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Central Intelligence Bulletin

CONTENTS

SPAIN: Killing of Prime Minister Blanco confuses succession question. (Page 9)

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***SPAIN:** The death of Prime Minister Carrero Blanco yesterday complicates General Franco's carefully laid succession plans and compounds the uncertainties of the post-Franco era.

Vice Prime Minister Fernandez-Miranda, who automatically assumed Carrero's post in an acting capacity, is a leading candidate for a permanent appointment. As a close associate of the slain leader and an advocate of his restrictive political policies, Fernandez-Miranda can be expected to carry on the regime's policies. He has not, however, been known--as Carrero was for so long--as Franco's chosen successor as chief of government, and he would be more likely to be challenged by others wanting the post. Although the constitution provides that within ten days Franco must name a new prime minister for a 5-year term, the Caudillo may wish to continue Fernandez-Miranda on an acting basis for a longer period.

In view of the possible threat to law and order implicit in an assassination, Franco may conclude that the premiership should go to someone further to the right than Fernandez-Miranda. A possible compromise choice would be the president of the Cortes, Rodrigues de Valcarcel. If a military choice is deemed advisable, General Manuel Diez Alegria, chief of the High General Staff, is a possibility. Franco might even decide to reassume the post himself.

The other part of Franco's succession plan remains intact. Prince Juan Carlos, whom Franco named in 1969 as king-designate, is still slated to become chief of state when Franco dies or is incapacitated.

The timing of the attack on Carrero--approximately an hour before the opening of the trial of ten leftist labor leaders--suggests that his death was caused by extremists. The blast occurred about half a mile from the court where the trial was to take place. The trial was suspended temporarily, but late reports indicate that it resumed in the afternoon.

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A tight security cloak has been thrown over the city. All police have been recalled from holiday leave, and the Spanish security service will probably be rounding up known extremists of all political persuasions. [REDACTED]

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Dec 21, 1973

Central Intelligence Bulletin

10

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