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THE FENER GREEK PATRIARCHATE

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A controversy concerning the Fener Greek Patriarchate started in Turkey in 1997. It was stated that the Patriarchate could be used both for and against the interests of Turkey. On the one hand, it was claimed that the Patriarchate had intentions to establish itself as an ecumenical church and become a state like the Vatican; that the Orthodox world was trying to gain power in Turkey. On the other hand, some people stated that Turkey could benefit from the prestigious position of the Patriarchate and suggested an improvement in its status.

First of all, I want to stress that the Patriarchate no longer enjoys the importance it once possessed in Greek-Turkish relations. Today, the Patriarchate is trying to become influential in Turkish-American relations.

The Fener Greek Patriarchate is a historical religious institution. After the division of the Roman Empire, it became the church of the Byzantine Empire and obtained the status of an ecumenical church. With the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, the Patriarchate became the church of the Greeks living within the Ottoman Empire. Besides its functions as a religious institution, the Patriarchate was also granted the right to act as a ministry of Greek affairs by Mehmet II. He granted increased authority and privileges to the Patriarch. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Fener Greek Patriarchate became the church of the Greeks living within the Republic of Turkey. The Lausanne Peace Treaty terminated the Patriarchate's authorities and privileges in non-religious affairs. The existence of the Patriarchate as a religious institution was threatened with the considerable decrease in the number of Greeks living in İstanbul. The Greek Church in Cyprus constituted another serious burden against the existence of the Patriarchate; the Cyprus crisis had forced Greek inhabitants of İstanbul to leave the city, thus destroying the basis on which the Patriarchate rested.

We do not exactly know when the Fener Greek Patriarchate was established. It is claimed that Apostle Andrew was the first to spread the teachings of the New Testament in Byzantium. With the establishment of Constantinople as the centre of the Byzantine Empire, Apostle Andrew became the first saint of the city (3 March 357). By the end of the fourth century, Saint Gregory had successfully set up Orthodoxy in Byzantium. The second Religious Council gathering in Constantinople granted the Evêque of the city the second highest ranking following Rome, and in 451, the fourth Religious Council raised the status of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to that of Rome. The Patriarch had obtained the title of being an ecumenical leader by the end of the sixth century.¹ Byzantine Emperors limited the authority of the Patriarch only to religious affairs and prevented them from getting involved in secular affairs. The Patriarchs became somewhat the head of religious affairs in the Byzantine Empire.

After conquering İstanbul, Mehmet II (Mehmet the Conqueror) ordered an election for the Patriarchate, which, at the time was unoccupied. The Religious Council selected Gennadius and Mehmet II recognised him as the Patriarch. The Fener Greek Patriarch continued to assume the ecumenical title. The Patriarch ensured the co-ordination of Orthodox churches within the Ottoman Empire. As the Empire grew in size, the range of influence of the Patriarch also expanded accordingly. When the Empire began to lose territory, however, Orthodox churches affiliated to the

Fener Greek Patriarchate began to be detached becoming independent, national churches.

Ottoman sultans also granted the Fener Greek Patriarch the right to act as a leader of the Greek population living within the Empire. Patriarchs ruled the Greek community in the name of the sultan.

In an imperial edict (ferman) Mehmet II granted the Patriarch certain authority and privileges. The details of this ferman are unknown since it was destroyed by a fire. Professor Co_kun Üçok states that the authority and privileges in question were based on similar fermans granted to other religious communities, and as such were:

- 1) No one shall harass the Orthodox community;
- 2) Gennadius and his bishops shall be exempt from all kinds of taxes and duties;
- 3) Churches shall not be converted into mosques;
- 4) All kinds of religious ceremonies pertaining to marriage, divorce, burial, etc., shall be practised freely;
- 5) Easter feast shall be celebrated in complete freedom and the gate of the Fener Patriarchate shall remain open during all three religious feasts;
- 6) Bishops and metropolitans shall enjoy judicial immunity.²

The Greeks continued to be governed by their own church laws, since Islamic law was not applicable to them. The Patriarch was granted the right to apply Greek laws in matters concerning the Greek community. Thus, a good knowledge of civil affairs in addition to religious affairs was a desired quality in candidates for the Patriarchate. Furthermore, it was deemed obligatory that Patriarchs be individuals who had the full confidence of the sultan, having been subjects of the Ottoman Empire for at least two generations.³

The Fener Greek Patriarchate cannot be said to have acted in a praiseworthy manner during World War I. The entry of the Greek army into İzmir on 15 May 1919 was considered to be the manifestation of success for the Megali Idea. Hristomos, who was the metropolitan of İzmir, incited hatred against Muslims by joining the Greek army and the local Greek population in street demonstrations. The deputy of the Patriarch, who later was to become Patriarch Meletios himself, asked the Greek population in İstanbul to support Greek forces. The Patriarch acted as if he too had declared war on the Ottoman government in İstanbul. Considering that he was the leader of the Greek community, the behaviour of the Patriarch might be looked upon as acceptable, yet Turkey could not be expected to accept all this in stride.

Atatürk stated that the Fener Greek Patriarchate was a source of treachery and was impairing the peace and comfort of Christian citizens. He added that Turkey could no longer tolerate the existence of the Greek Patriarchate on Turkish soil.⁴

During the Lausanne Peace Treaty which convened following the defeat of Greek forces, the Ankara government listed its complaints concerning the Patriarchate and declared that this Greek religious institution could not continue to exist in İstanbul. İsmet İnönü, commenting on this issue, stated: "Our thesis was that the Patriarchate had been the centre of all kinds of activities against Turks during the cease-fire period. The Patriarchate had become an institution which destroyed the amicable relations between the Turks and Greeks, and prevented their peaceful coexistence within a single state. We invariably defended the thesis that the existence of such an institution should, by all means, be terminated in Turkey."⁵

Books written by Greek authors also attest to the above mentioned actions of the Patriarchate against the İstanbul government. The issues concerning the Patriarchate, the exchange of populations and the religious rights of minorities, were discussed in a sub-commission on 22

December 1922 during the Lausanne Conference. Completely disregarding previous incidents, the Greek representative demanded that the Patriarch continue to possess the same authority and privileges as before the war. Dr. Rıza Nur, the Turkish representative, indicated that the Patriarchate could not continue to exist as a state within another state. The debate shifted from the authority issue of the Patriarch to the continuation of the existence of the Patriarchate in İstanbul. The Turkish representative declared that the Turkish government had separated the caliphate from state affairs, concluding that the privileges granted by the Ottoman Empire to non-Muslim communities—and thus the existence of an institution to be responsible for the implementation of these—were no longer necessary under the rule of a secular state. The Turkish representative thus demanded the abolishment of the Patriarchate in Turkey. Christian states participating at the conference unanimously rejected the request of the Turkish representative.

In a telegraph message dated 10 January 1923, İnönü wrote: “The British representative Lord Curzon has communicated that our request to expel the Greek Patriarch in İstanbul has vexed all churches. In fact, we have observed that the Christian world as a whole, considers this to be a common religious issue. I insisted that the administrative and political status of the Greek Patriarchate constituted a threat to our country and personally communicated this to Lord Curzon. However, Lord Curzon told me directly that no delegate, including himself, could settle the Patriarchate issue against the wishes of the entire world.”⁶

When Turkey insisted on the above mentioned request, the French representative offered a proposal to reconcile both sides: the Patriarchate would remain in İstanbul but would no longer have any authority in secular affairs. The Turkish government would have the right to control the designation of the Patriarch and limit his actions.

Interpreting the French proposal according to the interests of his country, the Greek representative demanded the continuation of the existence of the Patriarchate. He claimed that the Greeks had been granted privileges since they were of a different religion. Islamic law, therefore could not be applied to the Greeks since they had been governed by church law. The establishment of the Patriarchate in İstanbul was in accordance with the decision of the Religious Council. A political conference did not have the authority to alter these decisions.

The Turkish representative on the other hand, opposed the continuation of the existence of the Patriarchate in İstanbul. He stated that the Patriarchate had always been and would continue to be involved in politics.⁷ He added that the authority of the Caliph had been abolished in non-religious matters, suggesting that the Patriarchate could be relocated somewhere outside İstanbul, to Mt. Athos for example.

The report prepared by the sub-commission was discussed in a meeting of the First Commission on 10 January 1923. The president of the sub-commission, Montagna, submitted the report and expounded upon the difficulties faced on the issue concerning the exchange of populations. The debate concerning the Patriarchate arose when the commission attempted to determine who was to be subject to population exchange. The sub-commission was unable to settle the issue.

The head of the commission Lord Curzon said that, although it would have devastating results, an exchange of populations seemed inevitable under the prevailing conditions. He added that the exclusion of the Greeks living in İstanbul would be beneficial to the city’s economy.

Lord Curzon pointed out that the world was very much interested in the fate of the Patriarchate and that all the civilised world would grieve if the Patriarchate were to be distanced from İstanbul.⁸ He stated that the Patriarchate would become solely a religious institution if it were allowed to remain in İstanbul.

Eleftherios Venizelos, the Greek statesman, held a prolonged speech for the continuation of the existence of the Patriarchate in İstanbul. He could not deny Dr. Nur’s accusations that the Patriarchate had collaborated with the enemies of the Ottoman Empire during the war but tried to reduce the significance of the crime. Venizelos said: “War is an extraordinary event. It creates great

confusion in our consciences. It is dangerous and erroneous to base our decisions for the future on past events.” He added that, in order to ensure the continuing existence of the Patriarchate in İstanbul, action could be taken to remove the accused Patriarch from office.

Venizelos accepted that conditions in Turkey had changed. He said that the Greek government was ready to accept the abolishment of all the Patriarch’s authority except over religion and the Church. Venizelos then cited some of the issues which would be placed under the jurisdiction of the Turkish government: “Not accepting the Patriarch as the leader of the Greek community; abolishing all legislation which grants political authority to the Patriarch (for example) those provisions of the Law on Provinces which allow the Patriarch to attend some commissions ex officio, or those provisions of the Elections Law which grant him the right to supervise the arrangement of election schedules”.⁹

At the beginning of his speech, İnönü pointed out certain errors found in the Sub-commission’s report. He stated for example, that the number of civilian Turkish hostages taken to Greece was not 4,000 but around 10,000. İnönü further said: “The Turkish delegation has excluded the population living in Thrace from the exchange of populations, because it intends to hold a plebiscite to determine the fate of this region. To ask for the exclusion of the Greeks living in İstanbul for their contribution to the economy of the city, is not realistic. Most of the Greeks living in İstanbul are small shopkeepers and they can easily be replaced by other people.”

All present at the meeting were impatiently waiting for what İnönü would say concerning the Patriarchate. İnönü made the following declaration:

“We consider the official declarations made by the representatives of the Allied Forces and the representative of Greece—that the Patriarch would by no means get involved in political or administrative affairs and would solely be engaged in religious affairs—as a reliable guarantee.¹⁰ We drop our request to remove the Patriarchate from İstanbul, on the condition that it remains within the limits described by these declarations.”

In a telegraph message on the evening of 10 January 1923, İnönü confirmed: “The debate around the Patriarchate has been settled by our open declaration that the Patriarch shall not have any political and administrative authority or privileges and we do not assume any responsibilities other than those described by the laws concerning minorities.”¹¹

The speech delivered by İnönü produced great relief among the participants gathered in the meeting hall. Lord Curzon stated that İnönü’s declaration had been received warmly at the conference adding that it would have a very positive impact throughout the world.

These mutual declarations constituted an unwritten agreement. The Patriarchate would no longer possess its previous status. The task to determine the new status of the Patriarchate within the framework of minority laws would now be at the discretion of the Turkish Republic and Ankara obtained the right to determine the status of the Patriarchate and especially the procedure for the election of the Patriarch. I was very much surprised when I saw an article in one of the influential newspapers which claimed that the legal status of the Patriarch had not been discussed during the Lausanne Conference. According to international law, agreements can be both written and unwritten. An unwritten agreement possesses as much validity as a written one. To claim that the Patriarchate debate—which had been discussed at length during the Lausanne Conference—had been omitted, would be to misrepresent historical facts.

The Patriarchate faced difficulty in adapting itself to the new status determined by the unwritten agreement during the Lausanne Conference.

The government of the Turkish Republic began supervising the election of the Patriarch. In a communiqué sent to the Religious Council on 6 December 1923, the İstanbul Governor’s Office declared that the candidate must be a Turkish citizen with an occupation in Turkey at the time of the election. Meletios who had been fascinated by the Megali Idea, was compelled to resign after the ratification of the Peace Treaty. Grigorios, who was the metropolite of Kadıköy, was elected

Patriarch on 6 December 1923, in compliance with the communiqué sent by the İstanbul Governor's Office. During the next elections, an attempt was made to threaten Turkey's role as supervisor. Konstantinos, the metropolite of Terkos, who was not favoured by Turkey, was elected Patriarch. On 29 January 1925, the Turkish authorities forced Konstantinos to leave for Salonika by train. Greece protested against Turkey's dismissal of the Patriarch and discussions started between Ankara and Athens. Konstantinos was forced to resign on 22 May 1925. He was succeeded by Vasilios, the metropolite of _znik. On 4 September 1928, Vasilios recognised the independence of the Greek church and all metropolitanates in Greek territory accepted the supremacy of the Archbishop of Athens.

The Patriarch began enjoying a higher prestige, following the establishment of peaceful relations between Greece and Turkey. The Turkish authorities referred to Fotios, who had been elected on 7 January 1930, as 'Patriarch' instead of 'Priest'. Greek prime ministers Venizelos and Tsaldaris, who came to Turkey, also paid a visit to the Patriarch at Fener.¹²

By the end of the World War II, both Turkey and Greece were facing the Soviet threat. This resulted in increased co-operation between the two countries, supported by the United States. In its struggle with the Soviet Union, which mainly consisted of Orthodox peoples, the United States attempted to use the Fener Greek Patriarchate as a weapon. Patriarch Maksimos, who was allegedly a Soviet fan and mentally ill, was forced to resign. In November 1948, Athénagoras, the Archbishop of North and South America, was elected Patriarch. The new Patriarch came to Turkey on US President Truman's private aeroplane on 26 January 1949. Turkish President _smet _nönü received Athénagoras at his Çankaya residence. The Patriarch, whom the Turkish authorities had referred to as 'Priest' after the Treaty of Lausanne, was now welcomed as the envoy of the US President.

Athénagoras had a peculiar personality. He took up religious orders on July 1910 in Manastır (Bitolj). Metropolitite Stephonos appointed him as manager of the religious schools. Within two years, he had become a secretary to the metropolitite. The population of Manastır consisted of 30,000 Turks, 15,000 Greeks, 5000 Bulgarians and 3000 Serbs in those days. Athénagoras established friendly relations with the Mevlevi and Bektashi sects living there. He is even said to have been invited to the religious worships of the Mevlevi.¹³ Athénagoras later became secretary to the Religious Council in Athens. In 1923, he became the metropolitite of Corfu (Kırkira). He seems to have been a defender of a universal rather than a national church. In 1930, Athénagoras became the archbishop of the American Orthodox Church. He organised and modernised Orthodox churches in the USA and founded a religious academy in Boston. He did not get involved in Greek politics and remained impartial. He visited US presidents Roosevelt and Truman at the White House and further corresponded with them. He was fascinated by the success of the multi-national and multi-religious state in America. During his assignment at Fener, he eliminated religious differences between the Orthodox churches in Moscow and İstanbul, uniting the two.

Commenting on the situation in İstanbul, Athénagoras said: "We, the Orthodox Greeks, are loyal citizens of Turkey. All we ask is compliance with the Constitution. We know that we live in our country for three thousand years."¹⁴ Athénagoras endeavoured to unite the Greek minority and the Turks. He delivered greeting messages on Turkish religious holidays. He even placed the Turkish flag on the Patriarchate, like any other public institution in Turkey. He tried to improve Turkish-Greek relations in the areas of culture and tourism. However, all these efforts suddenly came to an end with the advent of the Cyprus crisis. Commenting on Makarios, Athénagoras once said: "He failed to realise the extent of his responsibility. He shouldn't have played such a political role."¹⁵

By the end of 1954, terrorist activities supported by the Greek government started to seize Cyprus. On 1 April 1955, the Greeks living on the island attempted—under the guidance of the Archbishop—to accomplish énosis, that is, union with Greece.

Turkey had fears about the security of the Turkish community in Cyprus. Russia was an age-old enemy and the extreme left was influential both in Greece and Cyprus. Turkish defence forces would be engulfed by énosis. On this issue, Athénagoras once said: "Cyprus is just below Turkey's belly

Turkey cannot risk such a thing.”¹⁶

During the London Conference, the Greek representative accused the Turkish public of not paying any attention to Cyprus. Following this, the 5-6 September events occurred in İstanbul in 1955.

In a letter sent to Makarios on 19 April 1963, the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Evangelos Averoff clearly expressed that amending the Zurich-London agreement unilaterally, would harm Greece as well as all Greeks living in Turkey, including the Patriarch.

The Cyprus crisis destroyed all positive effects of Athénagoras' efforts towards uniting the Greeks and Turks in İstanbul. Some groups in Greece accused him of treason due to his complete loyalty to the Turkish state. Similarly, extreme nationalists in Turkey blamed him for being a secret supporter of énosis, due to his reluctance to denounce Makarios. Each new phase of the Cyprus crisis upset the Patriarch and the Greek community in İstanbul further. The 'Bloody Christmas' events initiated by Makarios at the end of 1963 and the subsequent attacks of Greeks on Turks, caused widespread uprisings in Turkey, especially in İstanbul. In early 1964, the requests for the abolishment of the Patriarchate once again came on the agenda. In June 1966, a member of parliament proposed the closing down of both the Patriarchate and the Heybeli Monastic School. Under these circumstances, Athénagoras was forced to remain silent and his voice was not to be heard any more.

I have tried to summarise the efforts of Athénagoras and the difficulties faced by the Fener Greek Patriarchate up to this point. In spite of the US President's support and in spite of all his personal efforts, the Patriarch was unable to improve Greek-Turkish relations. The same applies to the current Patriarch Bartolomeos. In a declaration following his visit to Pope Paul II at the Vatican in July 1995, it was stated that both the Pope and the Patriarch supported dialogue between religions and prayed for the eastward expansion of the European Union. According to the press, Bartolomeos's support of Turkey's entrance into the European Union was denounced by the Greeks. In a meeting of the Turkish-Greek Business Council in İstanbul in May 1997, Bartolomeos said: "United Europe has enough space for Turkey. Greece, being Turkey's closest neighbour, should also support this We have to learn how to live together peacefully, otherwise, we will all be destroyed like fools." Greek politicians in Athens were not moved by these words and the Greek press did not publish Bartolomeos' speech, which could potentially have improved Turkish-Greek relations.

Turkey pays special attention to the Fener Greek Patriarchate's compliance with the unwritten agreement during the Lausanne Conference. According to this agreement, the Fener Greek Patriarchate shall solely offer religious services to the Greek minority remaining in Turkey. The Patriarchate however, continues to stick to its historical claim of being the ecumenical church, which Turkey does not accept.

Books about religion provide two different meanings for the word 'ecumenical'. The first one refers to the universal character of the church in general. Several meetings and activities are organised for the unification of Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic churches. In spite of good intentions and declarations, unification cannot be achieved.

The second meaning of the word 'ecumenical' is the honorary priority of the Fener Greek Patriarchate over independent and equal Orthodox churches. With this title, the Fener Greek Patriarchate works for the unification of all Orthodox churches. In the past, Orthodox churches were organised horizontally and on an equal basis. For this reason, there is no hierarchy among them. The Fener Greek Patriarch has no authority over the Archbishop of Athens or the Patriarch of Moscow. The Fener Greek Patriarchate can unite with them only to the extent they deem appropriate. There exist difficulties in practice. For example, the Patriarchates in İstanbul and Moscow differ in their attitudes concerning the organisation of the Greek and Russian Orthodox communities in the United States.¹⁷ A similar problem exists in France. The Archbishop of Athens creates more problems than Ankara in accepting the ecumenical status of the Fener Greek Patriarchate. In the past, the ecumenical title rested on the geographical and political unity of the Byzantine and Ottoman

Empires. Today, such a basis does not exist.

The Republic of Turkey does not have any legal obligations whatsoever to recognise the ecumenical status of the Fener Greek Patriarchate. According to the unwritten agreement at the Lausanne Conference, the continuing existence of the Patriarchate in Istanbul is only possible if it does not get involved in secular affairs. Is the unification of Orthodox churches a religious or a secular issue, or even a political activity? Byzantine Emperors have always prevented the unification of the Patriarchate with the Roman Church. The Ottomans allowed the Fener Greek Patriarchate only to be responsible for the co-ordination of Orthodox churches within the boundaries of the empire.

Today, the ecumenical status is associated with the unification of Orthodox churches within and without the Republic of Turkey. In an article published in Time magazine on 5 May 1997, Patriarch Bartolomeos said: "We believe that Orthodox Christians have a special duty in the improvement of East-West relations. Like the Turkish Republic, we have one foot on each side." The responsibility mentioned by Bartolomeos is a political one. If we take into consideration that such an activity also comprises relations between the Orthodox churches in the United States and Russia, the political significance of this activity for Turkey will become clear. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow gained significance once again. It also wants to play a role at the international level. This development confronts the Patriarchs of Istanbul and Moscow. An example of this confrontation is that Alexis II, the Patriarch of Moscow, does not acknowledge the decision of the Estonian church to join the Fener Greek Patriarchate. In a meeting held in Graz in June 1997, Alexis II declared that the ecumenical status was a dangerous issue and was not acceptable by any means. Turkey's relations with the Russian Federation are full of difficulties. Adding the problems between the two Orthodox churches to the existing stock of problems is by no means to the benefit of Turkey. If the Patriarchate wishes to get involved in non-religious affairs once again, it could do this much more effectively in New York. If it wants to remain in Istanbul, it has to stop getting involved in secular affairs.

Our experience regarding this issue—such as the events during the Lausanne Conference—shows that, whenever Turkey attempts to close down the Patriarchate in Istanbul, it faces the reaction of Christian states led by the USA as well as the Vatican. For this reason, Turkey is not attempting to change the status of the Patriarchate any longer. If Turkey manages to keep the Patriarchate at its current status, the power of the Patriarchate will inevitably continue to diminish, since the number of Greeks living in Istanbul has fallen considerably. What Turkey should do, is to leave the existence of the Fener Greek Patriarchate to the passage of time.

As its very name suggests, the Fener Greek Patriarchate is a church with an ethnic character; it is a Greek church. Today, this church does not possess much ability to harm the internal balance of Turkey. Its ability to impair Turkey's foreign relations depends on the attitude of the Greek lobby in the United States. On the other hand, it could benefit Turkey at an international level, if and only if the interests of Turkey and Greece did not clash. In case of a disagreement, the Fener Greek Patriarchate cannot be expected to act in a manner that will oppose Greek interests. During the Lausanne Conference, Turkey criticised the Patriarch for getting involved in political activities. Demanding the political assistance of the Patriarch today would not be consistent with our past experience.

Certain scholars in Turkey confound the issues concerning the closing down of the Patriarchate and its compliance with its current status with an improvement of its status. Turkey presently does not have any intention to close down the Patriarchate or prevent its activities which are in accordance with its status.

During the last twenty years, Turkey's attitude towards the Patriarchate has been one of tolerance. The Patriarch is not prevented from attending international meetings. Turkey has also allowed the Patriarchate to renovate its building. The renovation was celebrated at a ceremony in 1989 attended by 3000 guests, including Greek ministers.¹⁸ The Turkish President invited the Patriarch and other religious authorities to his mansion at Çankaya. Today the issue on the agenda is the

strengthening of the Patriarchate by improving its status.

In a letter he sent to Prime Minister Tansu Çiller in March 1994, US President Bill Clinton placed the issue on the agenda once again. Clinton requested that the Patriarch be relieved of its distressful predicament. The reason for Clinton's interest in the Fener Greek Patriarchate is that there are five million people in the USA who are of Greek Orthodox origin, most of whom have emigrated from Anatolia. These people constitute potential votes and could play a significant role in the elections. In his letter, Clinton did not explicitly say what the distress in question was. Later, during a visit he paid to Washington, the Greek Prime Minister A. Papandreou declared that, in order to relieve the current distress, the Patriarchate should be granted the ecumenical title. This request means a unilateral amendment by the Greeks of the unwritten agreement of the Lausanne Conference. The advantages Turkey would obtain in return for this amendment remain unclear.

According to the regulations concerning the election of the Patriarch, which were communicated by the Governor's Office of İstanbul in 1970, the candidate has to be a Turkish citizen. In the future, it will prove more and more difficult to find a Greek candidate who is a Turkish citizen, since the size of the Greek community and thus the number of Greek religious persons in İstanbul has been on a continual decline. The problem can be overcome by granting non-Turkish Greeks the right to become Turkish citizens, thus making them eligible to become a Patriarch. Consequently, Americans who are not Turkish citizens, but might prove to be useful to Turkey could become future Patriarchs.

According to the 1970 regulations, the Patriarch is elected by a secret ballot of the metropolitans of İstanbul and İzmir (Imros), through an election held at the Fener Greek Patriarchate. There are requests for the amendment of this election system. Some people suggest that the Patriarch should be elected by a Religious Council comprising the representatives of all Orthodox churches which are affiliated to the Fener Greek Patriarchate, including those in the United States.¹⁹ In addition to the churches in Turkey, the Fener Greek Patriarchate commands the archbishops in Crete, the United States and Australia and also the metropolitans in Menteşe (Dodecanese) and New Zealand.²⁰ It is not clear whether or not the supporters of the above mentioned proposal intend to include Orthodox churches in Russia. There are approximately 150 million Orthodox people in the world, 125 million of whom live in the Russian Federation. The remaining 25 million are scattered throughout several countries where Greek and Russian migrants live. If the new election system promotes the Patriarch to the ecumenical status, it would be logical to expect that the Russians will also demand a say in the elections.

The Lausanne Peace Treaty assigns to the Fener Greek Patriarch a status similar to that of the Turkish muftis in Western Thrace. The muftis in Western Thrace are designated through appointment. According to a Decree Law dated 24 December 1990, the Greek government has the authority to appoint muftis at its own discretion. The Greek government imprisons muftis elected by the Turkish community. Will those who demand that the Patriarch be elected by the Russians living in the USA accept that the Turkish muftis in Western Thrace be elected by the Turks living in Thrace or Turkey? Moreover, do they have any intentions of allowing the Muslims in Turkey to have a say in the elections of the Muslims in the United States? If the world is advancing towards globalisation, this should encompass everyone.

Some scholars in Turkey hope that an improvement of the Patriarchate's status would improve Turkey's image abroad. Patriarch Bartolomeos thinks that the opening of the theological school in Heybeliada (Halki) would "significantly improve Turkey's image abroad, since it would be a manifestation of a true respect for religious faith." Currently, there exists a theological school in Boston for the education of Orthodox religious officials. The opening of the school in Heybeliada will possibly serve to revive the historical image of the Patriarchate. Moreover, the opening of the Heybeliada theological school will not provide any legal benefits to Turkey. At this point, we have the right to reconsider the establishment of a Turkish theological school in Western Thrace or North America.

The new election system will give birth to an international religious institution within Turkey and

the Ankara government will have difficulties in supervising the activities and elections of such an institution. As mentioned above, the international community reacts in a negative way, whenever Turkey attempts to supervise the Patriarchate. In practice, the proposed system will hand over control of the Patriarchate to Orthodox groups of Greek and Russian origin who are living abroad. According to General Celil Gürkan, during a NATO meeting in 1964, Chief of Command Cevdet Sunay inquired of US Secretary of State Dean Rusk on the delivery of two battleships. Rusk replied: "I will talk to the President immediately and will try to deliver the two battleships as soon as possible, on the condition that you stop exerting pressure on the Patriarchate and investigating its accounts. Do you promise?"²¹ The government of the time did not give an immediate positive reply and the battleships were delivered in 1967. It is also well known that Greek Orthodox groups played a significant role in several events such as the handing over of the Dodecanese to Greece in its entirety, the message sent to İnönü by US President Lyndon Johnson during the Cyprus crisis and even the military embargo the US Congress imposed on Turkey.

It would be imprudent to accept the improvement of the status of the Fener Greek Patriarchate without discussing in detail the potential advantages and disadvantages involved and without ensuring the grant of similar rights to Turkey.

What we observe is that the Fener Greek Patriarchate is currently trying to free itself from the realm of Greek-Turkish relations and assume a significant role in US-Turkish relations.

1 O. Clement, *Dialogues (1969) avec le Patriarche Athénagoras*, Paris, pp. 86-87.

2 "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Rum Ortodoks Kilisesi", *Türk-Yunan İlişkileri*, Ankara, (1986) p. 191.

3 Benlisoy-Macar, (1996) *Fener Patrikhanesi*, Ankara, p.33. 4 "Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri", V. III, p.587.

5 İ. İnönü, (1985) *Hatıralar*, V. II, Ankara, p.130.

6 B. Şimşir, (1990) *Lozan Telgrafları*, Ankara, V. I, p.362.

7 S.L. Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı*, Tome. I, V. I, Part. I, pp. 114-127.

8 Ambassador A.F. Drangulis also concedes that Patriarch Meletius actively participated in politics, thus losing his "National Leader" title. *La Grèce*, Paris (1926), V. III, p. 586.

9 S.L. Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı*, Tome .I, V. I, Part. I, p. 328.

10 *Ibid.*, p.331.

11 B.Şimşir, (1990) *Lozan Telgrafları*, V. I, Ankara, p.363.

12 Benlisoy-Macar, (1996) *Fener Patrikhanesi*, Ankara, pp.48-53.

13 O. Clement, (1969) *Dialogues avec le Patriarche Athénagoras*, Paris, pp.54-55.

14 *Ibid.*, p.91.

15 *Ibid.*, p.100.

16 *Ibid.*, p.100.

17 Chanoine N. Iring, *Bilan de l'Oecumenisme Contemporain*, p.108.

18 Jean-Pierre Valognes, (1994) *Vie et Mort des chretiens d'Orient*, Paris, p.822.

19 O. Clement mentions a proposal to establish a 'Permanent Orthodox Council': *L'Eglise Orthodoxe*, p.81.

20 Benlisoy-Macar, *Fener Patrikhanesi*, pp.62-63. O. Clement says that some Russian orthodox people were affiliated to the Fener Greek Patriarchate: *L'Eglise Orthodoxe*, p.31.

21 *Türk-Yunan İlişkileri*, p.208.