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COUNTRY Levant/Greece/USSR  
SUBJECT Soviet Influence in the  
25X1A Patriarchate of Antioch

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1. By the early part of the twentieth century, Tsarist Russia had succeeded in wresting from the Greeks hegemony over the Orthodox Churches of the Arab world, both through the considerable sums of money that Russia spent on the church and by the fact that Russia gave her protection to the church. Church leaders went to Russia for their education and the church acquired a considerable number of Russian characteristics. Most of the present hierarchy of the Patriarchate of Antioch were trained during this period.

2. After the Bolshevik revolution, when all connections with Russia were severed, the Orthodox Church in the Levant faced the problems of finance and education. With no outside aid, the Church maladministered and misappropriated its rich religious bequests (awqaf) and, with Russian higher schools closed to them, the clergy fell into ignorance and the laity, having few schools of its own and no colleges, was forced to attend the numerous Catholic schools which enjoyed the support of the Latin powers.

3. A new era of hope opened for the Orthodox Church members of the Levant with the opening in 1944 of the Legation in Beirut by the Soviet Union, which had by then abandoned its previous anti-religious stand and had become the protector of the Orthodox Church. Soviet propaganda reached not only the Orthodox masses, far too ignorant to have any conception of the true position of the Church in the Soviet Union, but also those members of the Orthodox hierarchy who were venal or foolish enough to shut their eyes to reality. The Patriarch of Antioch, Alexander Tahhan, a man of eighty-three, was influenced by the Soviet propaganda, but the only two men with sufficient education or prestige to succeed Tahhan as Patriarch are not considered pro-Soviet. One, the Metropolitan Ignatius Huraykhi of Hama, follows a strong Arab nationalist line. The other and more likely candidate for the office, Theodosius Abu-Rujayli, Metropolitan of Tyre, Sidon, and Dependencies, is highly respected and known for his anti-Soviet attitude. Comment. According to a public announcement, Abu-Rujayli was transferred in October to the important See of Tripoli.

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vacant for many years. He was replaced in South Lebanon by Bulos Khuri, who is reported by a source with good contacts in the Church to be anti-Communist. He is the brother of Fahia Khuri, leader of the 'Usbat al-'Amal al-Qawmi /League of National Action/, and brother-in-law of 'Abdullah Qubrusi, head of the political committee of the Syrian Popular Party.)

4. The Soviets have, therefore, found other candidates, one of whom is Ilyas Salibi, the Metropolitan of Beirut. A man of low social origin and very little education, Salibi has managed to enrich himself through misappropriation of the religious bequests which he controls. Politically, Salibi has made an alliance with Habib Abu-Shahlah, Greek Orthodox deputy from Mt. Lebanon and lawyer for Tapline, and Niqola Rizqallah, Muhafiz of Beirut, which alliance source states has been advantageous to all three. Salibi proclaims openly that the Soviet Union is going to win the "coming war with the West," and that the Patriarchate of Antioch should "jump on the band-wagon." Source states positively that Salibi does not take money from the Soviets but is following the Soviet line because he hopes that they will make him the next Patriarch of Antioch. He is also spending considerable sums of money to ensure his election. Salibi has great influence over Patriarch Tahhan, who has been heard to echo Salibi's statements on an eventual Soviet victory.
5. Other Soviet supporters in the Church in addition to Salibi are Archbishop Karam, Metropolitan of Mt. Lebanon, who source states, definitely takes money from the Soviets, and Archimandrite Samahah, who is a Soviet Intelligence agent. [REDACTED] Comment. For previous statements concerning this intelligence activity of Samahah and for information on Karam, [REDACTED]  
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6. At the celebrations of the 500th Anniversary of the Moscow Church, held in Moscow in July 1948, which the representatives of the Patriarch of Antioch attended with an eye to the reestablishment of the same direct financial assistance which Antioch had enjoyed under the tsars, Samahah proposed a toast to Stalin as the "defender of the Orthodox Church." Source states that the representatives of the Patriarchate of Antioch evidently made a poor impression on their Russian colleagues.
7. When the Russians began to present pre-arranged resolutions which were in conflict with what the Greek members of the Church thought to be the real reason for the gathering (i.e. the anniversary celebration of the Moscow Church), the Greek members left the conference. The Antioch representatives, despite the warnings of the Greek members of the Church, then joined in anti-Papal resolutions. The only material gain that Antioch received from the Soviets, however, was a promise of the revenue of one church in Moscow.

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8. Samahah was left behind by the delegation in Moscow ostensibly to arrange for the revenue of the church promised by the Soviets, but probably also to give certain assistance to the Soviets to enable them to strengthen their hold on the Patriarchate of Antioch, source claims. However, considerable pressure is being exerted for the recall of Samahah from Moscow, but there is also talk of sending Deacon Basilleos Qazan, brother of Communist Fuad Qazan, in his stead. Qazan has commenced to learn Russian. [REDACTED] Comment. A second source with good contacts in the Orthodox Church stated that Qazan had been transferred to Aleppo under Archbishop Raphael Nimr, an enemy of the present Patriarch.) 25X1A
9. Concerning the problem of education of the priesthood, [REDACTED] when the Patriarch was questioned about sending students to the Soviet seminars, he answered that there were no suitable candidates. The Greek Government offered to put three students through the ecclesiastical school at Corinth, and the Greek Church offered two more students still higher training. 25X1X
10. [REDACTED] the Greek Government had offered to put three students through ecclesiastical school, and adds that the Patriarch said that he did not have anyone at the moment to send, obviously refusing to accept this offer for fear of offending the Soviets. At present there are students from the Antioch Patriarchate in both of the Russian ecclesiastical schools at Paris, one of which backs the present regime in Russia, and the other of which is White Russian. 25X1X
11. Another question to be solved by the Church is the matter of a Russian priest to be delegated to the Patriarchate of Antioch as a liaison man. There is already a Russian helping the Patriarch, a layman named Bogolyubski, who claims to be a White Russian, but whose true allegiance is uncertain, source states. [REDACTED] Comment. For additional information on Bogolyubski (Bogoliowski, [REDACTED].) The priest who used to serve the Russian community in Beirut, Archimandrite Simeon Nikitin, has departed but is certain to be replaced. [REDACTED] Comment. A Maronite source stated on 13 October that Father Bichkov had been appointed to serve the Russian community.) 25X1A
12. The Greeks, to counteract growing Soviet influence, have tried to have the Patriarch of Antioch accept a liaison man from the Greek Church. Their candidate for this position is the archpriest, Constantinos Moraitakis, who recently arrived in Beirut as chaplain to the Greek Legation. Moraitakis was educated at the Orthodox School in Iasy, Rumania, and is a man of high caliber. Recently he has been expelled by the Soviets from Rumania, where he had been the chaplain to the Greek Legation in Bucharest and later was with the Swiss Legation, where he was working at the time of his expulsion. [REDACTED] Comment. Moraitakis is possibly identical with Bishop Moratinos (or Moriatakis) who reportedly has been expelled from Rumania recently for anti-Communist activities and was reported to be in Greece. [REDACTED] Moraitakis has been presented to the Patriarch of Antioch, who does not want to accept him as a delegate from the Greek Church, possibly fearing that the Russians could then demand the same privilege, source states. 25X1A

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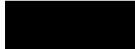
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13. Although a meeting of the Holy Synod is due, when most of these questions might be expected to be discussed openly, the Synod may be postponed for some time, not only as Archbishop Karam is ill, but also as the Patriarch of Antioch is not anxious for a meeting. Source stated that the reason for the Patriarch's opposition is that his enemy, the Archbishop Raphael Nimr, wishes to bring up a scandal embarrassing to the Patriarch, which accuses him of selling for his own benefit certain "awfaq" land belonging to the convent of Belemend in Kura Qazah, near Tripoli. ~~██████████~~ Comment. A mention of this appeared in the Beirut newspaper al-Nahar on 15 September.)

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