

Spain: Internal Situation 230/1/39

11

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BRITISH EMBASSY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

January 17th, 1939

No. 55

Mr. of the
Francis attaches.
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2/11

My Lord,

The recent offensive by General Franco's forces has provoked considerable despondency in this country where sympathy is very largely with the Barcelona Government. As an instance of typical opinion I have the honour to enclose a copy of a leading article from the "Washington Post" of January 15th which draws special attention to the risk to Latin-America of a victory by General Franco. The argument is that the General is deeply in debt to Italy and Germany and that the pipers will undoubtedly call their tune. "One place where the pay-off must be anticipated is in Latin-America". The article goes on to argue that the triumph of a nationalistic, racially conscious revolutionary movement in Spain is bound to be followed by an assertive pan-Hispanic movement. Such a movement will be directed in the Italian and German interest both in the spheres of trade and of political propaganda. "A Franco victory would make a Fascist springboard of the Iberian Peninsula, including Portugal as well as Spain, extending to the Azores, the Canary Islands and other potential air and submarine bases pointing towards South America".

2. The editor of the "Washington Post" tells me that this article provoked the same afternoon a radio attack/

The Right Honourable

The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,

etc., etc., etc.

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1/11
INDEX

attack by a local priest named Father Cartwright and that at least 20 subscriptions to the newspaper have already been cancelled by Catholic readers. The one body of opinion in this country which is strongly pro-Franco is the Roman Catholic Church, whose leaders in this country are nearly all obeying the behest of the Vatican in supporting the Insurgents. There have been bitter polemics at public meetings and in the press between Catholic leaders and the Spanish Ambassador, notably when the Archbishop of Cincinnati conducted a "Red mass" in Washington to celebrate the opening of Congress and the jubilee year of the Law School of the Catholic University here. Even more vigorous was the reaction of the Archbishop of Baltimore to an invitation from the Spanish Ambassador to visit Barcelona and investigate the treatment of the Church there for himself. The Archbishop, if the press is to be believed, indulged in somewhat unclerical language and described the Ambassador as "a common, ordinary liar". He said that he regarded the Ambassador's invitation as "quintessential and sublimated gall" and that photographs showing priests conducting funerals in Barcelona are "the bunk".

3. Father Coughlin is also active in his broadcasts in denouncing Dr. Negrin's Government, and in opposing the vigorous campaign here which aims at inducing Congress to lift the embargo on the export of arms to Spain by revision of the Neutrality Act. The hatred of Germany provoked by Jewish persecutions has stimulated this agitation, and the Catholic Church appears to be in the curious position of supporting

Nazi/

Nazi aims in Spain while denouncing Nazi persecution in Germany, although it is the Nazi attitude towards the Church rather than towards the Jews which provokes the more criticism. Father Coughlin, however, is attacking the Jews on the ground that they are communists at heart, and his campaign is represented by left-wing papers such as "The Nation" as a deliberate attempt to spread anti-Semitism. In this he is not supported by the wiser members of the hierarchy.

4. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Minister to the Holy See.

I have the honour to be,,
 with the highest respect,
 My Lord,
 Your Lordship's most obedient,
 humble servant,

(Sgd) V. A. L. MALLETT

H. H. Chargé d'Affaires.