Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 814
28 April 1958

Resettlement of refugees and surplus population

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Etienne de la VALLEE POUSSIN and other members of the Assembly

The Assembly,

Having learnt with interest the results of the International Conference on " The Refugee Problem today and tomorrow", held at Geneva on 27th and 28th May 1957, under the auspices of the " Standing Conference of Voluntary Agencies " and non-governmental organisations interested in migration;

Having been informed of a proposal submitted to the Conference by the International Rescue Committee, concerning the rehabilitation of refugees and surplus elements of population;

Considering that this proposal, which is appended to the present Resolution, is of the greatest interest,

Approves the sense of this proposal and requests that, after detailed examination, it be implemented.

Resettlement of refugees and surplus population Proposal for detailed study and promotion

Introduction and Background

Every war has had its aftermath of homes, families and lives; displaced refugees and under-employed communities.

Before the days of economic nationalism the normal play of economics and social forces tended in time to resolve the major issues, and charity tidied up the frayed edges.

Since 1945 several massive efforts have been made to supply the deficiency, and some notable results were achieved at vast expense on, a more or less charitable, governmental hand-out basis.

The time has come to consider alternatives

Governments are no longer willing to spend the vast sums involved. It is slowly being accepted that the emergency methods so far. used, admirable and necessary in themselves, have tended to perpetuate the problem of refugees by isolating it from the general economic and social problems of our times. This is what happens when public and governmental appeals for assistance are made and the sufferings of refugees are used to point-up their needs and move officials and public to action. The net result is that the refugee himself becomes isolated.

The answer lies in the opposite direction, in integration.

Integration is a social as well as an economic process and must be studied in all its complex aspects. The time for the adoption of temporary shifts and compromises is past. Emergency action must not preclude the tackling of the long-term problem. For such it is. Communism will always create refugees as long as it exists, and this is therefore a continuing problem—one that will stay with us for a generation or more.

Large scale overseas emigration has been a useful safety-valve in the last few years, as it was in past ages, but it is expensive and wasteful in many cases and, today, increasingly difficult. It creates as many problems as it solves. Australia, Canada, the United States itself, have taken between them millions and can take hundreds of thousands more. But time is needed to digest the immigrant and adjust economies of receiving countries—at least in Latin America and probably elsewhere.

It is also not wholly beneficial for Europe to denude itself of its youngest and most vigorous citizens, nor to send fighters for freedom so far from home that they can hardly hope ever to return. Finally, it is bad economics for Europe to expect and receive charity on this basis.

Have the nations of Europe studied the possibilities of intra-European population transfers?

Have all the local European solutions been examined and tried and exhausted?

The answer is no—it was easier to ask for help from outside and shift the responsibility elsewhere.

Suggested Line of Enquiry

There are several European areas which if properly surveyed, developed and exploited, agriculturally, industrially and mineralogically, could support two or three times their present population. To do so would be cheaper, socially wiser and economically better business than dumping more thousands overseas than can be readily and safely absorbed.

There are two areas, and maybe more, that could usefully be studied and surveyed. One is the Landes region, in the South-west of France which is suffering from depopulation and urbanisation and the other is Sardinia, the island in the Mediterranean.

Areas of southern Italy, Calabria and Sicily have been the subject of special Governmental measures, World Bank Loans, etc. Some districts of Spain and Portugal and maybe others of North Africa could be similarly treated for humanitarian, economic and social and even political reasons as a measure of pacification and reconstruction.

To make a study of any one of these possibilities, first on the basis of existing and available surveys and then, by means of on-the-spot checks, would take some 6/8 months and cost an initial $25,000 U. S. Further sums might be necessary and might be made available from the resources of whatever organs are set up as a result of the initial survey. It would have to be a detailed factual study of possibilities and include, in one or more areas, an accurate, minute and authoritative proposal for the sort of development that is aimed at. A note of the break-down of costs is attached for Sardinia only.

Sample Study

Sardinia is an island nearly as big as Sicily with a population of 1.2 million inhabitants as compared with 4.5 million on Sicily.

There are historical, climatic and health reasons for this.

In the days of the Romans Sardinia produced most of the grain and wheat required by Rome. This was done with the help of vast irrigation works to offset the six months drought that hindered agricultural development. Some areas of Sardinia were then more highly populated than they are today.

When Rome fell to the Barbarians, Sardinia became a prey to raids and attacks and devastations by the Barbary Coast Moors, and the peasants were driven by these attacks for refuge into the mountains where most of their villages are to this day.

The irrigation works fell into disrepair. The lowlands became marshy and the island was infested with malaria. No one but a Sard, inoculated by the anopheles mosquito since birth and for generations, could live in Sardinia.

Subsequent rulers used the place, as united Italy did until the Second World War, as a penal settlement and as a place to banish bad officials who had to be punished. The Sards themselves are a splendid people.

To this day no Italian will willingly leave the continent—as they call the mainland of Italy—and live in Sardinia and, in any case, there isn't the capital locally to undo the damage done by a thousand years of neglect.

What can be and is being done in Calabria at a crushing cost to the Italian State could be done better and cheaper in Sardinia if an interest-free loan could be negotiated with, say, the World Bank on the same lines as their loans for Sicily and Calabria.

The loans would have to be interest-free as the Italian State could not undertake repayments for many years, and interest charges would amount to exorbitant levels.

How would this money be used?

It would be used to resettle on Sardinian soil some fifty thousand persons on a three-way split basis, say, 10,000 Sards, 15,000 continental Italians, and 25,000 alien refugees. Italian officials have said some time back that it might be possible to resettle refugees in Sardinia on certain conditions, amongst which were that the Yugoslavs were, for obvious political reasons as their nearest neighbours, excluded and that other refugees already in Italy have an absolute priority. There are 15,000 of these, of whom 5,000 are Yugoslavs, and 5,000 more would be too old or infirm or otherwise unsuitable for resettlement. This would make it possible to take some 20,000 persons from other areas in Europe.

Advantages

Long-term advantages would be to test the method of intra-European migrations and resettlement on a large scale, to increase the wealth and economic power of underdeveloped areas and to give Ufe, liberty and the self-respect of work to thousands amongst the victims of the cold war.

This is only an example of one of the many studies that might be undertaken on the basis of which such solutions could be promoted at a lesser cost than, and without precluding any manner, of, overseas emigration.

The actual realization of the plan would have to be for negotiation between the Italian Government or, in the case of the Landes, the French Government and, as regards any loan, the World Bank.

The initial grant would be used exclusively for the making of studies and surveys on which to base proposals for execution by the national Governments and International Agencies concerned. The assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of U. N. (F.A.O.), International Labour Office (I.L.O.) and other organs would be necessary.

For this grant to come within the scope of the law an association could be formed to be called " Association for the Study of Resettlement of Refugees ".

The study should cover soil analysis, water conservation, well digging, rainfall statistics, crop possibilities, marketing problems, community planning, social welfare and language problems, etc.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed:

VALLEE POUSSIN Etienne, de la, Belgium

Appendix

Sample survey and promotion project (Sardinia)

Grant : $25,000;00

Period : Six to eight months.

Payable : Quarterly in advance, c/o Swiss Bank in Geneva.

Account : Monthly in arrears.

Budget : Headings interchangeable.

Savings : To be carried forward for extension period or returned if eventually unutili-zable.

Staff: Research Director 1.00

Local Assistant (bilingual) at $5,000 p.a. 2,500.00

Secretary (bi-lingual) at .$2,500 p.a. : 1.250,00

Office expenses—rent, 1,00

stationery, stamps, telegrams, etc. 1.000,00

Staff travel to Sardinia, Rome and U.S. 2.000,00

Staff per diem at $10 p.d. 200 days 2.000,00

Contingency Account 1.000,00 9.752,00

Technical Consultants :

Fee s at $40 per day, say 10 Consultants for 20 days 8.000,00

Travel expenses of Consultants 2.000,00 10.000,00

Promotional Activities:

In connection with ne-gotiations, articles, lectures, entertainment 2.000,00

Publication of study 3.000,00 5.000,00

say 25.000,00

Note

Time element is only a rough estimate since governmental and printing delays are quite unforeseeable, availability of suitable Consultants cannot be ensured, and similar factors may intervene in other stages of the project.

Sample Plan for resettlement of Italians, including Sards, and Alien refugees in the Island of Sardinia

On the basis of the appropriate section of the enactments establishing:

1. The United States Point Four Programme,
2. The United Nations Technical Assistance for underdeveloped countries and various subsequent directives,
3. The International Bank of Reconstruction and Development,
4. Council of Europe's Resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers,
5. M. Pierre Schneiter's Report to the Council when he was President of the French National Assembly in 1954, all of which, in similar or identical words, tend to cite the terms of the Strasbourg Committee of Ministers' Resolution of 20th May 1954 designed to encourage and promote and, in some cases, provide for— " the thoroughgoing development of resources in countries where the cause of, so-called,

over-population is related to inadequate technical and particularly industrial equipment", the following scheme might be studied and a survey be made and, if the plan was found technically sound and economically viable, it might in some form be implemented.

PLAN

"Without attempting to pre-judge the conclusions of the proposed survey or to assess the precise source of funds for the realization of the plan, the broad lines of the suggestion are sketched in the attached schedule.

This is based on the assumption that the survey will recommend the construction of one barrage dam and consequent irrigation works and that it may be possible to resettle some 20,000 families, say 50,000 persons.

The plan is in three parts, of which the first for some $40,000,000 might be financed by the International Bank as a commercial proposition, the second for some $60,000,000 consisting of permanent social investment (houses, schools, etc.) and interim maintenance might be financed on a dollar for dollar matching basis (i.e. with both principal and counterpart) by international grant and the Italian Government, and the third being land reclamation and roads, etc., might be financed by an Italian Government internal loan, and might be worth a further $50,000,000.

To make the plan acceptable as a high priority for the Italian Government and to get their agreement to the inclusion of alien refugees two conditions have been tentatively suggested by Italian officials:

1. No Yugoslav political refugees would be included in the scheme, and all Yugoslav refugees at present in Italy or who may be later admitted would be accepted for resettlement by other European or non-European countries forthwith, in exchange for non-Yugoslav refugees to be resettled.
2. Service charges on all the loans should be assumed internationally so that the Italian state would benefit by interest free loans with a protracted capital repayment period.

Hydraulic and Industrial Works

1. Construction of one barrage dam $ 20,000,000

2. Construction of irrigation works 10,000,000

3. Construction of wells 5,000,000

4. Financing of loans for artisan and small industry, fishery and shops and reserve 5,000,000

$40,000,000

Resettling 20,000 Families

1. Loans for construction of a house:

Lire 2,000,000 For construction of equipment for house:

Lire 400,000

Lire 2,400,000 = $ 4,000

for 20,000 families=$80,000,000

50 % as repayable loan, say, $40,000,000

2. Maintenance grant at §500 lor 6 months (for one family Lire 300,000) see also C.3 for salary element 10,000,000

3. Construction of schools, churches, community centres, equipment, dispensaries 4,000,000

4. Contingency reserve 5,000,000

5. Management 3 years 1,000,000

(1 year preparation, 1 year opera-ration, 1 year run-down)

Total 60,000,000

Combined total $100,000,000

Italian Contribution

1. Land reclamation work (largely equipment and salaries) 20,000,000

2. Construction of roads (largely equipment and salaries) 20,000,000

3. Maintenance (salaries other than under A. at $500 for six months matching B. 2 10,000,000

Say, $50,000,000

Profit and Loss Summary

Value of Land—purchased under land reform acts—at, say, 1,000,000 Lire per plot = 20,000,000,000= $35,000,000

Value after reclamation, irrigation and construction x 10 = $350,000,000

Net economic and social gain: incalculable.

Political advantages

Estimate dependent on one's evaluation of, say, the success of the original Marshall Plan, or work for refugees generally.

Demographic value

In itself the resettlement of some 50,000 persons would be of only limited demographic value but it might serve as a model for similar projects which cumulatively would help level-off the birthrate " hump ". This is foreseen as reaching its peak between 1960-1980 in Italy and in Central Europe and soon after in Eastern Europe, thus reducing migration pressures for a generation and, as far as Europe is concerned, maybe for ever.