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The Home  
of Man

## **Fourth Congress / Athens:** *The Functional City*

The Fourth Congress is born under a lucky star. A ship—a beautiful cruising vessel—conveys it for four radiant summer days through the three seas of France, Italy, and Greece to Athens. Glamour surrounds its meetings: the entire Greek cabinet takes part in its principal assembly before an audience of fifteen hundred guests. Then a respite granted to its members gives them an opportunity for personal contacts presided over by a thrilling architecture and nature, on the Acropolis in Athens, at Delphi or at Delos, at Olympia or in the Cyclades.

The return finds them grouped in further discussions aboard ship and unites them in a conclusion that may have historic importance. Marseilles, at the end of the cruise, was the scene of the final dispositions.

That cruise ship was turned into meeting rooms, committee rooms, and secretarial offices. There was only one sound: the hissing and splashing of water along the hull; there was only one atmosphere: youthfulness, trust, modesty, and professional conscience. After those two weeks of fervent work, a precious result: *The Athens Charter*.

The Athens Charter unlocks all doors to the urbanism of modern times. It is a reply to the present chaos of the cities. In the hands of the authorities, itemized, annotated, clarified with an adequate explanation, the Athens Charter is the implement by which the destiny of cities will be set right.

The Charter must be placed on the table of authority, in both the municipalities

and the councils of State. It is not the work of one individual but the conclusion of an elite group of constructors passionately attached to the new art of building, that is to say, armed with the certainty that the *Home of Man*—collapsing of decay in one quarter and skimped beneath the rod of voracious money everywhere else—must be reconsidered: the home of man, the decent and friendly shelter for life's joys and setbacks, the focal point of the family, the receptacle for the individual and collective powers that are latent in each of us, the key-cell of a harmoniously organized society.

These homes are in urban or rural aggregations, in boundless cities or in straggling villages. The crisis of humanity that is rife in the cities has repercussions throughout the country. There is no alternative but to deal with the cities, which are the ruin of mankind today! To deal with them with complete effectiveness one must know these cities, learn what they are and what they are made of. It was necessary to analyze cities of every category, to establish their present condition and to compare them one with another in order to ascertain whether they were being affected by some single malady in different guises. It was necessary to see whether anything real, anything effective, could in fact be done and whether it ought to be undertaken. A remedy to the evil had to be proposed. And, as the measure of those measures to be taken, it was necessary to choose the one that is incontestable: man, the human scale, and their indissoluble relationships with the environment are the measuring-rod, the rule that leads to harmony. That rule is the law of the sun and a respect for the conditions of nature.

Convened in Barcelona from the 29th to the 31st of March 1932, the CIRPAC had set a severe program of analysis to be addressed to thirty-three cities in eighteen countries—Amsterdam, Athens, Baltimore, Bandung, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Cologne, Como, Dalat, Dessau, Detroit, Frankfurt, Geneva, Genoa, The Hague, Karlsruhe, Littoria, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Oslo, Paris, Prague, Rome, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Utrecht, Verona, Warsaw, Zagreb, and Zurich. This is a considerable, indeed an immense piece of work, if one bears in mind that it is a matter of free labor and necessitates the assembling of teams.\* Following the established custom of the CIAM, all the drawings are divided according to a standard module and

\* Certain maps for Berlin, London, and Paris cover areas of 175 square feet, and three maps are required for the presentation of each city.

mounted on aluminum sheets furnished by a Swiss company. These sheets are set up everywhere aboard the boat; in Athens they form the substance of an imposing exhibition. They exist, they remain, they are at our disposal from now on, an authoritative source for consultation in this hour of premonition, less than ten years before the world-wide scramble for spoils that will cover the earth with debris and will, more than anything else, pose the cardinal question: that of the reconstruction of the human habitat, that of the *Home of Man*.

Result:

- a) the book of the Fourth Congress of Athens, the anticipated United States publication of which has been delayed on account of the insecurity of the times;
- b) a major album of plates, edited by the Dutch, publication of which has been subject to the same difficulties;
- c) the present work, published through the initiative of the CIAM-France Group: an explanation of *The Athens Charter*.