

CHAPTER 1

How the documents were stolen

On 26 April 1938, Ramón Serrano Súñer - Franco's minister of the interior and great admirer of the Nazis - signed the decree that created the National Department for the Recovery of Documents (DERD). This body was responsible for the confiscation of documents from Republican organisations, parties, trade unions and many other types of association that had been deemed to be "contrary to the National Movement" and that were seen as "likely to provide the State with information on the activities of its enemies". These documents were to be confiscated from the premises of these institutions and bodies as soon as Francoist troops occupied territory that had originally remained loyal to the Republic.

This decree did little more than formally institutionalise a body which had been created the year before and which had begun its activities during Franco's campaign against the Basque Country and the northern territories. It was on this campaign that several task groups carried out search operations as soon as new territory was occupied. Confiscated materials were transported to DERD'S centre which had been set up in Salamanca, the most important and safest city¹ in the power of those who had rebelled against the Republic. The confiscated documents were processed and sieved for information that would provide the Francoists with details about the political and social activities of thousands of citizens, and so allow them to carry out a merciless campaign of repression. These details were then passed on to the police and other political departments as well as to the military courts.

From the beginning of its activities in the Basque campaign, DERD was composed of search teams that were to set up document collection points. The first such centre was in Bilbao, where a search team was to extract data and pass it on to the bodies responsible for repression. Its main task was to seize documents from the Basque Country's institutions of self-government. They confiscated one hundred and thirteen boxes that were found in the port of

¹ Due to its proximity to dictator Salazar's Portugal, an ally of Franco.

Santander where they were awaiting shipment to France. From its Bilbao office, the information section also gathered information on the location of organisations in towns that had not yet been occupied to facilitate the task of the search teams on arrival. At the Salamanca headquarters, the central classification and record office staff were responsible for processing data and establishing a records office which subsequently led to the creation of five hundred thousand data cards by the end of 1938.

Although documents were confiscated both from Basque and Republican institutions, it is noteworthy that those belonging to people and businesses supporting the rebels were returned to them. Among the institutions targeted by DERD, the following are significant:

1. Military affairs.
2. Domestic policy (law and order, evacuees, social work).
3. Foreign intervention (refugees, material aid, personal and moral support, propaganda, foreign correspondence).
4. Culture and propaganda (public education in general, sports, lectures and public events, propaganda and activist involvement).
5. Justice (civilian courts, imprisonment, sentences, forced labour).
6. Political parties (PC, PS, PR, JSU, FAI; accounts and minutes).
7. Separatism (Basque, Catalan, Galician and Valencian political parties and institutions associated with the nationalities, universities, etc.).
8. Economy (department of confiscations, treasury, provisions).
9. Trade Unions (UGT, CNT, AIT, SOV).
10. Covert activities (DERDI, Friends of the USSR, support committees, anti-fascist leagues, organisations associated with women's liberation, naturism, esperanto, literary/scientific clubs, etc.; sports, sects; theosophism, freemasonry).

After the campaign in northern Spain, Catalonia was to be the main target of the Francoist forces since it had a Government and Parliament of its own. Furthermore Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, was at that time the provisional seat of the Spanish Republican and Basque governments. The operations of the search teams working on the Aragonese front began to be

perfected. In Catalonia, they were first to be active around the Lleida, Terra Alta and Montsià regions as far as the boundary marked by the Segre and Ebre rivers, where the front line persisted for months. All the seized documents were held either at the Lleida or Vinaròs centres.

From its base in Salamanca, the information service prepared a list of search operations to be carried out in Barcelona. On 24 December 1938, over one thousand nine-hundred locations had been listed and assigned to one of ten different police districts which were to cover over six hundred streets according to the plan the occupation forces had drawn up for the city. They had also decreed that on entering Barcelona, DERD staff would occupy premises at Via Laietana 54, a building placed at this organisation's disposal by the Insurance Company La Equitativa.

After the Battle of the Ebre, at the end of December 1938, the final offensive on Catalonia was launched, and frontline search teams began operating in areas occupied as of 8th January. Starting on the Lleida plain, they moved towards Tarragona by way of the counties of Conca de Barberà and Camp de Tarragona. Searches led to a haul of 135 sacks, a further 33 sacks in Igualada and others at Vilafranca del Penedès and Sant Sadurní d'Anoia.

Franco's men occupied Barcelona on 26 January 1939. The next day, police and military forces took charge of the city, which was placed under martial law until May. Franco's forces were accompanied by frontline search teams. A small DERD detachment had been left at Salamanca to guard its premises there, but the remaining staff of fifty, including its director Marcelino Ulibarri, the heads of the investigation teams, the office staff, archivists and auxiliaries, were all moved to Barcelona. In addition, fifty soldiers from the Second Corps of Navarre's Carlist troops were brought in as auxiliary staff, increasing to one hundred the men involved in search operations in Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia. About ten commandeered vehicles were used to transport search teams and confiscated documents.

Two days after the occupation of Barcelona, on 28 January, the six search teams began to work at full capacity, bringing in sacks of documents by the lorry-load. They were stored at fourteen premises that had been occupied for the purpose. DERD headquarters was to be at Muntaner 265, and its garage at Llúria 153. Among the premises used for storage, the Catalan Parliament

building was to be a prominent one. It was also used as a base for the military police accompanying the occupation forces, whose General, Eliseo Álvarez Arenas, set up his headquarters in the Palau Robert, a building that formerly housed the Catalan Ministry of Culture, and which was situated at the junction of avenues Diagonal and Passeig de Gràcia. The army of occupation's court set up its offices in the Justice Palace, formerly the seat of the Catalan Supreme Court of Appeal.

About two thousand search operations were carried out throughout the city, the last taking place on 7 June 1939. Although only about three hundred searches were made in February, these operations were to yield the largest booty. Most of the searches were carried out in March, however. From that month on, the number of staff in Barcelona was reduced because some of its members were sent off on new offensives that would lead to the fall of the remaining Republican fronts in Madrid and Valencia. In the first few days, activities were focused on the more important newspapers, magazines, bookshops and printing presses. It was also a priority for them to seal off premises used by the Catalan government as well as those used by the Republican and Basque governments. Their premises were searched and documents removed over the following days. As they scoured official buildings and the headquarters of the major parties and unions, search teams also began to inspect the homes of those party and union leaders suspected of concealing important documents. After searching the Generalitat Palace - the seat of the Catalan Government - they also started to sift through the homes of councillors, members of the Parliament of Catalonia as well as the President of the Catalan Parliament himself.

From the Barcelona office they continued to organise the spoliation operations in the rest of the State as well as activities which involved the drawing up of political record cards that were then made available to the police and the military courts engaged in a full-scale campaign of repression. Because the volume of documents seized was so immense - lorry-loads of sacks were brought to the stores daily - it was impossible to process it all as it came in, despite the large team dedicated exclusively to the task. That is why they decided to take the most significant documents, lists or information cards from each place they searched, as this material was more likely to supply them with

the data they sought. It was all subsequently processed by the office and sent daily to the different agencies of repression.

As in Bilbao, the DERD set about returning documents and private libraries to owners whose materials had been confiscated during the war period. They were normally conservatives who had gone over to the Francoist side. That is why Barcelona newspapers published lists of people who could retrieve their documents after swearing allegiance to Franco and after receiving the approval of local Falangist leaders. The bodies responsible for political persecution - both the police and the Falangist militia - confiscated documents during search operations. All documents were subsequently passed on to the DERD, which organised inspection operations on a centralised basis.

The destruction of books and journals

One of the duties of the occupation forces was to confiscate all books and journals considered to be contrary to the spirit of Franco's National Movement. This was not only the responsibility of DERD but also that of the Falangists' Department of Press and Publicity, a body responsible for their elimination or "purge" - to use the Francoist term - from all public libraries, cultural institutions, publishers' offices and bookshops. DERD withdrew ten copies of each book or journal it found; the rest were pulped. As historian Josep Cruanyes has been able to confirm, the profits from the sale of this material to paper mills were set aside to fund DERD's activities. In Barcelona, this body is known to have destroyed at least seventy-two tons of published material. The total amount destroyed in the first months of the occupation of Catalonia was much greater because the massive volume of books destroyed by Falange's Press and Propaganda Department must also be taken into account.

In the first few days of operations, the offices of the following newspapers were searched: *La Batalla*, *El Treball*, *Solidaridad Obrera*, *La Publicitat*, *La Veu de Catalunya*, *El Diluvio*, *El Día Gráfico*, *La Noche*, *La Humanitat*, as were those of magazines such as *Tiempos Nuevos*, *Moments*, *La Revista Blanca*, *Mujeres Libres*. The same occurred at the bookshops *Catalònia*, *Bosch*, *Bastinos* and *Castells*, as well as at the majority of publishers and printing presses. As regards political parties, large-scale searches were made at the

offices of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya, Acció Catalana Republicana, Estat Català and Unió Democràtica de Catalunya. The offices of the anarchist groups Confederació Nacional de Treball (CNT) and Federació Anarquista Ibèrica (FAI) were also searched. Of the other trade unions, large-scale searches were also made of the premises of Unió General de Treballadors (UGT) and the Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Comerç i de la Indústria (CADCI). At some trade union headquarters, such as those of CNT, FAI or CADCI, search operations lasted a full week, and several lorry-loads of sacks containing documents were removed.

Search operations were conducted at the following cultural institutions: Ateneu Barcelonès, Ateneu Enciclopèdic Sempre Avant, Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular, the Ateneu Politècnicum, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Institut de Cultura i Biblioteca Popular de la Dona; choirs such as L'Orfeó and L'Eco de Catalunya; sports clubs, or associations such as Associació Protectora de l'Ensenyança Catalana, where the Apel·les Mestres children's library was closed down and the Catalan-language *History of Catalonia* for Catalan school children was destroyed. We also know of searches conducted at minority religion centres - such as those of theosophical or spiritualist congregations - as well as at naturist clubs such as Pentalfa, run by Italian-born professor Nicolas Capo, who also published a magazine and several periodicals on healthy nutrition. DERD removed his complete library and over a ton of back numbers, all of which were pulped.

Among the locations where most documents were confiscated, one must include the different offices of the Catalan government. From the Catalan Economy Council alone, at Rambla Catalunya 83, four lorry-loads of documents were taken on 22 and 23 March 1939. Among the more severely affected parties were Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, whose different offices were targeted in sixty search operations, and Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya, targeted in ninety search operations. At one of the offices of PSUC, situated in Gaudí's Pedrera building in Passeig de Gràcia, twenty-two sacks of documents were taken. As regards the unions, both the Confederació Nacional del Treball and its sister anarchist organisation, Federació Anarquista Ibèrica, were subjected to very thorough search operations. One hundred and fifty CNT offices in Barcelona were searched. At CNT headquarters on Via Laietana 32,

the search lasted for a week. The search of the FAI's headquarters at Via Laietana 30 also took a week. Eight lorry-loads of documents were removed from these offices. Another union that was subjected to a major search operation was the Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Comerç i de la Indústria, a nationalist union with a solid tradition and a long heritage that included different services and co-operatives belonging to its members. The search at the central offices at Rambla Santa Mònica 25 also lasted a week and led to the confiscation of one hundred and eighty sacks of documents. This gives us an idea of the size of the confiscation operations that took place, a phenomenon without precedent in Catalan history.

The Freemasons

Parallel to DERD, another body was founded called Servicios Especiales, which was designed to confiscate all documents found on premises run by the Freemasons. Servicios Especiales was also headed by Marcelino Ulibarri. In Barcelona, this section's Guardia Civil agents searched the Fènix Atheneum Club in the Portal de l'Àngel, which was the headquarters of the Gran Logia del Noreste and the Lògia de Catalunya amongst others. Of the forty-one search operations carried out at the homes of Freemasons, those taking place at Roc Boronar i Font's - a member of the Logia Liberación who later joined the Logia Themis - are significant. In these operations, care was taken to confiscate all kinds of symbolic objects associated with Masonic rites, ranging from the clothes of members to the furniture on the premises. Today it is still possible to visit a mock Masonic lodge installed in the Archive in Salamanca. It contains a display of objects associated with the Masonic rite, exhibited in a way designed to mock the organisation's practices. It is incomprehensible that the installation was not dismantled once democracy returned and its contents handed back to their rightful owners. How can a democratic society maintain a propagandistic exhibition aimed at attacking a particular ideology? It is disturbing that this is allowed by the very State that ought to guarantee respect for freedom of thought. However, visitors are given no explanation as to why this display is still in place.

The last period of the Barcelona office and the move to Salamanca

In March 1939, arrangements were made to move the head office to another building in the city, at Carrer Princesa 21, where there was plenty of space available for the archive, with a large basement for storage. When it became apparent that no more search operations were to be carried out, and after various fronts had fallen, which led to the accumulation of thousands of tons of documents, Ulibarri ordered all the documents to be sent to Salamanca on 24 May 1939. Meanwhile a liaison office was to remain open at the new head office. Packing operations were begun and DERD's different offices in Barcelona were closed down, including the main office in Carrer Muntaner. There were estimated to be about 3,500 sacks of documents in eight warehouses across the city, along with those stored at the head office. The material taken from the Freemasons had already been sent to Salamanca by lorry.

Over the course of several days, as many as twelve railway wagons were loaded with documents and trains loaded with documents are known to have left for Salamanca between 21 June and 5 July 1939. In all, over one hundred and forty tons of documents were to be transported. The Tarragona, Igualada and Lleida documents were sent direct to Salamanca in military vehicles. The Barcelona office remained open until September, when an order was given to move the central office to Salamanca. The transfer of office documents and files was carried out on 8 October. The last occasion on which documents were brought to Barcelona from other Catalan cities was 13 February 1940. We can thus conclude that, in all, over two hundred tons of documents were confiscated in Catalonia.

Operations elsewhere in Catalonia

As explained above, the document confiscation teams conducted search operations in some Catalan towns between April 1938 and January 1939, when the Francoists were advancing eastwards towards Barcelona. In February 1939,

once efforts were centred on the Catalan capital, Marcelino Ulibarri posted a memorandum to all Catalan municipal corporations ordering them to send all their documents associated with the Republican period to DERD offices. Due to the varying degrees of efficiency and compliance within the different town halls involved, the results were to be quite inconsistent. However, at least one hundred and fifty Catalan town halls are known to have sent documents to the DERD office in Barcelona.

Operations in the Balearic Islands²

DERD did not confiscate any material in the Balearic Islands. The main reason for this may be that the order to confiscate materials was not issued until mid 1937 when Franco's army had already taken over in places such as Majorca. In the first few days after the fall of the largest Balearic island, most of the documents the Francoists laid their hands on were destroyed. Another factor was that DERD teams did not actually arrive on the islands of Eivissa and Menorca until later.

At the service of repression

Most of the documents had already been transferred to Salamanca in the first few months of 1940 when Marcelino Ulibarri boasted that he had 800 tons of documents stored in Salamanca's Dominican monastery. It was here that all the sacks had been taken from the various fronts. These figures illustrate the magnitude of the fascist regime's confiscation operation that even surpasses that carried out by the Nazis in Germany.

After the war ended and when all the documents confiscated in the last Republican zones had been seized, the task of reorganising them was undertaken. There was not to be a classification process as such, but documents that might contain references to suspects' ideological leanings were to be selected. For those searching for information, it would suffice to find references to individuals in publications or discover that they were members of

² For operations in Valencia, see the section on "The Office in Valencia" in Chapter 3.

a co-operative or a republican club. On finding this data, investigators would compile an information card with the name of the person and the document kept in a folder as "proof" of the "crime" committed. Sometimes the cards were created for seemingly ridiculous reasons such as the fact that the suspect had given money to an association raising funds to aid the victims of the bombing raids on Lleida in western Catalonia (1938). To find a suspect's name in a communist newspaper justified the creation of a card. The classification process was carried out to create a police record office and no professional archivistic criteria were respected, leading to the chaotic distribution that still exists today.

About one hundred people were involved in this task, many of whom lived in San Ambrosio, the school building which was later to become the police headquarters in Salamanca. The processing operation is known to have lasted until 1958. An enormous collection of documents - including three million personal cards - was to be the result. This police records office compiled political reports that were sent on to military courts, special "political responsibility" courts - which exerted financial repression - and the courts for the purging of civil servants. Such courts sought to rid the administration of those of its employees who had not shown "leanings" towards the new regime.

Apart from what was to be termed the archive of "political and social records", the Servicios Especiales section established a records office containing 190,000 cards, hundreds of personal records and thousands of reports on the Masonic links of suspects. Among the documents considered to have Masonic connotations, it is surprising to find those of groups wholly unrelated to the Freemasons, such as the Jewish community of Barcelona, the Evangelist Church, the Rotary Club or other spiritualist or theosophical organisations. This confusion can only be understood in the light of the fact that the Francoists received the support of influential sectors of the Catholic Church that were fiercely opposed to the Freemasons, seen as key actors in the "plot" of what was termed the "Jewish-Freemason alliance" against the "Traditional, United and Catholic Spain" that the Church defended.

The Salamanca records office was also to supply material to a new political court called the Special Court for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism (TERMC), which had the ever-present Marcelino Ulibarri as its first president. It judged people for having held posts in Masonic groups or political

parties. The court brought charges on the basis of reports compiled by the DERD. TERMC was later substituted by the Public Order Court (TOP), which was created by a law of 2 December 1963. TERMC continued to exist as a court for political repression until the end of the Franco regime in 1975, however.

At the death of Marcelino Ulibarri, the DERD changed its name to Delegación Nacional de Servicios Documentales (DNSD), a term it would retain until its dissolution by way of a decree issued on 28 October 1977. Thus ended a body that had been a vital piece of Franco's repressive regime. It had no "*raison d'être*" after the legalization of the unions, political parties and the restitution of the Catalan Government, bodies which it had sought to repress using information gleaned from the archives it had confiscated.

The documents now held in Salamanca

The institution we know today as the "General Civil War Archive" of Salamanca is in fact the archive of the National Office of Documentary Services (DNSD), a body that had had its head office in the old San Ambrosio school in Salamanca before being dismantled. It was the archive created by the administration when the confiscations started. It had a Masonic section called Servicios Especiales and continued its activities until the body replacing it -Servicio Documentales - was dismantled. Amongst the documents it holds are the correspondence and documents generated by the centre. These include a huge collection of three million police cards and 190,000 information cards on the Freemasons. There are also thousands of reports drawn up during the centre's active period. When called for, these documents were farmed out to different State departments as well as to the TERMC itself. They often failed to be returned. When all is said and done, what today is presented to us as the "Archive of the Civil War" is indeed little more than what one historian described as a "glorified police records office".

To get an idea of what is still conserved there, twenty-nine years after the death of Franco, it is worth studying the evolution of the centre over the last sixty-six years. In 1940, when an attempt was made to move DERD from Salamanca to El Escorial, a site nearer Madrid, DERD documents were calculated to weigh about one thousand tons, a factor that militated against the

transfer. Little is left today of those documents, largely made up of the eight hundred tons of unclassified sacks stored in Santo Domingo in Salamanca. This can be verified by studying the inventory of the classified batches. It reveals that, apart from documents, the following items had also been confiscated: books, magazines, periodicals and many other objects such as official stamps, posters, paintings, sculptures and other miscellaneous objects. In the case of Masonic centres, a special effort was made to confiscate all sorts of symbolic elements such as furniture, clothes and other ritual objects associated with the network and its members.

From studies carried out on the documents still held in the collection at Salamanca, it appears that when they were sorted, many were either destroyed or sent on to form part of other collections in the Francoist state. One of these destinations was the Military History Service, where documents of a military nature were sent. Many books confiscated by DERD and held in the Archive were later to be sent to the libraries of Francoist institutions such as the Political and Social Section of the police. Another destination for the documents was the "Causa General", an inventory of "crimes" attributed to the Republicans and drawn up by the Franco regime. As it was much less convincing than Francoist propaganda had made out, it was never published.

It is now known that there are Catalan Government Justice Department documents in the National Archive in Madrid³ which had been extracted from the DNSD office in Salamanca. There is a suspicion that important confiscated documents now missing from Salamanca may also have been transferred to other State bodies.

All this leads us to conclude that not all the confiscated materials have been conserved and that many materials have been forwarded to other institutions. The fact that countless documents have been destroyed is proven by studies showing that when the confiscated documents were processed, several tons of paper classified as "useless" were extracted and used to produce data cards and paper needed in large quantities to draw up records and reports in the records office.

If we consider the volume of documents taken from Catalonia, we must sadly conclude that only ten percent remains of the originals. The rest was

³ Indeed, they form part of its index of documents.

either sent to other State archives or destroyed in large quantities. Twelve railway wagons full of documents left Barcelona in 1939. Today, what remains would barely fill one, however. Another fact proving that documents were destroyed is the knowledge that several lorry-loads were also confiscated from the Catalan Government's Economic Council in Rambla Catalunya. Today there are only nineteen batches mentioned in the inventory of documents held in the Civil War Archive in Salamanca. This shows that many documents were not conserved in Salamanca, as one is led to believe, but actually destroyed.

One factor we may find surprising about the distribution of documents in batches is the apparent lack of order that exists among the documents used to create the data cards. It seems that they should have been classified according to the bodies or private individuals from whom they were confiscated, but the truth is that the order in which they were kept depended on the repressive aim towards which the organization worked. The people responsible for selecting documents and sifting through books and other publications later filed them in the order in which they had been handled. On the cards, they wrote a reference to the place where the documents had been stored, hence the apparent disorder. In fact, the order that exists in the Archive is that of a police records office.

The archive is organised under a series of headings. In the case of the Catalan documents, the headings are "Lleida", "Barcelona" and "Vinaròs", the original confiscation points during the Catalan campaign. However, the shortcomings of the filing system are reflected in the fact that Catalan documents are also found among the batches in Madrid. This shows that the idea that documents were to be filed on the basis of the place where they had originally been confiscated was not respected. This was probably due to the carelessness of the staff, largely underqualified police agents. Another possible reason for the deficient filing system is the chaos there must have been in the large sack-filled store at Santo Domingo.

When the confiscations took place, many of the victims had already fled and those who had not were either in prison or were to act as mere on-lookers as DERD agents conducted their search operations. These agents failed to identify themselves or give any reason for the confiscations. Indeed, the DERD was a secret police corps that, while it kept internal reports, did not receipt

those affected when it conducted its operations. The State gave out no official information about the Salamanca records office. Those who had suffered confiscations were offered no information, a factor which helps to explain why so few victims knew the whereabouts of their documents. This has been put forward as a reason for the fact that many victims have not been able to claim their belongings until now. As the contents of the records office are increasingly made known, a growing number of descendants of those who suffered confiscations are discovering that their documents - or part of them - are still kept in Salamanca. The State must be seen as fully responsible for the fact that such people have been unaware of this until now. The Spanish government should have returned all remaining confiscated materials to the victims years ago. The failure to do so explains why it has been almost impossible to reconstruct the archives of so many institutions or individuals, as has been the case, for example, with the legitimate Catalan Government or the heirs of the former Vice President of the Catalan Parliament, historian Antoni Rovira i Virgili. In the case of political institutions such as the Government or Parliament of Catalonia - both suppressed for thirty-nine years - no record was kept of the destinations of the documents confiscated from them. Even today, no pre-1939 Catalan Parliament document is held by Catalan institutions except for a very small number that were fortunately saved by Parliamentary officials.

Classifying the Catalan Government documents required examination of thousands of batches of documents kept in sections corresponding to different sources. It also meant painstakingly cataloguing documents and replacing them in their original order. Even then it is evident that many documents are missing. Some may have been dispersed to other collections such as the "Causa General" (the General Cause that was an attempt to list all "red crimes"). Many other documents were destroyed during "classification" operations at the Salamanca police records office.

In the case of documents confiscated from proscribed parties, trade unions or other social and cultural organisations, all records that could have led to the identification of their origin were eliminated. Currently, none of the major Catalan trade unions - CNT, UGT, CADCI - are in possession of their pre-1939 archives. The same is true of the major parties whose histories have been

written on the basis of press reports but without the aid of their official records that are scattered amongst different document batches in Salamanca.

As regards the kind of documents involved, among those belonging to individuals we find materials ranging from private correspondence, correspondence between intellectuals or politicians to complete libraries such as those confiscated from Antoni Rovira i Virgili, Antoni Xirau, Joaquim Maurín or Nicolas Capo. Surprisingly enough, in a police or political records office such as this, we also find a full set of Catalan literature dating from the end of the nineteenth century to 1939. The only explanation for this is that they are books written in Catalan, a factor that was considered "dangerous" by the State and a language persecuted the State.

In the last few years of its existence, the Documentary Services body of the Francoist administration denied any involvement in the confiscation of the belongings of the former Vice President of the Catalan Parliament, Antoni Rovira i Virgili. This became apparent when his daughter, Teresa Rovira, requested the authorities to return them to her in the last few years of the Franco regime. In contrast, the private documents of several Spanish Republican politicians, such as Giner de los Ríos or Azaña, have been duly returned to their respective families by former Spanish governments. Among the remaining documents, most have absolutely nothing to do with the Civil War because all documentation referring to the war was selected and transferred to the Military History Archive. The remaining documents, apart from those associated with public affairs and institutions, are of very varied origins. There are documents ranging from private letters and books belonging to various private libraries, to different kinds of documents belonging to political, social and cultural organisations and trade unions. Many of these documents do not even belong to the Republican period. Numerous Atheneum (literary or scientific) clubs or trade unions had their archives dating back to their foundation in the nineteenth century confiscated! One example of private documents stored in Salamanca is that of those confiscated from the surgery of the Barcelona-based Italian doctor Nicolas Capo, a specialist in alternative medicine. Kept there is the correspondence he maintained with patients and the health questionnaires filled in by those he visited prior to the prescription of suitable diets. All the documents date back to the twenties, a period prior to the proclamation of the

Republic, let alone the Civil War! It must also be pointed out that if more descendants of the victims of confiscation have not come forward to demand their documents, it must be due to the fact that they simply did not know that it was a body called DERD which had looted their archive or library. Logically, it was the State's responsibility to inform those affected about remaining documents. The State's tendency to conceal the archive's contents and the fact that it has granted archive status to a police records office must be seen as spurious ploys aimed at gaining precious time. It is a dishonest strategy designed to avoid returning documents that the Francoist State had been able to retain only by brute force.

Today it is a paradox that the State has still not returned the confiscated documents to those who demand them. It highlights the fact that the Francoist regime treated its supporters better than the current democratic State treats its citizens today. Until the confiscated material is returned, the Spanish State will not have fulfilled its duty of ensuring justice for those citizens who were persecuted by the Francoist regime. Many Catalans thus question the democratic credentials of the Spanish State. This issue also brings to mind the fact that one of the debts associated with the wounds caused by the civil war and the Franco dictatorship has yet to be paid: a public tribute to all those who suffered persecution by Franco and who are still ill-treated today. As stated by the authors in the introduction, this book is dedicated to them.