CABINET.

EVACUATION BY H.M. SHIPS OF SPANISH NATIONALS FROM SPAIN.

Note by the Secretary, Cabinet.

At the Meeting of Ministers held on 18th September, 1936, (Paper C.A./O./42 2nd Conclusions, Minute 1(2)) the Meeting invited the Foreign Office and the Admiralty to ascertain precisely what were the existing regulations relating to the evacuation of Spanish nationals by H.M. Ships.

In pursuance of this Conclusion the attached Memorandum, which has received the concurrence of the Admiralty, has been prepared by the Foreign Office.

(Signed) M. P. A. HANKEY,
Secretary to the Cabinet.

Whitehall Gardens, S.W.1.,
30th September, 1936.
Evacuation by His Majesty’s ships of Spanish nationals from Spain.

On 31st July the following telegram was sent by the Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean: "the policy with regard to the evacuation of Spanish nationals is to be that these nationals are not to be evacuated save in exceptional cases of persons with special claims on our consideration and in no way connected with hostilities. Commanding Officers of His Majesty’s ships are to use their discretion within the limits of the above policy".

On 6th August the following telegram was sent by the Foreign Office to the Consul General in Barcelona: "as regards your action in connection with the evacuation of Spanish nationals, you are to be guided by the policy that these nationals are not to be evacuated unless you and the Commanding Officers of His Majesty’s ships consider that they have exceptional claims on the consideration of His Majesty’s Government, and unless their evacuation can be effected without prejudice to British subjects and British interests in general".

Numerous requests have been received in the Foreign Office for the evacuation or protection of Spanish nationals and can be roughly divided into the 4 following categories:

1. Managers of concerns with substantial British interests or agents of British firms.
2. British born Spaniards, or husbands or children of British born subjects.
3. Spaniards in danger on account of their political views or social position.


As regards (1) it was decided that the names and addresses of such applicants should be forwarded to His Majesty's Consuls concerned adding that this action was being taken merely for their information, and that they should take such action as was considered possible within the limits of the instructions contained in the above quoted telegram to Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean. As regards (3) it was decided that the evacuation of these persons should be assisted unless there were strong reasons to the contrary. As regards (3) it was decided that assistance should be declined unless the persons concerned were in danger of their lives in any riot or disturbances etc. Further instructions were sent to His Majesty's Consuls in Spain on 25th September to the effect that Spanish personages of political importance might be evacuated as a last resort if their lives were in danger and it was left to the discretion of the Commanding Officers of His Majesty's ships to extend this treatment to other Spanish nationals in cooperation with the efforts of other countries. In order to insure that this procedure would be carried out, instructions were also issued that foreign nationals would not be evacuated in His Majesty's ships unless in possession of a recognised permit signed by a British Consular Officer. Such permits would only be granted on humanitarian grounds or in exceptional cases, at the discretion of His Majesty's Consuls. As regards (4) the Admiralty were asked to allow a certain amount of latitude in the interpretation of their instructions so that a limited number of nuns could be evacuated if necessary in certain circumstances.
So far as is known over 350 Spanish nationals have been evacuated by His Majesty's ships, the vast majority of whom have been women and children and approximately half, nuns. There is no record of any politicians having been evacuated. Permission to leave the country had in most cases previously been obtained from the local authorities.

FOREIGN OFFICE,

28th September, 1936.