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96 Jan.

1909.	TURKEY	97 Jan 313
September 20, 1909	No.	Received by post.
Paul Black No. 78	(Subject)	
Last Paper. 94	<p>Service of Christians in the Turkish Army</p> <p>Reports the substance of the conversation exchanged with the Lahn Jathianch re petition drawn up by members of the Roman Catholic Community of Saffa soliciting certain privileges</p>	
	(Remarks)	
	<p>Col. Surtess ✓ Sd</p>	
	(How disposed of)	
	(Action completed.)	(Index.)
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N^o 78.

Confidential

Jerusalem,

September 20. 1909.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch N^o 76 of the 17th instant, I have the honour to report that the Latin Patriarch called on me this morning in accordance with a request - addressed to him by petitioners representing the Roman Catholic community of Jaffa. In the petition His Beatitude was begged to approach the Foreign Consuls with a view to obtaining their intervention in regard to the compulsory military service to which it was now sought to subject the Christians.

His Excellency

The

The Right Honourable,

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

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The petitioners stated that they had no desire whatever to evade their military obligations, but that they wished that it should be made clear what these were. As they understood the matter at present, a mere vote of the chamber had been passed extending to all Ottoman subjects the liability to military service hitherto restricted to Mussulmans. In consequence, the names of all Christians of from twenty to twenty-six were being enrolled: this was tantamount to giving retrospective force to the new decision, as men long past the usual age for recruitment would thus be taken, who had in many cases already adopted avocations which they could not now leave without ruin to themselves and families. The petitioners hoped that a properly

This is not
the case

is not!

properly drafted law would be promulgated, stating explicitly the terms of the service incumbent on Christians, and that these should be treated as well as their Mussulman fellow-subjects. They further expressed the desire that Christian troops should not be employed in the Arabian Peninsula, where they would be exposed to the fanaticism of the inhabitants, exclusively Mussulman in those parts; that the Christian recruits should not be drafted into battalions with Moelem soldiers, but should be formed into separate regiments; and that regard should be had to the provisions of the international treaties stipulating that Christians should not serve in the Turkish Army.

In communicating the terms of this petition to me, Monseigneur Camassei - stated

stated he did so most confidentially, and merely
à titre d'information: if I saw my way to -
report the matter to Your Excellency, he would
be quite satisfied. He considered the matter
a very delicate one the more so as, though
head of the Latin Community, he holds no
position recognised by the Ottoman Government,
and differs consequently from the Greek and
Armenian Patriarchs, who are Ottoman
subjects appointed with the confirmation
of the Sublime Port.

I said I would certainly acquaint
Your Excellency with his visit, but -
that I entirely agreed with him in
thinking the matter a very delicate
one in which it was hardly possible

to

to interfere. The matter was not peculiar to Jerusalem
but was common to the whole empire. I added that I
knew of no treaty which even mentioned the question of
the liability of Christians to military service. In reply
to a question of mine, Mgr. Camasei admitted that
he had been induced to sign a telegram to the
Porte (sent on the 16th instant) on the statement
that the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs had also
done so, claiming exemption from military service for
the Christians of Jerusalem on the ground that the
Musulmans of Mecca and Medina were similarly
exempted. I explained to him that as far as I was
aware this was not so, the only exemption being in
favour of properly appointed officers of the
Sanctuaries.

Mgr. Camasei stated that an unfortunate
effect had been produced in Musulman circles -
when it became known that the Catholics had taken

this

this step, and added that he understood that the
Armenian Patriarch had issued an encyclical -
urging on his flock to fulfil their legal military
obligations without opposition. I asked him if
he could not obtain from Rome authority to
issue a similar letter; he did not see his way
to do so, though he admitted that the Turkish
law on military service, which grants -
exemption to Priests, teachers and seminarians
was far more liberal than the Italian law
which affords no such privileges.

I have the honour to be,

with the greatest respect,

Sir,

Your Excellency's

most obedient,

humble servant,

E. Beech