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Creation of a European Cultureal Fund for Exiles

Report
Relations with European Non-Member Countries
Rapporteur: Mr Karl Georg PFLEIDERER, Germany

A. Explanatory Memorandum

1.

This is the third recommendation concerning the proposed European Cultural Fund for Exiles submitted to the Assembly by the Special Committee to watch over the interests of European nations not represented in the Council of Europe. It will be recalled that the two previous recommendations were unanimously passed by the Assembly on 8th December, 1951 (Recommendation 17) and on 27th September, 1952 (Recommendation 40).

In its Fourth Report to the Assembly, dated 7th May, 1953, the Committee of Ministers announced that it had decided that it could take no action on these Recommendations, for various reasons[1] which were specified.

In its Reply the Assembly expressed deep regret that the Committee of Ministers had . been unable to implement Recommendation 40. The Assembly stated that it was unable to agree with the arguments advanced by the Committee of Ministers in support of its decision, and went on .to explain why, in the Assembly's view, these arguments were inconclusive. In the light of further explanations as to the aims of. the proposed Fund, the Assembly requested the Committee of Ministers to reconsider its decision and expressed the view that discussions in the Joint Committee might help towards reaching a solution acceptable to both sides.

Since then, the following developments have taken place in connection with this question :

> *M. van Zeeland's reply to Major Tuf ton Beamish's speech in the Assembly on the 8th May, 1953, expressing his own personal support for the Cultural Fund.*
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> *The announcement by the German Federal Minister of Finance, Herr Schäffer, on 26th June, 1953, in the Bundestag that funds will be made available by the German Federal Government as soon as the Cultural Fund has been set up.*

Joint discussions in fact took place at a meeting of the Joint Committee held in Paris on the 12th December, 1953. Major Tufton Beamish and M. Pfleiderėr presented the views of the Special Committee. Subsequently, the Committee of Ministers decided to forward to the Assembly a statement of the views which its representatives had put forward at that meeting. The most significant passage of this statement is that in which the Committee of Ministers states that :

" the aim and character of the proposed Fund... is to preserve among the exiles now in Western Europe their cultural inheritance and national civilisations ... the question of creating a special fund might be reconsidered in the sense that Member States not wishing to contribute thereto could perhaps agree to its creation by the other Members ".

The Special Committee discussed this statement at two meetings held in Strasbourg on the 21st and 22nd May, 1954, during the first part of the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Consultative Assembly. It was decided to present a new recommendation to the Assembly, taking into account the developments of the last year. This recommendation was unanimously agreed to by the Special Committee.

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1. See 5th Session, 1953 : Doc. 122·

B. Draft Recommendation

The Assembly,

Having regard to Recommendation 40 for the setting up of a European Cultural Fund for Exiles, which was unanimously adopted by the Assembly on 27th September, 1952 ;

Having given careful consideration to the statement made by the Committee of Ministers at the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 12th December, 1953, which was communicated to the Assembly in Document 220 ;

Having noted that in that statement the Committee of Ministers expressed the view that if :

" the aim and character of the proposed fund... (is) 'to preserve among the exiles now in Western Europe their cultural inheritance and national civilisations 'the question of creating a special fund might be reconsidered in the sense that Member States not wishing to contribute thereto could perhaps agree to its creation by the other Members " ;

Regretting the recurring delays in setting up the Pund in view of the encouraging-reply given in his personal capacity by M. van Zeeland, then Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, to Major Tuf ton Beamish in the Assembly on 8th May, 1953, and also in view of the announcement of the German Federal Minister of Finance, Herr Schäffer, in the Bundestag on 26th June, 1953, that the Federal Government had made token appropriations in that year's Budget hi anticipation of the setting up of the European Cultural Fund for Exiles,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers reconsider . the establishment of the European Cultural Fund for Exiles. in the light of the following additional explanations of the purposes of the Fund.

1. The Assembly is prepared to accept the interpretation given by the Committee of Ministers as to the essential purpose of the proposed European Cultural Fund for Exiles, namely that it should be used to preserve among the exiles now in Western Europe their cultural inheritance and national civilisations. It is considered that, in the present unnatural division of Europe, our common cultural heritage is the most important remaining link between East and West, and it is felt that it is the duty and responsibility of the Council of Europe to uphold this linií and thereby endeavour to ensure the survival of the Western' Conceptions of culture of the Central and Eastern nations.

2. One of the most effective ways of keeping alive the cultural traditions of these countries is, in present circumstances, to give practical encouragement and assistance, under adequate safeguards, to cultural, scientific and research institutions founded by or for refugees who have been driven into exile by oppression. Although much attention has been given to the problem of refugees, little has so far been done adequate safeguarde to cultural, scientific and activities. These include the setting up of institutes and libraries, the publication of books, newspapers and periodicals, the organization of: lectures, seminars, special courses, art exhibitions and musical festivals. In general, such activities as have been possible have been undertaken under great material handicaps. It is proposed that the Fund should be used to strengthen and develop these activities and to promote others, for example, through the endowment of professorships at universities. It is hoped that, as a result, a nucleus of teachers, scholars, scientists and artists from Central and Eastern Europe may establish themselves among us as the free trustees in exile of the cultural traditions of their countries. The Fund will stand as a testimony to the universal brotherhood of science and learning.

3. The Assembly is well aware of the heavy financial commitments of all Member States which render any additional effort difficult. For this reason the Assembly proposed in Recommendation 40, and it now reiterates this proposal, that voluntary organizations and private persons should be approached with a view to their contributing to the Fund, once Member States of the Council of Europe have given a lead. The Assembly proposes that the Committee of Ministers should take appropriate steps to ensure that this is done. Similar considerations led to the suggestion, also contained in Recommendation 40, that, if any Member State wished, for particular reasons, to abstain from participating in the Fund, this should not prevent other Member States from taking action in this field, if necessary by making use of the procedure accepted by the Committee of Ministers for the conclusion of partial agreements.

4. As regards the administration of the Fund, the Assembly is willing to simplify the procedure advocated in Recommendation 40. The Assembly earnestly requests the Committee of Ministers to instruct the Committee of Cultural Experts to meet as soon as possible, for the purpose of preparing immediately a draft preliminary budget together with a plan for allocating the funds, and to vote the necessary appropriations for the first financial year in time for the Cultural Fund to begin to operate in the autumn of 1954. For the future, the Assembly suggests that the Committee of Ministers should vote an annual expenditure, to be reviewed from time to time in the light of experience and of the number of legitimate applications received. This expenditure would constitute an independent item in the programme of cultural activities sponsored every year by the

Council of Europe. The Committee of Cultural Experts would prepare a plan for allocating the funds, which would be referred to the Assembly's Special Committee for an opinion before being finally submitted to the Committee of Ministers.