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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Creation of a European Cultural Fund for Exiles

Communication
Committee of Ministers

1. Letter from the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers to the President of the Consultative Assembly, dated 22nd April, 1955

Monsieur le President,

As the Assembly was informed by the Supplementary Report to the Fifth Report of the Committee of Ministers (paragraph 41) [1], the Committee of Cultural Experts was instructed to consider the whole question of the European Cultural Fund for Exiles, with a view to the possible conclusion of a partial agreement.

I must now report that the Cultural Experts were unable to make headway with this task owing to the fact that far too few Member States were prepared to participate in the establishment of such a fund. The Experts, that is to say found themselves in the same quandary as the Governments; the Assembly will be familiar Avith its nature from statements made as early as December, 1953 by representatives of the Committee of Ministers on the Joint Committee.

The Council of Europe could hardly set itself a more noble objective than to help European culture in those countries where it is threatened with extinction, nor would this enterprise be practicable without the advice and co-operation of a body of distinguished exiles— intellectuals, scholars and artists. The Committee of Ministers cannot, however, agree with the Assembly in linking this enterprise with a policy assisting the whole range of cultural, educational or scientific activities pursued by refugees.

The result of this would be to replace action in the cultural sphere, which is of great significance though somewhat delicate, by a large-scale and costly programme. Moreover, such a programme of assistance to certain categories of refugee would be difficult to supervise and by no means certain to be effective.

The Assembly knows that considerable financial sacrifices are being made by many member countries on behalf of refugees. If they were now to increase their efforts by contributing to a further international fund, it is clear from discussions in the Committee of Ministers that most Governments would be criticised by their own nationals, who would find little justification for such preferential treatment.

Although it sees no prospect of inducing Members to accept the means suggested by the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers is certainly not indifferent to the high aim which the Assembly is seeking to pursue by patronising—and, as it were, adopting—the threatened cultures of Europe.

Some practical steps should, clearly, be taken to preserve national cultures now threatened with extinction. It would seem that the Assembly could give the nations not yet represented no better proof of its solidarity than by deciding to include this significant problem among its cultural activities and in the plans which it desires to put forward within the scope of the Programme of Work.

I am, Monsieur le President, your most obedient Servant.

pp. Chairman of the Committee of Ministers,

1. 2. See 6th Session, 1954 : Doc. 272.

Signed : N. HADJI VASSILIOU.