

Russian Patriarch Kirill Spied in Switzerland for KGB in 70s – Media

By [AFP](#)

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Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

The Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, a strong supporter of President Vladimir Putin, worked for Soviet intelligence while living in Switzerland in the 1970s, Swiss newspapers reported, citing declassified archives.

According to the Sonntagszeitung and Le Matin Dimanche weeklies, the Swiss police file on the man who today serves as the spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church "confirms that 'Monsignor Kirill,' as he is referred to in this document, worked for the KGB."

The two papers said they had gained access to the file in the Swiss national archives.

Kirill, who today is a fervent supporter of Putin's war in Ukraine, lived in Geneva in the early 1970s, officially as a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church at the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Under the code name "Mikhailov," Kirill's mission was to influence the council, already infiltrated by the KGB, the papers said.

The Russian Orthodox Church has refused to comment on Kirill's spying activity in Geneva, while the WCC had maintained it had no information about the case, they said.

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But, they reported, the archives showed the Soviet objective was to push the institution to denounce the United States and its allies, and to tone down its criticism of the lack of religious freedoms in the Soviet Union.

The patriarch's nephew Mikhail Gundyayev, who currently represents the Russian church at the WCC in Geneva, however insisted to Le Matin Dimanche that his uncle "was not an agent, although he was subjected to 'strict controls' by the KGB."

And this, he insisted, "did not affect the sincerity of his engagement in ecumenical work with other churches."

Gundyayev also insisted that his uncle had had a special appreciation for Switzerland.

Kirill has visited the wealthy, Alpine nation at least 43 times, the paper reported.

He was among other things passionate about skiing, even reportedly breaking a leg on the Swiss slopes in 2007.

"Between religious diplomacy, espionage and finances, Kirill has continuously been drawn to the Alps and the shores of Lake Geneva," Le Matin Dimanche said.

"I have special feelings for your country," the patriarch himself said in 2019 upon receiving the president of the upper house of the Swiss parliament.

"Of all the countries in the world, it is possibly the one I have visited the most often."

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