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LEBANON

TURKEY

RELIGION
Orthodox

PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH PLAYS DOUBLE ROLE. TO VISIT
ISTANBUL

SOURCE ISTANBUL : Confidential source

DATE OF OBSERVATION : 10 July 1953.

EVAL. COMMENT : All developments of the Orthodox Church are watched here with keen interest. There is little doubt that the Soviets, in their indirect support of the MOSCOW Patriarchate are preparing for an ideological reserve position which one day, they might bring into play.

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During May 1953 the Metropolitan of BERICHT, Elijah SALIBY, visited the Oecumenical Patriarchate on his way to ATHENS. His Reverence expressed his love and respect for the Oecumenical Patriarchate in many speeches. This Metropolitan is exerting a great political influence on the government of LEBANON and for this reason is considered as the most prominent religious personality in LEBANON. He has also views on the patriarchal throne of ANTIOCH.

This Metropolitan gave the information that a delegation, composed of the Metropolitan of EPIPHANY Ignatios and the Metropolitan of VOSTRA Athanasius, went to MOSCOW to visit the Patriarch ALEXEI.

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The same delegation, together with the permanent MOSCOW representative Archimandrite Basil SAMAHA, went to BUCHAREST on 15 June to visit the Rumanian Patriarchate as reported by the BUCHAREST radio. This delegation was received by the government representative, Mr. Marina SALIKA. From all these, it is evident that the Patriarchate of ANTIOCH continues to play a double role in its effort to maintain friendly relations both with the MOSCOW and the Oecumenical Patriarchate.

The Oecumenical Patriarchate did not refrain from expressing its discontent at this policy, for the attitude which the Patriarchate of ANTIOCH had shown on the Bulgarian question and for its sending a delegate to SOFIA to be present at the election of the Bulgarian Patriarch. The Oecumenical Patriarch ATHENAGORAS has even sent a personal letter in which he stressed that the two Patriarchates had always a common policy on all Oecumenical matters and that any other policy would be contrary to the history and the mission of the ancient Patriarchates of the East and would cause a disagreeable impression. In conclusion, the Oecumenical Patriarch said that he is always ready to exchange ideas on the general questions.

The Patriarch of ANTIOCH tried to find an excuse for his attitude in the Bulgarian ecclesiastical question by saying that he was not informed in time of the viewpoint of the Oecumenical Patriarchate and that he hastened to reply to the invitation.

The Patriarch of ANTIOCH has announced by cable that he will come to visit the Oecumenical Patriarchate and the Theological School of HALKI from which he graduated. He is expected to arrive in ISTANBUL between July 15 - 20.