

American Delegation Drops Out

Turks Bar U.S. Archbishop From Patriarch's Funeral

NEW YORK (AP) — The Turkish government has banned Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America, from attending the funeral in Istanbul Tuesday of Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch. The archbishop was reported to have been described by the Turkish government as "undesirable and persona non grata."

Terence Cardinal Cooke, Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York, The Rt. Rev. Jonathan Sherman, Episcopal Bishop of Long Island, Rabbi Marc Eisenbaum, director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee and Dr. Gavin Espy, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, likewise canceled their plans to attend.

The five were to have formed an ecumenical delegation at the services.

Archbishop Iakovos told a news conference the others "decided not to go out of solidarity, compassion and understanding."

Iakovos said the Turkish decision "surpasses all my effort to understand why," especially as a delegation of 50 American members of the Greek Orthodox Church are being allowed to attend.

A spokesman for Cardinal Cooke said his decision was not a protest since he had intended to go only as a member of an ecumenical group. When plans for that tribute fell through because of the ban on Iakovos, he said, the Cardinal canceled his own tentative arrangements.

A spokesman for the Greek Orthodox Primate said the archbishop had been notified by the U.S. Department of State Sunday afternoon that Turkey had refused him a visa on the grounds that he was "undesirable and persona non grata."

There was no further explanation, but the spokesman said Archbishop Iakovos had been unable to get permission to visit Turkey since 1968.

The Archbishop that year was instrumental in arranging the meeting in Jerusalem between Pope Paul VI and Athenagoras — the first time the leaders of the two churches had met since 1864 when the great schism over authority and creedal forms climaxed.

When the Pope visited New York Oct. 5, 1965, Iakovos was host to him and Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish leaders at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Trinity.

Long a leader of the ecumenical movement, the Archbishop's 11 official visits after assuming his present post on Feb. 14, 1959, was to visit Pope John XXIII at the Vatican. It was the first

visit by a Greek Orthodox Bishop or Archbishop there in 50 years.

Iakovos, a longtime leader in the Civil Rights movement, is a close friend of Cardinal Cooke.

Before being named to his present post as spiritual leader of over two million Greek Orthodox in the Western Hemisphere, Iakovos was for eight years a co-president of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

He is an American citizen, but a native of Turkey.

Dr. Espy said it was "almost unbelievable that any country would see fit to prevent a church leader from attending the funeral of his Patriarch."

"There remains much unfinished business in the field of ecumenical relations and, indeed, in international relations when something like this happens," he said.

He said he had not consulted with other members of ecumenical delegations from this country before making his decision not to attend the funeral.

"I decided not to go, not out of disrespect for the Patriarch," Dr. Espy said. "On the other hand, it is a show of disrespect to him and his church that the church has been affronted in this way."

He said he did not remember any other instance of a government barring mourners from a funeral.

Iakovos said he was bitterly disappointed because he thought "going to the funeral to kiss the hand of my spiritual father was an elemental human right."

He said the ban against him was the culmination of a campaign waged by the Turkish government since 1966 when he was forbidden to officiate at a service in St. George's, Istanbul.

The archbishop said the Turkish government falsely reported in 1967 that he had been expelled from the country and that, on his last trip there in 1968, youth demonstrations had been organized against him.

Rabbi Tammenbaum said he hoped that "even at this late hour" Turkey would allow Iakovos "to head a delegation of religious leaders to Istanbul to pay tribute to the life, work and memory of a religious leader of international standing."

Father George J. Bacopulos, chancellor of the archdiocese, said "no ecumenical purpose would be served" by the others going without Iakovos since "there are already representatives of the Christian and Jewish faiths in Istanbul who will attend the funeral."

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