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COMMENT ON THE EMBARGO - 1939

President Roosevelt, Message to Congress, January 4, 1939:

"We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly -- may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more."

Washington Post, January 7, Editorial:

"In London and Paris, as in Washington, the Barcelona regime is the only one recognized as having the right to speak for Spain. Nonetheless, in all those three capitals the policy of appeasement has been employed in such a way as to hamper the recognized government and, therefore, indirectly to favor those in rebellion against it. No such scrupulous 'neutrality' has ever been attempted by Rome and Berlin.

"The policy of appeasement has operated in Franco's favor. A constant influx of foreign troops and munitions has bolstered his military strength. . . Still, it appears, the Barcelona regime remains unconquerable. In the democratic countries, where both sides are allowed a hearing, opinion grows that the great strength of Barcelona must lie in the willing support accorded its government by the bulk of the Spanish people."

New York Herald Tribune, January 9, Editorial:

"In two days Mr. Chamberlain will be in Rome; the Loyalists appear already to have won the first heat. For they have secured that he cannot offer them up as a sacrifice to further "appeasement" on the ground that Franco is sweeping all before him. They may crumble later, or may conceivably even bring Franco to the halt that will imperil him. But by the eve of the Rome meeting they have again compelled Mr. Chamberlain to face the thorny Spanish problem instead of consigning it to the hope that it 'will solve itself;' and the Spanish problem is one which, once it is really faced, entangles all the European powers and even (because of our arms embargo) the United States. In spite of appeasement, Spain may still conceivably be decisive in the fate of Europe.

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Dallas Morning News, January 5, Editorial

"The more victories Franco wins, the less popular he seems to be in the United States. Even many Catholics now realize that the rebel chief is no dependable friend of their church. His allies, without whom his rebellion would probably have collapsed long ago, are Hitler, Mussolini and the Moorish mercenaries -- certainly none of them known as supporters of any brand of Christianity. The Loyalists, nearly all of whom are Catholics, offer more hope for the preservation of freedom of worship in Spain. Perhaps the most potent factor in turning American sympathy away from Franco, however, is the danger of his establishing in Spain a totalitarian dictatorship dominated by Hitler or Mussolini. Such a step would not only be a blow to democracy in Europe but a threat to the Monroe doctrine and to United States influence in Latin America. A Fascist Spain might evoke imitation in some of the South American countries that once were Spanish colonies and still derive much of their cultural inspiration from that country."