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23.3.42

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

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As you know, the Japanese Government have approached the Vatican with a view to the appointment of a Japanese representative there. The United Kingdom and the United States Governments have been doing their best to persuade the Pope not to receive him but, from a statement made in New York yesterday by Archbishop Spellman, who has been Vatican spokesman on this continent before, it looks very much as though the Vatican has decided to receive a Japanese envoy.

A Ministry of Information telegram, received this afternoon through the Office of the United Kingdom High Commissioner, contains the following paragraph:

"Vatican State. Negotiations are now in progress for establishing diplomatic relations with Japan and until a definite decision is reached we are confining ourselves to expressing surprise that the Vatican should contemplate such a step at this juncture. Should the establishment of diplomatic relations be announced we propose to take the line here that the news has created a most painful impression, that the United Kingdom Government find it difficult to reconcile such a step with the Vatican's frequently expressed anxieties regarding the extensions of the war and that the appointment of a Japanese Representative cannot fail to be interpreted as a condonation of Japan's treacherous and unprovoked attack and the result of Axis pressure."

War!!

I think we might usefully remonstrate right away with the United Kingdom Government over taking this line. It is unfortunate that the Vatican appears to have yielded to enemy pressure in receiving a Japanese envoy at this time, but I can see no useful purpose served and possibly some harm done by our countenancing a press quarrel with the Pope. The United Kingdom Government and