

The Opus Dei in Spain

The *Daily Herald* has sent a correspondent to Spain, Mr. J. R. Oldfield, of whom it is difficult not to think that he knows better than he writes. At any rate he easily could inform himself more accurately ; but British correspondents writing for Left papers take their information from very biassed sources. Only this can explain the extraordinary production on Wednesday, when simple readers of the *Daily Herald* had described to them what the *Herald* headline called "Franco's blasphemous new Spanish Inquisition," and the author Mr. Oldfield called a

"budding new holy inquisition styling itself *Opus Dei* Franco's latest ally in his strangle to keep a hold on the Spanish people," and as "a brand new-spearhead of Catholic Church support."

Mr. Oldfield does not say, and probably does not know, that the *Opus Dei* was founded twenty years ago, that it has nothing to do with General Franco, and that it is a pious congregation of men and women who live in the world

pursuing different professions, but who live together in small communities and take the three vows of perfection. Their object is personal sanctification, and they have no collective works that they conduct other than their personal work as individuals. The movement is an attempt to live up to the excellent prayer, "O God, reform thy world, beginning with me."

In its twenty years of existence, the *Opus Dei* has grown steadily, and not only in Spain, although it has a thousand members there. Like so much else that has enriched the life of the Church, including the Dominican and Jesuit Orders, it comes from Spain, but is a universal idea. Its secrecy has nothing sinister about it; it is simply that men

and women living this life in the world do not want to claim any special status. It is said in Spain that there is a discernible tendency for other Spaniards to entrust professional work to its members, not only from a knowledge that it will be competently and conscientiously done, since it is fundamental to the idea that every man must live and work in the best traditions of his calling, but also as a gesture of good will towards the idea, and that sometimes this causes men to be employed because they are members of *Opus Dei*, rather than because they are the best for the work on strictly professional grounds. There is a certain parallel of the way the friars were at one time selected for all kinds of posts in the Church, not only in Spain, because of the high standing of their Orders.