

THE LAUSANNE TREATY MINORITIES IN GREECE AND TURKEY
AND THE CYPRUS QUESTION, 1954-9

The evolution of Greek-Turkish relations after the war, it is widely accepted, is a sad story. Probably the sadder part of this story is the one concerning the Christian minority of Istanbul and the Muslim minority of (Greek) Western Thrace. The Istanbul minority consisted almost totally of ethnic Greeks, whereas ethnic Turks formed half of the Thracian minority, the rest being Pomaks and Gypsies. These people had been allowed to remain in their regions after the obligatory exchange of populations which took place at the end of the Greek-Turkish wars of 1912-22. In the case of the Istanbul minority, in fact, its position in the site of the Oecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul was seen as indispensable by the Greeks for the preservation of the influence of the Oecumenical Throne. Problems occurred immediately over the implementation of the Lausanne Treaty, as the Turks strove to reduce the influence of the Patriarch and put forward exaggerated demands concerning compensations due by this Treaty. These difficulties were overcome in 1930, when the two great statesmen, E. Venizelos of Greece and Kemal Atatürk of Turkey, initiated a new era of Greek-Turkish co-operation. Thereafter, the presence of the minorities was regarded as a further pillar strengthening the Greek-Turkish axis of the 1930s. Yet, the Istanbul minority had a particularly harsh time in the war years, when Ankara imposed the *Varlik* tax on its members. It must be stressed that Turkish citizens of Turkish origin did not have to pay such tax. After 1945, however, the evolution of the cold war and the accession of both Greece and Turkey to NATO (in 1952), indicated that Greek-Turkish co-operation would be resumed. Indeed, the two countries had been strategically interdependent since 1930; the cold war intensified such interdependence even more. The emergence of the Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav alliance in 1953-4, and the revival of the Oecumenical Patriarchate, under the new Patriarch, Athenagoras, were further signs that the minorities would again become a link, not an issue, between the two countries. Athenagoras proved a strong personality who could guarantee the preservation of the influence of the Oecumenical Throne. Such influence, furthermore, now

had a dimension touching upon cold war realities: if Istanbul lost the spiritual leadership of the Orthodox, the most likely institution to assume it, would have been none other than the Moscow Patriarchate, since the USSR was the most populous Orthodox country¹.

Despite these, Greek-Turkish relations followed a different path. The violent Turkish response to the Greek claim on Cyprus, destroyed such prospects. It has to be remembered that Ankara always suspected that the Patriarchate and the Istanbul minority were the remnants of the *Megali Idea*, the old Greek aspiration of re-establishing a large Greek state in the Eastern Mediterranean. This, of course, was rather unreasonable, as the *Megali Idea* was abandoned by the Greek state after the Lausanne Treaty, when the Greek-Turkish exchange of populations removed any ethnological basis for a Greek claim to territories in Asia Minor. However, the Greek claim to Cyprus triggered all sorts of anxieties in Ankara, for the Turks, always preoccupied with strategic concerns, immediately held that the *Megali Idea* was being revived. The Greek side substantiated its claim on the island on the grounds that 80 percent of its inhabitants were Greeks: for Athens, it was natural that they would like to chose their own future. Any irredintism was not necessarily the *Megali Idea*, nor was it necessarily directed against the Turks. However much this was clear, though, Ankara did not appear to believe it. And for the present article, what counts is not what was the case, but what Turkey thought². The irony was that the Christians of Istanbul clearly disagreed with the dynamic action of the Greek Cypriots, as such action would put the Istanbul minority in a very difficult position. For example, in Spring 1956, Athenagoras told the Americans that he had advised Athens against taking the issue at the UN. Athenagoras also clearly resented Makarios's political role³.

1. Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974* (Athens, 1983); pp. 112-123, 174-180, 211-213 and 244-251.

2. The point that Turkey was afraid that Greece would, one day, revive the *Megali Idea* was made by Ambassador Gheorghios Pezmatzoglou in a letter to Karamanlis, on 31 May 1957, when the Ambassador tried to formulate the tactics of his approach to the Turks: see Karamanlis Archive, Athens, Constantine G. Karamanlis Foundation, (hereafter KA), reel 6, pp. 313-320. See also Neoclis Sarris, *Η άλλη πλευρά: Διπλωματική Χρονογραφία του διαμελισμού της Κύπρου με βάση τουρκικές πηγές* (The Other Side: Diplomatic Chronicle of the Dismemberment of Cyprus, Based on Turkish Sources), volume B, Book A I (Athens 1982), pp. 61 and 81.

3. Memorandum (Athenagoras-Robert G. Miner), 17 April 1956, Washington D.C., National Archives, State Department records, Record Group 59, decimal file number 747c.

This article will try to trace the interrelation between the presence of the two minorities and the dispute over Cyprus. As such, it will not attempt to discuss the history of the minorities. Social questions will be addressed only insofar as they touched upon the Cyprus issue, or were influenced by it. In this respect, though, it may be useful to stress a difference of a social nature between the minorities: the Istanbul one was an urban community, its members spoke Turkish and as a result were usually well educated and with a high standard of living; the Thracian one was rural, with an inadequate command of the Greek language, as a result badly educated with a very low standard of living, as Western Thrace was one of the most underdeveloped parts of Greece, a country which had just come out of a war which lasted no less than ten years (1940-9).

I. To the 1955 events

Prior to the emergence of the Cyprus dispute, the minorities were not a major issue in Greek-Turkish relations. In 1953 for example, The Turkish Press strongly criticised the Greek state for the latter's treatment of the Muslims of Thrace. The British Embassy in Greece, however, noted that both countries were very careful in handling such questions. The Embassy stressed that there was no persecution in Western Thrace, but that problems appeared because it was extremely underdeveloped: as such, the difficulties existed for the whole population, not only for the Muslims. The attitude of the Turkish Press was clearly not reflected at the perceptions of the Turkish Foreign Ministry. In November 1953, the British Ankara Embassy reported to London the opinions of Turkish diplomats, who said that the Turkish government had no grievance over the treatment of Muslims in Thrace. Members of this minority who were going to Turkey, the Turks said, wanted to escape Greek army service, or were in trouble with the Greek authorities from their own fault. The only criticism of the Turkish government was that the Greeks allowed the activities of "reactionary" (that is, non-Kemalist) elements in the minority⁴.

The Greek government of Field-Marshal Alexandros Papagos conceded

00/1-1756 (hereafter decimal file number only); Miner (Istanbul) telegram no. 808, 21 May 1956, 747c. 00/5-2156.

4. Athens to FO, 29 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371/107544/1; Ankara to FO, 25 Nov. 1953, FO 371/107544/3.

more prerogatives to the Thracian minority in early 1954. As Kelling noted, the Papagos government was now clearly oriented towards putting forward a formal claim over Cyprus and it needed to provide assurances to the Turks to the effect that the rights of the Turkish Cypriots would be safeguarded. Indeed, the Turkish Foreign Ministry was quick to express to the British satisfaction at the 1954 Greek measures on the Thracian minority: the minority, they said, was about to become a depressed community “with reactionary tendencies”⁵.

It is common place that at that stage, Athens heavily underestimated the possibilities of Turkish reaction to Greece’s placing the Cyprus issue on the UN Assembly agenda. It was more than apparent that a Greek-Turkish rupture over Cyprus would endanger the Christian minority of Istanbul. Athens, though, chose to ignore this aspect completely, probably because it did not believe that the Turks *would* in the end become entangled in the Cyprus question. The Turkish objections to the exercise of self-determination of the island were, to say the least, ill-founded, as the ethnological realities in the island as well as the distribution of the Cypriot population clearly showed that *Enosis* was in line with liberal and democratic principles and, in the final analysis, with the interests of the west. But it does not matter whether Turkey was on solid grounds in countering the Greek claim — the fact that she would do so was enough. Thus, the Greek appeal to the UN, in 1954, and mostly the outbreak of the armed revolt in Cyprus, in April 1955, seemed to confirm for the Turks that the Greeks were after a new round in pursuit of the *Megali Idea*. And, of course, the Istanbul minority and the Patriarchate, which were seen in Turkey as the last incarnations of the *Megali Idea* were about to come under the Damoclean sword⁶.

It was after April 1955 that the Patriarchate came under the attack of the Turkish Press, which demanded that Athenagoras “discipline” Makarios, as the former was senior in the Orthodox hierarchy than the latter. Certainly, this demand revealed a misunderstanding on the part of the Turkish Press of the realities in the Orthodox Church, which is not centralised. The Oecumeni-

5. George Horton Kelling, *Countdown to Rebellion: British Policy in Cyprus, 1939-1955* (London - Westport - New York 1990), p. 141; Ankara to FO, 26 March 1954, FO 371/112835/1.

6. Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza, *Lost Opportunities: The Cyprus Question, 1950-1963* (New York, 1986), pp. 26-27; Menelaos Alexandrakis, Vyron Theodoropoulos, Efstathios Laghakos, *Το Κυπριακό, 1950-1974: Μια ενδοσκόπηση* (The Cyprus Question, 1950-1974: An Introspection), (Athens, 1987), pp. 95-101.

cal Patriarch is *primum inter pares*, and the Autokephalous nature of the Church of Cyprus meant that Athenagoras had no means of pressing Makarios. Furthermore, a historical irony ensured that this was anyway impossible: the Archbishop of Cyprus was still the political leader of his flock (for Cyprus was taken from Ottoman rule prior to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923), while the Oecumenical Patriarch had ceased to be one, exactly as a consequence of the Lausanne settlement. Therefore, Makarios was not only Archbishop, but *Ethnarch* (leader of the nation) as well. Indeed, he was elected in this political post by popular suffrage: he had a mandate. The Turks did not seem to understand these and they were infuriated because the Patriarch did not "discipline" the Archbishop of Cyprus⁷.

Unfortunate consequences came more quickly than anyone would have imagined. Simultaneously with the London Conference on Cyprus, attended by Britain, Greece and Turkey in early September 1955, riots broke out in Istanbul and Izmir, which resulted to the almost complete destruction of the property of the Christian minority of Istanbul and of most Churches. The pretext for the riots was a bomb explosion at the Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki (Atatürk's old family house). Yet, the explosion was staged by the Turks, exactly to provide a pretext for violence; indeed, it was a member of the Muslim minority of Thrace, Octay Engin, who threw the bomb. The riots were organised by the Turkish government, in order to strengthen the Turkish stand at the London Conference. The Turkish government wanted the riots to take much smaller proportions, but they got out of control, as the *lumpenproletariat* of Istanbul grabbed the opportunity to take on the prosperous minority. The Turkish Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, Adnan Menderes and Fatin Rüştü Zorlu respectively, were found guilty of organising the riots in their trial after the *coup* of 1960⁸.

The September 1955 events had far-reaching repercussions. The Greek-Turkish alliance was destroyed and NATO cohesion in the region remained only nominal for many years; the Balkan alliance of 1954 never recovered from the shock; Turkish prestige suffered; the first signs of anti-Americanism emerged in Greece when the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, sent

7. Alexandris, p. 253.

8. Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, "The Riots in Turkey, in September 1955: A British Document", *Balkan Studies* 31 (1990), 165-176; Frank Tachau, "The Face of Turkish Nationalism: As Reflected in the Cyprus Dispute", *The Middle East Journal*, 13 (1959), 262-272; Walter F. Weiker, *The Turkish Revolution of 1960-1961: Aspects of Military Politics* (Washington DC, 1963), pp. 33-35.

identical messages to Athens and Ankara expressing his desire for the resumption of Greek-Turkish co-operation, overlooking the fact that the one of the two countries had to be blamed for the events. The riots also confirmed the fact that the Greek effort to achieve *Enosis* might result to the destruction of the Istanbul minority. In the next years, the Turks started a war of nerves against the Istanbul minority, by making threatening statements and by selective deportations on charges of espionage (evidently, all these charges with the possible exception of one, were false). On the other hand, it must be noted that even in the immediate aftermath of the September 1955 riots of Istanbul, there were no acts of revenge against the Thracian minority in Greece, something which the Americans were quick to notice. Indeed, throughout these years, the American Embassy in Greece constantly pointed to Athens's effectiveness at avoiding discriminations against the Thracian Muslims⁹.

Following tense representations by Athens, in October 1955 the Turks honoured the Greek flag (which the mobs had insulted during the Izmir events) and offered to pay compensation for the victims. The Greeks, in turn, found themselves in a strange position: they had evidence that the Turks had organised the riots and that Turks had staged the explosion in the Turkish Consulate of Thessaloniki, which was supposed to have been the pretext for the pogrom. But at the same time, Athens, knew that any further row over these events might cause another round of violence against the Istanbul minority. The member of the minority and Deputy of the governing party of Turkey, Alexandros Hatzopoulos, visited Greece in December and had talks with the new government of Constantinos Karamanlis. Indeed, it seems that in the end of the day, the Turkish violence of September 1955 paid off: as the Americans commented on the Hatzopoulos visit, "it seems that the plight of the said [i.e. Christian] minority proved a quite effective argument with the Greek Government". The Karamanlis administration, simultaneously, was engaged in the effort to help the Makarios-Harding negotiations over Cyprus. Athens thus decided to drop the charges against Turkish diplomats for the staging of the Thessaloniki explosion. The consequent interference in the judicial process, however, caused an uproar in Greece. Things became even more complicated as the Bill concerning compensation for the victims of the September 1955 events was to be approved by the Turkish Grand

9. Alexandris, p. 267; Hatzivassiliou, "The Riots in Turkey"; for an example of a US document stressing Greece's policy of avoiding discriminations against the Thracian Muslims, see Cannon (Athens) to State Department, 20 July 1956, 681.82/7-2056.

National Assembly. The Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuat Köprülü, speaking in the Assembly, mentioned "Turks" leaving in Thrace and "Greek speaking people" living in Istanbul and threatened with a new exchange of populations. This resulted to a further row between the two countries. Whereas the Bill for compensation was voted for by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (and, according to the Greek Consul General in Istanbul, seemed to satisfy the minority), Greek-Turkish relations were at its worst since the riots. The further intensification of the Cyprus dispute after Makarios's deportation by the British, created new difficulties. In June 1956, the Greeks, in an attempt to avoid trying the Turkish diplomats accused for the Thessaloniki explosion, suggested to the Turks to replace them. Ankara refused to do so, as such move would confirm the diplomats' guilt. In the end, the diplomats were acquitted, although two others, among them Octay Engin, were indicted (the latter "escaped" to Turkey latter in the year)¹⁰.

II. To the Cyprus agreements

In the next years, the period of the first Cyprus crisis, the Turks continued to hint that the Greek commitment to *Enosis* would endanger the Istanbul minority: whenever the British contemplated making a concession to Athens, the Turks implied something about the future of the minority. Thus, in February 1956, during the Makarios-Harding negotiations, the Turkish Ambassador in London, Fuat Ürgüplü, said that if Turkey sensed a Greek success in Cyprus, "there was a risk of a massacre of Greeks at Istanbul which would make the riots of last September mere child's play". Hints were also made by the Turkish Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, in June 1956, when the British contemplated a scheme for Cyprus which would lead to self-determination, subject to a Turkish veto. To be sure, there is nothing to confirm that the Turkish government used these remarks *only* as a threat: it is beyond any doubt that the Turks did not want the repetition of the riots. Ankara might have also been genuinely anxious that this time disturbances would occur without governmental planning¹¹.

10. Peake to FO, 31 Dec. 1955, FO 371/123858/1; Ankara to FO, 16 Feb. 1956, FO 371/123858/15; Stewart to Young, 13 March 1956, FO 371/123858/19; Bowker to Young, 6 June 1956, FO 371/123858/22; Lambert to Young, 20 June 1956, FO 371/123858/24; Kapsambelis (Istanbul) to Foreign Ministry, 3 March 1956, KA, reel 5, pp. 2326-2327; Carp (Istanbul) to State Department, 16. Jan. 1956, 681.82/1-1656.

11. FO minute (Ward), 2 Feb. 1956, FO 371/123868/1465; Bowker to FO, 28 June 1956, FO 371/123902/1392.

At the same time, after the 1955 riots, the Turks initiated a novel claim: in November 1955, Menderes departed from the previous line of Ankara regarding the Thracian minority, telling the British Foreign Secretary, Harold Macmillan, that the Muslims of Thrace lived "under almost intolerable conditions" (it is notable that the British Embassy in Athens almost immediately disclaimed this argument). In June 1956 Menderes told the British that Muslim minorities "always" had a difficult time under Greek rule. These, of course, were contrary to the position Ankara had taken with regard to the Thracian minority up to then. However, it was natural that the Turks would say so, to strengthen their case against *Enosis*: if Muslims could live under Greek rule, then *Enosis* would be more acceptable. And, as the Turks endorsed the partition solution, from the second half of 1956 onwards, they insisted in this much more strongly. Their partition claim was based on the precondition that Greek and Turk could not live together: if they could do so in Thrace, then partition in Cyprus would not be needed¹².

In that same June 1956, Menderes linked the Cyprus question with the Lausanne Treaty: he told the British that in case of *Enosis* the strategic balances between Greece and Turkey would be altered, and Turkey would then ask for the revision of the Treaty of Lausanne. He referred to the Aegean islands, (together with the position of the Patriarchate and the Istanbul minority). When the Turkish Prime Minister stated such views publicly, in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, he provoked an angry response by the new Greek Foreign Minister, Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza. In early July, Averoff and the Turkish Ambassador in Athens, Settar Iksel, had a lively meeting, during which the Ambassador even referred to the possibility of a Greek-Turkish war. Despite this, two Greek proposals for the future of Cyprus, communicated to the British in Summer 1956, suggested that in case of *Enosis*, Greece should demilitarise the island, offer economic advantages to Turkey and safeguards to the Turkish Cypriots which would overpass by far the safeguards which Lausanne gave to the Thracian Muslims and the Istanbul Christians¹³.

Despite this Greek effort at easing Turkish anxieties over *Enosis*, by

12. Wright (Baghdad) to FO, 22 Nov. 1955, FO 371/117670/1465; Athens to FO, 6 Dec. 1955, FO 371/117675/1605; Bowker to FO, 27 June 1956, FO 371/123903/1397.

13. Bowker to FO, 28 June 1956, FO 371/123902/1392; Stephen G. Xydis, *Cyprus: Conflict and Conciliation, 1954-1958* (Columbus, Ohio, 1967), pp. 60-65; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, "The Suez Crisis, Cyprus and Greek Foreign Policy, 1956: A View from the British Archives", *Balkan Studies*, 30 (1989), 107-29.

mid-1956 a new rupture between Greece and Turkey did not seem unlikely. Indeed, there was much discussion about troop movements in diplomatic circles. The public references of the Turks to the Lausanne Treaty and the private threats of Iksel for a Greek-Turkish war led the Greeks to contemplate exchanging the Istanbul and the Thracian minorities, as the last resort for the protection of the former. The idea was to transfer the Patriarchate to an island or mount Athos and cede the sovereignty to the Patriarch. Athenagoras, however, was known to oppose the scheme, and the British Foreign Office did not believe that the Greeks would go that far. In July 1956, the British Consulate in Istanbul reported that no measures to repatriate the minority had been detected, but it also added that there was much anxiety among the Greeks of Istanbul and that this anxiety had started spreading to the Armenians and the Jews living in the city. Later in the year, new Turkish allegations about discriminations against the Thracian minority were dismissed by the British Consulate in Thessaloniki, on social grounds: when a newspaper of the minority suggested that the Greeks did not employ enough Muslims in certain enterprises, the Consulate pointed out to the fact that the Muslim population's women were not usually allowed to work in public among males¹⁴.

Simultaneously with the adoption of this new Turkish line, Ankara tried to limit the damage done to its reputation by the 1955 riots. In September 1956, Athenagoras received a sum of money for compensation. Athenagoras told the British that although the money did not suffice to replace all the treasure lost in the riots, it would be enough to rebuilt the property of the Church that was destroyed. He also said that Ankara was probably aware of the fact that further damage to the Patriarchate might play in the hands of the Russian Church which would try to assume the spiritual leadership of the Orthodox with damaging consequences for the western alliance in the cold war. The position of the Istanbul minority, though, had now attracted the attention of other ecclesiastical organisations. During the Autumn of that year, the Church of England Council of Foreign Relations made enquiries on the conditions in which the Patriarchate functioned. The Foreign Office tried to ease the anxiety of the English clergy, even suggesting that Turkey was moderate over Cyprus, while Greece was not: the dispute over Cyprus

14. Peake to FO, 2 July 1956, FO 371/123858/25; Clarke (Rome) to FO, 10 July 1956, FO 371/123858/28; FO minute (Luard), 13 July 1956, FO 371/123858/29; Ankara to FO 31 July 1956, FO 371/123858/30; Wall (Thessaloniki) to Athens Embassy, 19 July 1956, FO 371/123985/5; Young to Waddams, 31 Oct. 1956, FO 371/124053/8.

was the reason, the FO said, why the Istanbul minority felt threatened. Things were further complicated when the Turkish police stormed the offices of the *Hellenic Union* of Istanbul and arrested its President on espionage charges. He was convicted in 1957. The charges seem to have been correct, and indeed the Greek Foreign Ministry virtually accepted it. (Alexandris terms this as the only case when Turkish action against a member of the minority was justified). Yet, as things stood, the affair only increased the alarm of the minority. On 11 January 1957, a report by the British Embassy in Ankara painted a gloomy, even sinister picture of the Greeks and the Istanbul minority¹⁵.

It appears that the Foreign Office was embarrassed by the interest of the Church of England for the position of the Patriarchate in Istanbul, partly because there was a fear that such interest might make the Turks turn against the minority once more. At this stage, it was the Turks who disturbed the FO's efforts. On 2 January 1957, the Turkish Ambassador in London met Canon Waddams, of the Council of Foreign Relations of the Church of England. Ürgüplü pointed to the payment of compensation to the 1955 victims, "but he went on to say that if provocation by the Greeks continued in Cyprus and elsewhere, it was more than likely that there would be another riot, only this time it would be a massacre and the police and the troops would probably be on the side of the rioters. He added that life was cheap in the Mediterranean, that fighting was the Turkish national sport and that Turks outnumbered Greeks by three or four to one". Ürgüplü said that if Greece rejected the Radcliffe constitution for Cyprus, Turkey would ask for immediate partition and if Greece again refused, an exchange of minorities would be called for. The FO, needless to say, was greatly disturbed by the conversation. London asked the Ankara Embassy to check why Ürgüplü spoke like this, while FO officials casted their disappointment: "Anything better calculated to alienate the Council completely, and to confirm its fears that the Turks and not the Greeks are the disturbers of the peace in the Eastern Mediterranean could hardly be imagined. One can only presume that the Turks are contemplating resorting to threats if they fail to achieve their objectives over the Cyprus question by negotiation. One is, too, quite convinced that the threat is no empty one, and that although the Istanbul Riots of September, 1955, were such a sorry performance on the Turks' part, there would be little hesitation

15. Johnston to Satterwaite, 24 Sep. 1956, FO 371/124053/4; Waddams to Bowker, 19 Sep. 1956, FO 371/124053/7; Brant to Barron, 17 Dec. 1956, FO 371/124053/10; Ankara to FO, 9 Sep. 1957, FO 371/130022/1; Alexandris, p. 273.

on the part of the Turks in provoking some further incidents to lead to a renewal of the trouble"¹⁶.

Nevertheless, this, for the British, was not a moment when they would be prepared to accept that the Turks were "disturbers of the peace". Shortly after the first shock, the British appeared willing to question everything on the report of Canon Waddams. The Consulate General in Istanbul noted that the Oecumenical Patriarch was not anxious over the fate of the minority (as if the Patriarch would know when a new pogrom would start!). The Turks for their part, told the British that Ürgüplü had reported that he had said different things to Canon Waddams, something which the FO unquestionably accepted. The British Ambassador in Ankara, Sir James Bowker, even wrote that Waddams was "tactless" in approaching Ürgüplü. Waddams himself was lobbied by the FO of the Turkish position. There were two main motives behind the attitude of this British Department. Firstly, their fear that the Turks *would* take on the minority if the Church of England appeared to support it. Secondly, early 1957 was exactly the time when the FO was coming round to accept the *implementation* of partition of Cyprus, a solution which Turkey supported. Partition, of course, would cause averse reactions anyway, for it would be accompanied by large forcible transfers of populations. It would certainly be even more difficult if the Turks had appeared threatening the lives of civilians and the Patriarchate, who had no relation with the Cyprus conflict. It is clear that the Turkish government appeared embarrassed at Ürgüplü's remarks, which seem to have been made without the authorisation of Ankara. Still, the remarks had clearly been made, and it is interesting to see the FO's readiness to overlook them, or even to forget that Ürgüplü had made *almost exactly* the same points in a conversation with a Deputy Under-Secretary of the FO, in February 1956¹⁷.

Makarios's release from exile and his arrival in Athens, in March 1957 was a further episode which led to fears for the Istanbul Greeks. Makarios's strong statements after his release provoked suggestions in the Turkish Press to expel the Patriarchate. Ankara delivered a Note to Athens, claiming that the ceremonies for the reception of the Archbishop at the Greek capital were directed against Turkey. Following these manifestations of Turkish discomfort for the reception, the Greeks delivered a Note of their own to Ankara,

16. Memorandum (Waddams), 3 Jan. 1957 and Young to Bowker, 11 Jan. 1957 and FO minute (Brant), 7 Jan. 1957, FO 371/130194/1.

17. Bowker to Young, 25 Jan. 1957, FO 371/130225/6; Broad to FO, 19 Jan. 1957, FO 371/130225/6.

making clear that they would hold the Turkish government responsible for any violence against the Istanbul minority. The Greeks' anxiety about a repetition of the September events was also evident in the conversations of the Prime Minister, Constantinos Karamanlis and Averoff with British or American diplomats. Although the Greeks told the Turks that if the 1955 events were repeated, the Greek public would demand a "tooth for tooth" response, they said to the Americans that Greece had taken measures to protect the Thracian minority in case that further violence against the Istanbul minority endangered them. At this stage, also, Averoff floated the idea of exchanging the Istanbul minority for the Turkish Cypriots, a way to remove the former from the position of hostages in which they had found themselves and ensure *Enosis* for the Greek Cypriots. The idea, nevertheless, was not taken further. The Patriarchate itself, for its part, stated its loyalty to Turkey on 14 April, trying to prevent another round of violence¹⁸.

Makarios's release was followed by a long impasse in the diplomatic scene, during which many solutions were aired, in Athens (self-determination or independence), London (partition or a British-Greek-Turkish condominium), or Ankara (immediate partition). The Greeks, at the same time, decided to try to win the Turks over to the independence solution. Athens sent Gheorghios Pesmatzoglou, a political figure with good connections in Turkey, as Ambassador to Ankara. The Pesmatzoglou mission, the diplomatic impasse, the Turkish elections and the Turco-Syrian war scare in Autumn 1957, all contributed to the toning down of the quarrel, at least for some time. However, the chaotic situation which evolved following the presentation of the Macmillan plan in June 1958 and the resort of the Turkish Cypriots to communal strife created new problems. The Greeks were again anxious about the Istanbul minority and they even withdrew the families of the Greek officers of the NATO Headquarters in Izmir, fearing a repetition of the 1955 events in the same city, when the families of Greek officers serving there had been attacked. Athens also delivered the usual Note to Turkey, holding the Turkish government responsible for any violence against the minority. Yet, both British and Americans were certain that such action was not imminent. The situation was further complicated in October, when the implementation of the Macmillan plan led to worries about further deterioration of Greek-

18. Xydis, pp. 80-86; Alexandris, pp. 270-274. Miner to State Department, telegram no. 709, 20 Feb. 1957, 747 c. 00/2-2057; Miner, telegram 858, 11 April 1957, 747 c. 00/4-1157.

Turkish relations. However, the Cyprus agreements were concluded within some months¹⁹.

Certainly, as far as the Greeks are concerned, the main driving force for the conclusion of the 1959 agreements was not their fear for the minority, but the Cyprus situation. It is, however, accurate that an additional motive for Athens to reach an understanding with Turkey was uncertainty about the fate of these people. The 1959 agreements were accompanied by a general Greek-Turkish rapprochement and created the hope that the Istanbul minority would in the end be saved²⁰.



III. After the agreements

The resumption of Greek-Turkish co-operation was greeted with relief by the Istanbul minority. Alexandros Hatzopoulos wrote to Karamanlis on 2 March, thanking the Greek Prime Minister for his reference to the Istanbul Greeks in his statements, issued after the conclusion of the settlement. The improvement of Greek-Turkish relations, at the same time, raised the issue of the treatment of minorities. In the context of an overall review of Greek foreign policy undertaken late in February 1959, after the conclusion of the agreements, the First Political Directory of the Greek Foreign Ministry painted a gloomy picture of the Turkish attitude towards the Istanbul Christians. The Ministry said that despite the fact that the attacks of the Turkish Press against the Istanbul minority had ceased, no measure had yet been taken by the Turkish government. The Ministry was anxious about this: "as it is known, a simple hint and toleration on the part of the government is sufficient for the most wild persecution of a foreign element to take place". The Ministry also enumerated cases of favourable treatment of the Thracian Muslims by the Greek state, such as acceptance of granting of Turkish scholarships to them, to an extent which overcame the spirit of the Greco-Turkish cultural agreement; allowing the forming of new Muslim clubs; permitting the Turkish Consuls to finance Muslim cultural activities; granting loans of the Agricultural Bank to Muslims to an extent which overcame loans to Greek Christian farmers. The Turks, on the other hand, according to the Greek Foreign Ministry, had continued selective deportations of Greek subjects

19. Allen to FO, 14 June 1958, FO 371/136228/3; Bowker to FO, 15 June 1958, FO 371/136228/3; Miner to State Department, telegram GO1, 8 July 1958, 747c.00/7-858.

20. Averoff, p. 364.

from Istanbul, after December 1958; gave inadequate compensation for the 1955 riots and were now trying, through taxation measures, to get these money back from the members of the minority²¹.

In fact, this was the period when Averoff and Karamanlis paid an official visit to Ankara. The visit was very successful. Agreement was reached on the examination of bi-lateral questions by a committee consisting of one Greek and one Turkish diplomat, who would review the questions of fishing rights (friction over which arose quite often), treatment of minorities, and the property of the minorities (that is, the property of the Patriarchate). These issues had been left untouched for many years and an effort to review them was natural. The two diplomats who were assigned to this committee were Dimitris Bitsios of the Greek and Zeki Kuneralp of the Turkish Foreign Ministry²².

The very fact that the Turks agreed to discuss the problems of the Istanbul minority was an indication that their previous propaganda concerning Thrace would now retire in the background. As Cyprus was settled, and most importantly, without partition, Ankara stopped claiming that Greek and Turk could not live together. Indeed, it reverted to its pro-1955 attitude: as the British Embassy in Turkey reported in Summer 1959, "we have recently seen other evidence suggesting that the Turkish Government may be more concerned — for prestige reasons — with the failure of their Thracian minority to embrace the Atatürk reforms than with the material well-being of the community and the alleged Greek discriminatory policy towards it"²³.

On 13 August 1959, the British Embassy in Athens reported Bitsios's impressions from the meetings. Kuneralp, Bitsios said, was satisfied with the position of the Thracian minority and only suggested a few further improvements, whereas Bitsios had to ask for the "redressment" of the rights of the Istanbul minority, "which he had found in a depressed state and lacking confidence in the intentions of the Turkish Government. He had put it to the Turks that it was in their own interests and in that of the West generally that the Oecumenical Patriarch should be allowed full freedom in the exercise

21. Hatzopoulos to Karamanlis, 2 March 1959, KA, reel 6, pp. 1891-1892; minute (Matsas), 21 Feb. 1959, KA, reel 2, pp. 1775-1778; Kapsambelis to Karamanlis, 11 April 1959, KA, reel 2, p. 1900.

22. FO minute (Brooke), 23 April 1959 and Athens to Ankara, 10 April 1959, FO 371/144527/2; Allen to FO, 14 May 1959, FO 371/144527/7; Allen to Selwyn Lloyd, 16 May 1959, FO 371/144527/10.

23. Ankara to FO, 6 Aug. 1959, FO 371/144527/14.

of his spiritual and oecumenical functions, since the restrictions applied to him since 1955 would have given the Patriarch of Moscow a pretext for attempting to take over the leadership of the Orthodox on the grounds that the Oecumenical Patriarch was prevented from exercising it". Indeed, the Turks allowed the Patriarch to travel outside Turkey for the first time after many years. Athenagoras himself, in September, told the British Ambassador in Ankara, Sir Bernard Burrows, that he was satisfied with the behaviour of the Turkish authorities²⁴.

The May 1960 coup which resulted to the fall of the Menderes government created much anxiety in Greece, for the new government in Turkey appeared, at least initially, to favour a more rigid policy towards minorities. In fact, even in May 1960 an incident was reported in the Greek Press, when the Turkish Consul General in Thrace insulted one of the Muslim Deputies of the Greek Parliament because he was still wearing a fez and reading the Coran in Arabic. The incident caused an adverse reaction in the Greek Press, while the British Embassy in Athens once more reported that the Thracian minority was being treated "quite reasonably" by the Greek authorities. The period of uncertainty seemed to come to an end with the visit of the Turkish Foreign Minister, Selim Sarper, in Athens, in October 1960, which re-established the confidence between the two countries. Sarper agreed that bi-lateral questions should be dealt on the lines of the Bitsios-Kuneralp Report. This report is not available, but seems to have been favourable to the Greek interests. The Greeks were also pleased that Sarper made clear that Ankara would not try to interfere in Western Thrace. Nevertheless, any hopes for the well-being of the Istanbul minority were destroyed in the mid-1960s. During the second Cyprus dispute, from 1963 onwards, Turkey expelled the Christians of Istanbul, without even allowing them to take their money with them²⁵.

IV. Conclusions

The issues concerning the minorities in Greece and Turkey in the 1950s, followed closely the evolution of the Cyprus question. Prior to its emergence

24. Curle to Addis, 13 Aug. 1959, FO 371/144527/14; Burrows to Addis, 26 Sep. 1959, FO 371/144800/4; Istanbul to Ankara, 16 Nov. 1959, FO 371/144800/5; see also Sarris, volume B, book A II, pp. 586-591, where Kuneralp's views are also presented.

25. Athens to FO, 24 May 1960, FO 371/152973/4; Allen to FO, 26 Oct. 1960, FO 371/152973/7; Curle to Sarrell, 13 Sep. 1960 and FO minute (Sarrell) 15 Sep. 1960, FO 371/153091/3; Whitteridge to Home, 5 Dec. 1960, FO 371/153091/6.

on the international scene, the Turks were satisfied with the Greek record, while the Greeks were confident that the Istanbul minority would not face substantial problems, after the trial of the *Varlik* tax. As the Cyprus dispute developed, however, things changed. The 1955 riots in Istanbul gave a severe blow to the minority, who never recovered their confidence in Turkish intentions. The Turks, on the other hand, pursuing their policy of partition of Cyprus, started claiming that the Thracian minority was having a difficult time under Greek rule, despite that prior to 1955, *privately*, they had said quite a different story. The danger of a Greek-Turkish war, as it emerged during the years of the Cyprus crisis, created fears in Athens about the safety of the Istanbul minority, and it appears that twice, in Summer 1956 and in Spring 1957, the Greeks contemplated transferring the minority and the Patriarchate in Greece. The 1959 Cyprus settlement again created hope that the Istanbul minority would be saved, whereas the Turks returned to their pre-1955 position with regard to the Thracian Muslims, focusing their concern more to the spreading of Kemalist principles, rather to any claim that Athens was oppressing them.

It may be said that the Cyprus question destroyed the Istanbul minority. The Turks were in a position to persecute these people and get away with it. To be sure, the Turks always had an easier task in the Cyprus question: they simply had to prove something negative, namely that Greeks and Turks could not live together. The Greeks, on the other hand, had to prove that co-existence was possible. In this respect, communal violence in Cyprus and pogroms in Istanbul were in line with the Turkish claim. In the case of Istanbul, indeed, violence was greatly facilitated by social reasons, such as the prosperity of the minority and the influx of poor Turks, immigrants from the Eastern provinces, who were ready to take on the prosperous Greeks living in the city. Although the Turkish government appeared reluctant to face another international outcry such as the one which it faced briefly after the 1955 riots, Athens had no means of knowing that new violence would not take place. The fate of the Istanbul minority was always in the minds of the Greeks throughout 1955-59.

With regard to Turkey, though, it has to be stressed that research confirms Professor Sarris's view that the Cyprus question had a multidimensional impact on the country. The issue of the influx of immigrants from Asia Minor to Istanbul has been mentioned. But some additional points may be made. The Cyprus crises of 1954-9 and 1963-5 spread over too long a period. Indeed, the Menderes governments had been in place for a decade and it must be remembered that these governments consisted of people who were usually

outside the traditional establishment of Kemal's heritage. Ten years is a long time: countries change, especially when a severe dispute, such as that of Cyprus, is coupled with social transformations of the magnitude of those that Turkey experienced in these years. To be sure, Greece and many other countries of Southern Europe changed in the same period. Yet, Turkey's case was very different, in the sense that Turkey had to go through this process, without the population pressures (which were much more severe than in other countries) causing the abandonment of the Kemalist tradition of a secular state (which in itself was an enormous change). The Menderes governments were anxious to develop Turkey economically, but this triggered important social tensions. Thus, the Menderes government, although mainly motivated by reasons of geopolitical insecurities and national pride, also used the Cyprus question as a distraction from the heated issues of the day. Cyprus, however, not only was outside the geographical boundaries drawn by the National Pact of Ankara of 1920, but it also endangered the Greek-Turkish friendship which was part of Atatürk's heritage. Is it the case that the popular pressures created by the Cyprus question and their combination with the social and demographic realities led to the virtual elimination of an important part of Kemal's programme? The question cannot be answered here — it may be preferable not to be addressed by a Greek. This question will have to wait for a detailed study on the matter²⁶.

The Greeks faced a dilemma in the Cyprus question: Greek -Turkish confrontation in Cyprus always endangered the Istanbul minority and the Patriarchate. The 1959 Cyprus agreements and the simultaneous Greek-Turkish rapprochement allowed hope that the minority would be saved. It was not to be. During the second Cyprus crisis, in the mid-1960s, Turkey destroyed it for good. It should be noted, however, that in all Cyprus crises the difference in the treatment of the two minorities was remarkable. The Muslim minority of Greece did not suffer in 1955; nor in 1964, when the Istanbul minority was thrown out of Turkey; nor during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

26. Sarris, volume B, book A I, pp. 55-58, where the author quotes extracts from Turkish books deploring the social transformation of Istanbul because of the influx of people from Eastern Anatolia.