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Role of the consultative Assembly in putting into operation the Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe

Report[1]
Committee on Culture, Science and Education
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I. Draft Resolution on the securing of financial and moral support for the Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe.

II. Explanatory Memorandum.

1. 1958 - 10th Session - Third part

A. 1. Draft Resolution on the provision of financial and moral support for the Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe

The Assembly,

Having regard to Recommendation 74 (1955) on the establishment of a Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe;

Having regard to Resolution (58) 13 of the Committee of Ministers setting up the Cultural Fund;

Believing that the progress of the Cultural Fund will depend largely on the moral and financial support it receives in each member country and that it is advisable to set up National Committees for this purpose,

Invites its Members to take appropriate steps to ensure that the Cultural Fund receives from their respective countries the financial and moral support it requires for success:

(i) National Committees

The first step to be considered should be, for each country, to set up a National Committee for the purpose of interesting the general public in the cultural activities of the Council of Europe and of securing financial and moral support for the Cultural Fund. Wherever possible such a committee should:

a. be constituted as a non-profit-making association and governed in accordance with the laws of the country concerned;

b. be under the most distinguished patronage and be assured of the co-operation of bodies and institutions already working in the cultural field;

c. collaborate closely at national level with all Funds or Foundations concerned with European cultural activities, with a view to ensuring the co-ordination of their tasks;

(ii) Other steps

In cases where a national committee ?appears inexpedient, efforts should be made to obtain financial support for the Fund from nongovernmental sources by whatever procedure is most appropriate in the country concerned;

Instructs the Secretary-General to afford Representatives every assistance in implementing this Resolution;

Instructs its Cultural Committee to submit periodically a general report on any activities undertaken in pursuance of the present .Resolution.

B. 2. Explanatory Memorandum presented by M. VAN REMOORTEL

1. A. Background:

In July 1955 the Consultative Assembly, In Recommendation 74, proposed the establishment of a Cultural Fund in order to increase the financial resources available for the cultural activities of the Council of Europe. Chapter IV of the Special Message of the Committee of Ministers in 1954 had an appendix containing a long list of projects drawn up by the Cultural Experts which could not be carried out owing to lack of funds.

It was impossible, under the budget arrangements of the time, to increase appropriations to the extent necessary in order to fulfil the programme of the Committee of Cultural Experts. It was therefore essential, if the Council of Europe was to accomplish its task in the cultural field, as defined in its Statute and in the European Cultural Convention, to find new methods of financing. The Assembly felt that it was desirable to supplement the contributions of the Governments by seeking additional revenue from non-governmental sources.

After considering the matter for three years, the Committee of Ministers decided to set up a Council of Europe Cultural Fund as from 1st January 1959. The Statute of the Fund, as adopted by the Ministers, follows the Assembly's proposals. Although the Cultural Fund is official in character, its Statute provides for different sources of income: governmental contributions paid into the Fund through the Council of Europe Budget, voluntary contributions by Governments and contributions from non-governmental sources. The Statute indeed improves on Recommendation 74 by binding the Governments to make a fixed annual contribution. That contribution has been fixed at a total of 35 million French francs for each of the first three years.

The great advantage of the Fund, however, is that, with the agreement of the Committee of Ministers, it can receive voluntary contributions up to an unlimited amount in addition to the fixed governmental contributions. Without these further resources, the Fund would have little purpose: for contributions by the Governments will be much the same as in the former cultural budget. If, then, the Fund is to be an effective instrument, the fullest use must be made of the possibilities it holds of attracting fresh resources.

As the Statute of the Fund gives no indication as to how non-governmental contributions may be obtained, it is for the Assembly to make concrete suggestions. Recommendation 74 contains the following passage on this subject:

" 8. A National Committee shall be set up in each country which has agreed to take part in the establishment of the Fund; this Committee shall be composed of at least three Representatives appointed by the Consultative Assembly, who shall co-opt other eminent persons.

9. This National Committee shall be responsible for planning and carrying out measures to obtain support for the Fund.

10. The subscription campaign shall be conducted in accordance with the customary methods of appealing for public subscriptions in the country concerned.

The National Committees may request the assistance of non-governmental organisations and may seek the advice of experts with a special knowledge of such methods.

The Governments may give their official support to the campaign.

11. The National Committees shall periodically report to the Assembly. "

Clearly, what the Assembly had in mind was to organise a campaign to raise money for the Cultural Fund from non-governmental sources. It is now for the Assembly to decide how this is to be done.

2. B. National Committees

Your Committee believes that the time has come to proceed with the formation of National Committees, as proposed in Recommendation 74. It is a well-established tradition in our countries to set up such committees in order to further causes of public interest in unofficial circles, and it would be hard to think of a more effective means of securing the required moral and financial support for the Cultural Fund.

2.1. (a) Aims

The National Committees will pursue a twofold aim. In the first place, they will have the practical task of collecting as much money as possible for the Cultural Fund in their own countries. But, in order to carry out that task satisfactorily, it will be necessary to awaken the interests of the public in the aims and activities of the Council of Europe in general and the Cultural Fund in particular. Before asking anyone to contribute to a cause, it is as well to explain to him what it is about and to convince him that the cause is a worth while one/ The immediate task of the National Committees will thus be one of information. To their fund-raising function will be added the role of public relations.

2.2. (b) Legal status

Due allowance being made for differing social structures, customs and legislation in different countries, it will be best for the National Committees to take the form of non-profitmaking associations and to benefit, as far as possible, by the tax concessions accorded to organisations approved as being of public interest. It is important to ensure that the Committees benefit as much as possible by the provisions of Article IV (2) of the Statute of the Fund, which lays down that " Members of the Council of Europe and non-Member States acceding to the European Cultural Convention shall, in so far as their laws permit, accord to the subsidies granted by the Cultural Fund and to any donations or legacies that it may receive the fiscal privileges and exemptions which apply in their respective countries to educational, cultural, scientific, charitable or other activities of a non-profitmaking character. "

2.3. (c) Title

Each National Committee will choose the name it considers best fitted to make its objects clear to the public. In one country it may decide on the title " . . . Committee of the Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe ", while in another it may prefer to call itself " Association of Friends of the Council of Europe Cultural Fund ", and so forth.

2.4. (d) Campaign methods

Each Committee will decide on the campaign methods best suited to conditions in its own country. As and when appropriate, it will send out circulars, distribute printed matter or organise discussions, lectures and meetings of a cultural or social character. It may also sponsor or organise concerts and exhibitions to raise money for its purposes. In this connection, the example given by the Atlantic Community Associations in the member countries of N.A.T.O. is well worth studying (see AS/Cult (10) 10).

2.5. (e) Formation

The initiative in setting up a National Committee should come from a Consultative Assembly Representative entrusted with that task by his country's parliamentary delegation to the Assembly.

2.6. (f) Membership

(i) Assembly Representatives: The national delegation should form a kind of nucleus of each National Committee. At the same time we might usefully call on former members of the Assembly who, with the experience gained at Strasbourg, have continued to follow the Council of Europe's work. A list of these members will enable Representatives to look out for the names of suitable persons in their respective countries (See AS/Cult (10) 7).

It will then be advisable to enlist the co-operation of a number of prominent personalities as presidents or patrons. It would also be wise to obtain the support of existing cultural organisations and institutions of recognised authority and standing.

(ii) Honorary members: The contribution of honorary members to the work of the Committees will be the prestige of their name. In certain countries the Head of the State himself may grant his patronage to the Committees; in other countries the Committees will be under the patronage of a member of the royal family or of a prominent public figure of high standing in the political or,cultural world, who is wellknown for his interest in European questions., Without such figureheads it will be impossible to attract the necessary public attention to the Committee's activities.

(iii) Cultural organisations and institutions: It will be important, from the start, to interest in the work of the National Committees representatives of the different cultural organisations and institutions which plày a decisive part in the life of their country. There are two arguments in favour of this policy: it is evident that even in a wealthy country the amount of money available for cultural purposes is limited. If funds are subscribed to a new organisation, existing subsidies for others may have to be withdrawn. This is as true of private as of public funds. It would be lamentable if the national committees were to function at the expense of national institutions themselves maintained by private contributions.

This collaboration will be the more easily obtained as these organisations have learnt from their own experience the necessity and usefulness of European co-operation. It is obvious that the creation of a body with European financial backing such as the Cultural Fund answers a real need.

It is also vital from another point of view that members of these organisations should take part in the work of the National Committees; nobody is better able to advise the authorities of the Cultural Fund on desiderata concrete proposals for the various Fund's programme. It must be remembered that it will be the task of the National Committees not only to supply the Cultural Fund with money, but also to make suggestions as to how it should be used.

It would be difficult here to go into further detail about these organisations and institutions without drawing up a very long list of examples varying considerably from one count ry to another. We might recall, however, that in almost all Member States institutions exist to promote scientific research and the applied sciences; these institutions are maintained by Government funds and by private grants (see AS/Cult (9) 40). Among these institutions may be named the permanent conference of University Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors, organisations such as the British Council and also learned societies, all of which play a prominent part in the cultural life of a country.

The UNESCO National Commissions might serve as an example for the collaboration advocated above.

(iv) Other members: Once the Committee of patronage has been formed and the assistance of private organisations obtained, each National Committee should endeavour to enrol as many members as possible. Any corporate body or private person interested in cultural activities, in general, and the Council of Europe, in particular, can belong to the National Committee. An appeal should be made to scholars, artists, writers, university professors, journalists and men of letters, industrialists, high-ranking civil servants, to Mayors and also to representatives of the liberal professions.

Obviously, most of these members will only be able to play a passive part, but they will be kept informed of the activities of the National Committee, of the Cultural Fund and of the Council of Europe. Only in exceptional cases will their assistance be requested, to carry out a particular project such as organising a function on behalf of the committee in the town where they live. As concerns the different degrees of affiliation, we may quote the examples of the French Association of the Atlantic Community, which makes provision for active members, associates, subscribers, donators, founders and benefactors with a corresponding scale of annual subscriptions. (See Doc. AS/Cult (10) 10).

(v) Municipalities: The role which municipalities will be able to play in National Committees should be examined in due course.

2.7. (g) Administrative structure

The administrative structure of each National Committee will depend on the number of its members and the growth of its activities.

(i) Central Committee: It is indispensable to form a small central committee of at most twenty members to be responsible in particular for the Committee's activities.

(ii) Local and regional sub-committees: In countries with a federal constitution, when the National Committee is sufficiently well established, it will be possible to create sub-committees in the most important provincial centres.

(iii) Secretariat: Each National Committee will organise its secretarial services according to its needs.

2.8. (h) Relations of National Committees with the authorities of the Cultural Fund

The Secretary-General of the Council of Europe will be responsible for official relations between the Committees and the authorities of the Cultural Fund. The help which the Secretary- General can give members of the Assembly wishing t o form a National Committee in their own country, will contribute greatly to the success of their efforts.

Although the National Committees will have to decide how they want to organise publicity for the Fund in each country, their activity should be brought into line and synchronised as far as possible with any steps that the Press and Information Directorate of the Secretariat- General in Strasbourg may take. Accordingly, it will be necessary to examine to what extent requests for help can be made to correspondents of the Press and Information Directorate in the Member States.

It would, moreover, be desirable for the Committees to be associated as closely as possible with their Government representative on the Administrative Council of the Cultural Fund, who, in the beginning, will doubtless be a highranking official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Education.

So that the Assembly may follow closely the activities of the National Committees, the Cultural Committee will gather all relevant information and report thereon regularly.

3. C. Relations with the European Cultural Foundation at Amsterdam

In order to avoid competition in seeking funds and a possible overlapping in their distribution, Recommendation 74 states that " agreements should be concluded with other special Foundations concerned with European cultural activities, both in respect of the use of available credits and the distribution or coordination of the cultural tasks to be undertaken ".

The Committee noted with pleasure that Article 3 (" Co-operation with other foundations ") of the Statute of the Fund follows almost literally the text of the Recommendation.

The Committee takes the view that it is the task of National Committees to co-operate with the representatives of the Foundation in collecting contributions. The Committee considers it desirable that the representatives of the Foundation in the various countries should be invited to become members of the National Committees and that the agreement on collecting contributions should be negotiated within these Committees. It is possible that the activities of the two institutions on the national plane may be merged and that the Committees may act on behalf of both organisations, since their objectives are essentially the same. Such close collaboration will be rendered easier by the fact that several members of the Consultative Assembly have already agreed to become members of the Amsterdam Foundation. The ways and means of achieving this collaboration will necessarily vary from country to country.

4. D. Conclusions

The above comments are purely in the nature of suggestions.

It is, of course, impossible to lay down rules which will hold good for each of fifteen countries. Before deciding on the steps to be taken, therefore, each country must consider its own peculiar circumstances and the possibilities open to it. In some cases the most effective method will be to set up a National Committee; in others, some other method will seem preferable. In certain countries, it may suffice to appoint one person who will devote himself actively "to securing the necessary support for the Fund.

It is with these considerations in mind that the Cultural Committee submits the present draft Resolution, which is intentionally confined to proposals of a general nature and seeks merely to suggest in what direction action might be taken by members of the Assembly anxious to assist materially in launching the Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe.