

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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1. The feeling of many Serbs, including Government workers, is that the West cares nothing for religious freedom in Yugoslavia, and is uninterested in the safety of their churchmen. Religious Serbs are particularly bitter that the trial of the Metropolitan Arsenije of Montenegro, and his sentence to 11½ years solitary confinement, were covered by only one Western correspondent, and received little if any notice in the Western press, while the trial of Roman Catholic Cardinal Stepinac was covered by hundreds of newsmen from the West and became the subject of editorial comment for an extended period of time. Some Serbs expressed the hope that the Catholic Church itself would issue a blast against the trial and sentence of the Metropolitan of Montenegro, thereby indicating a firm stand by all religious groups in the country against government persecution of the churchmen; failure of the Roman Catholics to do so was pointed out as another example of how the Catholic Croats "ignore and despise us Serbs."
2. Also in line with their attempts to nullify church solidarity, the Yugoslav Communists have broached the idea of establishing a separate Macedonian Orthodox Church, thereby withdrawing the Macedonians from their history-old religious affiliation with the Serbs and the Montenegrins. The idea was proposed by Communist-supported Orthodox priests at the May 1954 annual Sabor (Parliament of the Church) in Belgrade; the idea made no progress at this session, but may go through at the next year's meeting, particularly after the elimination of the Metropolitan of Montenegro.
3. Along the same lines of division, the Government is making every effort to attract the children and youth of Yugoslavia to summer camps, excursions, and other activities designed to remove them from parental religious education or direct participation in church functions.

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