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SECOND SESSION

(Strasbourg 30 May - 1 June 1995)



REPORT

ON THE CHARTER OF CITIES OF ASYLUM

(Rapporteur: Mr Fernando MARTINEZ LOPEZ, Spain)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

## THE INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF WRITERS<sup>1</sup>

In July 1993, a group of intellectuals called for the creation of an international parliament of writers. Their appeal was signed by over three hundred writers from all over the world, sixty of whom, gathered in Strasbourg for the *Carrefour des littératures européennes* from 4 to 8 November 1993, reaffirmed the need for an international structure, capable of:

- developing genuine solidarity between writers whose work and very lives are increasingly being put in danger and;
- becoming a forum for reflection and discussion on new forms of commitment free from political allegiance and not directed towards the media.

In February 1994, Salman Rushdie was elected president of the International Parliament of Writers and drafted its charter, entitled "A Declaration of Independence."<sup>2</sup>

The Parliament set up an international deliberative and executive body in the form of a Council, whose membership has gradually been enlarged to around fifty and whose role is to inspire and co-ordinate the initiatives adopted by the International Parliament of Writers.

In 1994, the Parliament held two forums: the first, its founding conference, in Lisbon from 28 to 30 September and the second, on the theme "Displaced Literature", in Strasbourg from 4 to 6 November.

Its main project for 1995 is to set up and develop a network of cities of asylum.

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<sup>1</sup> NB This report was drafted in collaboration with the International Parliament of Writers.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I.

## THE NETWORK OF CITIES OF ASYLUM

### The birth of a network

In November 1993, on the occasion of Salman Rushdie's visit to Strasbourg to attend the founding of the International Parliament of Writers, the *Carrefour des littératures* proposed that the City of Strasbourg offer Salman Rushdie the freedom of the city and declare itself a city of asylum for persecuted intellectuals<sup>3</sup>.

From its inception, the International Parliament of Writers has made this idea one of the linchpins of its activities and support was immediately forthcoming from the cities of Berlin, Amsterdam and Helsinki.

### A Cities of Asylum Agreement

An agreement has been drawn up between the cities of asylum and the International Parliament of Writers<sup>4</sup>, through which the cities undertake:

- to pay a subscription to the International Parliament of Writers on signing the agreement;
- to put one, or several, apartments at the disposal of persecuted writers, for the period of a year;
- to guarantee each writer access to municipal public services (such as council restaurants, urban transport networks, libraries and schools);
- to approach the competent authorities with a view to facilitating the process of obtaining visas and residence permits.

In exchange, the International Parliament of Writers undertakes:

- to pay a monthly residence grant to each writer given asylum by the city;
- to mobilise its members in the city or country of asylum in order to help the guest writer to integrate and pursue his or her work, to encourage the translation and dissemination of the writer's work and to organise exchanges and debates in the city's libraries, universities and schools.

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<sup>3</sup> On 8 November 1993 Strasbourg City Council adopted a "Motion regarding Salmon Rushdie and his Commitment", set out in Appendix II.

<sup>4</sup> The text of the model agreement is attached as Appendix III.

### Call for solidarity between cities: towards a Charter of Cities of Asylum

During the sitting of the International Parliament of Writers in Strasbourg in November 1994, the day after an all-night vigil for Algeria, Salman Rushdie launched an appeal for the extension of the network of cities of asylum, in the presence of Daniel Tarschys, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Catherine Trautmann, the Mayor of Strasbourg. It was also proposed that a Charter of Cities of Asylum should be drafted in collaboration with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. A public meeting was to be held in Strasbourg in the first half of 1995 and would be attended by the Mayors of the cities of asylum, the Council of Europe - a partner in the initiative - the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and the International Parliament of Writers. This appeal, which was given wide press coverage, also led to many cities putting themselves forward as possible cities of asylum.

### Creation of the International Board of the Cities of Asylum

In December 1994, an international Board for the cities of asylum was set up under the aegis of the International Parliament of Writers<sup>5</sup>. It is headed by Joachim Sartorius, the recently appointed director of cultural services in the City of Berlin and former director of the DAAD "Berlin Artists" Programme, who also sits on the Board of the International Parliament of Writers, and Christian Salmon, the General Secretary of the International Parliament of Writers.

Its tasks are:

- to set up and run the network of cities of asylum;
- to submit a list of those applying to reside in the cities of asylum to the International Parliament of Writers;
- to work together with the Council of Europe, cities of asylum and writers to push forward the analysis of new forms of citizenship, particularly citizenship based on residence, begun by the International Parliament of Writers.

### Objectives for 1995

The International Parliament of Writers plans to have some fifty residences for writers in the cities of asylum in the near future. The network must therefore be extended to other cities.

The city of Almeria has now joined the founder cities of asylum - Amsterdam, Berlin, Helsinki and Strasbourg. Discussions are in progress with other cities.

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<sup>5</sup> A list of the bodies and officials of the International Parliament of Writers is attached as Appendix IV.

The appeal launched in Strasbourg in November 1994, concerning an extension of the network of cities of asylum and the drafting of a Charter of Cities of Asylum, has been well received by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

A draft resolution was accordingly drawn up, in close collaboration with the International Parliament of Writers, at the last two meetings of the working group on the Congress's contribution to the Council of Europe's campaign/plan of action on combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance (held in Strasbourg on 21 February 1995 and in Budapest on 11 April 1995).

A P P E N D I C E S

- Appendix I: For the International Parliament of Writers  
A declaration of independence
- Appendix II: Motion regarding Salmon Rushdie
- Appendix III: Model agreement
- Appendix IV: List of officials

APPENDIX I

**For the International Parliament of Writers**

**A declaration of independence**

Writers are citizens of many countries: the finite and frontiers country of observable reality and everyday life, the boundless kingdom of imagination, the half-lost land of memory, the federations of the heart which are both hot and cold, the united states of the mind (calm and turbulent, broad and narrow, ordered and deranged), the celestial and infernal nations of desire, and - perhaps the most important of all our habitations - the unfettered republic of the tongue.

It is these countries that our Parliament of Writers can claim, truthfully and with both humility and pride, to represent. Together they comprise a territory far greater than that governed by any worldly power; yet their defences against that power can seem very weak.

The art of literature requires, as an essential condition, that the writer be free to move between his many countries as he chooses, needing no passport or visa, making what he will of them and of himself. We are miners and jewellers, truth-tellers and liars, jesters and commanders, mongrels and bastards, parents and lovers, architects and demolition men. The creative spirit, of its very nature, resists frontiers and limiting points, denies the authority of censors and taboos. For this reason it all too frequently is treated as an enemy by those mighty or petty potentates who resent the power of art to build pictures of the world which quarrel with, or undermine, their own simpler and less open-hearted views.

Yet it is not art that is weak, but artists who are vulnerable. The poetry of Ovid survives; the life of Ovid was made wretched by the powerful. The poetry of Mandelstam lives on; the poet was murdered by the tyrant he dared to name. Today, around the world, literature continues to confront tyranny - not polemically - but by denying its authority, by going its own way, by *declaring its independence*. The best of that literature will survive; but we cannot wait for the future to release it from the censor's chains. Many persecuted authors will also, somehow, survive; but we cannot wait silently for their persecutions to end.

Our Parliament of Writers exists to fight for oppressed writers and against all those who persecute them and their work, and to renew continually the declaration of independence without which writing is impossible; and not only writing, but dreaming; and not only dreaming, but thought; and not only thought, but liberty itself.

by Salman Rushdie  
3 February 1994

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APPENDIX II

**MOTION REGARDING SALMAN RUSHDIE AND HIS COMMITMENT<sup>6</sup>**

On more than one occasion during its history, Strasbourg has offered asylum to the persecuted, a hearing to the silenced and support to the exiled.

In 1993, a Parliament of Writers was founded, under the auspices of the *Carrefour des Littératures Européennes*, to call for the defence of values which we hold dear: freedom of thought and tolerance.

At the initiative of the *Carrefour des Littératures Européennes* and in order to make a contribution to the work of the International Parliament of Writers, Strasbourg, a free and international city, has decided to offer asylum to Mr Salman Rushdie. As an individual, he symbolises freedom of expression and conscience. Behind him stand the anonymous mass of all authors persecuted and sometimes killed because of their work, whether today in Algeria and the former Yugoslavia, or, unfortunately, elsewhere.

Today, in order to signal our concern for the Republic and artistic freedom and in recognition of his courage and understanding of the role of Strasbourg as the home of Europe's conscience and window on the world, we should like offer Salman Rushdie the freedom of the city.

Over the next few days, we shall be taking initiatives aimed at ensuring that the cities of culture and our twin cities shall all adopt an identical position, thereby forging a chain of solidarity, friendship and asylum for authors living in fear for their lives.

In today's world, at the close of the 20th century, it is up to cities to set the example of courage and solidarity, to uphold a long and glorious intellectual and popular tradition and to bear the burden of civic vigilance.

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<sup>6</sup> Adopted by Strasbourg City Council on 8 November 1993.



APPENDIX III

Model Agreement  
between the International Parliament of Writers and the Cities of Asylum

**Article 1 - Motivations of the City of .....**

**Article 2 - Undertakings of the City**

The City of ..... undertakes to implement the following provisions:

- it shall pay a contribution of 100,000 FF to the International Parliament of Writers on the signature of the agreement.
- it shall place one or several apartments at the disposal of the cities of asylum Committee of the International Parliament of Writers, for persecuted writers selected by the above committee, for the period of one year;
- it shall help to give each writer access to municipal public services (such as council restaurants, urban transport networks, libraries and schools); and shall approach the competent authorities to facilitate, as far as possible, the process of obtaining visas and residence permits.

**Article 3 - Undertakings of the International Parliament of Writers**

In exchange for the undertakings made by the host city, the International Parliament of Writers undertakes:

- to pay a monthly residence grant to each writer offered asylum;
- to mobilise its members in the host city or country with a view to:
  - . helping the guest writer to integrate and pursue his or her work;
  - . organising exchanges and debates in the city's libraries, universities and schools.
  - . encouraging the translation and dissemination of the writer's work.

Established at ....., on .....

APPENDIX IV

The **International Parliament of Writers** is a non-profit association based in Strasbourg

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Honorary members:  
Yachar Kemal, Naguib Mahfouz