

Summary

CEZARY WAS (University of Wrocław) / *The Athens Charter* – a review of the issues and the question of the contribution of Polish architects

In the second half of the 20th c., the *Athens Charter* was the most important programme for the reconstruction of destroyed cities, the expansion of existing ones and the construction of new ones. The CIAM propaganda claimed it was a revolutionary document, but both its realistic and utopian proposals were put forward by earlier authors. The charter's ideological roots were in the thoughts of social activists pointing to poor housing conditions in large cities, Patrick Geddes' urban research and reform programs and utopian plans for new cities developed from Ebenezer Howard, Arthur Sorio y Mata, Gonzales de Castillo, Tony Garnier to Nikolai Miliutin. Also for the extreme ideas of Le Corbusier, his so-called *Voisin plan*, precedents can be found in the conceptions of Werner Hagemann, Karl Scheffler and Peter Behrens. The main theses of the charter focused on treating the city as a set of its basic functions: living, working, leisure and communication. At the same time, it was postulated that these functions should be separated from each other. Extreme interpretations of these postulates would have been unacceptable if it had not been for the destruction of cities during the World War II and the process of building new towns accelerated by post-war prosperity. In the political, economic and social situation after the end of the war it became possible to adopt radical solutions. Meanwhile, the process of criticizing the *Athens Charter* intensified, especially after the demolition of a modernist housing estate in Saint Louis. The currently formulated urban planning programmes with traditionalist principles (the so-called new urbanism) are alternatives that do not exclude the possibility of maintaining the validity of some of the proposals of the 4th CIAM Congress.