Introduction

In the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate the age of the Cold War coincides exactly with the reigns of three patriarchs, Maximos V (1946-48), Athenagoras (1948-72) and Dimitrios (1972-91). Before turning to the history of this critical period a few words are necessary on the condition of the Patriarchate in the inter-war period and during the Second World War in order to place subsequent developments in context. The interwar period in the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate opens in 1923 with the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne, which brought to an end the long period of military confrontation between Greece and Turkey and settled the various outstanding issues in bilateral relations, including the status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. On 10 January 1923 after concerted pressure by all delegations in the peace conference in Lausanne the Turkish plenipotentiary Ismet İnönü agreed to withdraw a persistent Turkish demand for the removal of the Patriarchate from Istanbul.¹ This saved the Patriarchate in the historic seat it had occupied for close to two millennia, but it stripped it of all the traditional privileges it enjoyed under the Ottoman order and confined it to an exclusively spiritual role as the religious authority of the Greek Orthodox minority that was allowed to remain in Istanbul.²

The changed circumstances of its continued existence in its traditional seat and considerable difficulties in its relations with the authorities of the militantly secular and nationalist republican Turkey created an environment for a redefinition of the role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The 1920s and 1930s became a period of inwardness and reconstruction, which essentially involved the shedding of all traces of the intense flirtation with Greek nationalism marking the attitude of the Patriarchate under Patriarch Meletios IV during the Greek campaign in Asia Minor in 1919-22. The patriarchate resumed the supra-national attitude that had marked its position on major ecclesiastical questions for a considerable part of the nineteenth century and assumed an unwavering devotion to the canons and the canonical order in the Church as its new mission in the twentieth century.³ That has remained the attitude of the Ecumenical Patriarchate ever since.
During the Second World War serious difficulties were in store for the Patriarchate and for the Greek minority of Istanbul. The most serious problems arose in connection with the imposition of the property tax (*Varlik vergisi*) on the members of the Greek minority. To respond to the exigencies of the tax many minority members had to sell considerable parts of their properties, while those unable to pay were removed by the state to forced labour camps in Eastern Anatolia, in the region of Askale. This development put serious strain on the Patriarchate's flock and the Church suffered accordingly. The Patriarchate itself sustained serious property losses when important buildings under its control used for various philanthropic purposes were forcibly snatched away. Thus in 1942 the girls' orphanage on the island of Halki (Heybeliada) was sequestrated and attached to the neighbouring Turkish naval college. In the same year the important site of philanthropic and medical establishments at Balukli, outside the walls of Istanbul, was illegally occupied by agents of Papa Eftim, the self-styled head of an ecclesiastical Turkish Orthodox Church that had caused many problems to the Patriarchate in the 1920s. The Balukli site was not returned to its lawful owner, the Ecumenical Patriarchate until 1946, during the patriarchate of Maximos V. The most serious blow suffered by the Patriarchate during the war was the destruction of its main building by a fire on 21 September 1941. This left the Patriarchate essentially homeless throughout most of the period surveyed here.

The impact of world and regional power politics

The history of the Church of Constantinople, the Great Church of Christ in the venerable Byzantine nomenclature, in the years 1945–91 could be considered on two levels. The one level is that of what could be called *external* history, on which we could trace the immediate impact of the international environment of Cold War politics on the life of the Church. The second level is that of *internal* history, the inner life of the Church and ecclesiastical activity, on which the perceptive observer might follow not only the tenacity of the Church in continuing its traditions and safeguarding the canonical order, but also its purposeful project, against all odds, to maintain its spiritual leadership in the Orthodox world through important initiatives, inspired by the will to show the relevance and vitality of the spirit of Christianity in the conditions of the post-war world.

On the level of ‘external history’ the most dramatic manifestation of the impact of Cold War politics in the life of the Church came quite early on, suggesting that the general paranoia nurtured by the confrontation between East and West in the wake of the world war, could find perverse ways to affect even a minority religious institution in a country at the time still on the sidelines of the conflict. In February 1946, the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin I died. On the 20 of February the senior prelate of the synod of Constantinople, Maximos of Chalcedon, was elected to the ecumenical throne as Maximos V. He was a remarkable prelate, with a distinguished career in the Church, having served in critical positions under prominent members of the hierarchy, building accordingly a remarkable experience in ecclesiastical administration and politics. During the ten-year patriarchate of the aged and ailing Benjamin I, Maximos had been the governing mind of the Great Church of Christ. His election in February 1946 was unanimous and came as no surprise. On the contrary his elevation on the throne of John Chrysostom inspired both in the hierarchy and in the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul great hopes for a revival in the life and activity of the Church.

The hopes seemed soon to be vindicated as the Patriarchate under Maximos’ leadership regained control of the hospitals and other philanthropic establishments on the Balukli site and of the church of Christ Saviour in Galata. The Patriarch established a press office of the Patriarchate and sent four young graduates of the Theological School of the Patriarchate at Halki, two deacons and two laymen, for advanced training in the West. In inter-Orthodox relations Maximos V contributed through a patriarchal exarchy to the settlement of the ecclesiastical problem of Cyprus in 1946, while in the ecumenical movement he led the way for Orthodox participation in the newly founded World Council of Churches in 1948.

It seems that the new patriarch did not enjoy the confidence of the Greek government. The reasons have remained unclear to this day but some observers have suggested that although originally he had opposed the revocation of the Bulgarian schism under Benjamin I, his eventual presiding over the settlement in January-February 1945 had provoked the suspicions of Greek diplomacy as to his loyalties to the ‘Free world.’ Following his election Maximos V maintained good relations with Soviet diplomats in Turkey in an effort to be kept abreast with developments in the Church of Russia, which after the election of Patriarch Aleksii in 1945 was actively seeking to assume the leadership of Orthodoxy. This attitude intensified the reserve of Greek diplomats in Turkey toward him. During an official visit to Athens in May 1947, great honours were bestowed upon the Patriarch by the Greek government and the Church of Greece. King Paul called upon the Patriarch at his residence and three days later the Patriarch returned the visit to the royal palace. Upon his arrival on Greek territory the Patriarch issued a pastoral proclamation to the Orthodox people of Greece, appealing against the ‘fratricidal laceration’ and urging everyone to work for Christian charity and love against the hatreds incited by the civil war raging at the time. The fact that the Patriarch did not engage in anticommunist invective but appealed instead for reconciliation and peace does not seem to have been reassuring for the Greek government. The visit to Greece did not finally restore confidence in the Patriarch.

A bout of depression that marked the Patriarch’s health in early 1947 supplied the pretext sought by secular powers in order to find ways to replace him with a man completely docile to the governments aligning against the Soviet block in the Cold War. The candidacy of Chrysanthos of Trebizond,
who had served in 1938–41 as archbishop of Athens was initially promoted by the Greek government, who supported him as a strong anti-communist. Then a more suitable candidate was discovered in the person of Archbishop Athenagoras of America, whose relations were already strained with his superiors at the Phanar on account of his failure or unwillingness to fulfil his archdiocese’s financial obligations to Constantinople. The election of Athenagoras, who was initially favoured by Turkey in order to be pleasant to the US, became also the objective of Greek diplomacy. Thus the consent of the Turkish government to the election of a non-Turkish citizen to the throne of Constantinople was secured. It is quite possible that both American diplomacy and Turkey’s own solicitation for acceptance in the Western alliance contributed to the promotion of the new candidacy. The extraction of Maximos’ resignation proved more difficult but in the summer and early autumn of 1948 the pressure of Greek diplomats in Turkey on him became so suffocating that his illness seriously deteriorated and eventually on 18 October 1948 he tendered his resignation to the presiding prelate in the Synod, the metropolitan of Chalcedon, Thomas. The Orthodox flock and the hierarchy of the Patriarchate in Istanbul greatly regretted this development and in the ranks of the synod a group was formed favouring the election of the metropolitan of Derkoi, Joachim. Eventually however political expediencies and pressures prevailed. On 1 November 1948 Athenagoras of America was elected to the ecumenical throne, receiving eleven votes out of seventeen, the group of six favouring the election of Joachim of Derkoi casting while ballots.

Thus a new patriarchal reign began in Istanbul in the heyday of the Cold War. Athenagoras was enthroned on 27 January 1949 but he was never whole-heartedly accepted by the Phanariot environment, where he was perceived as an outsider and an intruder. He did, however, gain the respect of friends and enemies thanks to his devotion to his duties, his indefatigable industriousness and pastoral work and his broader vision for Christian unity.

From a political point of view Athenagoras’ reign was initiated under the best possible conditions. In this case the Cold War worked greatly in favour of a new climate surrounding the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The new patriarch arrived in Istanbul in January 1949 in an airplane made available to him by President Harry Truman. Upon his arrival he was granted Turkish citizenship by the Turkish government and he also enjoyed the unconditional support of Greece. As Greece and Turkey were preparing to join the Western alliance in 1952 and they also joined with Yugoslavia to form the Balkan Pact in yet another Cold War diplomatic move, Patriarch Athenagoras and the Ecumenical Patriarchate were enjoying a honeymoon period of acceptance, recognition and revival. The Orthodox minority in Turkey was going through a period of optimism and improvement.

Examined once again on the level of ‘external’ history the patriarchate of Athenagoras during its first six years (1949–55) could be considered a spectacular success story. Favoured by the climate of Greek-Turkish rapprochement and alliance and adopting an entirely novel by Phanariot standards communication strategy, obviously inspired by his American experience, the Patriarch created a new political climate for the Ecumenical Patriarchate. A month after his enthronement he became the first Ecumenical Patriarch to visit Ankara and call upon the President of the Turkish Republic, Ismet İnönü, to whom he delivered a personal message from President Truman. He was also received by Prime Minister Şemsettin Günsaltay and the minister of the interior. Following the change of government with the election of the Democrat Party in 1950 he met with President Celal Bayar and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes in Istanbul in June 1950 and in 1952 in Ankara. On 10 November 1953 he was invited to participate in the procession that followed the transfer of Atatürk’s remains to the grand mausoleum built just outside Ankara. In 1952 the Patriarch received Prime Minister Menderes at the Phanar, the first such visit in history. The high point in the Patriarchate’s newly found boom was marked by the visit of the royal couple of Greece to the Phanar on 13 June 1952, during a state visit to Turkey.

The improved political environment allowed the Ecumenical Patriarchate to carry out its ecclesiastical mission in a more effective way. Pastoral work within Turkey was greatly enhanced. In 1951 the patriarchal press was reopened and a weekly religious magazine, Apostolos Andreas (Apostle Andrew), was initiated next to the official monthly organ of the Patriarchate Orthodoxia (Orthodoxy), published since 1926. The Patriarch became an active presence in his flock’s religious life through frequent visits to the parishes of his archdiocese. The social involvement and philanthropy of the Patriarchate were greatly expanded. The Patriarchate’s greatest achievement in this period and subsequently under Patriarch Athenagoras had been its enhanced involvement in inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian contacts, whereby it could assert its primacy against Russian attempts to replace it as the leader of the Orthodox world. Pertinent initiatives were greatly facilitated by the freedom of movement accorded to the prelates of the Patriarchate by the Turkish government in the spirit of improved Greek-Turkish relations.

All this creative activity and the honeymoon in Greek-Turkish relations that made it possible came to a standstill with the emergence of a new dynamic phase in the Cyprus Question in 1955. The liberation struggle through guerrilla tactics initiated by the Greek Cypriots in April 1955 led Britain, the colonial power in possession of the island, to encourage Turkey’s involvement in the dispute in order to create a counter weight to the claim of Greece and the Greek Cypriots to the union of the island of Cyprus (82 per cent Greek in its population) with the kingdom of Greece. As it turned out the major victims of this development in the broader movement of decolonization were the Greek minority in Turkey and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

With a view to discuss the prospects of a settlement of the Cyprus Question Britain invited Greece and Turkey to a tri-partite conference in London on 6 September 1955. That was judged the appropriate occasion by Turkey to
press forcefully her claims on Cyprus by inciting large scale violent demonstrations in Istanbul, which over 48 hours on 6–7 September 1955 escalated into a veritable pogrom against the Orthodox minority, destroying commercial establishments owned by minority members along Istiklal Caddesi, the main shopping street in Pera, the famous Grande Rue de Pera of old, burning churches and other institutions belonging to the minority not only in Pera and in the old city across the Golden Horn but in remote suburbs along the Bosphorus and elsewhere, with many cases of murder and rape along the way.\(^9\) The ostensible pretext that triggered off the riots were reports in the Turkish press about a bomb that had been planted in Atatürk’s house at the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki. As it turned out the bomb had been planted by Turkish secret services. The complicity of the Turkish state in inciting the events became plain at the trials of incumbent at the time Turkish leaders following the 1961 overthrow of the Democrat Party government.\(^{20}\) The blow to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and especially to the Greek minority in Istanbul was, nevertheless, lethal. The picture of Patriarch Athenagoras standing in the ruins of the church of Saints Constantine and Helena at Samatya in Istanbul could be seen as the most eloquent testimony as to the character of the new political environment within which the Great Church of Christ had to carry out its mission.\(^{21}\)

With admirable patience, persistence and industriousness the Patriarchate and the minority in a relatively very short time repaired the material damage and attempted to resume a normal pattern of life. The seventy three churches, twenty six schools, and two cemeteries which had suffered various degrees of damage were restored and put back in use by the community. A World Council of Churches mission which visited Istanbul in November 1955 estimated the damage to Greek Orthodox churches alone at 150,000,000 dollars. Compensations by the Turkish government covered only a fraction of the damage.\(^{22}\) The new climate of hostility felt by the minority, however, acted as a major factor driving away its members. From 1955 onward a silent but continuous exodus got under way that greatly eroded the numbers of the minority, with serious consequences for the normal operation of the Patriarchate, which was thus losing its flock and the main source of its manpower. Patriarch Athenagoras was quoted to have remarked that ‘Constantinople had not really fallen in 1453 but in 1955’.\(^{23}\)

From 1955 onward, therefore, the Ecumenical Patriarchate had to sustain the consequences of a second cold war within the global East-West confrontation, a cold war between the two NATO allies Greece and Turkey. The intra-alliance regional cold war fluctuated in intensity according to the ebb and flow of crises in the Cyprus Question and concomitantly in Greek-Turkish relations over the next quarter of a century. The settlement of the Cyprus Question in 1959–60 with the establishment of an independent Republic in Cyprus based on a partnership between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, brought a relaxation of pressures upon the Patriarchate and the minority. This development, however, turned out to be only a temporary respite. New flare-ups of
dynamism that was expressed in the fields of scholarship, letters and music as these fields related to the life of the Orthodox Church. A distinct component of the tradition consisted in the cultivation of a special form of learned Phanariot Greek as the official language of the Church of Constantinople and of its theological and historical scholarship. The mechanism of the cultivation and reproduction of this heritage has been the School at Halki and its continuing closure puts the very survival of a tradition uniquely valuable for understanding European culture in its integrity, in serious jeopardy. In almost four decades since the closure in 1971 repeated appeals and unstinting efforts to reopen the School under Patriarchs Dimitrios and Bartholomaios have remained fruitless. This is a measure of the intensity of the continuing regional cold war within which the Patriarchate has to operate.

In the service of Christian unity

The closing remarks of the previous section could be considered to transpose the focus of our narrative from the level of the external history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the age of the Cold War to that of its internal history, the history of the inner life of the Church as a religious and spiritual institution rather than as a pawn in the antagonisms between secular systems of power. What emerges from a consideration of this aspect of the subject is a truly impressive, indeed admirable image of the dedication of the Church of Constantinople to the fulfilment of its mission as the exponent of the canonical conscience of Orthodoxy and as a guardian and transmitter of its authentic Christian tradition. What is even more impressive is the record of achievement in this domain despite the tragedies, difficulties and obstacles the Patriarchate had to face in transacting its tasks.

Already during the brief patriarchate of Maximos V the intention to carry out this mission became obvious in the initiatives both for the internal reconstruction of the Church of Constantinople, including the upgrading of its theological school, and for intra-Orthodox and ecumenical unity and order. It was during Athenagoras' reign, however, that the full extent of the Patriarchate's vision for the Christian Church became an actual way of life for the Church of Constantinople. It is also significant that most of this work was accomplished after 1955, in a period of severe difficulties and constraints in the operation of the Patriarchate. As institutional aids to the task of the Church three new academic centres were set up, fulfilling important missions in the fields of training, scholarship and dialogue: the Orthodox Centre at Chambésy in Switzerland (1966); the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies in Thessaloniki (1968); and the Orthodox Academy of Crete (1968).

In the domain of intra-Orthodox unity four Pan-Orthodox conferences were convoked in Rhodes (1961, 1963 and 1964) and in Chambésy (1968). The Patriarch undertook a pilgrimage tour of the three other senior patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem in 1959 and he later visited the modern patriarchates of Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria in 1967. In 1963 he presided over the celebrations marking the millennium of Mount Athos and visited also on that occasion the Church of Greece.

In the domain of inter-Christian relations the Ecumenical Patriarchate under Athenagoras initiated theological dialogues with the ancient Oriental Churches, with the Anglicans and the Old Catholics. As far as Christian unity was concerned the most important developments marked Orthodox relations with the Roman Catholic Church. Long and intensive theological preparations throughout the 1950s and early 1960s culminated in the historic meeting of Pope Paul VI with Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem in January 1964 and the eventual revocation of the anathemas of 1054 that had sealed the schism between the two Churches.

The new climate in the relations of the Churches was reflected in the visits exchanged between their heads, Pope Paul visiting the Phanar and Patriarch Athenagoras visiting Rome in 1967. The Patriarch's initiatives of rapprochement with the Catholic Church provoked strong reactions on the part of conservative Orthodox circles in Greece and elsewhere and some monasteries on Mount Athos stopped on this account the commemoration of the Ecumenical Patriarch on whose authority they canonically depended. Despite these reactions relations with Rome continued to improve throughout the Cold War. Patriarch Dimitrios visited Rome in 1987 returning a visit by Pope John Paul II to the Phanar in November 1979. The participation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate also remained active throughout this period in the World Council of Churches.

Through these initiatives which were based on systematic preparatory work and despite occasional setbacks the Ecumenical Patriarchate became a protagonist in the cultivation of a new spirit of unity and reconciliation in the Christian world, thus contributing to a revival of the principles of evangelical Christianity. In carrying out these tasks Patriarchs Athenagoras and Dimitrios were quite fortunate in their collaborators. Their patriarchates were blessed with the service of a succession of remarkable senior prelates, who combined great diplomatic abilities with profound theological scholarship and they could accordingly chart in a responsible and effective way the itinerary of the Church of Constantinople. Among them special mention ought to be made of Meliton of Imvros and then of Ilioupolis and Theira and finally of Chalcedon (1950–89), Maximos of Sardis (1946–86), Ieronymos of Rodopolis (1954–2005), Chrysostomos of Myra and then of Ephesus (1961–2006), Ioannis of Pergamon (1986–) and, of course, Bartholomaios of Philadelphia and then of Chalcedon (1984–91), the future Ecumenical Patriarch.

Constantinople and Moscow

These efforts in rebuilding Christian unity in a world that appeared to feel a profound need for the spiritual message of Christianity but at the same time was nurturing forces inimical and even hostile to it, became a primary contribution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the period 1945–91. Christian
unity and ecumenism were not pursued at the expense of Orthodox solidarity and canonicity. This was the other main activity of the Patriarchate in this period as it has been suggested above. Work in this domain, however, had to unfold very often within the context of another minor “Cold War” that the Patriarchate had to face up to, in this case with the secular motivations activating many of the moves of the Church of Russia in the post-Second World War period.

Relations between Constantinople and Russia in the period under review opened in a most cordial way on the occasion of the election of new patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in February 1945, following Patriarch Sergii’s death. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, responding to an official invitation, was represented at the election of the new patriarch Aleksii I. In his letter announcing the convocation of the electoral synod the locum tenens of the Russian throne, Metropolitan Aleksii of Leningrad and Novgorod stressed the devotion of the Church of Russia to the ancient traditions and to the unity of Orthodoxy, to be cultivated by close communication between the local Churches.26 Upon his election, the new Russian patriarch wrote to Patriarch Benjamin to thank him for his wishes, sending at the same time as a gift a precious icon of the Virgin composed of pearls.27

Two years later the Patriarch of Moscow and the Synod of the Church of Russia took an initiative which resulted in a new climate in inter-Orthodox relations. On 4 April 1947 a letter was addressed to the Ecumenical Patriarch Maximos V and to the other heads of Orthodox Churches announcing the decision to convene a council of Orthodox Patriarchs and heads of autocephalous Churches in Moscow to consider the following major issues in inter-ecclesiastical relations:

(a) Relations of the Vatican to Orthodoxy in the previous thirty years.
(b) The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical movement.
(c) The possibility of recognizing Anglican ordinations by the Orthodox Church.
(d) The Armenian-Gregorian Church, Syro-Jacobite Church, Abissynian Church, Syro-Chaldean Church and their relations to the Orthodox Church.
(e) Canonical problems of the Russian Church: on Schism, Calendar, reception of former clerics etc.28

The letter of the Patriarch of Moscow was received at the Phanar on 15 May 1947. On 30 June the Ecumenical Patriarchate sent its response signed in Patriarch Maximos V’s absence by his commissioner, the metropolitan of Prigkiponissa, Dorotheos. The response was polite but firm. It agreed that a meeting of the heads of Orthodox Churches was desirable and it also conceded that many problems needed to be seriously considered by the Church. It also acknowledged that the Russian Church had been through serious tribulations and was in need of the support and solidarity of sister Churches in reconstructing itself. In taking the initiative to convene the council itself however it had overstepped the bounds set by tradition and canonical order: such initiative belonged alone to the Ecumenical Throne, whose right and duty it was to undertake the initial action whenever issues arose affecting the Church as a whole beyond the regional jurisdictions of individual Churches. The letter went on to point out that on the basis of this centuries-old canonical order in the previous fifty years the Ecumenical Throne had undertaken pertinent initiatives (in 1902, 1920, 1923, and 1930). The intervening world war and other anomalous situations had prevented the convocation of the Pre-Synod planned by Patriarch Photius II as a preparatory meeting of an Ecumenical Synod of Orthodoxy. Its eventual convocation was the exclusive prerogative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.29 The patriarchal letter left no margins for equivocation and misunderstanding. The Russian Patriarch realized that he had no choice but to back down unless he wanted to provoke a major conflict within the Church. In a letter to the Synod of Constantinople he announced his decision to postpone the meeting for a more propitious time.30

The 1947 initiative of the Church of Russia set a pattern in intra-Orthodox relations for the remainder of the Cold War. Moscow’s intention appeared to be to assume the first role in the Orthodox world through unilateral initiatives and activism in inter-church relations. The Ecumenical Patriarchate was not obviously prepared to accept this and it invariably contained Russian initiatives by appealing to strict adherence to and respect of canonical order and tradition.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate’s firmness obviously contained the unstated but obvious intention of Russia to assert its position as by far the largest of the Orthodox Churches and on the basis of the power of numbers to claim the leading role in Orthodoxy. In visualizing this role the Church of Russia obviously enjoyed the support of the Soviet state. The valiant participation of the Church in the great patriotic war of resistance to the Nazi invasion had earned the Church its recognition by the state and the termination of the persecution that had marked the early Soviet period. After the war, however, the Soviet state by allowing the Church to reorganize, elect a new patriarch, operate with some degree of freedom and especially develop its external relations, obviously was planning to use it for its own foreign policy purposes. This transpired already in the 1945 synod which on the occasion of the election of a new patriarch had brought to Moscow the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch and the head of the Church of Georgia and representatives of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Serbia, Romania. The state representative at the meeting, Georgii Karpov, chairman of the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs, expressed the Soviet state’s changed attitude toward the Church and its intention to enhance its support for the Church’s activities.31 It was this new political relation between Church and state in Russia, which turned the restored Orthodox Church into a ‘docile’ agent of Soviet foreign policy,32 that caused alarm in the US and in Greece and set in motion the
policy moves that resulted eventually in the election of Athenagoras in Constaninople, obviously with the writ to contain the Russians in the ecclesiastical domain. The alarm was quite gratuitous because Constantinople itself, on the basis simply of observance of the canons, had taken the necessary steps on its own initiative already in 1947, before Athenagoras' election.

The Russians found an ingenious way to sidestep Constantinople's canonical arguments, at the same time asserting their position of predominance in the Church. They began organizing magnificent religious festivities on every possible occasion, inviting to Moscow the other Orthodox Churches and suggesting in this way that Moscow was in fact, if not in name, at the centre of the collective life of the Orthodox Church. Thus in 1948 a year after the postponement - in fact cancellation - of the proposed pan-orthodox council, on the fifth centennial of the elevation of Russia to autocephaly the Orthodox patriarchs were once more invited to Moscow. In February 1955 the tenth anniversary of the election of Patriarch Aleksii was celebrated and later in the same year (July 1955) there followed celebrations on a grand scale to commemorate Saint Sergius, founder of the Lavra of Zagorsk in the fourteenth century.

On that occasion Patriarch Christophoros of Alexandria was back in Moscow, along with the heads of the Orthodox Churches in the new Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe (Romania, Poland and Georgia) as well as representatives of Antioch, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. The assembly gave Patriarch Aleksii the occasion in an official address to call upon the patriarchs to work for mutual understanding and collaboration in the Orthodox Church, thus raising a claim once more to a coordinating role for his Church in the Orthodox world. Furthermore on the occasion of their meeting in Moscow the heads of the Orthodox Church addressed a message to the Big Four meeting at the moment in Geneva urging them to work for the achievement of permanent peace in the world. Special publicity was also given to the precious gifts lavished on the occasion of the celebrations by the Patriarch of Moscow upon the other Patriarchs present, especially on the senior among them, Christophoros of Alexandria. Constantinople, though invited, sent its wishes but abstained from the festivities.

Another occasion for a pan-Orthodox ceremonial gathering in Moscow to mark a major anniversary in the life of the Russian Church was presented in May 1958 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the reestablishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow. On this occasion the Ecumenical Patriarchate sent an official delegation, but again the main role was played by Christophoros of Alexandria, who was received with great honours by ecclesiastical and political authorities in Russia. Once again the heads of the Churches of Antioch and Georgia were present, as well as delegations from all other Orthodox Churches. The Soviet mass media accorded considerable publicity to the celebrations and the pertinent film was promoted beyond Russia, projecting an image of the Russian Patriarch at the epicentre of magnificent Orthodox ceremonies of worship and thanks-giving, surrounded by the other two Eastern Patriarchs who in terms of seniority preceded him considerably in the ranking of Orthodox Churches.

The pattern of a political strategy is clearly visible in these ostensibly religious activities. The Church of Russia through these initiatives appeared to assume de facto the first role in the Orthodox Church, favoured by the fact that all other Orthodox patriarchates and autocephalous Churches in Eastern Europe had to go along following the compliance of the regimes in their countries with Soviet policies. The three ancient patriarchates in the Near East, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, especially the first two, also fell in line. This was the result of a systematic policy of influence-building by the reorganized Russian Church in the region, through missions, official visits, scholarships and - perhaps most critically - various forms of material support, especially cash handouts. It was characteristic that shortly after his election Patriarch Aleksii visited the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria in May 1945 to rally their support to the plans of Moscow for the future course of the Orthodox Church. The political objective of the ecclesiastical primacy sought by Moscow was also transparent: support to Soviet foreign policy through declarations in favour of world peace and condemnation of the alleged plans of imperialism at the expense of the peoples of the world. This policy was clearly articulated already in the synod of 1945 that elected Patriarch Aleksii and in 1950 was announced as an official position of the Russian Church in a letter by Patriarch Aleksii to the other heads of Orthodox Churches, stressing the importance of Christian peace and asking for their consent to and collaboration with the efforts of his Church on behalf of world peace. As we saw the same policy was reiterated on the occasion of the celebrations in memory of Saint Sergius in 1955.

Through these initiatives the Soviet policy of propaganda on behalf of world peace appeared to be adopted as a general attitude of the Orthodox Churches. This left essentially the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Churches of Cyprus and Greece, and a wavering Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as the only Orthodox entities that did not fall in line with the strategy of the Moscow Patriarchate. Repeatedly their representatives stated their reservations on politically motivated declarations of ecclesiastical meetings and clearly separated their position from open anti-Western statements as had happened at the 1945 Synod in Moscow or again in 1948 on the occasion of the fifth centennial of Russian autocephaly.

Despite the distance and occasional coldness between them the Churches of Constantinople and Russia observed with great tact and precision all the formalities stipulated by canonical order. In November 1960 Patriarch Aleksii of Moscow wrote to the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras to announce his wish to visit the mother Church of Christ at the conclusion of a forthcoming tour of the Middle Eastern patriarchates. The news was received with deep satisfaction at the Phanar and Patriarch Athenagoras set up a special committee of senior prelates to organize the Russian Patriarch's visit down to its minutest details. The visit indeed took place on 23-26 December 1960.
Some details of the visit were characteristic. Upon his arrival in Istanbul on 23 December the Patriarch of Moscow was welcomed at the airport by the patriarchal committee in charge of his visit and was taken to the Phanar, where before meeting Patriarch Athenagoras, he officiated at a TeDeum in the patriarchal cathedral of St. George. Invited to ascend on the patriarchal throne in the church the Russian patriarch declined and preferred to stand at the royal gate of the sanctuary, in a gesture of respect to the primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The two patriarchs met immediately after the TeDeum in a very cordial atmosphere and proceeded to an informal luncheon. The next day, Christmas Eve, the Ecumenical Patriarch visited officially the Russian patriarch at his hotel. During the visit the Russian patriarch expressed himself profusely in terms of respect and devotion to the mother Church of Constantinople and its head. On Christmas day 1988 the two patriarchs co-celebrated the festal liturgy and at the diptychs of Orthodoxy the Patriarch of Moscow as a sign of honour and respect commemorated only the name of the Ecumenical Patriarch and not the whole list of Orthodox patriarchs and heads of autocephalous churches as it was his canonical right to do. At the liturgy were present all the general consuls representing Orthodox countries in Istanbul – Russia, Greece, Lebanon, Romania and Bulgaria. At the local level the Russian patriarchal visit to Istanbul signalled a respite in the Cold War and the ecclesiastical leaderships of the two leading Churches in Orthodoxy proved that they were quite capable of rising to the height of the occasion.

The return visit did not come until 1987 when the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios visited Moscow to a very warm reception by Patriarch Pimen and the Russian faithful. Addressing the Ecumenical Patriarch the Patriarch of Moscow voiced the joy felt by the ‘daughter Church of Russia’ on the occasion of the first visit by a Patriarch of Constantinople since the end of the sixteenth century, when Patriarch Jeremiah II had come to Moscow in 1589 to grant the patriarchal dignity to the Church of Russia. When the crowning moment of glory for Russian Orthodoxy came in 1988, however, with the completion of the millennium of the baptism of Vladimir of Kiev and the reception of the Russian people into the Orthodox communion, new difficulties presented themselves. During the Ecumenical Patriarch’s visit the previous year it had been agreed that he would return a year later to preside over the ceremonies and acts of worship commemorating the millennium of Christianity in Russia. In planning for the events, however, questions of canonicity soon arose on account of the Russian desire to include in the co-celebrant heads of churches the leader of the Russian Church in America, the ‘Metropolia’, which had been unilaterally and without the consent of Constantinople elevated to autocephaly by Moscow. This was not acceptable to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which considered the Metropolia schismatic. The Russians would not accede to the requirement of Constantinople to exclude the Metropolia from the celebrations with the consequence that Patriarch Dimitrios had to cancel his participation. This time Alexandria under Patriarch Parthenios sided with Constantinople and the Church of Greece followed suit. Of the Greek-speaking Churches only the Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus went to Moscow, at the urging of the government of Cyprus counting on Soviet support in the Cyprus Question. The celebrations of course went ahead as planned in the summer of 1988 with the Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch presiding in the main festal liturgy, Arabic instead of Greek being heard on short waves around the world as one of the main languages of Orthodoxy. Thus as the Cold War was drawing to a close, with momentous changes already under way in the Soviet Union, relations between Constantinople and Moscow appeared once more to be entering a new period of coolness. When Patriarch Dimitrios died in October 1991, the Patriarch of Moscow Aleksii II made a stopover in Istanbul on his return from a visit to Damascus to pay his respects but did no stay for the funeral the next day – with the exception of the two elderly and ailing patriarchs of Jerusalem and Georgia, the only one of the Orthodox patriarchs to be absent.

Conclusion

The preceding narrative of the vicissitudes besieging the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the period of the Cold War may create a misleading impression as to the character of the period in the life of the Church. On the face of it, it may appear as a period of power struggles and conflicts over temporal predominance, with the Church just resigned to the role of a passive recipient of the consequences of the protracted epochal confrontation between East and West. The struggle over the election of Athenagoras, the repeated disputes between Constantinople and Moscow, the harshness of the treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by the Turkish state once Turkey felt its position secure because of its strategic value to the West – all these tell us very little about the history and life of the Church as a religious institution. By contrast we appear to be in sight of just another story of disputes over power and attempts at its legitimation. Yet the story is certainly more complex and more nuanced. As ecclesiastical history our narrative essentially unfolds as the story of the struggle of the Orthodox Church to survive by meeting challenges emanating from the constellations of power in the modern world, without abandoning its Christian mission and witness. On this score the achievement of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is truly remarkable, considering especially the hostility of the Turkish state toward its presence and mission. What makes the experience of the Ecumenical Patriarchate truly unique is the fact that the Church of Constantinople is not attached to any particular state. Even under communism the Orthodox Churches in the countries of Eastern Europe functioned as national churches and despite repeated waves of persecution and terror, they retained multiple forms of entanglement with their respective states. The same was true of the Church of Greece, which along with the Church of Cyprus throughout the Cold War were the only Orthodox
Churches in the free world. The Church of Greece, however, remained closely attached to the Greek state and served as faithfully the Greek state’s anticommunism as its sister Churches behind the Iron Curtain served the world peace propaganda projects of their respective communist regimes. The Ecumenical Patriarchate by contrast remained free of state entanglements and this allowed it to cultivate unconditionally its canonical conscience and to make this the basis of its primacy in the Orthodox world. ‘Primacy’ of course is a misleading usage in the present context: the Ecumenical Patriarchate does not claim any kind of papal authority in the Orthodox world but as the senior see in Orthodoxy it shoulders the responsibility of safeguarding canonicity and tradition through coordination and initiative in the common concerns of Orthodox churches. In the period under review here these tasks have been transacted by the Church of Constantinople with great exactitude and patience, but also with firmness whenever necessary. From a secular point of view what could be considered particularly valuable in the evidence supplied by this historical record is the dexterity with which Constantinople managed its tasks as the senior Orthodox Church on a supra-national level, freeing ecclesiastical praxis of nationalist motivations and objectives, therefore bearing witness to the authentic ecumenicity of Christian values. This I think has been the most valuable contribution of the Constantinopolitan ecclesiastical tradition in the twentieth century – and beyond.

Archives/Libraries

Library of the Halki Theological Seminary, Heybeliada, Istanbul
Library of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Athens
Library, Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, Thessaloniki
Archbishop Iakovos Library, Holy Cross School of Theology, Brookline, Mass.

Publications

Orthodoxia
Apostolos Andreas

Population (Turkey)

1945: 18,790,174 total population, 88,680 out of which declared Greek as mother tongue
1990: 56,473,035 total population

Congregations

1945: not available
1991: 23 hierarchs; 58 vicars

The Ecumenical Patriarchate

1995: 103 churches, 89 clergy
Jurisdiction:
Turkey: Holy Archdiocese of Constantinople and four dioceses
Greece: five dioceses in the Dodecanese islands, ten dioceses in the semi-autonomous Church of Crete, the monastic republic of Mount Athos with twenty sovereign monasteries.
North and South America: twelve dioceses
Europe: nine dioceses
Oceania and Far East: four dioceses
The two autonomous Churches of Finland and Estonia
Two jurisdictions for Russians and Ukrainians in the diaspora

Religious leaders

Title: Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

Benjamin (Christodoulou) (1871-1946), 1936-46
Maximos V (Vaportzis) (1897-1972), 1946-8
Athenagoras (Spyrou) (1886-1972), 1948-72
Dimitrios (Papadopoulos) (1914-91), 1972-91

Political leaders (for Turkey)

Ismet İnönü (1884-1973), President 1938-50
Celal Bayar (1883-1986), President 1950-60
Cemal Gürsel (1895-1966), President 1960-66
Cevdet Sunay (1899-1982), President 1966-73
Fahri Korutürk (1903-87), President 1973-80
Kenan Evren (1918-), President 1980-89
Turgut Özal (1927-93), President 1989-93

Notes

2 Ibid., pp. 87-95, 144-73 and 194-206.
3 On the ‘canonical conscience’ of the Church a classic of clarity and precision is Maximos of Sardis, The Ecumenical Patriarchate in the Orthodox Church, Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1976, pp. 253-66.
5 On this very unfortunate phenomenon see Alexandris, pp. 149-54.
6 Ibid., p. 28. Unfortunately this church was eventually demolished in 1958 by Turkish authorities in order to open up a road in Galata. Ibid, p. 272.
12 Vitalis, p. 314.
13 Mavropoulos, pp. 253–64.
14 On the circumstances of Maximos’ resignation and Athenagoras’ election see Mavropoulos, pp. 251–64 and Alexandris, pp. 244–47. The patriarchal change of 1948 in Istanbul, exactly sixty years later still remains a tough subject, shrouded in embarrassment and reticence on the part of surviving witnesses with first-hand knowledge to be explicit and unequivocal about it. This was my discovery in trying to clarify the issues involved. The subject is important and deserves a more detailed examination in itself, as a special case study in Cold War diplomatic and ecclesiastical history, to be attempted on the evidence of surviving documentation, from Greek, Constantinopolitan but also from Russian and Vatican sources.
15 Stavrakis, p. 646.
16 *Orthodoxia* XXIV, 1949, pp. 58–64.
17 Alexandris, p. 249.
18 Ibid., pp. 248–51.
21 Vrononis, pp. 389–517.
22 Alexandris, pp. 259–60.
23 Ibid., p. 299.
27 Ibid., p. 41.
30 *Orthodoxia* XXII, 1947, p. 250.
31 A summary of Karpov’s speech in *Orthodoxia* XX, 1945, pp. 36–38.
32 In the authoritative judgement of A. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence. The History of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917–1948*, New York: Praeger, 1968, p. 468. For a detailed study see M. Spinka, *The Church in Soviet Russia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956. An important new source recounts the story on the basis of the records of the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs and confirms in detail the impressions of Western observers concerning the involvement of the Church of Russia in the plans of Soviet foreign policy. See T. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia. Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years*, translated by Edward E. Roslof, Armonk, N.Y. and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2002, especially pp. 39–41. Concerning the 1945 Synod the following judgements by the author are quite pertinent: The National Council was supposed to show representatives of foreign Orthodox churches the growing power of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR. They were to see both political and financial power flowing from government support, which in turn was to become a decisive factor when the financially needy Eastern Orthodox patriarchs set their own political priorities. In addition the National Church Council was to demonstrate the unity of Orthodoxy Churches to the international community as well as the reality of claims by the Moscow patriarchate to “leadership” of the Orthodox world. This was especially important for officials already planning a political confrontation between the USSR and the Vatican. [ ... ] The grandeur and splendor of arrangements, as well as the level of service provided to members and guests attending the National Church Council were intended to make a positive impression and to be conducive in no small degree for successful resolution of the tasks set by the government. These goals were achieved, as testified by the fact that Karpov received the state's highest award for excellence, the Order of Lenin, in February 1945’ (pp. 40–41).
33 *Orthodoxia* XXIII, 1948, pp. 249–50. See also Chumachenko, p. 54.
34 *Orthodoxia* XXX, 1955, pp. 242–43.
36 Ibid., p. 397.
37 Ibid., p. 398.
40 *Orthodoxia* XV, 1950, p. 140.
44 See further Metropolitan of Pergamon Ioannis [Zizioulas], ‘The Ecumenical Patriarchate and its Relations with the other Orthodox Churches’ in P. M. Kitromilides and T. Veremis (eds.), *The Orthodox Church in a Changing World*, Athens: ELIAMEP-Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1998, pp. 155–64.
45 *Orthodoxia* resumed publication in January 1994.
46 Monthly, 1926–63.
49 Monthly, 1926–63.