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Action taken on behalf of the earthquake victims in the Ionian Islands

Communication

Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities

Mr Jakob ALTMAIER, Germany

1.

1. After adopting Recommendation 55 on the help to be given by the Council of Europe to victims of the Greek earthquake disasters, the Assembly gave instructions, in the course of its twenty-third Sitting held on 25th September, 1953, that the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs should launch an appeal to European municipalities for the adoption of "towns or villages in the devastated areas of Greece".

2. As instructed by the Chairman of the Committee, the Secretariat-General addressed the following appeal, on 10th November, 1953, to five hundred major towns and provincial or "departmental" capitals, as well as to national associations of local authorities in the Member States of the Council of Europe :

2. Appeal addressed to all European Municipalities by the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs, acting on behalf of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe

Europe has been darkened by yet another tragedy.

After the flooding of the Belgian, Dutch and British coasts at the end of January, 1953 and the Turkish earthquake in March, the next country to suffer is Greece. Three of the Ionian Islands, Cephalonia, Zanta and Ithaca have recently been ravaged by a violent earthquake.

Representatives from Greece, M. Mer-eouris and M. Maccas, stated at the opening Sitting of the last Session of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe that the casualty list totalled 481 dead and 951 injured. In all, 22,886 families numbering 112,706 persons, were affected; 33,052 buildings were damaged; while, almost all the 102 churches were destroyed. Of the 172 schools, 4 libraries and 5 museums, not one escaped serious damage. Nothing remains of the General Hospital of Zanta nor of the 3 hospitals on the Island of Cephalonia.

The sense of European solidarity, and particularly that of the many thousands of municipalities of which Europe is composed, must once more be given practical expression. It is essential to continue and develop the efforts to afford assistance which were made as soon as the emergency was known but which, despite their generosity and scope, have proved insufficient. Our cities and towns which have been spared a similar misfortune must do all in their power to help Greece, a country which suffered so much during the war and which is still labouring under immense economic and financial difficulties, in the task of repairing and restoring the damage which has been caused.

The magnitude of the problem and the urgent need for assistance can be readily understood by the municipal authorities of the other European countries. In order to secure their support, the Consultative Assembly, on 25th September, 1953, recommended that the Committee of Ministers should take the necessary steps to arrange for the adoption of the capital of Ithaca by the Council of Europe and called upon Member States



individually to adopt various towns of the Ionian Archipelago. It further instructed its- Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs to launch an Appeal on behalf of the Assembly to all European municipalities, requesting them to adopt the towns and villages of the afflicted Islands.

This Appeal cannot fall upon deaf ears. Following the spontaneous movement leading to the adoption, last winter, by other European towns, of the flood-damaged villages of the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom, we are confident that it will meet with a generous response ; that the municipalities of Europe will once more show how close are the bonds which unite them in their struggle against adversity and in their desire to give expression to the ideals of a united Europe.

In adopting one of the Greek communes the obligations undertaken will vary according to the needs of the locality adopted and the resources of the adopting town. They may consist of immediate or long-term financial aid, or of practical assistance in the form of building materials, equipment, vehicles, pre-fabricated bust, tents, cooking utensils, food, clothing, etc. Assistance may equally be given directly, as between corresponding institutions : it is open to ' churches, schools and other organisations .which play their part in local life to come to the aid of their opposite numbers in the adopted area. Arrangements could, also be made for Greek children, "singly ' or in groups,, to stay for a time in the adopting town. We can safely leave it to the ingenuity of each local authority to make the fullest use of the resources at its disposal.

Mayors or chairmen of local councils who wish to respond to this Appeal are requested to make their suggestions to the Secretariat-General of the Council of Europe, at Strasbourg

An opportunity is given to demonstrate in practical terms the loyalty which we profess to the idea of a united Europe, and to repay in some measure the debt which we acknowledge to the country which was one of the cradles of our civilisation. The towns and cities of our ancient Continent will surely not fail to seize it.

3. This appeal was accompanied by the following letter from the Chairman to the Mayors of the five hundred municipalities :10th November, 1953 Sir, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of the Appeal which the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe has been instructed to make to the municipalities of Europe, on behalf - of the Assembly, for the provision of aid to the Greek towns and villages destroyed by the recent earthquakes I trust that your local Council and yourself will be willing to participate in this new manifestation of European solidarity by lending material and moral assistance to the victims of this disaster and thereby, as in the case of the magnificent gestures of aid to the flooded towns and villages of the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom, to give yet another example which will stimulate the growth among the European countries of a spirit of friendship and collaboration. The experience gained from the disasters which occurred along the coasts of Western Europe has gone to show that the system of adopting towns and villages provides a most effective means of accomplishing this work of mutual aid. The Secrétariat-Général of the Council of Europe will be glad to give you any information you may require on this subject, and helpful guidance may also be obtained from the international associations of municipalities, of which the most prominent are the following :Council of European Municipalities, Pare Moynier Geneva International Union of Local Authorities, 5, Paleisstraat, The Hague I am, Sir, Jacques CHABAN-DELMAS, Deputy, Mayor of Bordeaux, Chairman of the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe

4. Thé associations of local authorities were also invited in the following letter to circulate the text of this appeal to their members : 10th November, 1953 Sir, As Chairman of the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs, I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of an Appeal to the European Municipalities on behalf of the Greek islands devastated by the recent earthquakes, which is now being launched by the Committee in accordance with the instructions of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe. Your country, your Organisation and its affiliated local authorities will have been deeply shocked by the cruel disaster which has befallen the Ionian Archipelago. The success of our campaign for the adoption of the flood-damaged areas of the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom has Convinced nie that this Appeal will meet with à similar response from the member Authorities of your Association, and I therefore ask you to be so good as to Circulate the text to all your members. May I add that it Would, of course, be of the greatest assistance and would be much appreciated if you should see fit to give your OWn support to the Appeal. I beg to remain, Yours sincerely, Jacques CHABAN-DELMAS, Deputy, Mayor of Bordeaux, Chairman of the Special Committee • on Municipal and Regional Affairs of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.

5. Lastly, the Chairman of the Committee and M. Droulias, both of them Greek members of the Committee, launched an appeal on 18th October, 1953, from the rostrum of the States-General of European Municipalities at Versailles to the European mayors present.

6. The municipalities of various large European towns were also approached directly by members of the Committee's Bureau and M. Droulias.
7. In this connection M. Droulias, attended by Mr. Bowden and Mr. Smithors, visited the mayors of a number of British towns, including the Lord Mayor of London ; similarly, M. Droulias was received by the Chairman of the Paris Municipal Council.
8. Apart from such action taken by the Committee and its members, numerous appeals on behalf of the Ionian Islands were, of course, launched by Governments, international organisations and public and private institutions of Member States, and it is therefore not possible to determine to what extent the results obtained were due to action taken by the Committee. The Secretariat-General has, however, received the following information likely to be of interest to the Assembly.
9. The towns and associations of local authorities mentioned below have contributed to the Ionian Islands Reconstruction Fund or have given their support to appeals launched on behalf of reconstruction of the devastated areas : Luxembourg, Liège, Strasbourg, Beauvais (by a gift of 25,000 French francs to the village of Rizis in the Island of Cephalonia), Udine; (by a gift of. 100,000 lire), Trieste (by a gift of 7,146,000 lire), Metz, Mons, Groningen, Messina, Helsingborg, Turin, the International Union of Local Authorities, the European Council of Local Authorities, the Union of Netherlands Municipalities, the French Association for the European Council of Local Authorities, the British Association of County Councils, the Federations of German Municipalities (Deutscher Städte-bund and. Deutscher Städtetag) the "member town's of the latter organisation donating 40,000 German marks to the Ionian municipalities). Special mention may be made of the donation of 1,000 guineas to the Ionian Islands by the City of London and that of 3 million francs by the City of Paris for the rebuilding of the village of Assos, adopted by it on 24th December, 1953, in accordance with the following decision :

THE PARIS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Resolves that :

Article 1 Ever faithful to its tradition of solidarity in the face of disasters befalling friendly peoples, the City of Paris will contribute the sum of 3 million francs to the national subscription opened on behalf of the earthquake victims of the Ionian Islands.

Article 2 — For the purpose of making this contribution a credit of 3 million francs will be opened under Head 94, Sub-Head 38, of the amended budget for the financial year 1953.

Article 3 — The City of Paris shall adopt the village of Assos and will be honoured and will rejoice to see it re-named Paris on the occasion of its reconstruction.

(Meeting of 24th December, 1953)

Certified true copy

(Signed) Frédéric DUPONT,

Chairman of the Paris Municipal Council.