FATHER THORNING AND MR. HART

It is interesting to note just who the gentlemen are who feel so strongly about the importance of *not* raising the embargo and who, these many months, have been harrowing up Catholic feelings against the "red" Government of the Spanish Republic.

FATHER THORNING

Take Father Joseph F. Thorning, or Dr. Thorning, Litt. D. as he likes the papers to style him. He is Professor of Sociology and Social History at Mt. St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, author of a pamphlet "Why the Press Failed on Spain" (International Catholic Truth Society) and by far the most active Franco propagandist in the country. He has made several trips to Spain since the war began. His articles appear throughout the country in Catholic papers. His letters to the editors of newspapers are some of the most remarkable contributions to this curious field of literary production that it has ever been my privilege to read. From his writings I have culled certain bits which describe their author more clearly than I could ever attempt to do.

From "Why the Press Failed on Spain:"

"Regrettably, a large number of publishers and editors have allowed their antipathy for (or valid grievances against) Hitler and Mussolini to influence their judgment in the placing and spacing of news. It is no mere incident that the newspapers conspicuous by their bias, both editorially and journalistically, have been the New York Times (publisher, Arthur Hayes Sulzberger), the Washington Post (publisher, Eugene F. Meyer), the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (publisher, Joseph F. Pulitzer, Jr.) and the Philadelphia Record (publisher, J. David Stern). . ."

From the Brooklyn Tablet, correspondence from Vitoria, Spain, by Thorning and John V. Hinkel:

"The Nationalist Government has likewise decreed that all State school teachers must be Catholics. . . Principles contrary to Christian truths (in Spanish Catholicism there is only one source of Truth) are not permitted to be taught, thus eliminating abuses which had grave effects during the previous regime. . ."

In the Brooklyn Tablet of December 3, Thorning and Hinkel enthusiastically relate how, under Franco, divorce has been abrogated; all cemeteries restored to Catholic control meaning that "all atheists and unbaptized persons" will have to be buried, as under the Monarchy, "outside the pale" (no cemetery will be open to them); how the Jesuits who were dissolved (not expelled as Thorning says) have been restored; how the Republican laws making it unnecessary to register a child as "illegitimate" have been abrogated; how there has been restored to the Church property that was property before the State Church and thus of the Church-State, etc. (Incidentally, this article contains ten demonstrable misstatements of fact.)
From "The Freedom of the Press" in Light, "the official magazine of the International Catholic Truth Society," for September, 1938:

"
. . . the most lavishly subsidized groups in the Czechoslovak Republic are Communistic and Anarchistic elements."

In this article Thorning accuses the Benes Czechoslovakia of having abused freedom of the press by lying to its people by misrepresenting the intentions of France and England and by attacking Germany. In all this he sees "the first fruits of the Soviet alliance. . . ."

In a letter to Mr. George Seldes, January 28, 1938, Father Thorning made the remarkable statement that "the day of the non-combatant has vanished. This is regrettable but it is a fact. . . ." Later, when taken to task for this in a protest re the bombings of Loyalist towns, signed by some sixty Protestant bishops, Thorning said: that General Franco was

"one of the highest types of Christian gentlemen, whose ultimate victory will have the highest effect on Christianity and civilization."

He also accused the sixty-one Methodist and Protestant Episcopal Bishops who signed the bombing protest of allying themselves with

"atheistic, anarchistic, communistic elements which in the United States and Spain, unanimously support the Barcelona government."

In answer to a letter from Seldes to the New York Evening Post, Thorning on August 5, 1938, made some remarkable statements, as follows:

"The latter (Mr. Seldes) misrepresents the attitude of Pius XI when he claims that the Vatican 'protested' any alleged Franco 'outrages' in Spain.

"Any one who reads the text (not the newspaper headlines) of Papal documents knows that his Holiness entreated General Franco 'to prosecute the war as humanely as possible.'

"The Generalissimo in his reply declared 'in the most filial manner' that he had attacked 'only military objectives.'

"Obviously the Holy See accepted this explanation as adequate, inasmuch as shortly after this interchange of correspondence his Excellency, the Most Rev. Gaetano Cicognani, was dispatched as Apostolic Nuncio to Burgos. . . ."

Thorning's personal attacks on correspondents are of a violence unprecedented in the Church in this country, I like to think. In a letter to Congressman Teigan, dated March 1, he says about Lawrence Fernsworth, correspondent of the New York Times and of America, the Jesuit weekly, until the outbreak of the war:
"...I suppose that Fernsworth is a Catholic in the same sense that Judas is an Apostle of Christ..."

John Gunther is a liar. So is Jay Allen. Matthews is a "rabid red partisan."

Others are "left-wing, allied with atheistic, uneducated journalists to whom pink liberalism is the vogue." (letter to Mr. Weir, March 5, 1935).

From the letter to Congressman Teigan quoted above,

"P.S. - Yes, there is a relatively small group of Moors, who believe in God, as such citizens of Spain as the Negroes who fought for Democracy in Europe in 1917-19, fighting for Christianity in Spain in 1936-37. You, however, have given aid and comfort to Anarchists, Syndicalists and Communists, who make no secret of their militant atheism."

Father Thorning's facts are often open to question. He plays fast and loose with quotations. In the Brooklyn Tablet of December 24 he cites a famous passage from Jose Ortega y Gasset (España Invertebrada) to show that philosopher's low opinion of the Spanish Republic of 1931. The passage in question was written nine years before the Republic came into being. For a Ph. D. and a Litt. D. who poses as an authority on Spain this is a very serious blunder, if blunder it is.

At a Foreign Policy Association dinner in New York on the night of November 22, 1938, Father Thorning was asked to justify some of his statements re the origins of the Spanish war. Reference was made to statements appearing in the official biographies of Franco, Mola, and others, published in Rebel Spain, that quite demolish Thorning's own claims. He had no answer to make to any such questions.

Mr. Hart

Mr. Merwin K. Hart, of the "New York State Economic Council" has characterized himself in his letter of December 28, to Mr. Sumner Welles, as quoted in The Brooklyn Tablet of January 7, with such sharp effectiveness that I would not attempt to do better for him. He says that "Soviet power has grown so vastly as now to be able to influence if not even to mould, the foreign policy of the United States government."

In this letter Mr. Hart protests vehemently against the sending of relief on a non-partisan basis to Spain on the grounds that it will "merely" prolong the war. He makes the astonishing statement that a large part of the refugees in "red" Spain are not refugees at all since they are obliged to remain there by the Loyalist Government. Every reliable correspondent who has covered Rebel advances reports just the opposite.
But let me characterize Mr. Hart still further in his own words.

Mr. Hart's "New York State Economic Council" is also known as the "Committee for Private American Enterprise." This organization, in a leaflet describing its purposes, functions and accomplishments says, "We tagged the so-called Child Labor amendment with this truer title -- Control of Youth Amendment -- and exposed its insincere character." In 1938 "we opposed this again at Albany. The Assembly defeated it by an even larger margin than last year." The leaflet concludes with this statement, "We are convinced that the Government in Washington has come under the influence of a group of radicals who take their orders from Moscow."

In a broadcast from Malaga (Rebel Spain) on September 28, 1938, and reprinted in a pamphlet here, "America..Look at Spain," Mr. Hart warned that unless the "communist trend in the United States is stopped then as surely as the sun will rise, the agony that has taken place in Spain will be repeated in the next few years in the United States."

"The Coming Slavery" a broadcast by Mr. Hart has been reprinted in pamphlet form and is distributed by the "New York State Economic Council." In a pamphlet entitled "Tell Congress to Come Home" he gives "details on how to stop the coming American slavery by organizing in your community to combat the alien forces and pressure groups at work in our government."

In one of the "Council's" handouts called "Is Your Town Red?" there is this interesting paragraph, "Lady Astor, when recently in the United States, was asked by a reporter what she thought of Fascism. She replied in substance, 'Fascism! -- what is it? Nobody ever heard of it until Communism came along. That is the real danger!'" Mr. Hart's comment on this is: "So much for the Fascist bogey," thus comfortably disposing of this minor aspect of international affairs as he apparently considers it.

But Mr. Hart presumably considers Fascism important enough to make it worth his while to entertain Fritz Kuhn, head of the German-American Bund at a luncheon given by the "New York State Economic Council" in honor of Congressman Dies at the Hotel Biltmore on December 8. (New York Times, Dec. 9).

At a dinner of the Foreign Policy Association on November 22 Mr. Hart was included by Jay Allen as one of those visitors to Insurgent Spain who "had their bread-and-butter
letters to Franco printed as news in the American press." In reply Mr. Hart delivered an impassioned speech wherein the one fact which the audience elicited was that he had been able to change a tire on his car in Franco's Spain at night without any one bothering him and that he couldn't say as much for this country.