

Synopsis from Dr. Alexander Kitroeff

At the conference Turkey's delegates Ismet Inonu and Riza Nur claimed that Christians had rewarded Muslim toleration by becoming instruments of the enemies of the Turkish nation in the period preceding the conference. They claimed it was political disloyalty rather than their Christian religion that had caused their sufferings over the past decade or so. That is why they proposed the removal of the Patriarchate from Constantinople and then they did their best to argue for a strict limitation of its rights. They failed on both counts because there was no evidence the Patriarchate had overstepped its role as a religious institution in the period leading up to the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922. Indeed, if we look carefully at the historical context we will notice that the Ecumenical Patriarchate maintained an attitude of loyalty toward the Ottoman authorities up until the end of WWI in 1918, even though Christians, Armenians as well as Greek Orthodox faced persecutions following the Young Turk revolution that took place ten years earlier in 1908. And when the Patriarchate took up the cause of Greek nationalism, from 1919 onward, it did under the cumulative weight of the measures suffered by the Greek Orthodox – measures taken against them because of their identity and not because they were being disloyal. It was a defensive posture in other words. And this defensive posture continued after the outbreak of the GrecoTurkish war of 1919-1922. Even then, there were voices from within the Holy Synod that called for a reconciliation between the Greek Orthodox and the new Turkey that was emerging at the time. The Patriarchate remained within the bounds of its status as a religious institution and would do so as well after the Lausanne Conference.