

1909.

TURKEY

22 Jan.

(I)

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Jerusalem  
February 26. 1909.

No.

Received by *post.*

(Subject.)

Consul-Bloch,  
No. 13.

Greek ecclesiastical dissensions.

Reporting arrival of Commission of Inquiry,  
its action to settle question of - and the  
occurrence of fatal incidents.

Last Paper.

c.

(Print.)

(Minutes.)

*W. G. O.*  
*Better wait*  
*til we report*  
*arrivals to*  
*Amiers* ✓  
*Off. 227 Greek 31.*

(How disposed of.)

Action  
completed.)

(Index.)

Next Paper.

21 Jan.

Jerusalem,  
February 26. 1909.

Sir,

In continuation of my despatch No 5 of the 19<sup>th</sup> ultimo I have the honour to report that the Commission of Inquiry appointed to investigate the ecclesiastical dissensions prevailing in the Greek Church arrived here on the 8<sup>th</sup> instant. Their arrival was made the occasion for a great popular demonstration, and the hopes of the native party were raised by the demeanour of Nazim Pasha, the President of the Commission, which showed him to be favourably disposed - towards the Patriarch, Mgr. Damianos. But it became apparent from the outset that the -

Your Excellency

The Right Honourable,

Sir G. Lowther, K.C.M.G., C.B.

cc.

cc.

cc.

Constantinople

Commissioner

Commissioners were by no means unanimous, and that Costaki Bey Vayannis inclined rather to the side of the Synod. After receiving various deputations and being exposed to tumultuous demonstrations the Commissioners applied themselves in the first instance to endeavouring to induce the members of the Holy Synod to abandon their attitude of intractable opposition to the Patriarch and to the demands of the natives. But the obstinacy of these prelates was proof against the arguments of the Commission: they persisted in maintaining the decision which they had given for the deposition of the Patriarch and in refusing to listen to demands which they regarded as infringements of the rights of the Church. The Commission then tried to induce the Patriarch to offer his resignation, and on his refusal to do so to proceed to Constantinople to have the whole question examined into there. At first  
Mgr.

Mgr. Damianos consented on certain conditions to go to Constantinople, but he eventually withdrew his consent. On the suggestion of the Commission, orders had been sent from Constantinople for the removal of the two Archimandrites which had been demanded by the Patriarch, and they left Jerusalem on the 20<sup>th</sup> instant. But the real ringleader was the Archimandrite Euthimios the Custodian of the Holy Sepulchre, who disposes practically at his will of the vast revenues of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and who is popularly believed to have amassed a large fortune. The Patriarch was probably lacking in the courage requisite for demanding the removal of Archimandrite Euthimios, who according to rumour has not scrupled to utilise the funds at his disposal in winning over to his side various officials. Had this dignitary and the other two Archimandrites been removed at  
the

the outset, probably the question would have been settled long ago. But now party feeling has been envenomed to the utmost extent, and within the last few days affrays have taken place in various parts of the town with fatal results. Something resembling a panic occurred on the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> instant when it was learnt that three respectable Arabs of the Orthodox Church had been killed; the next day their funeral was conducted with every circumstance calculated to excite public feeling, the corpses being carried exposed through the main street of the town. Several other persons of both factions were wounded during the day.

These events tended to impress the Commission with a sense of the violence of the party spirit reigning and of the tenacity with which the native party adhered to their views. It was clear that as the local authorities appeared powerless to maintain order, and as the natives were determined

determined to resist any attempt to remove the Patriarch, some concession must be made to public opinion. Accordingly the Commission which had drafted its report, (advocating in the main the acceptance of the demands of the natives) telegraphed to Constantinople that it was impossible to remove the Patriarch or to hold elections for a new Patriarch, and that Mgr. Damianos must be maintained in his office at least for a time. This telegram Costaki Bey refused to sign; he left Jerusalem this morning but the other members of the Commission who had also intended to leave have been ordered to remain here for the present.

I feel convinced that tranquillity can be restored here only by maintaining Mgr. Damianos as Patriarch, at least temporarily until the present excitement has abated.

I may mention that Mgr. Meletios, Archbishop of Tiberias, whom the Synod had appointed

appointed locum tenens of the Patriarchate, died of heart failure a few days ago; Mgr. Theophanis Metropolitan of Nazareth, has now been appointed locum tenens, but is not recognised as such by the Government.

In the course of the several visits which I have exchanged with Nazim Pasha and the other members of the Commission I have endeavoured, while avoiding all appearance of interference or partiality, to dwell on the importance of preserving order and tranquillity, and on the desirability of taking into consideration the wishes of the entire native Orthodox population, rather than subordinating these to the narrow and selfish views of a few monks strangers to the Country, ignorant for the most part of its language, and careless of its interests.

I have the honour to be,  
with the greatest respect,  
Sir,

Your Excellency's most obedient  
humble servant,  
E. P. P.