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SECRET MAR 9, 1950

Priority:

AIR POUCH

To:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

From:

IS ANBUL 76 February 18, 1950 3 Enclosures

Ref:

OUR DESP # 293, SECRET, DEC 5, 1949, SUBJ: CONVERSATION  
BETWEEN ASST. SEC'Y. GEORGE MCGHEE AND PATRIARCH  
ATHENAGORAS

Subject:

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH ATHENAGORAS

There are enclosed memoranda of conversations by  
Vice Consul James R. Gustin with

1. The Grand Logothete of the Greek Orthodox  
Patriarchate
2. The Patriarch on February 1
3. The Patriarch on February 7

Grand Logothete Ghiokas is convinced of Russian  
emphasis on the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and  
Jerusalem, with the intention of eventually shifting  
the title of Senior Patriarch from Istanbul to  
Alexandria; Ghiokas is also convinced that the "non-  
conformist" practices of Athenagoras are currently  
cited by the Russians to the Patriarchs named above  
for propoganda ends.

Ghiokas also outlined property and taxation dif-  
ficulties with the Turkish government, including ex-  
propriation of certain church property; questions raised  
with the Turks one year ago were almost all unsettled.  
Ghiokas stated that the Greek Government is opposed to  
filling a local vacancy by the Archbishop of Imbros and  
Tenedos and had suggested transferring him and three  
others to the Dodecanese, to free Athenagoras from their  
influence; three of them had voted blank at the election  
of the Patriarch.

Ghiokas' most vivid concern, however, was the  
"immature, unchurchly and highly controversial conduct"  
of the Patriarch in public, where his innovations have  
long been severely criticized by the extremely conser-  
vative local Greek Orthodoxes, so much so that Ghiokas  
states Athenagoras has lost 80% of his support and even  
dares mention his deposition, while at the same time  
stating he is 10% better than last August. The Patri-  
arch must eliminate the selfish persons about him and  
conform to ancient customs, and of course Ghiokas  
desires that our government use its influence here.

LVBaldwin/sp

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While the Turkish government outwardly is generally favorable to Athenagoras, in its actions Ghiokas finds much to criticize severely.

In conversation, Ghiokas was in fact most critical of the promises of the Vali to him and to the Patriarch that a way would be found so that the Greek church could retain possession of the properties expropriated, and Ghiokas is convinced that while high officials continually assert their impartiality toward minorities, instructions are still carried out amounting to continued oppression. However, he was perfectly willing to request Turkish cooperation to transfer the four Archbishops if necessary or to put down possible demonstrations in their favor.

It is difficult to assess the Grand Logothete's criticisms, for many stem back to situations of which the present personnel of this office are not fully advised. Many of his more critical statements may certainly be the result of pique toward the Patriarch, as well as innate conservatism and respect for the traditions of centuries. I regard his entire frank approach as being an appeal for us to assert our influence as a government toward what he considers necessary ends and changes, but whether they are or not is open to question. His accusations of discrimination against his church and the Greek minority should be subjected to close scrutiny, for it is doubtful that the treatment accorded them will be found to be different from that accorded other foreign properties or citizens. Ghiokas has always played a large part in Patriarchal politics and intrigue.

Enclosure # 3 outlines direct requests made by the Patriarch himself to be given to Assistant Secretary McGhee personally. All of these points were discussed by the Patriarch with the Assistant Secretary as indicated in Despatch # 293; however, the Patriarch was much more explicit to Mr. Gustin in requesting two linotypes, an expression by the Greek government that it desires to eliminate the Patriarch at Alexandria -- following which the Patriarch could remove him, and material aid to Antioch and to Finland. Athenagoras stressed the complete freedom enjoyed by the Greek minority in Turkey and is most confident that the Turkish government will adopt no measures adversely affecting the Orthodox community here.

The Patriarch is obviously aware of the criticism of his "non-conformity" and apparently has no intention of altering his attitude in that respect.

#### Enclosures

1. As stated in despatch
2. " " " "
3. " " " "

*L. V. Baldwin*  
LaVerne Baldwin  
American Consul General

Copy to Mr. Moore, G. T. J  
Ankara

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Enclosure # 1 to Despatch  
No. 76, ISTANBUL, dated  
Feb 18, 1950.

To : The Consul General February 4, 1950  
From : Vice Consul James Gustin JRG  
Subject: Mr. Ghiokas and his Observations

I requested Mr. Vassiliadis to arrange an appointment for me with Mr. Ghiokas, the Grand Logothete of the Greek Patriarchate church, in order that I might say goodbye to him before my departure from Istanbul. Mr. Ghiokas took the occasion to reiterate his great concern with the policies of the present Patriarch, previously stated to me in a conversation last August, but which I felt at the time was so damaging to the idea of basic American interests which had prompted the election of Athenagoras that I did not see how a political report could be prepared at that particular time.

During the conversation in Mr. Ghiokas' city apartment on Zambak Sokak, which lasted from 4:00 PM to 7:30 PM, February 3, he summarized the position of the Greek Patriarchate with relation to the Greek government, the Turkish government, and the Patriarchates at Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem; his own personal relations with Athenagoras; and his strongly repeated urgings that the U.S. must take steps to guide Athenagoras into more conservative lines if the Greek, Turkish, and overall Allied countries' cause against Communism is not to be lost.

The first point which Mr. Ghiokas stressed was that there is at present no Communist penetration within the local Patriarchate. He mentioned that there had been an attempt in the past to penetrate this organization, but having failed, the Russians are shifting their emphasis to the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem with the purpose of eventually shifting the title of Senior Patriarch from Istanbul to Alexandria.

Mr. Ghiokas pointed out that he was glad to see the U.S. displaying an interest in affairs of the Greek Orthodox Church as he feels that such display of interest is good for the Patriarchate and for the U.S.

The next point made by Mr. Ghiokas was that of the Russian current tactics of stressing Athenagoras' "non-conformist" practices to impress the three Patriarchates mentioned above and to use Athenagoras' unpopularity as an excuse to shift the Crown to Alexandria.

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With reference to a building which is housing the Greek Theological school, the military authorities have stated again that they would like the use of this school building (a former request by the military was vetoed by the Council of State on the grounds that it was Greek church property).

Concerning the new tax law, Mr. Ghiokas was pessimistic and said that although no tax will be exacted from the Patriarchate itself according to the promise of the Vali and the Defterdar, there will be a tax on Greek hospitals and schools which are supported by the Greek community's donations, and these institutions in the future will be required to keep books for tax purposes. As church returns go toward the revenues for the schools and hospitals, with the remainder of the money to be used for the poor, it will become apparent on the date for the first examination of the books (March 31, 1951) as to exactly what the Turkish government has in mind with regard to the taxation of the Greek church institutions.

One thing which has occurred within the last two or three months and is very disturbing to Mr. Ghiokas was the Turkish government's expropriation of a small Byzantine church in Sirkeci near Gulhane Park named Ayaz Therapon, the Greek cemetery of Scutari, and the Greek cemetery of Sisli, the church having been property of the Greek community since Byzantine times. The Turkish government sent an agent to collect rent for these properties, and he was told by Mr. Ghiokas that there must be some mistake. Mr. Ghiokas has taken every means possible to keep his protest out of the courts; however, the case of the Scutari cemetery will come up before the Scutari court this Monday, February 6 with himself pleading the church's case.

Mr. Ghiokas said that the Patriarch sees the unsatisfactory relations with the Turkish government but does not want to injure his own amicable relations by taking any direct action himself. He calls his counselors together instead and asks them to find a way around the present Turkish restrictions. The Greek community is well aware of this conciliatory attitude and does not approve of it.

Of the six points which had been presented to the Turkish government more than a year ago for its approval, all, except election of committees to manage churches and schools, are still in suspense. The committees are in operation, and it seems that the Turkish government will permit regular functioning of these committees.

The death of the Metropolitan of Dherkon (Therapia) a few days ago has brought up the question of the naming of the new Archbishop. This is a very senior position in the local church, and the inhabitants of the Bosphorus have made known their desire to have the Archbishop of Bursa appointed. Athenagoras, however, is being pressed by the Archbishop of Imbros and Tenedos, who is not liked in his archbishopric, for the appointment of himself as Archbishop of Dherkon. The Greek government is very opposed to the appointment of this man, and in fact has suggested that the four Archbishops, namely, Pergama, Laodicea, Nea Cezari, and Imbros & Tenedos, be transferred into the Dodecanese archbishoprics (four are now vacant) which are under Greek control in order to eliminate these bad counselors who are now collaborating with Athenagoras. The Dodecanese, like the new provinces annexed after the Balkan Wars, are under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate and not the Free Greek church of Athens. This matter has been pending for sometime as these four persons were involved in the pre-election dispute over Athenagoras and three of them are among the three who voted blank at the time of the election. The Archbishop of Imbros and Tenedos is keeping on the good side of Athenagoras and of the Turkish government in the hope that he will secure a good personal position for a future Patriarchate election. The Greek government considers him as a traitor, and the inhabitants of the two islands resent his presence there.

As Ghiokas feels that great sacrifices were made in order to bring Athenagoras to Istanbul, all parties concerned must make great sacrifices now to keep him here. He feels that Athenagoras has lost 80% of his support, but it would be a disaster if he were to be deposed. He feels that the interests of the entire Christian world demand that this man stay here for at least several years and that he be guided to eliminate the persons who are near him and who are motivated only by personal desires; also that Athenagoras be urgently requested to conform to the ancient customs of the position he occupies. Ghiokas feels that this situation has become so urgent through repeated instances of immature, unchurchly, and highly controversial conduct on the part of Athenagoras when appearing in public that it has reached the point where the general interest of Greece, Turkey, and the Western Allies, requires a recommendation by the U.S. to Athenagoras, through such channels as it has, that he become more "conformist". Also that our government request Greece to actively support Athenagoras as he becomes more conformist. Ghiokas further suggested that the Turkish and Greek governments should be asked to assist Athenagoras actively in drawing the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch closer to him by whatever means possible and that Athenagoras should of course make this effort initially himself.

MAXIMOS

The health of Maximos is much better now, and Ghiokas estimates that he is 95% recovered. The other Archbishops who are opposed to the Patriarch are trying to mix Maximos into high level church intrigues, but it has been possible to this date through the combined efforts of the Greek Ambassador and Ghiokas to keep Maximos on leave until March 1. Ghiokas feels that it is most important that this leave of absence be extended for another six months or at least until Athenagoras enters the more retiring and less controversial routine already recommended. Maximos is a very conservative, religious man, and very nervous; and it is known that he greatly resents the Patriarch's innovations, particularly the prospect of a girl choir in the Phanar (a matter coming entirely outside Athenagoras' jurisdiction as Metropolitan of Constantinople and a matter which is not even within his authority as Patriarch to change so lightly) or the question of moving the throne of St. Chrysostom, which is currently being discussed by Athenagoras. Ghiokas fears that unless Maximos is kept on leave until these controversial matters are settled, there is a prospect of a violent scene between the two men. Ghiokas cited his own disgust at the actions of Athenagoras in calling up small children to his throne in a local church at the precise moment the officiating priest was celebrating the Sacrament and the rest of the church was engaged in religious contemplation -- with Athenagoras then delegating the special prayer of the Patriarch by sentences to the small children who clustered around him. Ghiokas was irritated to the point where he left the church after the service without waiting for the Patriarch. I asked if the Patriarch's actions still impressed him along the same lines as they had last August, at which time he had been very bitter toward the Patriarch, and Ghiokas replied that he believes that Athenagoras is about 10% better than he was last August. There is an extremely poor public reaction now, and his church community calls him an "actor".

GREEK AND TURKISH GOVERNMENT OPINION

The Greek government has a few reserves toward Athenagoras as of the present date, but the church and the people in Greece are entertaining many reserves toward him.

The Turkish government is generally favorable to Athenagoras in that high personages give every outward appearance of friendship and desire for cooperation, but the Ministry of Finance and the Defter Darlik are at the same time pushing

the expropriation of church properties. The Vali's recent visits to shopkeepers, which had been much publicized, resulted in restrictions on mostly minority shopkeepers.

Mr. Ghiokas stated that it was a matter of great personal grievance to him that he was forced to confide these matters to an American government official in the hope that the American government would be able to make the suggestion to Athenagoras to govern himself by the ancient rules of the church. Mr. Ghiokas stated that he is finding it impossible to collaborate further with Athenagoras as he does not respect the traditional position of Grand Logothete as one who gives advice to the Patriarch in the strictest confidence. Such advice has upon occasion been repeated to the members of the Saint Synod. Ghiokas feels that matters are coming to the point where he must confess his complete inability to work with Athenagoras and must submit his resignation. He states that the Patriarch is always very friendly to him, embraces him, thanks him for his advice, and then usually does the opposite, at the same time not keeping in confidence the matters which he has confided to him.

#### TURKISH ELECTIONS

As a last remark, Mr. Ghiokas stated that he feels that it is to the interest of everyone that the People's Party not lose the next election. He feels that a complete democratic victory would throw things into such a confusion that Turkey would be open to Communism to a greater extent than anyone foresees. He said that even though the People's Party is wrong in many of the things which it is doing, it should lose power gradually by some means such as a coalition government, and should not be permitted to lose power completely at one time.

To : The Consul General February 8, 1950  
From : Vice Consul James Gustin JRG  
Subject: Conversation between the Patriarch, Consul  
Merrill and Myself on February 1, 1950

The Patriarch had granted me an audience so that I might say farewell to him before leaving Istanbul, and I had also arranged to introduce Consul Merrill to the Patriarch at that time. We arrived at the Phanar at 11:00 AM and were immediately shown into the Patriarch's office for a private audience. I did not see Monsignor Meliton, the Grand Vicar, although my telephone arrangements for the audience had been made through him.

Athenagoras appeared very pleased to meet Mr. Merrill, and said that I could carry the message back to America that he, the Patriarch, was working steadfastly in America's cause. He stated that the United States is the hope of the world, and he would always be very proud of the opportunity he had had to know President Roosevelt personally from the time of his nomination as Governor of New York State to his death, and then to know President Truman personally. He also expressed appreciation for the close cooperation which he had received in the past from the State Department. He also mentioned the great courtesy that had been shown to him at Ottawa when he journeyed there to renounce his American citizenship, and how deeply the personal kindness of the Ambassador had touched him.

The Patriarch mentioned church affairs in Yugoslavia briefly, stating that church conditions there have taken a turn for the better.

He said that he had certain matters of importance to communicate to the Department, which of course he would not send without Mr. Baldwin's full knowledge. He stated that he would get this letter to me, as I am presently returning to Washington. I inquired whether I should call again to receive the letter and he stated that he would send it to me by his secretary.



Athenagoras said that his long experience as a priest in Balkan countries (Bulgaria and Yugoslavia) before going to New York gave him an intuitive knowledge of Slavic political designs, and he considered that the present Communism is only the present day form of Slavism.

Current Note:

As the Grand Vicar requested on February 7 that I call again on the Patriarch before my departure, and my appointment was set for 3:00 P.M. on February 8, I assume that I will be given the Patriarch's personal letter above mentioned.

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Enclosure # 3 to Despatch  
No. 76, ISTANBUL, dated  
Feb 18, 1950.

To : The Consul General, Istanbul February 9, 1950  
From : Vice Consul James Gustin JRG  
Subject: My Call on the Patriarch, Scheduled for 3:00 P.M.  
Wednesday, February 8, 1950.  
(A telephone call on February 7th from the Grand  
Vicor requested that I call on the Patriarch at  
that time)

I arrived at the Phanar at 2:50 P.M. and was immediately shown into the Patriarch's office. He said that he had wanted urgently to speak with me (and I gathered from his manner that he wanted his comments to be for my ears only) as I would soon be en route to the United States, and would be able to talk personally with Assistant Secretary McGhee.

The Patriarch showed me two letters, one from President Truman, and the other one from Mr. McGhee. He said that these two letters meant a very great deal to him, and indicated that more letters of the same nature would be of great assistance to him in carrying out his duties in Istanbul. He then asked if I had a pencil and notebook with me to take down some notes that he wanted to be passed to Mr. McGhee personally. The following is from these notes:

1. The local Patriarchate is strong (meaning against Communism) at present, and Athenagoras has full confidence in the Holy Synod; no financial support for this Patriarchate is required. The Patriarch requested, however, that he be supplied with two linotypes, one for Greek and one for English in order that he may publish a newspaper and magazines in each language.
2. The Patriarch then expressed grave concern over the Patriarch of Alexandria, stating that Christopher is openly in favor of Russian Communism, and that he is in touch with the Russian church and the Russian government. Athenagoras mentioned Christopher's attempt to visit the United States which had been blocked by himself, and stated that Christopher now wants to go to the United States through an application in Canada this spring or summer. Athenagoras said that he felt the Canadian government should refuse Christopher a visitor's visa because of the many opportunities Christopher would have

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to be in touch with Russian agents in Canada, if he were allowed entry there.

Athenagoras then stated that he is willing to remove Christopher from his position, provided the Greek government desires to eliminate him. (He then explained to me that the Greek government exercises a great deal of influence in the affairs of his Church.)

I inquired as to the means His Holiness had in mind for effecting this removal, and he said that Christopher was spending a great deal of money to impress certain people, that his Orthodox community in Alexandria is a very important one, and that Christopher, personally, has taken legal steps through a Moslem court in Alexandria to dispossess some of the Orthodox community of their property. He stated that such court action was entirely outside the activities permitted to a Patriarch, and that there were, besides, many other reasons on which he could be removed.

I gathered, although it was not so stated, that His Holiness preferred that the Department approach the Greek government to ask if it desires the removal of Christopher. Athenagoras was most emphatic in his resolution to do away with Christopher, if the Greek government approves, and later, as my call was ending, reiterated that Christopher is a dangerous man whom he believes to be mentally deranged, and that Christopher's "mot d'honneur" as given for any promise means nothing.

3. Athenagoras stated that his only other real problem is that of the Patriarch Alexander of Antioch, who appears to be under Russian influence, due very naturally to the fact that he received his education in Russia. Athenagoras stated that it would be quite easy for him to influence Alexander as the latter has financial problems (not very great), and a small financial support would bring him completely under Athenagoras' control. The Patriarch described Alexander as a feeble old man. Antioch also needs the financial support to establish a training school for priests, and to establish a magazine publishing center.

4. The Patriarch said that the Archbishop of Finland needs financial support badly, and that as he has found this Archbishop to be a good man and very obedient to him, he is very anxious that the required financial

support be provided for him. The Patriarch added that such support need not be great, and he thought that \$5,000 or \$10,000 would suffice.

5. Athenagoras stated that his relations with the Turkish government are very good, that the Greek community can now elect committees to handle school affairs, and he is most confident that no measures will be adopted by the Turkish government which would have an adverse effect on the Orthodox community in Turkey. He stressed the complete freedom enjoyed by the Greek minority in Turkey.

6. The Patriarch stated that the Archbishop of Athens is very strong against Communism. He asked if I were familiar with the organization of the Church of Athens, and I replied that I understood the Free Church of Greece to be separate from his Patriarchate. (The Patriarch seemed satisfied then that I understood the meaning of his remarks.)

7. Athenagoras then went on to say that the Archbishop of Cyprus is independent, that Athenagoras doesn't interfere in his political affairs (doubtless referring to the recent Church-inspired plebiscite), but that he knows the head of the Cyprus church to be strong against Communism.

8. The last person discussed was the Patriarch of Jerusalem, whom Athenagoras stated to be in very poor health, but very strongly opposed to Communism. His Holiness indicated that he is not worried about the Patriarch of Jerusalem, that although he is weak physically, he is very strong mentally, and there is a very good Locum Tenens with him.

At one point in the Patriarch's comments, he stopped to say that he was having a certain amount of difficulty in getting some of his own people (indicating by gesture the walls of his office) to see things his way. He stated that "they don't know that things have changed, and how things are being done these days". He shrugged to indicate his personal feeling that everything would work out all right in his own organization. (As I had recently heard the Grand Logothete's complaints about the Patriarch's informalities and frequent departures from the age-old traditions of the Phanar, I was particularly on the lookout for any pertinent comment from His Holiness, but did not feel it to be opportune to develop that point, nor to ask any questions concerning the new appointment to fill the position of the recently deceased Archbishop of Dherkon (Therapia).

At the end of the interview, His Holiness asked about my travel plans and seemed a bit surprised that I would not reach Washington until March first. I said that I felt however his comments could best be transmitted by a personal letter from Mr. Baldwin directly to Mr. McGhee, and that I would certainly call upon Mr. McGhee immediately upon my arrival in Washington. The Patriarch seemed satisfied that this letter and call would adequately present his thoughts and requests to Mr. McGhee, and asked if I thought it necessary that he repeat these points to Mr. Baldwin. I stated that I did not feel that a special call by Mr. Baldwin was really necessary (thinking also that two visits in quick succession by official Americans might arouse too much local comment).

His Holiness mentioned his high personal regard for Mr. McGhee and asked that I convey his warmest personal greetings to the Assistant Secretary and Mrs. McGhee.