

21  
Action  
Info  
RMR  
SF  
C  
EUR  
L  
CLI  
NIC

~~SECRET~~

Control: 14411  
Rec'd: December 22, 1950  
9:08 a.m.

FROM: Istanbul  
TO: Secretary of State  
NO: 541, December 21, 8 p.m.

DECLASSIFIED  
Authority NN1957432  
By CL NARA. Date 7/26/80

Central  
Files  
14  
FURNISH

SENT DEPARTMENT 541; REPEATED INFORMATION ANKARA 263, LONDON 26, ATHENS 32, PARIS 22, GENEVA 2.

Reference: Athens telegram 2158, December 14, Ankara telegram 1438, December 19 to Department.

832.413/12-2156  
returned to

1. During visit Patriarch December 19 other matters, I explained again that Ambassador Warren had been able visit Istanbul only very infrequently and briefly and therefore had not had opportunity call on Patriarch. I added, for Patriarch's private information, that I had personally advised Ambassador against calling during his most extended visit in early October. At that time patriarchate under strong local press criticism for various reasons including Skoura's speech advocating construction patriarchate palace. Any call by Ambassador would have increased Patriarch's difficulties. Athenagoras expressed understanding and agreement and his appreciation for explanation.

2. Entirely his own initiative, Patriarch brought up disservice done him and orthodox cause by Skouras and others who mistakenly persist considering oecumenical patriarchate similar to Vatican. With great force Athenagoras stressed history, tradition, hierarchical structure Orthodox Church emphasize independence individual national churches rather than authority oecumenical Patriarch. Any proposals make patriarchate like Vatican arouse immediate opposition, Patriarch said, from national Orthodox Churches, in first place from Greek national church, and also from Turks. Patriarch considers entirely unrealistic to suppose that Russians, Greeks, Serbs, Rumanians, etc., would ever begin to consider according oecumenical Patriarch anything remotely resembling the supremacy Roman Pope enjoys. For his part, he said he would do everything he could -- and always had to oppose any such distortion of structure Orthodox Church.

Patriarch himself like GOT thoroughly aware continued United States sympathy interest in patriarchate. On appropriate occasions Ambassador has mentioned to Foreign Office our high regard for Patriarch and similar views have been expressed to local

SECRET FILE  
HBS

SECRET

-2- 541, December 21, 8 p.m. from Istanbul

local officials. Patriarchate has on at least one recent occasion indicated knowledge and appreciation our efforts (CONGEN telegram 309, October 17). On local level hardly week passes without direct contact between this office and the Patriarch or members Holy Synod

4. Considerations re removal patriarchate subject forthcoming despatch. In general may be said prevailing view in patriarchate is such prestige and limited primacy in spiritual matters oecumenical Patriarch possesses derive from his historical position as original primate of capital and center of Byzantine empire and would not survive transfer elsewhere of patriarchate. Virtual disappearance this historic primate would provide opportunity for Moscow claim leadership Orthodox Church in opinion some members Holy Synod

5. Local Greeks also inclined believe removal patriarchate would bring into question continued Istanbul residence Greek minority and Hellenic colony and might well lead to exchange of population with western Thrace. Some informed Turks believe continued presence oecumenical Patriarch Istanbul minimizes possibility organized orthodox solidarity against Turkey, such matters as Cyprus or more general orthodox anti-Turk campaign which might be attempted by Soviets-satellites

6. Expulsion motion of irresponsible deputy Demirag of no consequence itself but as one of series unfriendly manifestations fosters gloom and pessimism in patriarchate. However, Athenagoras' December 19 as on all my previous visits emphasized his conviction Greek-Turk relations can and must be improved, his determination assist this development all ways and his unshaken belief patriarchate's presence in Istanbul is asset rather than liability in this work.

MINER

CWD:VMM/12

**MAR 4 1957**

SECRET