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The Bulgarian Church Representation in Istanbul after Lifting the Schism in 1945

(Abstract)

In 1913, the seat of the Bulgarian Exarchate was re-located to Sofia while the Exarchal Vicegerency remained in Istanbul, unrecognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Turkish authorities, but supported by the Bulgarian government and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC). The conditions for lifting the schism in 1945 and the unsettled status of both the Exarchal Vicegerency and the Bulgarian Church Community in Turkey deprived the Bulgarians of Bulgarian church representation and predetermined their remaining in the diocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In 1950, the Bulgarians of Turkish citizenship elected a Church Board of Trustees and Managing Board of the Foundation of the Orthodox Church of the Bulgarian Exarchate, already registered in 1936, to manage the church affairs. Since 1953, the Church Board has been recognized as a legal entity with the right to manage the property of the Bulgarian church community. Since 1953 in Istanbul, the Patriarchal Vicegerency with very limited functions has remained in place of the Exarchal Vicegerency. Over the years, the role of the Church Board has been established. It has the right before all authorities in the country to seek and protect the property rights of the Bulgarian churches.

Keywords: Bulgarian Exarchate; Exarchal Vicegerency; Church Board; Ecumenical Patriarchate; Schism

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