the food they need and which are less open to aerial attack than congested cities.

But there are certain disadvantages in the Nazi *Siedlungen*. Some of them have been built solely to house workers in new "decentralized" industrial plants in the country. In such settlements the workers have only one source of employment. When that fails they must get along on the produce of their gardens and their very small unemployment relief pay. Critics of the Nazi housing program also object to the policy of making all individual family houses for sale and not for rent. For that policy, they say, binds the worker to one neighborhood. Because he is building up a part ownership in his house, he does not feel free to move, even though better jobs may be available elsewhere. Other critics see in the *Siedlungen* policy a clever move to forestall revolution. For the settler will not be apt to favor any social upheaval which might take his property away from him. On the other hand, the fact that in the *Siedlungen*

workers have a chance to acquire property, even if it takes them a long time to do so, does help to remove class distinctions.

By far the most serious criticism that can be made of the program, from a housing point of view, is that so many of the houses built under it are primitive. From an economic point of view, however, there was good reason for omitting plumbing equipment. That was that the cost of the houses had to be kept down if workers were to be able to pay for them. The idea was that the settler could add more rooms and equipment to his house later if he found he could afford them.

Though the Nazi emphasis is on settlements of single family houses—detached or semi-detached—the cities continue to coöperate with public utility housing societies in building apartment houses where they are most needed. In fact, there is still a much greater demand for homes to rent than for homes to buy. This may be partly due to the general increase in working hours. For a man who works long hours in a factory is less apt to want to buy a home and garden than one who has a fair amount of leisure.

MARRIAGE LOANS AND FAMILY SUBSIDIES

Alarmed by Germany's falling birth rate, the Hitler regime has sought to encourage parents to have large families. The government has offered loans on very easy terms to "Aryan" young couples who want to get married and start a home. One quarter of the debt is cancelled with the birth of each child. The government also gives outright grants to very poor families who have four or more children, provided again that they are "Aryans." Both the loans and the grants are in the form of vouchers which can only be exchanged for furniture and other household articles. This policy naturally is of great benfit to the furniture industry. And indirectly it is a help to housing. For by coming to the aid of meager family budgets it sets free, temporarily at least, a higher proportion of income for rent or for instalments on the purchase of a home.

But, looking at the picture of German housing as a whole today, we can scarcely say that it is very progressive. The kind of experimentation that produced such interesting and varied architecture under the Republic is now frowned upon by the government. And though there are sound arguments in favor of the rural settlements, with their individual family houses, and many Germans are undoubtedly glad to live in them, still the interior standards of those houses cannot be described as advanced. Furthermore, even before the outbreak of war, home building in Germany had fallen off. For the building of the Westwall absorbed many of the materials which would normally have gone into housing. And many German workmen who might have been building homes were taken into the armament industries. There is still therefore, in spite of all the efforts that have been made, an estimated shortage of almost a million homes in Germany today.

As in Austria, housing as a really forward-looking movement flourished in Germany amid the ruins left by defeat in the World War. But the movement itself went down to defeat with the rise of dictatorship and the country's concentration on building up its military strength.

VII. Sweden and Holland

Though neutral nations were not in such financial straits after the war of 1914-18 as the belligerents were, they were plagued just as much by a shortage of houses and by abnormally high building costs. For four years they had geared their production to fill the trade demands of the warring powers. During all that time they had had to postpone building homes. Thus by the end of the war they were faced with a serious housing shortage. And the streams of refugees pouring over their borders had made their housing problems all the more acute.

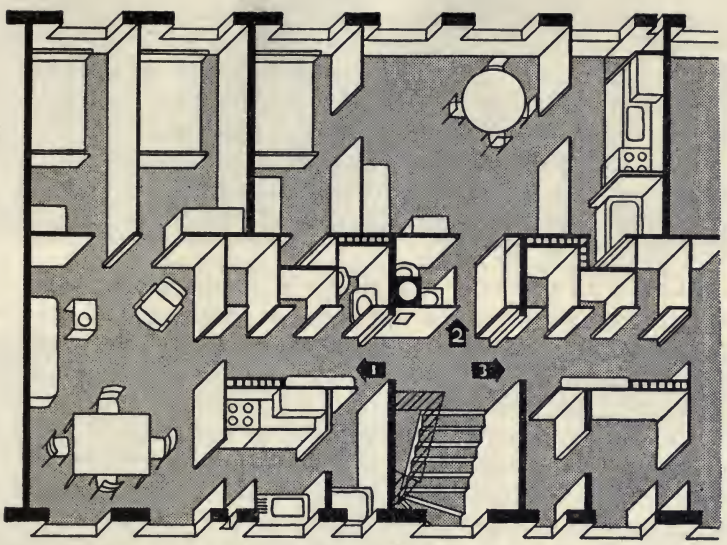
Sweden was one of the few countries in Western Europe that had escaped the worst evils of the Industrial Revolution. For industry had not flourished there until electricity, generated by water power, had been developed for fuel. As electricity could be distributed very cheaply, it had not been necessary for industries to establish themselves near its source, as they had elsewhere established themselves near the sources of coal. Consequently no unwieldy industrial cities had grown up in Sweden. And though the population had slowly increased during the nineteenth century, the proportion of town dwellers to country dwellers had remained roughly the same. Furthermore, there were few extremely wealthy and few extremely poor people in Sweden, and the majority of Swedish citizens could pay the rents the landlords asked.

Yet many individual houses were old and run-down. And overcrowded houses were pretty general. Because the winters are severe, heating a large house in Sweden is an expensive proposition. So it is a national habit for working families to live in one or two rooms to save money on fuel. In addition to coping with the housing shortage at the end of the World War, the Swedish government wanted to do something to relieve this traditional overcrowding of working families.

FIRST STEPS

Like other governments, at the end of the war the Swedish government put limits on the rents of the houses the country already had. It also said to certain approved agencies, "If you will build, we will give you one third of what it costs and lend you the rest of the money at 5 per cent." (Later they made it 4 per cent.) The "approved" agencies were mainly the municipalities and the coöperatives.

At first it was the municipalities which built most of the working-class housing. But since by 1923 the shortage was less acute, the Swedish government in that year gave up rent control and the housing subsidy. From that time on, the building



TYPICAL SWEDISH COOPERATIVE APARTMENTS

agencies to whom it lent cheap money for housing were mainly the coöperatives.

THE COÖPERATIVES SET THE PACE

For the coöperatives had proved themselves as skilled and as businesslike in the building of houses in Sweden as they had in other enterprises. Some of the industrial coöperatives built beautiful homes near their factories for their worker-members. Other coöperatives were formed for the sole purpose of building houses. Today there are over a thousand such organizations in Sweden.

One of the biggest coöperative housing societies is the H. S. B. *(Hyresgästernas sparkasse- och byggnadsförening*—"Tenants' Savings and Building Society"). Its central body arranges for loans, the wholesale buying of materials, and educational

programs in favor of good housing. It employs a large architectural staff and builds for its branch societies around the country. It has also gone into the manufacture of inexpensive furniture and fittings of modern design. Members of the branch societies manage their own housing developments. And since members all want efficient and economical management, because that will mean better returns on their shares, every one takes good care of his own quarters and puts pressure on his neighbors to do the same.

Most of the coöperative dwellings in Sweden are in blocks of apartments. Some are the last word in elegance, and are intended for sale or rent to middle-class people. Others are built on outlying land provided cheaply by the municipality and are let at moderate rents. Since 1936 the coöperatives have built yet another type especially for working families with several children: for these the town provides free land and the Swedish government gives the society a subsidy. For a family with three children the government pays 30 per cent of the rent, for a family with four, 40 per cent, with five, 50 per cent, with six, 60 per cent, and with seven or more, 70 per cent. The Swedes think this a better way of subsidizing family housing than adjusting rents to make them fit incomes, as some English cities have done.

ROOMS WITH A VIEW

But whatever the type of apartment the coöperatives build, they invariably apply high standards of design and equipment. The blocks are built as a rule in rows, with gardens and playgrounds between. When they are placed on a hillside, they are usually arranged so that as many windows as possible command the view.

Take the Kristineberg block dwellings in one of the suburbs of Stockholm, for example. They were started in 1932 by a coöperative with the help of the city government. They have a fine outlook over a lake and plenty of open space around. If we pay a visit to one of the buildings, we notice a num-



Apartments in Stockholm for families who receive state rent subsidies



Kristineberg cooperative apartments, Sweden



An up-to-date Swedish kitchen



A Swedish workman's cottage at Kvarnholmen



Living room in a Swedish cooperative apartment



Incinerator chute in a cooperative apartment house



Air view of Angby "small cottage" colony, near Stockholm



Assembling prefabricated wall sections



A "small cottage" kitchen



One of the five types of "small cottages"



Basement bath and laundry in a "small cottage"



Bay-windowed living room in a "small cottage"

ber of ground-floor shops. In the space between this building and the next, the children are at play in the community playground, surrounded by gay flower borders. One of the tenants has a small sign in her window announcing "Washing and Ironing Done." The woman who turns an extra penny by taking in her neighbors' laundry can use the electric washing and wringing machines in the basement and get her wash dried in next to no time in a special steam-heated drying room—a vast change from the old-fashioned washtub and clothes lines in a damp and steamy kitchen. While she is at work, she leaves her baby in the community nursery, where trained nurses look after him. The baby gets a warm meal at noon and a nap. There is also an infirmary where he will be put at the first sign of illness. His five-year-old brother meanwhile is taken care of in the kindergarten, which is equipped and run according to the most modern ideas.

If we look into one of the apartments, we find a compact but well-equipped home. The housewife shows us with pride a model bathroom and a kitchen more like a modern American one than any we could find elsewhere in Europe. There is an electric refrigerator, a gas cooker, a set of roomy cabinets and a stainless steel sink with all the running hot water a woman's heart could desire. The other rooms (there are only two) are small but well-proportioned and attractively furnished with pieces especially designed for small homes by a coöperative furniture factory. Through a glass door we catch a glimpse of a balcony with a fine show of pink petunias in the box clamped on its iron railing. Notice a combination sofa-bed in the living room. That would be exceptional in an English "council house." But we should remember that to Swedish families accustomed to living in one room, a two-room apartment in a coöperative apartment house spells progress. Besides, as our hostess reminds us, there are a gymnasium and social rooms in the building where parties, meetings, lectures and amateur theatrical entertainments are held. Consequently she and her family don't have to be confined to the apartment during all their leisure time.

Kristineberg boasts of several wrinkles that are especially ingenious. The windows are made of single pieces of plate glass, to give a clear view, and our housewife shows us how, to wash them, she swings them inward on brackets. The garbage she wraps in paper and puts into the incinerator chute. The chute is on the main landing and is connected with the basement, where the rubbish is burned. Last of all, our hostess takes us down to a small outbuilding to see a device which automatically beats carpets and mattresses.

Needless to say, not every coöperative housing development has *all* the up-to-date equipment we have seen at Kristineberg. But central heating and modern plumbing are quite usual, and elevators are common. So are the excellent provisions for the children, and the shops and social rooms for adults.

RENTS ARE LOW

Rents of coöperative flats in Sweden are about 30 to 40 per cent lower than the rents of private dwellings. Four kinds of saving make that reduction possible: the coöperatives often buy or lease land from the municipalities at a low figure; they have standardized units of construction and equipment so as to get the benefit of mass-production prices; they don't expect large dividends from their investments; and they keep the cost of repairs and management down by constantly checking up on these items themselves. Altogether coöperative societies have built something like 36,000 homes in Swedish towns since the end of the World War.

WHO FOOTED THE BILL?

Who footed the bill for this great development in building? Chiefly the coöperators themselves. From 1918 to 1929 the Swedish government kept up a temporary fund out of which to make housing loans. This fund consisted of government capital set aside for emergencies before the war, the proceeds of a liquor tax and the proceeds of a tax on existing dwellings. But in 1929 the government abolished the state fund and

created a permanent semi-private organization called the Swedish Housing Loan Fund instead. The government made a large grant of money for a capital reserve and then handed the fund over to a board consisting of seven coöperators and two government representatives. The coöperative building societies contributed most of the working capital to the fund themselves. Thus they took over the financing as well as the building of cheap housing. (But the government, as we have said, had later to come to the aid of the larger poor families.)

BACK TO THE SOIL IN SWEDEN

Although the coöperatives have done a great deal of housing in Sweden, the town governments have not on that account been idle. In fact they have been quietly filling in the corners the coöperatives left untouched. They have built homes for old people, for instance. And the City of Stockholm has tried out a very interesting homestead colony experiment which is worth our looking at.

Though some Swedish families show a decided preference for living in apartment communities, there are others who want little places of their own in the country. In summer these seekers after the simple life used to go out from Stockholm and camp in tiny huts on their allotment gardens on the city's rim. But the allotments threatened to turn into the sort of "shanty towns" we see outside many American cities today, and the Swedes wanted to prevent that. Since the Stockholm City Council owned large stretches of land on its outskirts, it decided to develop cottage colonies there on the pattern of the allotment huts, but with proper streets and sanitation.

BUILD YOURSELF A COUNTRY HOUSE?

The scheme sponsored by the Stockholm City Council for getting the cottages built has been very successful. The city government has drawn up plans and building instructions which even an amateur can understand. By following these instructions the people whose applications are accepted can build

suburban cottages for themselves. All they have to do is to put together standardized sections which are already partly assembled when they are delivered to the site. Skilled labor may be needed for the foundations and plumbing, but brothers, cousins, uncles and friends can be pressed into service to do the rest. They can usually get the house up in three or four summer week ends.

The financing of these cottages is almost as simple as the building. Tenants get from the municipality a long-term loan of 90 per cent of the capital cost of the cottage and contribute the remaining 10 per cent by doing the building themselves. The 90 per cent is in the form of materials, not cash, and as these materials are mass-produced they are about 15 per cent cheaper than regular building materials. Consequently these cottages are the least expensive living quarters of good standard you can find in Sweden.

Cheap though they are, these little houses are solid and attractive. Timber cottages, detached or semi-detached, with three, four or five rooms, they follow five different plans. A popular model has a sitting room and dining-kitchen on the ground floor, and a large basement containing a food cellar, a combined bathroom and laundry, a stove for central heating and hot water, a toilet and extra space for a workshop or garage. Upstairs are two or three bedrooms and plenty of roomy cupboards. All the cottages are painted in harmonious colors, and the streets are planted with apple, plum and mountain ash trees. Shops, public gardens and meeting halls are provided at convenient points, and more often than not there is a fiord or lake near by for swimming or ice-skating.

SO MUCH FOR SWEDISH HOUSING

How much have the Swedes accomplished through their housing program? Even to begin with, they had no vast slums. Now they have practically none—only a few old tenements here and there that are slated soon to come under the wrecker's hammer. Between 1916 and 1936 the "sickness of poverty"—

tuberculosis—fell in Sweden about 40 per cent. Better housing takes part of the credit for that. And some of the new Swedish housing sets an example, both in planning and equipment, that it would be hard to beat.

Nevertheless, although the Swedes have done good housing and have largely made up the shortage that existed in the nineteen-twenties, they have not by any means abolished overcrowding. Nor will they be able to abolish it until they have still more homes, particularly homes suitable for large families, offered at low rents. The business of accommodating large families of limited means is the least advanced part of Sweden's housing program. Although the recently established rent subsidies, based on the number of children a working family has, are a step in the right direction, such subsidies have not been in use long enough to have made any great dent in the problem.

HOLLAND IN THE VANGUARD

Holland is another up and coming country so far as housing goes. Although her concern with housing does not go back as far as England's, Holland was the first country in Europe to pass a housing law that really meant business. As we have seen (page 26), the Dutch Housing Act of 1901 not only regulated building but ordered the towns to clear slums, build low-rent houses and improve their town plans. And it provided for financial aid from the state to help the towns carry out the task. Practically all Dutch housing progress stems from this law. For although not all of its provisions were carried out to the fullest extent before the World War, when the big crisis in housing came, in 1919, the Dutch found that their 1901 law had already legalized everything they needed to do.

EMERGENCY MEASURES

In 1919, following four years of inactivity in the building field, Holland, like other countries, found herself with a critical shortage of houses. And, as in other countries, building costs were abnormally high.

Under the Housing Act of 1901 the Dutch municipalities had been able to get a subsidy in the form of a reduced interest rate on government loans for some of the houses they built. This subsidy was given, however, only when construction costs had risen so high that renting the houses on the basis of their cost would have put them out of reach of working-class families. As a matter of fact the municipalities had rarely asked for such a subsidy. Now, however, this ready-made arrangement came in handy. Up till 1924, by which time building costs had gone down to nearly normal again, the government gave subsidies not only to municipal housing but to public housing societies and certain private builders as well. Since then, subsidies have been given only for housing the families with the very lowest incomes, the state paying half and the town half. And since the world depression the number of houses receiving such subsidies has been reduced.

THE DUTCH HAVE DIFFICULTIES

Apart from the question of financing, the Dutch have peculiar building problems. They live in a low-lying country. It is difficult to build tall blocks of apartments on marshy land, and the cost of driving down the very deep pile foundations they require when built on such land is prohibitive. On the other hand, single-family houses cannot be allowed to grow up where they will in ever-widening suburban developments because Holland must preserve her agricultural land and not let it be overrun by the towns. So the Dutch have had to accept a higher density of dwellings to the acre than some of the other European countries would approve. But they have thought up ingenious ways of making life pleasant in spite of that.

Though all except their heavy traffic streets are made narrow, to economize on land, the Dutch pave them with cheerful red bricks. The sidewalk is usually on one side of the street only, but is shaded with trees. And because the houses generally are not very tall, those on one side of a narrow street rarely cast their shadows on those on the other. Pleasant tree-

shaded walks border the canals, giving the people in nearby houses an attractive outlook and a place for a stroll. And despite the necessity for building more houses to the acre than is usual in new suburbs in other countries, the Dutch people have certain advantages all their own. For they can live in the very center of the town without being cut off from the soil the way apartment dwellers usually are. Flats are chiefly in two-storied buildings, the upper ones having broad balconies and the lower ones little gardens. But detached cottages, which the Dutch think more suitable for families, predominate.

NEW HOUSES IN HOLLAND

Built usually of dark red brick, the new houses have gay, if tiny, gardens. Inside they have plenty of room but few "gadgets." For the Dutch officials think it more important to put their housing money into space than into elaborate equipment. At least three bedrooms (so that parents, boys and girls can sleep separately) are the rule. But there is no central heating, for coke and coal are too expensive in Holland to make central heating and running hot water practicable in low-rent housing projects. (For that matter even middle-class apartments, though centrally heated, often have no running hot water.) Tenants supply their own stoves—gas for cooking, coke for heating—and their own electric wall or ceiling fixtures. Private baths are considered a luxury. Some of the later housing developments have shower-baths, however, and there is a tiled cold-water sink and toilet in every dwelling.

Community bathhouses are not as a rule built into Dutch housing projects, but there are usually municipal baths close by. There are rarely any special laundry facilities, either in the individual homes or in projects as a whole. But cottage-dwellers, of course, have gardens where they can hang their wash out. Balconies in the apartments come in handy for the same thing. In the municipal housing schemes there are special quarters for old people, shopping centers and very often schools. The only playgrounds provided are in connection with

the schools, but these are well equipped and supervised. Private organizations have started nursery schools in a number of the projects, the authorities supplying the space.

WHO BUILT THEM?

Under the 1901 Housing Act Holland has put up 220,000 new dwelling units financed by public funds. (For the United States that would mean, proportionately, about three and a quarter million houses.) These new housing units amount to about 10 per cent of the total number of dwellings in the country. Who built them?

About one-quarter were the work of the municipalities. The remaining three-quarters were built by the public housing societies. These societies are the real dynamo of Dutch housing.

TENANT HOUSING COÖPERATIVES

Most of the Dutch public housing societies are organizations of *tenants*, not house-owners or builders or financiers. Before a society of tenants can begin to build, it must have a certificate from the government. It then draws up plans for a housing project and applies to the town government for a loan. If the town government approves the plans, it in turn applies to the national government for a loan of 100 per cent of the estimated cost of the project. If the loan is granted, the town passes it on to the society. The part of the loan devoted to building must be repaid in 50 years, that used in buying the land in 75 years. But if the municipality provides the land, as it often does, it can lease it to the society and no land loan will then be needed, as the land rent will be paid out of the rents of the project after it is completed. The town housing department helps to build the project and afterwards keeps a check on the management. But the management is in the hands of an executive board elected by the tenants themselves.

In this way people in Holland who join a tenants' coöperative can not only set about getting better housing but can keep the rents down by managing it themselves after they have got



Municipal houses in Amsterdam, Holland



Amsterdam homes for old people



Amsterdam municipal flats for rehousing slum dwellers

Modern group houses in Amsterdam



Asterdorp houses for "problem" families

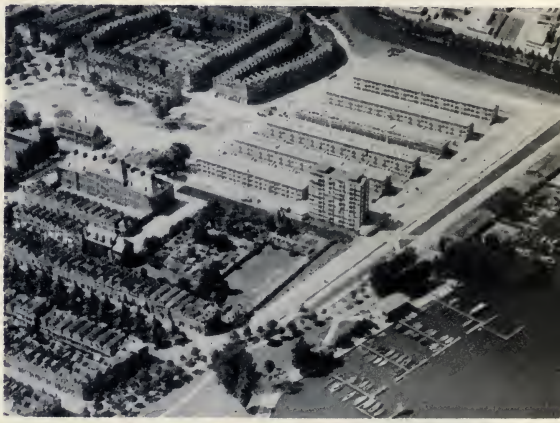




Air view of Römerstadt garden suburb, Frankfort-on-the-Main, Germany



Air view of a municipal housing scheme with a "vermicelli" street pattern, Liverpool, England



Modern housing in Rotterdam, Holland, displays new standards of space

Haussmann slum clearance in Paris: a new boulevard, and more crowding on either side



A section of Wythenshawe, Manchester's satellite community



it. But they cannot own it or make profits from it. They buy a small share in the society when they join but they do not have to put any capital into the project. When the building loan has been repaid out of the rents, the whole project becomes the property of the town government. This means that whatever small profits the rents yield after the fifty-year paying-back period is over go into the community coffers. Since the community took all the risk for the venture, the Dutch think that a just arrangement.

Many people in Holland were critical of the idea of tenant coöperatives at first. They thought low-income families could not be trusted with so much responsibility. But the tenant societies have been a great success. They manage their properties efficiently and in a thoroughly democratic fashion. Moreover, except for the houses they built in the emergency period 1919-24, they have paid their way without government subsidy. They do not even ask for tax exemption, for there is no such thing for houses in Holland. Some "housers" think that tenant coöperatives on the Dutch model would be a good idea for Americans with incomes just above the limits set for tenants of public housing.

HOUSES FOR "PROBLEM" FAMILIES

Among the houses built in Holland by the town governments themselves (with government loans similar to those granted to the societies) are some of a special type designed as temporary quarters for "problem" families, who pay very low rents.

A typical development of this kind is Asterdorp, in Amsterdam. There all the houses are built around a court within an enclosing wall. This wall has only one entrance, which is locked at night. Each house has a kitchen-living room and bedrooms, all on the ground floor, and a tiny backyard. There is a tiled recess for the stove in the kitchen but no way of heating the bedrooms. The toilet is out in the yard. In one respect, at least, Asterdorp has better than normal equipment: for, as an invitation to cleanliness, it has a community laundry and

bathhouse. There are allotment gardens, too, as well as a playground for the children, a library and clubrooms. Social workers organize clubs for the housewives and children, and a nurse attends to minor ailments three times a week.

Asterdorp described on paper sounds somewhat more "livable" than the St. Brigitta houses for poor families we saw in Vienna. But the families dislike the place—as who wouldn't? It's one thing to have slovenly habits, but quite another to be roped off because of them. It's only when their original quarters are appallingly poor and cramped that families will move into places like Asterdorp. So Amsterdam has given up building such projects. Whether this means that the city will adopt the more progressive English method of placing "problem" families in normal communities and letting them learn from their neighbors' good example remains to be seen.

CLEARING SLUMS

In addition to building houses, Dutch towns have cleared practically all their slums. To be sure, there were never as many of them in Holland as there were in the other Continental countries and in England, for the Dutch early embarked on a policy of deciding where and how new houses could be built. Consequently, when they started remodeling their towns they rarely had to tear down whole districts. Usually it was a matter of demolishing a few insanitary houses, clearing some of the sites for parks and playgrounds, and repairing other old houses, especially if they were of historic interest and gave character to a neighborhood. But from then on any new building that was done, either by public or by private agencies, had to fit into the town plan and also harmonize with the historic architecture of the older buildings.

WHAT ABOUT RENTS?

In Holland houses built with the aid of public money cannot be let to persons with incomes exceeding seven times the amount of the rent. Actually, most of the tenants pay about

a fifth of their incomes in rent. Rents for the houses built by tenant coöperatives are usually about 20 per cent lower than for houses of similar quality built and managed by private enterprise. These low rents are made possible by the non-profit character of the coöperatives, the low interest and instalments they pay on their government loans, and their savings in management costs. Rents for municipally built houses are lower still, for as a rule such houses are subsidized. By preference they are allotted to tenants who have been displaced by slum clearance or are living in overcrowded homes. But the rents even of the subsidized houses are too high for the very largest poor families, some of whom have as many as twelve children. The Dutch have discussed differential renting for such families, but officials fear the system would lead to endless disputes.

HOLLAND IN THE BALANCE

The Dutch have demonstrated what a lot of housing progress can be made even within the limits of a tiny, waterlogged country like theirs. Though their new houses are not equipped according to American standards, they are attractive and roomy. Holland's health and standard of living are vastly better than they were at the turn of the century. Moreover, Dutch tenant coöperatives are valuable schools of democracy. Like Sweden, Holland has wiped out all her worst slums. And she has done all this on a pretty sound financial basis. Except for the brief post-war emergency period, very little state money is actually an outright grant to housing in Holland. The state loans come back with interest and the profits the towns will begin to collect in 1955, when the early tenant coöperative projects have paid off their indebtedness, will partly offset the subsidies town governments have been handing out in the meantime.

On the other hand, there is still a shortage of low-rent houses for the very largest families, who are the least able to pay rents based on the cost of building and managing decent homes. So that problem remains.

Then, too, the Dutch have not solved the problem of producing a steady supply of new houses every year to replace worn-out ones. Holland is doing very little house building now. For world economic dislocations have brought her program almost to a standstill.

VIII. Cities of Today and Tomorrow

We have taken a bird's-eye view of the homes built under government auspices in six European countries since the war of 1914-18. We have found varying ways of attacking the housing problem and varying achievements.

Along with the attempt to give working people with small incomes decent homes, there has been a movement afoot to create a better general environment for everybody. Although this movement cannot be said to have made a great deal of headway as yet, in some countries large-scale public housing projects have given a foretaste of what it may accomplish in the future. Some of them have shown, for instance, how buildings can be placed to take advantage of sunlight and breeze, how the surrounding streets can be laid out to take care of traffic without subjecting the tenants to traffic nuisances, how community services such as schools, shops, restaurants, meeting halls and recreation grounds can best be arranged to suit the convenience of the people who use them.

In our American cities, as they expanded, one kind of neighborhood plan was common. This was a gridiron of streets, mapped out on graph paper without the slightest regard for the lay of the land. Hills, woods, meadows, ravines—the geometric street pattern unrolled itself over them all alike. The rectangular city blocks bounded by the streets were usually divided into lots 50, 40 or even as little as 20 feet wide. Usually an alley split each block in two to give access to the rear of the lots.

The houses crowded on these lots symbolized a narrow way of life. They had front yards too small to grant privacy from the street and side yards too small to accommodate anything but the shadow of the house next door. Garages and driveways came along later to eat up any space that might formerly have been used as a garden. And as the serried ranks of these small drab houses multiplied, promoters tried to compensate for their inconveniences by giving them "bungalow" or "English half timber" or "French provincial" fronts. These gridiron blocks and tight little rows of houses are being busily laid out in America even today.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

But in most of our larger cities there is another kind of suburb. In this kind the streets wind about in a sort of vermicelli pattern, and there are no back alleys at all. The suburb may be "Bellavista" or "Floral Gardens," opened about 1926. There you'll find the city's newest and most expensive homes.

Look at the airplane view of an English garden suburb on page 86. That's where the vermicelli street pattern came from. But what the American promoters did was to take over only the superficial street pattern without any of the fundamental ideas of the English garden city super-block plan.

What are the advantages of the garden city super-block plan over the street and alley system? We can see them quite plainly in some of the best English and Continental housing developments.

Look, for example, at the plan of part of the Dove Cote housing development on the outskirts of Liverpool (shown on page 93). Here dark and useless side yards have been done away with by grouping the houses in short rows. Grouping the houses in this way reduces outside wall area and makes them easier to heat. At the same time it gets rid of side windows staring blankly into each other and so creates more real privacy for each family. The groups of houses face curving roadways which enclose large irregular-shaped blocks with open

spaces in the middle. These open spaces are used for private gardens for the tenants and in some instances for common recreation grounds. The curving roadways round the blocks serve only for access to houses in the development and not for through traffic. But because of emphasis on an "informal" arrangement at Dove Cote the houses are not always placed so as to catch the maximum amount of sunshine and breeze.

OPEN BLOCK PLANS

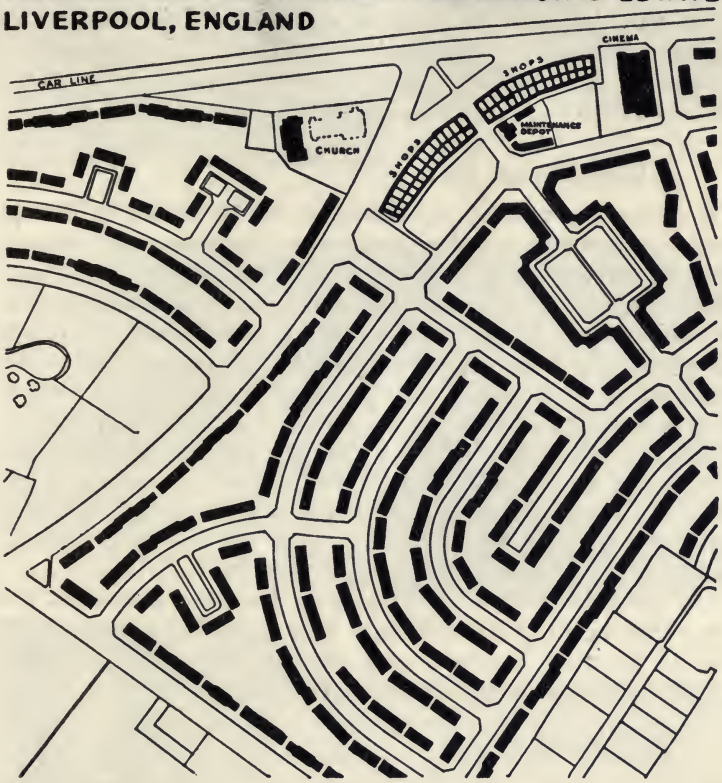
To find even greater economy and common sense in block-planning we have to go to Frankfort-on-the-Main in Germany. There during the 1920's and until the Nazi revolution in 1933, a tremendous experiment in housing and town planning was going on.

The first consideration of the Frankfort planners was to place dwellings so that they would get maximum sunlight and breeze. View and relation to community facilities such as kindergartens, schools and churches were other considerations. In some of the most economical developments built in Frankfort the groups of buildings were arranged in parallel lines (the spaces between them being open at the ends) and at right angles to the streets, which run east and west. In this kind of plan all the living rooms and terraces or balconies face west, and the entries and kitchens east. And the people who live in the houses escape the feeling of confinement one gets from looking out on a closed court. They also enjoy quiet, privacy and sunshine. And since the streets pass only the end of each block, instead of along its full length, there is a tremendous saving in road construction costs as well.

SERVICE PROBLEMS

In the English schemes you reach the service entrance in the rear by a walk leading round the house. If the group is long, you pass through an archway in the row. In many of the houses at Frankfort the service and main entrance are combined. The problem of garbage disposal, the most pressing service prob-

PART OF DOVECOTE MUNICIPAL HOUSING ESTATE LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND



lem, is met either by asking tenants to deposit their garbage at a place where the city trucks can collect it, or by using standardized containers, screened by shrubs, and accessible from the lanes which separate the groups of buildings. These lanes are quite different from the old alleys: they are landscaped walks wide enough for a specially designed garbage cart or, in case of emergency, a fire truck or ambulance.

The examples we have looked at show the possibilities of planning which takes into consideration the lay of the land,

prevailing breezes, sun, privacy, outlook, service and traffic problems. As public housing has gone ahead and added to the number of concrete examples of such improved neighborhood planning, more and more people have come to see that only by some such basic planning can whole cities be made "livable."

A TREMENDOUS TASK

Of course the task of replanning all the old cities in Europe and America staggers the imagination. Some countries haven't any laws yet that would permit such drastic action. In America most cities have what are called zoning laws. But these laws as a rule serve merely to confirm existing trends in a given neighborhood rather than to shape the development of that neighborhood in the way that would make it fit in best with the city as a whole. If a street has a shop or two, for instance, the zoning commission may label it a commercial street, though more shops may not be needed there. Furthermore, it has been fairly easy for private individuals to have zoning restrictions set aside. Only a very few American cities have city planning commissions whose decisions can be legally enforced.

In Europe, however, city planning has gone somewhat further than in America. Although they haven't yet made widespread progress, European city planners have given a number of practical demonstrations of their ideas.

SWEDISH TOWNS

Sweden is perhaps the country that has done most to make city planning a reality. Swedish towns early bought up land to control its uses. And in 1907 wide city planning powers were granted them by law. There are now a hundred Swedish cities with planning schemes.

This is the way the schemes work. A city planning commission studies population trends and the existing lay-out of its entire city area. It then draws skeleton plans for the development or reorganization of each district in relation to the rest of the city. These plans indicate only the general land use and



Windows of houses placed at an oblique angle to the street have a long view. Cooperative housing in Denmark



Cooperative apartments in Moscow



Blocks placed at right angles to the street save street costs and minimize traffic nuisances. Berlin Zehlendorf



Cooperative housing arranged in super-blocks, Neubuhl, Switzerland



Absence of planning in San Francisco produced this



New homes for Negroes in Miami, put up without benefit of a master plan



Slum children in Youngstown, Ohio, have to play in the street



Slum dwellers in Louisville, Kentucky, look out on a cheerless world



New USHA apartments in Cleveland provide a healthier, more hopeful environment

Housewives do their wash in a USHA community laundry in Atlanta, Georgia



Housing makes jobs. Construction at Red Hook, Brooklyn



the principal streets. But they stipulate what the height of the buildings must be and how much of the land they may cover. After that any one who wants to build must refer to the general plan. And even if his building scheme fits in perfectly with the general plan, the commission will veto it unless it seems to be needed for normal city expansion. In this way the commission prevents spotty overdevelopment and real estate speculation. In other words, like a wise forester tending his woods, it gives the city freedom to grow but prevents it from running wild.

But for successful planning you need disinterested administrators and technicians with both brains and imagination. You also need a practical administrative set-up. We can see very clearly how great this need is in England, where such a complicated administration has been set up that it has hindered rather than helped the town planners.

TOWN PLANNING IN ENGLAND

England had a town planning law even before the World War. The one she works under now is the Town and Country Planning Act, passed in 1932.

This Act is only moderately progressive. Since auto-buses have invaded English country roads and made it easier for people to get about, builders have been busy producing a rash of unsightly "country villas" fronting the bus routes. To stop this "ribbon development" from marring the entire English countryside, the 1932 Act permitted rural as well as town planning. Unfortunately, however the Act revoked an earlier law making it *compulsory* for local governments to plan their domains. And when an English local authority does draw up a plan, it has to go through a maze of red tape before it can begin to carry it out.

Still, some authorities have tried out the idea. Manchester planned an entire satellite city, called Wythenshawe. It submitted the plan to Parliament several times. In 1930, it got government approval and began to build.

Manchester, you see, couldn't expand north, south, east or west because other towns had grown up right on its boundaries. But it had to do something because the number of its inhabitants had multiplied by five in the previous sixty years and the city was hopelessly congested.

Wythenshawe was a huge private estate about eight miles south of the city's center. Manchester incorporated the whole of it within the city boundaries. The City Council bought nearly three-quarters of the land in it at prices based on agricultural values and therefore very low. The rest was open to private purchasers but the city controlled its use.

As a result Wythenshawe is growing up a likeable, livable town. Streets and buildings have adapted themselves to the woods and streams that were there to begin with. Heavy traffic to and from Manchester is drawn off on to a superhighway much like the Westchester County parkways in New York State. A permanent green belt surrounding the built-up areas serves for different kinds of recreation. In the plan spaces are mapped out for community centers, shopping districts, public buildings and light industries. So Wythenshawe, though in a sense a "dormitory suburb" of Manchester, is a place where people can live and work without going to Manchester at all. To attract home builders and manufacturers the city offers tax reductions on new buildings for several years. When it is fully developed Wythenshawe will house some 100,000 people.

Not all town planning in England, however, is as sound as the planning of Wythenshawe. In contrast there are huge suburban developments like Becontree—an offshoot of London —that are big enough to be independent towns but cannot stand on their own feet.

MISTAKEN PLANS

Becontree is a public housing project covering nearly five square miles of land. It has 25,000 dwellings and houses over 100,000 people. But except for a few service jobs, Becontree offers no opportunities for earning a living. Its workers have

to crowd on to London's already choked transportation lines every morning to go to work in the city. And the countryside meanwhile has been pushed further away from the trapped Londoner by the breadth of Becontree.

This kind of mistake—neglecting to dovetail new housing with opportunities for work near by—has been made in a number of English public housing developments. It is one of the features of the English program most open to criticism. Similarly, many English estates are lacking in sufficient facilities for social life. Sites for schools and churches there are, but tenants complain that there are not enough meeting halls, clubs, restaurants and amusement centers.

FRENCH GARDEN CITIES

By contrast the French, where they have done any large-scale planning at all, have produced whole communities complete with services and homes for people of various social and economic classes. During and after the World War the government of the Department of the Seine bought up several hundred acres of land around Paris at low agricultural prices. It has since roughed out plans for eleven towns separated by wooded stretches and farm lands. It is this Seine Department program that has given French city planners their big opportunity to show what they can do.

For some of these towns have already taken shape—Drancy-la-Muette, Chatenay-Malabry, Plessis-Robinson, for instance. In some of the later developments extremely tall blocks of flats serve as focal points in the general design, like church towers in older towns. These flats are intended for single people or families without children, who very often prefer such accommodations. There are, besides, cottages with gardens, laid out along pleasant streets. As a result of careful research into community needs, schools are grouped near the family homes and markets near the shopping centers, and dwellings most likely to be rented by brainworkers are guarded as far as possible from noise. It is in these new towns of the Seine Depart-

ment that some of the dwellings of striking design and convenience which we mentioned in Chapter V are to be found.

Unfortunately, however, the French planners failed in two serious matters. Rents in their garden cities are on the average higher than in the working-class districts of Paris. For the houses are not subsidized and rents must therefore cover all costs. And transportation facilities to and from the capital are poor. Consequently, Drancy and its neighboring towns have failed to attract many tenants.

GERMAN CITY PLANNING

The Germans, too, have made some significant contributions to city planning. They have built a number of new suburbs and replanned old sections of some of their cities. We have already seen something of the enlightened housing and town planning that was carried on in Frankfort-on-the-Main, for instance, during the time of the Republic. There the biggest emphasis was upon creating good living conditions. But after the rise of Hitler the main emphasis of German city planning changed.

For the Nazis wanted most of all to create magnificence that would enhance the glory of the state. You've probably read newspaper reports of their spectacular plans for renovating Berlin. Some of Berlin's slums were razed to make way for imposing superhighways leading out across the country. There was a scheme for a tremendous meeting hall opposite the *Reichstag* building—the space around the hall to accommodate a million persons taking part in Nazi demonstrations. In other cities, too, monster structures were begun.

The renovation of Berlin, of course, involved slum clearance after a fashion. But it was uncommonly like the sort of slum clearance that was carried out in the nineteenth century by Baron Haussmann in Paris. There, to make a fine setting for the Emperor Napoleon III at the time of the Paris Exposition in 1867, Haussmann tore down almost half of the city's residential buildings. Through the most congested quarters he drove straight, broad avenues, later to be bordered by mag-

nificent public buildings and palaces. Meanwhile the poor families thrown out of house and home by the clearance crowded into the remaining slums and made them still more intolerable.

As we have seen, the present German government has not neglected housing altogether, in the Haussmann fashion, for nowadays no government can. But huge sums spent on building military roads, mammoth arenas, auditoriums, and so on, necessarily leave less money for building homes. And, as we have seen, there is a serious shortage of homes in the Greater Reich. Now that Germany is at war, this shortage may be expected to increase sharply.

SOVIET CITY PLANNING

In the Soviet Union we find city plans have been laid down that are just as full of grandeur and glorification of the state as those of Nazi Germany. Soviet city plans, like the German ones, are part of a vast system of regional and national planning designed to make the whole country more efficient and powerful. But they are schemes for comfortable and convenient living as well. Hundreds of cities and towns are in various stages of building and rebuilding.

Look at Moscow, for instance. Think of entirely rebuilding Chicago, for Chicago has a population approximately the same as Moscow's—three and a half million people. That would be a pretty big job. And yet that was the sort of job the Russians set out to do in 1931.

A NEW CAPITAL CITY

First of all they decided on the general principles they were going to follow. Moscow was to be freed from congested areas. It was to have a number of residential districts organized to create healthy living conditions for its people. Its river was to be deepened to increase its usefulness. And canals were to be dug to shorten the river's course and create lagoons for recreation. Probably most important of all, the city's future population was not to exceed five million. That meant that trans-

portation systems, streets, utilities, schools and so on could be planned with a clear idea in mind of the traffic they'd have to bear. Another stipulation that helped to simplify the plan was that Moscow was to become a commercial and governmental, not an industrial, center. For future industrial development was to take place in the country, not in existing cities.

Furthermore, decentralization was to be the order of the day within Moscow as well as without. There were to be no concentrated shopping, theatre and residential districts. Rather, an even density of about thirty-four persons to the acre was to be the goal. To reach it, the city's present area of about 110 square miles will have to be extended to 230.

What about housing? Well, in spite of the rule about only thirty-four persons to the acre, all new housing in Moscow was to be in apartment buildings six or more stories high. These were to be arranged in areas called super-blocks—22 to 27 acres uncrossed by traffic arteries. Each super-block was to have its own community facilities—schools, nurseries, stores, theatres and so on.

Of course such sweeping changes would be impossible in most countries because their public authorities have no legal right to such sweeping control of land. But in the U.S.S.R. the government in the name of the people owns all the land. And if their country ever reaches a state of economic self-sufficiency, the Soviets won't have to bother about lack of cash for their housing and city-planning projects, either. They will be able to take it out of any industry or enterprise that shows a surplus.

But all that is still on the lap of the gods. It's one thing to make beautiful plans but quite another to turn them into reality. The Russians are short of skilled technicians and so far have often sacrificed quality to speed in their building. Sometimes plaster falls all too soon in the new houses, doors and window frames warp, equipment fails to function.

What will happen to all these building schemes under wartime conditions is not yet clear. But the one hopeful thing about the work done so far is that errors and deficiencies in

the construction of individual buildings can be much more easily set right in the future than a bad city or neighborhood plan. The imaginative sweep of Soviet city planning is a challenge in particular to America. In our cities, it is true, builders are putting up houses of a much higher standard of construction than is common in Russia. But they are putting them up on crowded sites that may not be thinned out for generations.

And so, as war-torn Europe turns away from the business of housing her people and the beginnings of her city-planning movement, we come back to America. Here there is much to do before we can create decent living conditions for all our people. But we are not at war and we have a housing movement already going ahead.

IX. America, What Next?

After looking at Europe's record, we ask ourselves: What can we do with our own housing movement? Well, we can, if we choose, wipe out our slums. We can clear away the ramshackle, disease-ridden, firetrap dwellings that cluster around our mines, factories and steel mills, near our docks and rail terminals, and in the centers of our cities. We can pull down the grim little tar-paper shacks, patched with oddments from the dump heap, that are all the shelter many tenant farmers and agricultural laborers can afford. From Maine to California, from Florida to the State of Washington, we can build comfortable, healthy homes instead. If we choose, we can.

At the same time, we can prevent builders from putting up new slums—homes packed so tightly together that, with all their modern plumbing, they are close kin to the dark dense dwellings of the nineteenth century. Again, it's a matter of choice.

For the machinery for accomplishing all this is already there. During the depression the Federal government set up more than one agency to help private enterprise finance homes. One is the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), created to save families who had started buying their homes during normal times from losing them by defaulting on their payments in times of depression. Another is the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which encourages private capital to invest in the building of homes for sale or rent to families with moderate means. In order to do this, the FHA guarantees the payment of interest and repayment of principal up to 90 per cent on such investments. At the same time the FHA sets up both price and minimum construction standards for the enterprises it guarantees. Then there is the Farm Security Administration (FSA), which took over the three greenbelt towns built by the Resettlement Administration in the depression and which is now experimenting with the building of low-cost farm homes. Lastly, there is the United States Housing Authority (USHA), whose sole job it is to rehouse the lowest-income third of the nation—the people who are now living in slums and can't afford to do otherwise.

Housing is not just one agency's job. It is not just the government's job. As we have seen, in Europe governments stepped in to help with housing. But the only housing they actually took care of themselves was that for lower-paid workers. At the same time an enormous housing demand was left for private enterprise to meet. And, far from competing with private enterprise, in England and Sweden public housing actually stimulated a demand for private housing. The two programs did not overlap but followed parallel lines, with private housing well in the lead.

So, in this country, too, private enterprise will have by far the biggest part of the job to do. It is only where private enterprise cannot at present turn out homes at low enough cost for workers that USHA can step into the picture.

And for USHA to step into the picture and do what private enterprise cannot at present do, it has to provide a subsidy. In all the countries we have visited decent homes have come within the reach of the lowest-income families only as a result of a state subsidy. If in Europe such subsidies have recently been cut down or cut off altogether, it is not because the housing problem of those families has been solved, but because of economic depression or the demands of war. It may be, of course, that, as new economies in design and construction are devised, public housing will be able to pay its way without an annual subsidy or can hand over its job to private enterprise. But at present there seems no way to provide decent homes for lower-paid workers except with a government subsidy.

The USHA therefore may offer an annual subsidy of as much as 3½ per cent of the capital cost of each public housing project. This annual contribution is given only if, and for as long as, it is needed to bring rents down to the level of the average rents asked for slum dwellings in the neighborhood. It must be matched by a local subsidy of at least one-fifth of the Federal subsidy. This local subsidy may be in the form of tax exemption. The USHA also lends up to 90 per cent of the cost of approved projects, the cities supplying the remaining 10 per cent. By the end of 1939 the USHA had lent or agreed to lend some $670,000,000 for public housing throughout the country. In other words, it had helped to finance 160,000 dwelling units, enough to house about 640,000 people.

FUTURE PROGRAM OF THE USHA

But what about those 10,000,000 families who, according to reliable estimates, are still not properly housed? The USHA itself suggests that about 5½ million of these families might in time be supplied by private enterprise, some possibly with repaired and modernized old houses, others with new ones. But to supply as many homes as that at prices all those people can afford to pay, the building industry will need to make

economies through large-scale building and better coöperation among its various sections. If it fails, many of those 5½ million families will remain potential USHA tenants. But even if it succeeds, 4½ million families will remain for the USHA to care for. Mr. Nathan Straus, Administrator of the USHA, therefore advocated recently that the USHA should plan to build 300,000 public housing units a year for the next fifteen years. The program would need to be reëxamined each year, of course, to see if all of it were really necessary. Congress in the fall of 1939, however, refused to grant any new appropriations to the USHA for any future program whatever.

PUBLIC OPINION

We have said that the machinery for a big housing program exists. But just how it will be used and whether it will be used at all in the future depends upon public opinion and how well informed it is. There was no real public housing program in England, for instance, until the public demanded "Homes for Heroes" after the World War. And one of the reasons why France has built so few low-rent houses of modern standard is that her people haven't as yet vigorously demanded public action in the housing field.

If large numbers of American taxpayers begin to realize that spending public money to build decent homes is sounder in the long run than spending it on relief of unemployed building trades workers and on costly police and fire and health protection in the slums, they will demand more public action in the housing field. They will see that preventive medicine is sounder than curative—and usually cheaper, in the long view. So they will want the municipalities to go on building homes.

LOCAL INITIATIVE

And because it is the municipalities that have the responsibility for planning, building and operating public housing projects, while the USHA helps to finance them and sets standards, public opinion need not go all the way to Washington to

demand public housing. It can demand it, so to speak, over its own back fence. Today there are more than 250 cities—ranging from big metropolitan centers like New York, Chicago and San Francisco to towns like Sarasota, Florida and Billings, Montana—that have working housing authorities. These housing authorities were created and carry on their duties under special enabling laws passed in thirty-eight of the states. Needless to say, they would never have been set up if it had not been for a local public demand.

If European experience is any guide, this decentralization of public housing administration is a wise arrangement. It is the local government that knows most about the local housing problem and is best fitted to cope with it. And, as England early found out, the local government does a better housing job when it has a financial stake in the outcome. For if the local government contributes money to its housing program, it wants to see that its money is well spent.

The kind of building local authorities do will of course vary. Decentralizing public housing and handing over the initiative to local authorities meant giving them some freedom of choice. But the European countries have found it best to set minimum standards to apply nationally. Their experience has shown that durable houses of good but simple design are in the long run an economy for public housing. They cost more in the beginning than "shoddy" buildings but last longer and do not need such frequent repair. It will be strange if America, the land of ingenuity, cannot adapt the best European housing designs to her own needs without adding unduly to costs.

BRINGING COSTS DOWN

But costs, of course, must be watched. If we bring them down (short of building "shoddy"), we can build more houses with the funds available. Vienna achieved a great deal in this direction through manufacturing itself some of the building materials it needed, and through the central large-scale buying of others. English and Swedish cities, too, went in for large-scale

buying of materials and equipment. Mass production methods helped the Swedish coöperatives and some of the German cities cut the prices also. In England better coöperation among workers, contractors and manufacturers eliminated strikes and other costly delays. And in all countries the fact that there was a steady volume of construction tended gradually to lower prices. If we can match European achievement in trimming costs, our public housing will be so much the sounder.

HOUSING IS PART OF CITY PLANNING

But our public housing will not be genuinely sound unless it can become a part of long-term town and country planning. We have seen some European cities wrestling with this larger problem with varying degrees of success. But even their failures point to the need for such planning.

Here in this country we have codes which set forth minimum standards for the site lay-out, structure and equipment of buildings. But in most cases these minimum standards are very low. Zoning laws establish where new buildings may go up. But, as we have seen, they are not always wisely administered or strictly enforced. Meantime, new slums spring up unchecked and cities grow to their own disadvantage. As long as we neglect to work out city plans that can really be enforced it is possible that some new public housing projects will turn out to have been wrongly placed. A model project, for instance, might go up on a site that would be needed ten years later, say, for a railroad or a main traffic highway.

But before American cities can do anything really effective to reorganize their lay-out and control their future growth, they will need laws giving them power to curb land speculation and the misuse of land—particularly the crowding of buildings on the land. When we consider that the population of the whole world could be accommodated at a density of only 40 persons (or ten families) to the acre in the State of Kansas alone, we realize how absurd it is that even so-called model housing like Knickerbocker Village in New York City should have a density of 1,000 persons to the acre.

BUYING LAND

If cities could control land uses and land speculation, it would be a big help to housing. But meantime land speculation persists, and city land is therefore high priced. Some way for cities to buy land for public housing at reasonable prices might be worked out immediately, even if municipal control of land had to come later.

In England, when a local authority wants to buy land for housing, it can get an impartial board of appraisal to fix the price. But the board of appraisal figures, not on what the land might be worth if such and such a development were to take place in the future, but on its value for housing. And if it is covered by rotten slum houses, they are not included in the price. Not having such an arrangement, many Continental cities have used their general land-buying power to take over land whenever it was on the market at low prices. In this way they were able to put cheap land into storage against future housing needs. This is the sort of land-buying power cities in New York State recently acquired. Cities in other states might well seek similar power from their state legislatures.

LOOKING AHEAD

So, as we look at the situation in America, we see that we have here and now the makings of a housing boom. Our government has sought to stimulate private capital to build. It has set up the USHA to provide homes for families that private enterprise cannot cater to. And the USHA program is wisely decentralized. With strong public support it can get the necessary appropriations from Congress and go forward.

But before we can create a decent environment for everybody, we need to cut the costs of building, to regulate the use and the price of land, to do some extensive city planning and replanning. That is a big job. Still, while Europe turns aside from the building of homes to the building of bombproof shelters, and pours her men and money down the drain of war, we can perhaps be getting on with that job.

Even here in the United States, of course, the war brings disturbing shifts in our economic life. War industries boom, prices go up. But as Thurman Arnold, Assistant Attorney General, has said, housing and its supply branches represent the only non-war industry large enough to compete with the armament, steel and other industries that flourish in wartime. We ought, therefore, Mr. Arnold argues, to put all we can into housing *now*, to keep our national economy from getting top-heavy on the war industries side and then having a slump when the war is over.

Perhaps the war might be called a challenge to America to pick up the torch that Europe has tossed down, and carry on. Thousands of people who live in American slums today must hope so. And thoughtful people the country over, looking soberly at the slum problem and studying the probable effects of a revival in the building industry, must ask themselves: Would not a great public housing program be the better part of wisdom?

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