

THE ARCHIVES FRANCO STOLE FROM CATALONIA

The campaign for their return

**Comissió de la Dignitat
The Dignity Commission**

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Prologue by the Catalan Prime Minister, Josep Bargalló

Although in this day and age we have other means of conserving historical memory, until not long ago we used to say - in Catalan - that "words are blown away by the wind" and that only papers are the true guardians of the past. Over the centuries, documents have been the physical expression of the way in which nations have lived, thought and felt. Documents are the most direct expression of a nation's historical will. They bequeath to posterity the events that our forefathers experienced. That is why documents have become an essential means of understanding and evaluating historical memory. Without documents, we would be orphans with regard to our past. Thanks to documents, we can identify ourselves as a clearly defined nation.

It can therefore surprise no one that the Catalan people want to recover the documents that bear witness to their country's age-old identity. No nation may steal from another elements that are essential to the framework of national history; no nation may steal from another the cultural trappings that sustain national memory. Thus it is that the people of Catalonia today call for the return of what was taken from them as a symbol of their submission, the spoils of war taken on their defeat. If there is a genuine desire to build a State of brother nations, in which respect for the plural nature of the different historical communities involved is truly guaranteed, the historical memory of these nations must also be maintained. To turn a blind eye to their demands is to wreck the chance of furthering dialogue and the possibility of peaceful co-existence. Turning a blind eye to their demands also shows a desire to perpetuate the symbols of defeat. The documents retained at Salamanca signify much more than mere historical heritage. They represent the defeat of the Catalan people in 1939.

Cognizant of this fact, the Parliament of Catalonia, on May 18th 1989, passed Resolution 73/III on the recovery of documents held at Salamanca. As a result of this petition, the Spanish Cabinet, on March 15th 1995, decreed that Civil War documents should be returned "without further delay" to their rightful owner, the Catalan Generalitat Government. This step was not taken, however, because of the opposition encountered in certain areas of the administration

whose reactionary attitudes received the backing of the more centralist and conservative media. A further Resolution of the Catalan Parliament (155/VI), on June 1st 2000, still awaits a favourable outcome.

Over the last three years - 2002-2004 - the failure to meet the demands of our institutions have been seen by the Dignity Commission - Comissió de la Dignitat - as a blatant lack of respect for our nation. It is this that has driven the Dignity Commission in its task of creating awareness and canvassing support in an initiative that has prompted a vigorous response from diverse cultural fields throughout the world. This book represents the fruition of the Dignity Commission's work in defence of our dignity as a nation. We are grateful for its efforts and hope that this question will shortly be resolved in the only suitable way possible: the return of the Catalan and Valencian documents to their rightful owners, one of which is the Catalan Generalitat Government itself.

Josep Bargalló i Valls

Prime Minister of the Catalan Government

Preface by Artur Mas, former Prime Minister of the Catalan Government

While this book is of immediate interest to the people of Catalonia, I am convinced it will also interest all those who firmly believe that co-existence between nations is based on the principle of justice. This book addresses unresolved problems that we have inherited from the saddest period in the history of 20th century Spain. It informs us about the pillaging of Catalan family, business and institutional archives by the forces of occupation that were led by the rebel general who subsequently became the dictator Franco. The book explains how the confiscated documents were removed to Salamanca and used in a wave of repression against those committed to the advance of democracy in the Spanish Republic, particularly those who had done so to defend their linguistic, cultural and political identity as Catalans. It also throws light on our long-standing and unsuccessful attempts to reclaim these archives. Moreover, it will show us that we are not alone in condemning this unjust situation: we have gained the support of distinguished people across Spain, Europe and throughout the world. This fact encourages us in our efforts to further press the Spanish government to repair an injustice committed by an invading army and an unlawful government.

The Dignity Commission is the driving force behind this initiative. It has united people of good will and a number of initiatives under its banner and has achieved great success in familiarizing the people of Catalonia with the issue of the "Salamanca Papers". This has been accomplished using a strong civic approach, two aspects of which I would like to highlight for their special importance. The first is the educational approach adopted by the Commission as it has set out to explain the issue to people and to convince them - whether those at home, impressed as they have been by the Commission's efficient, persistent and well-organised work - or others further afield who have been impressed by the need to return the stolen materials and by the advantages to be gained in doing so. It has largely meant an attempt to reverse the consequences for those who were conquered but not convinced. In seeking to restore things to their rightful place, the Commission wishes to convince rather

than conquer. The second aspect I would emphasize is the Commission's success in involving so many important figures around the world in an exemplary expression of solidarity and support of a just cause wherever in the world one is to be found.

Artur Mas

Former Prime Minister of the Catalan Government

Introduction

The phenomenon born in the wake of the Dignity Commission's¹ struggle for the return to their rightful owners of the so-called "Salamanca Papers" -stolen by Franco's men 65 years ago - is remarkable for various reasons.

The first and foremost is that of having managed to achieve a very wide degree of unity of action between people, groups, trade unions and political parties from the most varied of backgrounds, ideologies and geographical origins, uniting them in an initiative that was immediately to receive the full support of our country's major institutions of government.

A second remarkable factor is that the Dignity Commission, while exposing the gulf that sadly still exists today between Catalan and Spanish perceptions of democracy, has at the same time contributed to the establishment of productive links with groups in Castile and Leon, groups which have seen the Catalans not as the "traditional enemy" - as is the custom - but as a very real ally in the vital task of recovering historical memory and overcoming the demagogy that has until now hampered understanding and solidarity between nations.

Also noteworthy - as several observers have pointed out - is that the Dignity Commission, on gaining wide support for the first International Manifesto in summer 2002, has helped to place the scandal of the "Salamanca Papers" on the agenda throughout the world.

An explanation is required for the inclusion in this book of a prologue *and* a preface, the former by the present Prime Minister of the Catalan Government, Josep Bargalló, and the latter by his immediate predecessor, Artur Mas. Mr Mas was Prime Minister at the time when this book first received the government's support, an attitude fully shared by the current government. We are grateful to both men. This book reaches you after a considerable delay due to the intensive electoral agenda that Catalonia has faced since 2003. We offer our apologies for that delay.

¹ In Catalan, Comissió de la Dignitat.

In this introduction, we would like to thank all those people who, from abroad, have taken an interest in this question and sent their support for the Dignity Commissions Manifesto of June 2002 which sought to uncover one of the last remaining stains that fascist Europe has bequeathed to the 21st century. In gratitude, we are sending you a copy of this book as originally promised. We wish to thank you for the messages of support largely received by e-mail, many of which are reproduced in the book.

We would also like to express our gratitude for the right to use photographs taken by Rafel Tixé,² Ignasi Aragay (head of the culture section at newspaper *Avui*), Pere Virgili (*Avui*), Fermí Esteve (Palau de la Generalitat), Félix Cochado (*La Vanguardia*), Agustí Ensesa (*La Vanguardia*), M. Lorenzo (Valencia), Mané Espinosa (*La Vanguardia*), Marc Garrofé (*La Mañana*), Toni Alcántara (*La Mañana*), Ivan G. Costa (*El Triangle*) and Cristina Calderé (*Avui*). Our thanks, too, to the newspapers *Avui* and *La Mañana*, as well as to the Catalan Government and the Universitat Catalana d'Estiu (Prada), for generously allowing us to reproduce images. We would also like to thank cartoonists Lluís Puyal and Fer (*Avui*) for letting us reproduce their cartoons, a small sample of which are included from the hundreds that have appeared on the issue of the "Salamanca Papers" in the Catalan press in recent times, and which themselves would be a subject worthy of a book. Our deepest gratitude, too, to Henry Ettinghausen, Stephen Telfer and Joe Linehan for translation work, valuable proof-reading and suggestions that were most welcome. At the same time, we also want to express our gratitude to the publishers Editorial Pagès and to the Catalan Government for their keen support.

The texts appearing in this book³ were written and corrected by almost twenty people who are in some way associated with the Dignity Commission's Secretariat: Imma Albó, Anna Almazan, Josep Altayó, Agustí Barrera, Enric Borràs, Xavier Borràs, Josep Camps, Josep Cruanyes, Henry Ettinghausen, Joaquim Ferrer, Julià Garcia, Josep Guia, Paula Martínez Ros, Montserrat Milian, Rosa Maria Puig-Serra, Marta Rojals, Marc Sardà, Toni Strubell, Agnès Toda and Ramon Vilardell. All of them wish to dedicate this book to the real heroes of this story, those who suffered at the hands of the Francoists: the

² Official Dignity Commission photographer.

³ For further information, see the Dignity Commission website: <http://www.portal.com/dignitat>

hundreds of thousands of men and women who experienced imprisonment, exile, confiscations and even death as they defended our nation, freedom and democracy against fascism.

Barcelona - Valencia, September 2004