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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

COUNTRY USSR; Syria; Greece; Turkey  
 SUBJECT Sociological - Religion  
 HOW PUBLISHED Daily newspaper  
 WHERE PUBLISHED Athens  
 DATE PUBLISHED 11 Jan 1953  
 LANGUAGE Greek

DATE DIST. 22 Apr 1953

NO. OF PAGES 1

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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RUSSIAN CHURCH ACTIVITIES AIMED AT WEAKENING ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

Geneva -- Reports from Moscow mention that the Russian Church has resumed its activities toward weakening the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul and that it is making efforts to place under its authority every Orthodox Church behind the Iron Curtain. After the Polish Orthodox Church was declared autocephalous, the Russian Church proceeded to take similar steps for the Czechoslovak Orthodox Church, disregarding the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the supreme ecclesiastical authority. Aleksey, the Patriarch of Moscow, then announced to the Ecumenical Patriarchate as well as to the Holy Synod of Greece that the Czechoslovak Church was now autocephalous and that he regarded this as a fait accompli.

Furthermore, the Russian Orthodox Church sent three bishops to Antioch to propagandize against the Ecumenical Patriarch with the claim that he is inclined toward Protestantism. At the same time, Patriarch Aleksey invited the Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandros, to Moscow to attend the jubilee celebrations which were to honor the Russian Patriarch's religious career. But upon the suggestion of two high priests of the Antioch Patriarchate, it was decided that the Patriarch of Antioch should not go to Moscow but that patriarchal representatives would be sent instead. At the last minute, however, the jubilee was postponed because of the supposed illness of Patriarch Aleksey.

Finally, according to the same reports, the Russian Archimandrite in Jerusalem is taking steps toward proclaiming the Arab Orthodox Church autocephalous, with Nazareth as its seat. This Russian movement in Jerusalem was strengthened considerably when the Israeli government returned to the Russian Church its property.

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