

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO : Department of State

882.413/5-2650

FROM : ISTANBUL 332 May 26, 1950

REF : DESPATCH 76, FEBRUARY 18, 1950

SUBJECT : CONVERSATION WITH ATHENAGORAS

Consul General LaVerne Baldwin called on the Oecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras to say goodbye and offered at that time to take any messages which the Patriarch might desire to have passed on to Washington. The Patriarch did not in conversation take advantage of this offer.

He stressed his Americanism, belief in the Good Neighbor policy, in democratic methods, and in the courage and frankness of America, which he had endeavored to carry out in his policies as Patriarch. He inquired whether we as the American Government felt that he was on the right track in his approach to the Turkish Government and in his treatment of his Patriarchate. I replied that while numerous petty criticisms had come to my ears originating from conservatives unwilling to admit change, I myself had seen the results of the Patriarch's energy, moral stamina, and democratic beliefs in the attitude of his own people. He went on to say that he enjoyed working with the present Vali (Governor) of Istanbul, whom he had known before his appointment as Vali and that he believed the Vali had done much good and could do much more. The Patriarch added that the Patriarchate's relations with the Turkish Government are very good, with the Greek Orthodox schools, churches, properties and persons fully protected; businessmen of course were encountering (and would do so by their very nature) difficulties from time to time. The Patriarch continued that he did not propose to change his "American policy" regardless of any criticism which might come to him of the character described, and he has the energy to carry through on these lines.

He inquired whether the U.S. Government would reach any understanding with the Soviet. I replied that while the Soviets made commitments, we could tell only by their actions whether they had any intention of keeping such commitments, and continued that the U.S. Government's policy would be to oppose communism in any form wherever it is found; to lend aid and assistance as possible to the countries on the periphery, such as Greece, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indo-China; to work through the United Nations and other possible means for an understanding; and above all -- and here the Patriarch could with his church lend great assistance --

LVBaldwin/sp

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to fight communism on moral grounds, emphasizing our peaceful intentions and proposals, which could be reinforced for every single American and others of the same opinion.

The Patriarch also particularly inquired whether we would change our policy toward Turkey. I replied that while the Marshall Plan would expire in 1952 and that thus far nothing was decided upon to take its place if this were to be done, we would certainly continue to back Turkey with our moral support and with such funds as Congress would authorize in the way of military aid, perhaps at least continue training assistance or advice if other funds were not made available. We were not changing from the Truman Doctrine nor from the Marshall Plan in policy. He was impressed and pleased by this statement and said so.

I informed the Patriarch briefly of events in Yugoslavia following the death of Patriarch Gavrilko. He stated he had appointed the Bishop of Timok, his personal friend, to represent him at the funeral and that he felt that Timok would be a fine successor to Gavrilko. He also stated that he had learned that the two Serbian Bishops in America and the other Serbian in Great Britain were considering severing their connections with the Yugoslav church in the event that a Patriarch not to their liking should be chosen.

Patriarch Athenagoras stated that he would be happy to keep Consul General Lewis advised through present channels of such communications as he might receive which he felt might be of interest to us; I had thanked him for his past actions in that respect.

His Holiness was most sincere in his farewells and in the expression of his high regard for America, for the Secretary, and for Mr. McGhee. He did not mention the numerous specific requests which he had presented through Vice Consul Gustin (Despatch under reference) nor did I refer to them other than to make inquiry whether he had any particular matters which I might bring to the attention of Washington on arrival there.

For the Consul General

Laverne Baldwin
Laverne Baldwin
American Consul General

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