

# Father Coughlin Aids 'Christian Front' as 'Friend of Accused'

## Jackson Broadens Probe of Reputed Plot To Overthrow U. S.

By the Associated Press.

NEW YORK, Jan. 22.—A broadened grand jury investigation was promised today in the Government's revolution conspiracy case against 17 "Christian Front" defendants, as the Rev. Charles E. Coughlin, calling himself a "friend of the accused," came to their defense.

The 17, arrested last Sunday in raids that also netted arms, ammunition and bomb-making paraphernalia, are in jail in lieu of \$50,000 bail each. Each says he is innocent of any attempt to overthrow or sabotage the Government.

Attorney General Jackson said in Washington last night that the grand jury meeting this week in Brooklyn would cover the activities "of any individual or group, wherever located, who may have aided, abetted, directed, financed or incited" the defendants.

### Jackson Calls for Evidence.

"I have asked United States District Attorneys John T. Cahill of New York and William J. Campbell of Chicago to co-operate by furnishing all helpful evidence in their possession. These instructions do not constitute an accusation against any person involved, but only call for a thoroughgoing inquiry in accordance with our traditional grand jury system," Mr. Jackson said in a statement.

He said the investigation also was aimed at supporters "of any other subversive group working for similar unlawful activities."

Father Coughlin explained in his regular Sunday broadcast from Detroit that "I do not belong to any unit of the Christian Front; nevertheless, I do not disassociate myself from that movement. Therefore, I reaffirm every word which I have said in advocating its formation. I encourage Christians of America to carry on its formation.

"Insofar as the public press—not the Department of Justice—has placed the Christian Front on trial, insinuating that it is a radical movement and asserting that it is composed entirely of crackpots, I take my stand beside the Christian Fronters."

He said that, "recognizing also that in one sense the opposition to Communism is on trial, I freely choose to be identified as a friend of the accused."

If the charges cannot be substantiated, he said, the 17 deserve "official exoneration." If they are guilty, he said, "let them suffer the penalty of the law."

Referring to the arrests as "Mr. Hoover's (J. Edgar Hoover) descent upon a group of Christian young men," Father Coughlin charged that erroneous reports had been published regarding the extent of firearms seizures and that "sinister implications" had been falsely made from the case.

"No wonder," he said, "that certain news journals whose editors endeavor to avoid prejudice and who resent being duped by propaganda—no wonder they regret that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with its admirable chieftain, J. Edgar Hoover, was used as a springboard from which was catapulted an attack upon members of the Christian Front."

### General Aims Praised.

"They know that the Christian Front stands for God and country, even though a few crackpots, as they call them, found entrance into its ranks."

Mr. Hoover has said the 17 had been training to set up a Hitlerlike, Jew-baiting government in this country.

Shortly after the men were jailed, the Justice Department was asked by 16 persons—including Prof. Harold C. Urey of Columbia University and Robert W. Searle, general secretary of the Greater New York Council of Churches—to investigate any possible connection Father Coughlin might have with the arrested men.

The radio priest's address last night was heard at a Christian Front rally in the Bronx, before which Albert Gunnison, the movement's Bronx leader, said, "The Christian Front will see that these men get a fair trial, even if every Christian Front man lands in jail."

### Charges of Politics Made.

Father Coughlin commented that "although Mr. J. Edgar Hoover and his colleagues were careful to describe them (the 17 accused) as members of two distinct rifle clubs, nevertheless the press of the Nation saw fit to identify all of them with the Christian Front, thereby placing that organization and those who sponsored and encouraged it on trial before the bar of public opinion."

"Mayor La Guardia of New York," Father Coughlin said, "properly ridiculed the entire affair as ludicrous. Some public officials intimated that the Government was playing politics with the Department of Justice."

While the major charge against the 17 is sedition, Father Coughlin said, much has been made of minor charges. "Chief" of these, he said, is that the accused group, together with all members of the Christian Front, "stand for anti-Semitism." He himself has repeatedly denied charges of anti-Semitism on his part.

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"So much effort has been made to emphasize this latter charge," he said, "that the impression is now created in the minds of millions of newspaper readers and radio listeners that the arrest of certain individuals belonging to this group of Christians will prove to be a benediction because it will result in the liquidation of Father Coughlin and his followers' who are represented as the chief anti-Semites in America."

Bearing out this point, the priest said, were editorials in the Baltimore Sun of January 16 and in the New York Daily News of the same date.

### Charges Seizures Exaggerated.

"Judging from these and similar editorials," he added, "one might suspect that the main charges of sedition were only incidental, and that the main purpose in jailing these youths and in smearing the name of the Christian Front was to use the majesty of the state not only to put down anti-Semitism, but to

put down the bud ideas which are repugnant to those in high places.

Regarding seizure of arms, Father Coughlin declared:

"There were no 12-gauge rifles seized."

Quoting a "printed report" from United States Army officers, Father Coughlin said the confiscated firearms consisted of "only two Springfield rifles and a motley assortment of other material, including outmoded guns whose proper place, at least for some of them, were in the Smithsonian Institute or over your grandfather's mantelpiece."