

[MGSA-L] On this 49th anniversary of the Greek Krystallnacht in Istanbul

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Mon Sep 6 06:34:14 PDT 2004

- Previous message: [\[MGSA-L\] New Book on Ancient Greek Athletics by Orestes G. Varvitsiotes](#)
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On the eve of the 49th Anniversary of the 'September 6, 1955 Greek Krystallnacht in Istanbul' [1], a group of about one thousand protesters gathered in front of the physically barricaded Ecumenical Patriarchate [a.k.a. Fener Greek Patriarchate/Fener Rum Patrikhanesi] shouting slogans and throwing stones from the surrounding streets of the dilapidated neighborhood...
<http://www.hurriyetim.com.tr/haber/0,,sid~381@nvid~464621,00.asp>
http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc_id=477607

According to the 'Agence France Presse', "The protesters, called out by the youth movement of the Party for Nationalist Action (MHP), hurled stones at riot police before being subdued by tear gas and truncheons. Pictures showed the protesters burning an effigy of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, head of the northern Greek Orthodox church [sic! -- emphasis mine], and hanging him from a tree." [Excerpted from TurkishPress.com © 1997-2004 Anatolia.com Inc.]
<http://www.turkishpress.com/turkishpress/news.asp?ID=26321>

The demonstration was purportedly incited by the recent comments made by the Patriarch Vartholomaios A' in an interview with Reuters, in which --allegedly-- he criticized the standing of "religious freedom in Turkey" and called on the European Union (EU) to intervene on behalf of the reopening of the Theological Seminary in Halkê/Halki (Heybeliada in Turkish). There was apparently a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of his Holiness' comments, and the news piece was retracted shortly afterwards by Reuters, which, in addition, issued a note of apology to the Ecumenical Patriarch. However, it was indeed too late. Most Turkish newspapers, led by the flagship liberal daily Hürriyet, had already risen to the occasion.
<http://www.hurriyetim.com.tr/haber/0,,sid~381@nvid~451787,00.asp>

I have previously addressed, in this list, the problem of non-recognition of the Ecumenical status of the Patriarchate under Turkish law, and the ongoing saga of the Theological School of Halki [2]
<https://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2004-August/003897.html>
<https://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2004-August/003902.html>

The analysis by Sema Sezer, Chairperson of the Balkan Studies Desk at ASAM (Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies) -- an Ankara-based think tank, is particularly telling in this regard to the extent that it puts the whole issue in context, from a policy-oriented Turkish perspective [see below]

Excerpted below (in accordance with 'Fair Use') is Sema Sezer's article titled "Patriarch Bartholomeos's Statement and the Reactions to It", which was published in the August 09-12, 2004 issue of the quarterly strategic studies journal, Avrasya Dosyası (Eurasian File).
http://www.avsam.org/english/haftalikanaliz/09-12_08_2004/main.htm
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THE BALKANS

Patriarch Bartholomeos's Statement and the Reactions to It

The Fener Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomeos's statement regarding "religious freedom in Turkey and the reopening of the seminary" (the statement made to the Reuters correspondent made newspaper headlines on Aug. 9, 2004) has drawn strong reactions. According to the newspaper reports the patriarch had said that in Turkey the "freedom of religion concept" was "quite restricted and superficial" and that they did not have the right to manage the foundations, monasteries, cemeteries and schools belonging to the church, that these had come under the state administration and financially exploited, that the EU pressure would ensure the reopening of the Heybeliada Seminary which was closed down in 1971 and that if the violations of individual and religious freedoms were to come to an end that would accelerate the process of EU membership.

After the statement attributed to the patriarch caused public uneasiness and government spokesman Cemil Cicek said, "No one should try to put his private expectations before Turkey by using the EU as a tool", it has been observed that the Patriarchate has taken the path of denying these reports. In a written statement the Patriarchate said, "The news item that has been relayed to the press with the kind of phrases that hurt the feelings of the general public has got nothing to do with the truth."

The Patriarchate stressed that Bartholomeos had merely expressed the hope that the Heybeliada Seminary would soon be reopened, stressing that after being contacted by the Patriarchate the Reuters Agency issued a correction, conceding that it had made a mistake. However, it does seem far from being credible that a prestigious agency such as Reuters would make such a big mistake in relaying to the public the answers it had gotten in writing to a set up questions it had asked in writing.

When assessing the (albeit later denied) remarks of the patriarch it would be useful to refer briefly to the Patriarchate's status. The Patriarchate is a religious institution that meets the religious needs of the Orthodox minority and is fully subject to the laws of the Republic of Turkey. It is not a legal entity. For that reason it does not have the right (which the Turkish Law grants to real persons or legal entities) to set up, manage or supervise establishments such as schools, foundations and associations. With the Lausanne Treaty --though the Patriarchate is not mentioned on its own as an institution-- the presence and the rights of the minorities were accepted and, as a result of the verbal agreement reached, the Fener Patriarchate was described as the church of the minority and its administrative, political and judicial powers were terminated. In this framework from the administrative angle it has to take up as its interlocutor the Eyup District Governor's Office, the Fatih Prosecutor's Office and the Office of the Governor of Istanbul.

Although on every occasion he expresses support for Turkey's EU membership it is no secret that Patriarch Bartholomeos has issued statements in which he implied that the path to EU membership would be via the "modification of the Patriarchate's status and the reopening of the seminary". The statements the leaders and officials of the EU member countries to this effect, the European Commission's Progress Reports on Turkey and the European Parliament decisions, are of a nature that provides support to that stance. For example, in its year 2000 Progress Report the European Commission stressed that the "regardless of whether they are covered by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty or not, the concrete demands of all non-Muslim segments should be duly examined including the problem of the Heybeliada Seminary remaining closed."

On the other hand, one sees that Bartholomeos, who has served as the Fener Greek patriarch since 1991, has had talks with western heads of state and government, putting on the agenda issues such as the Patriarchate's status and the reopening of the seminary though he should not be engaging in international activities without permission from the

Council of Ministers. During his frequent visits to the USA he has had the opportunity --with more ease than would a visiting head of state-- to meet with the high level American officials including the president and the secretary of state. As a result of these talks the reopening of the seminary becomes a major item on the agenda during the aforementioned leaders' and officials' talks with Turkish government officials.

The fact that a Greek-Greek Cypriot population of over 2.5 million lives in the USA, carrying out a powerful lobbying activity, and the importance the EU attaches to the Patriarchate in the framework of its Balkan policy, indicates that the pressures and the impositions on Turkey on this issue will be continuing. A significant part of the peoples living in the Balkans --starting with Greece-- are Orthodox and there is a clash of interests in the region between the EU and Russia. This constitutes a major factor causing the EU to display an interest in this issue.

One could also say that the remarks made during the Reuters interview with the patriarch run parallel to the statement the patriarch had made on Oct. 3, 2002 after meeting with EU Commission President Romano Prodi. At that time the patriarch had said that he had explained to Prodi that in Turkey the minority rights and the rights given to the foreign foundations were not enough. He had said that he understood that the EU would not give Turkey a date for the talks at its December 2002 Copenhagen summit and that they were expecting bolder steps.

In this framework one could say that the latest development as well contains a message, an indirectly conveyed threat aimed at benefiting from the Turkish government's eagerness to obtain from the EU a date for the talks and, therefore, to prevent the Progress Report to be issued prior to the 2004 summit from making negative comments on this issue. Thus, one thinks that the aim is to cover significant ground in the context of the "ecumenical" claims by ensuring the reopening of the clerical school that has remained closed for 33 years. (Sema Sezer, Balkan Studies Desk, Chairwoman)

http://www.avsam.org/english/haftalikanaliz/09-12_08_2004/main.htm
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Yesterday's demonstration brings back agonizing memories of another serendipity of history coinciding with the Cyprus conflict: The infamous 1955 Pogrom (a.k.a. "The Night of St. Bartholomew of Rômiosynê") aimed at the defenseless Greek minority of Istanbul [1]
<https://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2004-August/003877.html>

It is worth mentioning --in closing-- that the protesters demanded, among other things, the re-opening of the 'Closed Gate' of the Patriarchate [... from which Patriarch Gregorios E' (Gregory V, later sanctified as St. Gregory Holy Martyr-Hieromartyr) was hanged on Easter Sunday 1821] <http://www.turkishpress.com/turkishpress/news.asp?ID=26341>, to which the Patriarchate responded by issuing the following statement:

"There is the memory of a Patriarch here. It is not possible to open this door because it is reinforced with marble."

[SAN TA MARMARA THS POLHS ...]

A solemn reminder in the true spirit of Turkish-Greek rapprochement.

C.D.K.

Notes

[1] See the editorial by Speros Vryonis Jr. titled "Eye on History: September 6, 1955 Krystallnacht in Constantinople"

<http://www.greekamerica.net/pastissues/7-1/eyeonhistory.wu>

AND the book by Leonidas Koumakis titled _The Miracle: A True Story_ translated in English by Pat Tsekouras
<http://www.greece.org/genocide/books/miracle/p1-70.htm> and in French by N. Lygeros http://lygeros.free.fr/Le_miracle_de_Leonidas_Koumakis.html (both highly recommended)

See pictures by journalist and photo-reporter D. Kaloumenos depicting scenes from the aftermath of "The Night of St. Bartholomew of Rômiosynê". The latter expression was used by Andreas Lambikês, editor of the 'Eleftherê Fonê' (Free Voice), a high circulation Greek newspaper in Istanbul in the 1950s, for which he was arrested and imprisoned
http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/end.html

http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/pic1.html
http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/pic5.html
http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/pic6.html
http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/pic8.html
http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/pic9.html
http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/pic10.html
http://www.anemos.com/Diaspora/gr_turkey/pic11.html

[2]

<https://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2004-July/003764.html>
<http://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2004-April/003255.html>
<http://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2004-March/003000.html>
<http://maillists.uci.edu/mailman/public/mgsa-l/2004-March/003013.html>
http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc_id=475800

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