

882.413/4-2650

*The Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (McGhee) to the Consul General at Istanbul (Baldwin)*

SECRET

WASHINGTON, April 26, 1950.

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

DEAR VERN: Your letter of February 16<sup>1</sup> and your despatch No. 76 of February 18<sup>2</sup> have been brought to my attention by Mr. Gustin since my return to Washington last week.

I am inclined to regard criticism of the alleged unorthodox behavior of Athenagoras<sup>3</sup> as largely a reflection of Phanar politics<sup>4</sup> and in any case as a problem which is likely to work itself out without any interference on our part. I also believe that the Greek Government is competent to make a decision with regard to Patriarch Christopher of Alexandria without our advice and that we should, in general, avoid involvement in the matter of Orthodox appointments and personalities except where it may be necessary to combat direct, obvious and serious Soviet efforts at penetration of the Church.

On the other hand, I do consider that we should, if at all possible, extend some limited financial help to the Church where it is genuinely needed and likely to be effective, both with a view to counteracting the spread of Soviet influence through the Church in Greece and the Near East and to keeping open an important avenue for our own penetration of the communist but still basically Orthodox countries of eastern Europe. I am therefore inquiring whether an agency of this Government might be in a position to meet the Archbishop's specific requests for the linotypes and financial help for other Patriarchates.

I have given Bill Lewis<sup>5</sup> a brief letter of introduction to Athena-

<sup>1</sup> Letter from LaVerne Baldwin, not printed (882.413/2-1850).

<sup>2</sup> From Istanbul, not printed; enclosure 3 thereto was a memorandum on a conversation, February 7, by James R. Gustin, Vice Consul at Istanbul, with Athenagoras I, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, who outlined certain points to be conveyed to Assistant Secretary of State McGhee. Among these were a request for two linotypes for publication by the Patriarchate of a newspaper and magazines in Greek and English; an assertion by Patriarch Athenagoras of his willingness to remove Patriarch Christopher of Alexandria, who was "openly in favor of Russian Communism, . . . *provided the Greek Government desires to eliminate him*"; and a request for financial aid for the Patriarchate of Antioch and the Archbishop of Finland. (882.413/2-1850)

<sup>3</sup> Reference presumably is to some opposition faced by Patriarch Athenagoras from certain members of the Holy Synod at the Phanar (the site of the Patriarchate in Istanbul).

<sup>4</sup> This question was raised by Grand Logothete Ghiokas of the Greek Patriarchate church in a conversation with Vice Consul Gustin at Istanbul on February 3 (memorandum of conversation, February 4, by Vice Consul Gustin; enclosure 1 to despatch 76, February 18, from Istanbul, 882.413/2-1850, not printed).

<sup>5</sup> Charles W. Lewis, Jr., newly assigned Consul General at Istanbul.

goras (copy attached)<sup>6</sup> in which I merely mention the latter's conversations with Vice Consul Gustin and say that I am making inquiries as to the possibility of helping him in the matters in which he is interested. It would seem inadvisable to go any farther than this in talking with Athenagoras at the present time, but it may be helpful for you to have the above reactions in mind in your final conversations with him.

[Here follow personal remarks.]

Sincerely yours,

GEORGE C. MCGHEE

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<sup>6</sup> Not printed; copy, April 11, 1950 (date of drafting of letter), in Ankara Embassy Files, Lot 58F33, Box 3301, 570.3 Religion 1950.

782.5/4-2750

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*Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State  
(Webb)*

SECRET

[WASHINGTON,] April 27, 1950.

Subject: Continuing Desire of Turkey to be Included in a Formal Security Arrangement

Participants: H. E. Feridun C. Erkin—Ambassador of Turkey  
Mr. Webb—Under Secretary  
Mr. David Popper—UNP  
Mr. C. Robert Moore—GTI

The Turkish Ambassador referred to his meeting with me on September 30, 1949<sup>1</sup> in which he had discussed the desire of Turkey to be included in a regional defense arrangement associated with the United States. He indicated he was aware at the time that the problem was one which required study and that we would not be able to give him an early decision. The recent series of Soviet actions and statements was a new development, however, which compelled him again to bring this matter to our attention with the request that we give it urgent consideration.

The Ambassador mentioned that fourteen or fifteen months ago when the question of Turkey's inclusion in a regional pact first came up he expressed the view that Turkish exclusion might well lead to an isolation complex on the part of the Turkish people and the feeling by the Russians that this country was indifferent or had a lack of interest in the survival of Turkey as a free nation. He considers that more recent developments have borne out his earlier fears and that the Soviet Union is now attempting to create an atmosphere of increasing

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum of conversation, September 30, 1949, not printed.