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**FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH**

FROM : **AmConGen, Istanbul, Turkey** **627**  
DESP. NO.

TO : **THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.** **April 10, 1953**  
DATE

REF : **1953 APR 17 PM 3 03**

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**DECLASSIFIED**  
Authority **NND 842934**  
By **UNSA** NARA Date **7/28/90**

SUBJECT: **Official Call on the Oecumenical Patriarch**

1. Upon the occasion of my first official call upon the Oecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras on April 1, the Patriarch spent much of his time in expressing his love and admiration for the United States and all things our country represents. He went so far as to state that the cornerstone of the policy which he had set for himself as Patriarch was to advance American ideals. His expressions of admiration for the United States were at times so unrestrained as to become almost embarrassing. I could not help feeling that if, as a Turkish citizen, his feelings are as freely expressed to non-Americans, he will become labelled as a sort of professional pro-American, that his influence in Turkey and among the Orthodox will be consequently diminished, and that to some his utterances will be considered merely the repetition of American propaganda. I understand that in some quarters his efforts have already been discounted for this reason and that the Department is aware of this. I would therefore be inclined to recommend that we do what we can to encourage a note of subtlety in the Patriarch's expressions of his very understandable pro-American sentiments, and that our future relations with him should be conducted with such discretion as to avoid having him too closely identified with us.

2. During the remainder of the conversation His Holiness touched on several matters of interest:

(a) He now plans to visit Jerusalem, Syria and Egypt in June after the celebration in Istanbul of the Five Hundredth Anniversary of the Conquest of Constantinople to be held during the last week in May. As reported in ConGen despatch 186, September 18, 1952, his pilgrimage to Jerusalem is timed particularly for the purpose of talking to the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria in the hope that through his personal influence he can bring them more solidly into a "common front of free Orthodox Churches against Communism". He had heard that Christoforus of Alexandria had recovered from his recent serious illness and that his physical recovery had been accompanied by a mental change--he had lost his illusions regarding Communism. (This may be somewhat optimistic, particularly in light of Alexandria's Despatch 50.

**RBMacatee/vb**  
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(b) He expressed great satisfaction with developments in Yugoslavia. (He had been a Yugoslav citizen for seven years.)

(c) His personal friendly relations with the Turkish Government, which had recently contributed 240,000 liras for the support of Greek schools, was a source of gratification. The Turks, he thought, were being sensible and tactful in playing down the Five Hundredth Anniversary ceremony; and for his part he was continually trying to make "his Greeks" exchange the bitterness of the past for the "good neighbor" policy of the present. (See Congen despatch 445, January 15, 1953.)

(d) He had recently exchanged telegrams with the Patriarch in Moscow on the occasion of Alexis' name day. Athenagoras said it was his policy to maintain this type of contact with the patriarchs and Orthodox Church leaders behind the Iron Curtain in order to lend them encouragement and to afford them a "window to the West". However, there could never be compromise between the Church and Communism, and he intended to make this clear to the Patriarch of Antioch when he saw him in June.

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*RB Macatee*

Robert B. Macatee  
American Consul General

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*John*