

WORLD DOMINION

The World Dominion Movement advocates Informed Continuous Co-ordinated Evangelism to reach everyone at home and abroad. Its basis is belief in the Deity and Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the World's Only Saviour, and in the Final Authority of Holy Scripture.

Editor: THOMAS COCHRANE.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

THE REV. J. DOUGLAS ADAM, D.D., has occupied the Chair of the Philosophy of Religion in an American University, and has had a long experience as a Minister in the Church of Scotland.

MRS. K. M. SITTERS is the wife of Mr. P. H. SITTERS, the National Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in Jugoslavia.

THE REV. A. McLEISH, Survey Editor of the World Dominion Movement, has had long experience in India as a missionary of the Church of Scotland. He was a delegate to the Madras Conference.

MR. E. R. HOLDEN is the Hon. Secretary of the Centre for Christian Co-operation in Lisbon.

DR. J. T. TUCKER, of the United Church of Canada, is Principal of the Currie Institute at Dondi, Angola, and is Secretary of the Angola Mission Conference.

MR. KENNETH G. GRUBB is a member of the World Dominion Movement and the author of many books. He was a delegate to the Madras Conference.

MRS. JOSEPHINE E. VAN PEURSEM is an associated missionary of the Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church in America.

MR. J. RODERICK DAVIES is the Director of the Bible House of Corumba, Brazil.

THE REV. W. AXLING, D.D., is Secretary of the National Christian Council of Japan.

THE REV. A. STUART MCNAIRN is the General Secretary of the Evangelical Union of South America.

The Future of Religion in Spain

'WAYFARER.'

THE Spanish Civil War is finished. A general sigh of relief went up when the news was flashed round the world. The surrender of Madrid on the 28th March, brought to an end one of the most tragic episodes of modern history. The collapse of the Republic surprised nobody. Indeed, a Nationalist victory had never been in doubt. Germany and Italy were determined that Franco should triumph. No heroism could prevail against the superior training and equipment of their troops. Moreover, they poured into the country a supply of reserves that kept the balance continually weighed against the Government.

The struggle was not only hopeless, but inglorious. For stark cruelty it has rarely been surpassed. We have talked at various times with refugees from both Government and Nationalist territory, and the stories they tell are equally horrible. Crimes have been committed in the name of God and anti-God. The 'red' massacres of Barcelona and the ruthless repression of the Basque autonomists, to quote but two known to everybody and denied by none, are an indelible stain on the honour of both parties engaged in the conflict.

Let us turn, however, to the religious side of the question, for it is with this that we are chiefly concerned. Generally speaking, both Government and Nationalists respected the liberty of worship obtaining in Spain at the beginning of the Civil War. The Republican Government, after the suppression of the extremists, reaffirmed this. Roman Catholic priests were invited to return to their parishes and promised protection. At no period were Protestant liberties threatened. Even during the most critical period of the struggle services continued as usual. I think of one church where, in happier days, I often worshipped. Two shells have penetrated the roof and the windows have been blown to fragments. The large con-

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gregations of pre-war days have dwindled to thirty. Yet they grimly carry on. It was Christmas morning. Service was held in the vestry and the singing of hymns was accompanied, not by the organ, but by the droning of enemy air-craft overhead. The minister spoke of the Prince of Peace whose perpetual presence was manifest in the faces of the worshippers.

In Nationalist territory Catholic worship was celebrated with all the pomp of monarchical days. Religion and politics, as in those days, worked hand in hand. The war was declared to be a Crusade, and tanks were blessed by Bishops. Yet religious liberty was generally respected. Protestant services continued as usual in the big towns and were often well attended. The chief exceptions were Salamanca and Valladolid, where the evangelical churches and schools were closed. The minister of the former, the Rev. Atilano Coco, a young clergyman ordained by the Archbishop of Dublin, was shot, while the venerable incumbent of the latter, the Rev. Fermin Borrobia, was condemned to thirty years' imprisonment. Neither of these men took any part in politics.

Liberty of propaganda, essential to the life of a minority, was granted by the Government and refused by the Nationalists. While the sale of the Bible reached record figures in Government Spain, colportage was not possible in the territory occupied by General Franco. Registered parcels of Bibles sent from London to Vigo were undelivered. After protests covering many months they were returned marked, 'Prohibited by the Military Censorship.'

Early in the conflict fears for the safety of the Spanish minority led the British Committee on Co-operation in Spain, to ask General Franco for assurances. These were readily granted. On the 11th November, 1937, the 'Generalissimo,' speaking through the mouth of his representative, the Duke of Alba, guaranteed to Spanish Protestants, in the most formal manner possible, both liberty of worship and propaganda. The letters embodying these guarantees were published in *The Times*, and

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were of considerable propaganda value to the Nationalist cause.

We do not doubt General Franco's sincerity in making this declaration, but we should like to draw his attention, and that of the Christian world, to certain undeniable facts. Eighteen months have gone by since these guarantees were given, yet the Protestant Churches of Salamanca and Valladolid remain closed and Señor Borrobia, Pastor of the latter, is still in prison. Moreover, at the time of writing (28th April), the Protestant Churches of Barcelona are all closed. For several Sundays after the Nationalist occupation they remained open. Catholic newspapers were jubilant about this and articles appeared in them entitled: 'Protestant Freedom in Nationalist Spain,' and 'Protestants in Spain thank Franco for Freedom.' On this evidence statements made elsewhere as to the persecution of Protestants were discredited. Suddenly, without warning or reason, the Protestant churches in Barcelona were closed by order of the Governor, General Alvarez Arenas. A request for a revision of this decision received a prompt but negative reply. Moreover, during the last few days serious news has filtered through from Spain some of which has been reproduced by serious, secular newspapers. However, as we have not actually received the decrees to which we are about to refer, we quote from them with reserve. Two or three weeks may pass before actual confirmation is possible.

It is declared :

(1) That the Civil Marriage Bill has been repealed and that sixty days have been given to all married under this Law to re-marry according to Roman Catholic rites. Failing this, their children will be declared illegitimate. Now, as Confession is required before marriage in the Roman Catholic Church and no 'heretic' can receive absolution, remarriage, under these conditions, would be equivalent to being received into that Church. What will be the position of non-Catholics under this decree? The Spanish Embassy confirms the promulgation of this Law, but at the time of writing, have not received the text The conservative

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French newspaper, *Le Temps*, in its issue of 25th April, says that more than 30,000 couples in Madrid alone are affected. They are being re-married at the rate of 650 a day.

(2) The teaching of the Roman Catholic religion is obligatory in the schools. Images and crucifixes, removed under the Republic, have been reinstalled. Children are obliged to attend Mass. Has any provision been made for the exemption of non-Catholic children? We have heard of none.

(3) All Civil Servants are required to give proof of Christian, that is (in Spain) Catholic piety (*Pruebas de piedad Cristiana*): that is to say, fulfil the obligations of the Roman Catholic religion. Again there is no mention of exemption for non-Catholics.

(4) A list of prohibited books has been prepared. Only accepted books may be circulated in Spanish in Spain. Enquiries at the Spanish Embassy brought forth the statement that the Bible is not included in this list.

The above-mentioned decrees, if not attenuated by clauses not mentioned in the first report, are additional causes for anxiety.

On the 19th April, 1939, a deputation from the World's Evangelical Alliance and the British Committee on Co-operation in Spain and Portugal, again called at the Spanish Embassy in London. In the absence of the Ambassador the news of the closing of the Barcelona churches (the other information mentioned above had not then been received), was brought to the notice of the Chief Secretary, the Marquis de los Santos, and the contrast between this event and the promises given on the previous visit were emphasized.

So much for the past and the present, but what about the future? Will religious liberty be maintained? Will there be an open door for Protestant missions? These are questions which greatly pre-occupy the minds of Evangelical Christians. Opinions vary on this very important matter. During the course of the war an American missionary in charge of a Bible School at Granada called on the Governor and asked permission to

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continue his work. This was granted, but the Governor added that it hardly seemed worth while, as soon there would not be a single Protestant, Jew or Mason remaining in Spain. In spite of the permission received, conditions made it impossible for this school to continue. This statement is obviously a merely personal opinion of the official in question and possibly of little value. Yet some such obligatory religious unity has been referred to recently by Nationalist orators. One of them, speaking of the new Spain that is to rise on the ruins of the old, said substantially the following: 'Spaniards will be brothers united in one conception of the State and one religion.' Such statements, although possibly unofficial, cause anxiety which only the complete fulfilment of General Franco's promises can allay.

No impartial person can doubt that Protestantism has an important contribution to make to the new Spain even as it had to the old. Christ has ever been in the very front of the Evangelical programme and only He can heal the wounds of a stricken land. It is a sad fact, that cannot be denied, that for generations masses of the Spanish people have considered the Roman Catholic Church as the enemy of everything they hold dear in life. It would seem to us that this hatred can hardly have been changed into love by the conduct of the clergy in Spain during the Civil War. Unless the whole tragedy is to be repeated at a later date, in an even more terrible form, the attitude of the people towards religion must be changed.

It was not by chance that the infuriated mobs who burned Roman Catholic churches spared Protestant places of worship. It is evident that their hatred did not extend to Evangelical Christianity. The Protestant pastor, ever the friend of the poor, has won a place for himself in the heart of the Spanish people. Protestants, therefore, are in a peculiarly favourable position to engage in a work of spiritual appeasement. Their co-operation is invaluable and available to all who seek to raise Christianity from the disrepute into which it has fallen. Among the most potent allies would be a small, but intensely

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spiritual, Roman Catholic minority, which, much as it differs in doctrine from Reformed Christianity, nevertheless incarnates in its life the virtues associated with the divine Name. The Cross, too often seen hanging from the girdle of predatory priests, or the necks of massacring Moors, must be given a new meaning in the eyes of the people. They must see it as the symbol of love and sacrificial service. There is no short cut or easy way. Only by infinite patience can hatred be changed into love and a new Spain rise from the ruins of the old. Intolerance and oppression can do no more than force Spaniards to an outward conformity. Only love can change hearts. It is in order to take part in this divine work of redemption that Protestantism claims its place in Spain.

Young People of Jugoslavia

K. M. SITTERS.

AFTER fifteen years of work in the Jugoslav Young Men's Christian Association we can state with confidence that we have in our Associations young people as intelligent and interesting as can be met with in any other country in Europe. The majority of them, of course, are Slavs, but some are Hungarian, and some are German. They belong to different Churches, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant ; live in the three principal cities, and in many towns and villages throughout the country, and represent many sections of society : young business men, students, middle-school boys, apprentices and land-workers.

If you ask why they join the Young Men's Christian Association and what it means to them, the answer must include several reasons. They join it because their friends are members and they like its sociability and friendliness ; because it offers them sports and games ; because they have been in its Summer Camps and admire the spirit of them ; and because they are seeking an ideal in life and