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**The Lonely Path of Integrity
Spyridon, Archbishop of America (1996-1999)**

by Justine Frangouli -Argyris

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Phanar Seeks Meeting With Prime Minister

by Justine Frangouli

The Ecumenical Patriarchate has made a last minute's attempt to involve the Greek government in the issue of the Archdiocese of America. The Phanar has, in fact, come to a dealock as a result of its decision to remove the Primate of the Church in America without, however, having found a replacement who will be able to guarantee the unity of the Greek-American community.

The Phanariots are now seeking an immediate meeting with Greek Prime Minister, Mr Costas Simitis, on the pretext of briefing him on the options for a successor to the current Archbishop, thus attempting to shift on to the PASOK government the burden of their responsibility for whatever should follow.

The new scenarios for the removal of Archbishop Spyridon have already triggered strong reactions among Greek Americans. Such reactions seem to become even stronger as the scenarios are being linked to the influence exerted by an elite of wealthy Greek Americans on the Patriarch. These rich people are fierce opponents of Archbishop Spyridon, who had recently put up money for the purchase of a patriarchal residence.

Another section of the Greek American community is convinced that the new crisis in the Church of America (which this time seems to have been engineered by the Phanar itself) stems from the Phanar's displeasure over Archbishop Spyridon's interventions on Greek National issues. Such steps culminate in the representations that on the Archdiocese's initiative will be made to President Clinton by the Greek American lobby in view of the 25th anniversary of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Many are of the opinion that the Patriarch, perhaps pressured by Turkey, wishes to be rid of Spyridon before the tragic anniversary.

However, the Patriarch (who has not yet secured unanimity among the Patriarchal Synod's members on the ousting of Archbishop Spyridon) appears to have put himself in a most difficult position, given that the successor, who will certainly encounter a sharp reaction from Archbishop Spyridon's supporters, is expected to fulfill the following conditions:

1. He will have to meet with the approval of Fr Alex Karloutsos, an influential priest associated with financial magnates of the Greek-American community. Formerly a confidant of Archbishop Iakovos, Karloutsos literally ditched him in the end, and today openly declares his hostility to Archbishop Spyridon.
2. He must be acceptable to the five US Metropolitans who, in a recent letter to the Patriarch, seek to have a say in the election of the new Archbishop of America and hint that the successor should be one of them selves.

But since the Phanar does not trust the five US Metropolitans, given that certain of them have taken an open position in favor of an autocephalous Church of America, it seems that the succession to Archbishop Spyridon will be given the "salami" treatment. The Phanar will initially transfer one or two Metropolitans regarded as "trouble-makers" and then proceed with the replacement of Archbishop Spyridon with someone who enjoys the complete trust of Patriarch Bartholomew.

This time, the Patriarch will not allow the Archbishop of America to have broad powers, a fact that could be a danger to himself –like Iakovos or Spyridon. Thus, the successor (who may be Nikitas of Hong Kong or Michael of Austria) will be given a new package including the revision of the Archdiocese Charter. Such by-laws will provide for an Archbishop with reduced responsibilities, a “first among equals”, a Metropolitan of New York, in essence.

After breaking up the Archdiocese of North and South America into four eparchies following the fall of Iakovos, the Patriarch is said to be determined to further weaken the role of the next Archbishop in the USA. This time, however, he will have to pay a high price, for the Archdiocese of America has reached maturity and is well aware of its potentials.

At the same time, the reactions of the Greek-American community to the ousting of two Archbishops within the span of three years and, moreover, under the pressure exerted by the same individuals and interests, will have far-reaching consequences. It would certainly not be wise for the Greek government to shoulder the responsibility for these in this critical phase of developments.

[Translated from Greek]

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