



Doc. 203

21 September 1953

Help to be given by the Council of Europe to the greek earthquake victims

Report¹

Rapporteur: Mr Etienne de la VALLEE POUSSIN, Belgium

1. 1953 - 5th Session - Third part



A. Draft Recommendation

The Assembly,

Deeply grieved at the extent of the disaster suffered, as a result of the recent earthquakes, by the three Greek islands of Cephalonia, Zante and Ithaca;

Conscious of the feeling of fellowship which, in face of such catastrophes, unites all the peoples of Europe, who are in duty bound to assist the victims;

Recalling the appeal issued by the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs of the Council of Europe on behalf of the victims of the disasters in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium and Turkey;

In the spirit of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers, urging the Governments of Member States to give Greece, in the fullest possible measure, whatever assistance it may need for the reconstruction of the devastated areas,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

- a. should adopt without delay such practical measures as it may consider appropriate in order to obtain the effective assistance of all Member States and to organise, under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the collection of funds and gifts in kind to be placed at the disposal of the Greek Government for the permanent reconstruction of the stricken areas, and, to this end, shall instruct the Secretariat-General :
 1. to circulate to the Governments of Member States and to public and private organisations in the free world an account of the catastrophe and of the present needs of the stricken areas of Greece;
 2. to ascertain the reconstruction plans of the Greek Government and to communicate them to the other countries of Europe, so as to enable the latter to give the most effective assistance according to the means at their disposal; and, more particularly, to determine what types of gifts in kind would be the most acceptable to Greece;
 3. to centralize the assistance provided and the sums contributed for transmission to the Greek Government on behalf of the Council of Europe;
- b. to decide, in order to give a definite purpose to the effort of the Council of Europe, and thus arouse the particular interest of the donors, upon the adoption of a city or town in the Ionian Islands, such as Ithaca, and to promise all or part of the cost of its reconstruction, on the basis of plans put forward by the Greek Government;
- c. to establish for this purpose a special fund to be built up by the Council of Europe from the contributions of the various Governments and from gifts collected in each country by a public organisation or an institution selected for the purpose;
- d. to invite the individual Member States to adopt towns or villages in the Ionian Islands, as has already been done by certain Governments.

B. Draft Order

The Assembly :

- a.* instructs the Special Committee to deal with the question of the Greek Earthquake Victims to keep in touch with the work carried out by the Council of Europe on behalf of the victims of the Greek disaster and to report to the Assembly;
- b.* instructs the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs to launch an appeal to the Municipalities of Europe to adopt towns or villages in the devastated areas of Greece.

C. Explanatory Memorandum

1.

1. At its Sitting on 15th September, the Consultative Assembly decided to set up a Special Committee to consider ways in which the Council of Europe could assist the devastated areas of Greece. It also instructed that Committee to submit its conclusions before the end of the present Session. The Committee started work immediately and this Report, containing its conclusions, is submitted to the Consultative Assembly for approval.

2. The earthquake, which was of unprecedented violence, began on 9th August and completely destroyed the three Ionian Islands of Cephalonia, Zante and Ithaca. The figures for the disaster show that 481 people were killed and 951 injured. 112,706 people, comprising 22,886 families were rendered homeless. 33,052 buildings were damaged, of which 17,316 were in Cephalonia, 12,739 in Zante and 2,997 in Ithaca. 85 % of these buildings were completely destroyed, and the remainder rendered uninhabitable. Of the 102 churches in the islands few escaped destruction. The same applies to the schools, libraries, museums and hospitals. Indeed, all the schools were destroyed, that is to say, 111 in Cephalonia, 58 in Zante and 3 in Ithaca. Of the 4 libraries and 5 museums in the islands, none has been saved.

3. Greece has already had to bear the heavy burden involved in providing immediate aid to the victims and is now faced with the problem of the reconstruction of the devastated areas. In the face of this grave disaster, Europeans, in a widespread movement of solidarity, have shown their desire to come to the aid of the victims in their most urgent needs as they did at the beginning of the year in the case of the victims of the devastated areas of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Turkey. The Committee of Ministers, moreover, passed a Resolution urging the Governments of member countries to give the greatest possible assistance to Greece in the reconstruction of its devastated areas.

4. The Special Committee has endeavoured to find the most effective ways in which the Council of Europe could help. It considers that the phase of immediate aid to the refugees is over and that it is now in the permanent rebuilding of the devastated towns and villages that the European countries should offer their assistance to the Greeks. This assistance should be of three kinds : that given by the Council of Europe, that given by the Member States individually, and that which can be given through municipalities and local councils. The Committee proposes in particular the adoption by the Council of Europe of an Ionian town or village and that a special fund should be created to this end from contributions by the Council of Europe, Government subscriptions and gifts from local authorities. It also suggests that the Member States should be asked to adopt towns and villages in the Ionian Islands and that an appeal should be launched to European municipalities urging such adoption.

5. In view of the success of the appeal launched throughout Europe by the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs for the adoption of villages in the devastated areas of the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium and Turkey, the Special Committee on the problem of the Greek Earthquake Victims proposes that that Committee should again be responsible for launching a similar appeal in this particular case.

6. The Committee submits to the Assembly the following draft Recommendation and draft Order, which were unanimously adopted.