

CHAPTER 3

The Dignity Commission

The Creation of the Dignity Commission

Neither things nor institutions are created from nothing. Experience tells us that there is always someone behind the scenes who decides to set machinery in motion, especially if it is a question of starting an initiative as bold and ambitious as that of the Dignity Commission, which had the sole objective of achieving the repatriation of the Catalan archives withheld in Salamanca. Indeed, the initiative did not appear out of the blue and followed a path clearly marked out by the dogged determination of its founders and those who had preceded them in this cause.

At the end of October 2001, Toni Strubell and Julià Garcia met in Torredembarra, just to the north of Tarragona, and give birth to the idea of creating an independent organisation that would campaign for the return of the "Salamanca Papers". What led to this decision was the news that had appeared in *El País* newspaper regarding the plans for an exhibition to be held as part of the events during *Salamanca: European City of Culture 2002*. According to the article, Catalan documents stolen by Franco's troops and retained at Salamanca since the end of the Civil War would be on show.

In the weeks that followed, further information about the exhibition became available. Other individuals who would soon take an interest in the question were the editor Enric Borràs, his journalist brother Xavier Borràs - who would shortly become the group's press officer – and the historian Josep Cruanyes, who was writing a book on the subject of the "Salamanca Papers".¹ These men decided that the time had come to remind their fellow Catalans of one of the many wounds left gaping since the Civil War. Since 1995 - the last time the media highlighted this issue - the matter of the "Salamanca Papers" had not commanded much public attention. Efforts were now made to establish contact with intellectuals, journalists, historians, archivists, writers and cultural activists in an attempt to seek their views on the possibility of launching a public campaign in favour of the repatriation of the Catalan documents in Salamanca.

¹ Josep Cruanyes, *Els papers de Salamanca. L'espòli del patrimoni documental de Catalunya. (1938-1939)*. Edicions 62, published in June 2003.

At the end of December 2001, the promoters decided on a venue in Barcelona to prepare a first meeting with people from central Catalonia. The objective was to draw up a programme. In the course of this meeting, at a café in Barcelona's Passeig de Gràcia, a date and venue were established for the foundation of the Comissió de la Dignitat: the 21 January 2002 at the prestigious cultural institution known as the Ateneu Barcelonès - Barcelona's Athenaeum Club - in Carrer de la Canuda, a street just off the Rambles. A working agenda was drawn up for the meeting, as was an initial list of people to be invited to the event.

The first meeting of the Dignity Commission was thus held on 21 January 2002. The room provided by the Ateneu for the meeting was packed solid. Among those attending were people who had come independently, such as the Director of the National Archive of Catalonia, Mr. Josep Maria Sans i Travé, and others representing important cultural or political bodies such as Òmnium Cultural and Alternativa Verda, or institutions such as Barcelona City Council's Office for Human Rights, represented by Ms Roser Veciana, or the Catalan Government's Presidency Department, represented by Mr. Josep Camps, later to be a member of the Secretariat. During the meeting, the promoters of the initiative explained the reason for the venue and placed special emphasis on earlier initiatives associated with the same issue. Information was also given regarding the planned exhibition as part of the programme for *Salamanca: European City of Culture 2002*. It was at this first meeting that a name for the group was to be suggested, based on the term "Dignity" as used in a phrase uttered by José Saramago, the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. He had defined a "nation" as a community of people who have "not yet lost their capacity for indignation". Despite the historical offence epitomized by the failure to return the Catalan documents, Catalans clearly now had a chance to show that they had not "*lost their capacity for indignation*" over an issue as pressing as the retention of the "Salamanca Papers".

The second meeting of the Dignity Commission was held on 11 February, again at the Ateneu Barcelonès. This time the main conference hall was used, as there was a significant increase in attendance. Many new associations and bodies now sought representation on the Dignity Commission. This meeting was to prove significant for two main reasons: firstly because more information was now available on the Salamanca exhibition. It would be called "Propaganda in time of war", and would open on 5 October 2002. It was to show materials held in the Civil War Archive in Salamanca, the institution

where Catalan and other Republican documents had been retained since soon after their confiscation.

By spring 2002, the Dignity Commission had become a landmark in Catalan society. At the end of the year, the Catalan Internet newspaper *Vilaweb* would rate it as one of the leading and most influential social groups in the “Catalan countries”.² The Commission was to engage in a whole range of activities aimed at recovering the Catalan documents retained in Salamanca, one of the most notable being the campaign, in the summer of 2002, to gain international support. The Commission was also to attend four meetings in Salamanca, two of which involved special charter flights; official receptions both at the seat of the Catalan Government, the Generalitat Palace, and at the seat of the Catalan Parliament; meetings at the major Catalan universities³ and at the Ministry of Culture, in May 2004, as well as a meeting with Catalan minister of culture, Ms Caterina Mieras, in June 2004. There were numerous meetings and talks all around the country between early 2002 and September 2004.

The Office in Valencia

“On the last Sunday of October: the way is well known, let’s make for the road and gather at El Puig.”

These are the first lyrics of the famous ‘Al Tall’ song that calls on all those who love the “Catalan countries” to attend the yearly El Puig rally in October. Those attending the meeting at the Muntanyeta del Castell, in October 2002, were to hear the Dignity Commission’s presentation given by its coordinator, Toni Strubell, who had also been guest speaker at the most important of Valencian cultural prize-giving ceremonies the night before, that of the “Premis Octubre”. At the popular El Puig rally, the final details regarding the creation of the Commission's Office in Valencia were decided in a conversation between Toni Strubell, Enric Borràs and Josep Guia, and the question of the ideal candidate for the job was discussed. All provisional arrangements were later ratified by the Secretariat.

The question had already been raised the day before at a meeting between Dignity Commission members and Eliseu Climent and Antoni Gisbert

² A geographical term which includes, amongst other territories, Valencia, Majorca and the other Balearic Islands, the portion of Catalonia in France and Catalonia proper.

³ Universitat de València, Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat Catalana d'Estiu, etc.

of “Acció Cultural del País Valencià” (ACPV), a prestigious cultural organisation that was to be asked to accommodate the new office of the Dignity Commission in Valencia. It had also been decided that the Commission would pay the fees of the person running the office. ACPV had previously announced its public support for the Dignity Commission at a press conference held on 18 October 2002, at which the press received copies of a letter sent by the organisation to the President of the Valencian Government, requesting his participation in the call for the return of Valencian documents withheld at Salamanca. In the 30 July edition of the weekly *El Temps* (edition 946), Josep Cruanyes had published an article with the title “El segrest dels documents del País Valencià” (The seizure of documents from Valencia). In it, he spoke of the confiscation operations carried out by Franco’s men in Valencia in 1938-1939. In edition number 958 of the same magazine, on 22 October 2002, Núria Cadenas published a long report on the activities of the Dignity Commission.

The establishment of the Dignity Commission in Valencia in October 2002 may be viewed as a direct consequence of the participation of some of its members in the Catalan Summer University held in August at Prada de Conflent, as well as at the massive rally held in Barcelona’s Passeig de Lluís Companys on the 11 September (National Day), where Toni Strubell was to speak. These events led one of the local socialist parties - PSAN - and ACPV to invite Commission members to Valencia.

The day after the El Puig rally, Josep Guia offered the post of secretary of the Dignity Commission's office in Valencia to Paula Martínez Ros. The proposal was accepted by the Secretariat and on 30 October Josep Guia and Paula Martínez were to attend the next Dignity Commission Secretariat meeting in Barcelona. The new office of the Dignity Commission was to open on 4 November 2002.

Activities carried out so far

The activities carried out so far in Valencia have had a dual purpose: firstly, to make known the existence of Valencian documents withheld at Salamanca; and secondly, to encourage all kinds of organisations and individuals to strengthen the call for their repatriation. With these objectives in mind, members have participated in many meetings since the Dignity Commission’s initial presentation at the University of Valencia on 26 November 2002.

As regards contacts with associations and political parties, on 13 November 2002, an initial briefing was held with members of the BNV, Esquerra Valenciana, PSAN, EUPV, Esquerra Verda and ERPV parties, and productive meetings were held with Socialist Joaquim Puig (vice-president of the Valencian Parliament) and Dolors Pérez (EUPV), also a member of the Valencian Parliament. Parties involved in all these meetings have been very receptive to the idea of co-operating in the recovery of the Valencian documents and have expressed their support for the Dignity Commission. Especially interesting was the bill presented by Joan Francesc Peris, with the support of all left-wing groups, in the Valencian Parliament.

As regards the position taken by the political parties, mention must be made of the debate organised by the Association of Valencian Archivists as part of the Association's Second Conference, on 11 December 2002. The Association's secretary chaired the session, in which the following participated: Valencian MPs David Serra (PP), Francesc Colomer (PSPV-PSOE), Dolors Pérez (EUPV) and Joan Francesc Peris (Esquerra Verda). Also present was José Luis Villacañas, Director General of the Valencian Government's Book Department. At the debate, Peris, Pérez and Colomer spoke in support of the repatriation of the documents, stressing the importance of arguments such as the principle of origin and the laws regarding inheritance. They also resorted to political arguments such as the need to remedy the shortcomings of the transition period to democracy and the possibility of recovering collective history. With a view to applying the same principle to the papers stolen by Franco, reference was also made to an idea then circulating in Salamanca regarding the return of materials taken from America. In answer to this, Serra and Villacañas did little more than repeat Spanish Government justifications for why "archive unity" had to be maintained and claimed there was still not enough public demand for the papers' return.

Besides political organisations, other cultural groups have shown their support for the cause. At its AGM on 23 November 2002, the Federation of Local Studies Institutes of Valencia (FIECOV) decided to ask the Valencian Government to request the return of the seized documents to their rightful owners. The Els Ports Local Studies Centre also expressed its support in a letter addressed to the Valencian Office of the Dignity Commission, a gesture that shows how well received the Commission was.

From the moment the Valencian Office of the Dignity Commission opened, it was seen as a priority to contact Valencian town and city halls. The

motion that had already been used in Catalonia was amended and it was sent to the councillors who had taken an interest in the issue. Motions have been presented to councils and many of them have been carried, in some cases with the favourable votes of PP members, although, in general, the motions were largely carried in councils with a left wing and/or nationalist majority. However, many local politicians to this day are unaware that their communities were the victims of mass document pillaging.

The documents stolen in Valencia

Not knowing what documents a particular institution may claim back from Salamanca is one of the aspects that makes the process more difficult, not so much because of the political demand as such, but rather because of the difficulty in knowing how to stipulate the demand in administrative and legal terms. At present we do not have a complete list of the public or private bodies that may be considered direct victims of thefts.

At the outset, we only had information supplied to us by historian Josep Cruanyes - a leading member of the Dignity Commission - who at that time knew that forty-four Valencian municipalities which had documents retained in Salamanca. Subsequently, as a result of the visit made to the Salamanca Archive on 12 November 2002, we were able to draw up an additional list of towns in the Castelló area, and also had access to the book *Documentación sobre la Guerra Civil en Alicante. Inventario de la serie político-social de Alicante. Archivo Histórico Nacional sección Guerra Civil* published by the Gil-Albert Institute⁴ in 1983, featuring a study by Maria Teresa Díez de los Ríos. This allowed us to extend the list of affected towns to one hundred and fifty-seven. More recently, we have also had access to the *Guía de la Documentación Valenciana existente en el Archivo Histórico Nacional sección Guerra Civil*, compiled by Emma Jávega Charco. This work enabled us to extend our list to over two hundred towns, although we still feel that it is too early to give a final figure. This is the provisional list:

Ademús, Adsúbia, Agost, Agres, Aigües, Aiora, Alacant, Alaquàs, Albaida, Alberic, Albocàsser, Alcalà de Xivert, Alcàsser, Alcoi, l'Alcora, Algemesí, Alginet, l'Alguenya, Almassora, Almenara, Almoradí, l'Alqueria de la Comtessa, les Alqueries, Altea, Alzira, Ares, Asp, Banyeres de Mariola, Bellreguard, Benassau, Benasal, Beneixama, Benejússer, Beniarbeig, Beniarjó, Beniarrés, Benicarló, Benicàssim, Benidorm, Benifaió, Benigànim, Benilloba, Benillup, Benimodo, Benirredrà, Benissa, Benissanó, Benitaxell, Bilar, Bicorb, Bocairent, Bolulla, Borriana, Borriol, Bugarra, Busot, Cabanes de l'Arc, Càlig, Calles, Callosa d'En Sarrià, Callosa de Segura, Calp, el Camp de Mirra, Canet lo Roig, Carcaixent, Carlet, ls Casas Bajas, Castalla, Castell de Cabres, Castell

⁴ Which depends on the Alacant Provincial Council.

de Castells, Castelló de la Plana, Caudiel, Cincorres, Cocentaina, Cortes d'Arenós, les Coves de Vinromà, Coix, Crevillent, Culla, Daia Nova, Dénia, Dolores, Elda, Elx, Ènguera, Eslida, Fanzara, Figueres, Figueroles d'Alcatén, Finestrat, Fondó de les Neus, Formentera de Segura, Gandia, Gavarda, Godella, Guardamar, Ibi, la Pobla Tornesa, Les Useres, Llanera de Ranes, Lliria, Llucena, Ludient, Manises, Moncofa, Monòver, Montesa, Montfort, Morella, Muro d'Alcoi, Mutxamel, Novelda, la Nucia, Nules, Oliva, l'Olleria, Onda, Ondara, Onil, Ontinyent, Orba, Oriola, Orpesa, l'Orxa, Orxeta, Parcent, Paterna, Pedreguer, Pego, Petrer, el Pinós de Monòver, Pobla d'Arenós, Pobla Llarga, la Pobla Tornesa, la Pobla del Duc, Polinyà del Xúquer, Polop, el Puig, Quart de Poblet, Ràfol, el Ràfol d'Almúnia, Redovà, Relleu, Requena, Ribesalbes, Rocafort, Rojals, la Romana, Rossell, Sagunt, Saix, Salem, les Salines d'Elda, Sant Joan de Moró, Sant Rafel del Riu, Sant Vicent del Raspeig, Santa Pola, Sax, Serra d'en Galceran, Sogorb, Sollana, Sueca, Tales, Tavernes Blanques, Tibi, Torrebaixa, Torreblanca, la Torre de les Maçanes, Torrent, Torrevella, Traiguera, les Useres, Valencia, la Vall d'Alba, el Verger, Vilafamés, Vilafranca, la Vila Joiosa, Vilanova d'Alcolea, Vila-real, la Vilavella, el Villar de l'Arquebisbe, Villena, Vinaròs, Xàbia, Xacarella, Xàtiva, Xelva, Xiva, Xiva de Morella, Xixona.

Other confiscated materials are very diverse in nature. They range from posters by Josep Renau or Artur Ballester to war photographs taken in Valencia by Deschamps or Kati Horna, postcards by V. Ballester Marco or Vorin, political pamphlets, periodicals such as *Fragua Social*, *Portavoz de la CNT*, *Adelante*, *Diario Socialista de la Mañana*, *Amanecer Rojo*, *Semanario de la Juventud* o *Heraldo de Castellón*, *Diario del Frente Popular*; books of minutes from masonic lodges such as *Libre Examen* from Alcoi, *Sol Naciente* from Vila-real or *Librepensadores* from Valencia; reports sent from active units on the front line; documents relating to parties and unions, etc. There are also private papers such as letters sent by soldiers, certificates and wills, amongst others.

To visit the Archive in search of documents is an exhilarating and moving experience. One does not always find what one is looking for because some boxes are misleadingly labelled. However, even when distracted from one's initial search, it is always compelling to uncover fragments of lives affected by a cruel war and caught up in one of the most disturbing and least-known episodes of fascist repression in 20th-century Europe. This experience should be possible for us Valencians, and Catalans in general, in our own homeland, the place where the events happened and where the documents originated. It is here that there is greater need to discover the details of our past.

The echo in the media

From the outset, the demand for the return of the Valencian documents withheld at Salamanca has met with a positive response. The press conference organised by ACPV on 18 October 2002 attracted the attention of all the main

Valencian newspapers, all of which gave wide coverage to the issue. Amongst other things, they took a special interest in the part played in the confiscations by important Francoist collaborators such as Adolfo Rincón de Arellano, who was later to be Mayor of Valencia, and Miquel Adlert, one of the main promoters of Valencian linguistic secessionism with regard to the Catalan language.⁵

Since then, there has been a regular flow of news about the documents and Ràdio Nou (Valencian Public Radio) and TV3 (Catalan Public TV) have broadcast several short interviews on the issue. When the Dignity Commission made its first presentation at the University of Valencia, the University weekly *Nou Disè* reported it in detail, making it headline news and dedicating a full page to the issue inside.

Future prospects

The public impact of the demands for the return of the confiscated documents is still far from strong in Valencia. This means that the activities outlined above will have to continue for some time until we find ourselves in a more favourable political situation. Nevertheless, the hard line taken by the former Spanish Government may now be seen, mercifully, as a phenomenon of the past and were it necessary, we feel sure that if contended in the courts, the case would be resolved in favour of the victims. As mentioned above, however, the difficulty lies in determining which documents each private individual, organisation or institution can claim. A collective and non-defined claim would be unacceptable before the law, yet it is still difficult to compile a detailed list of what belongings were seized; moreover, there is a risk that any list drawn up would be incomplete. Besides ensuring publicity, support, and political statements, it will be necessary to assemble a catalogue of the documents being claimed. Whatever happens, it is our job to make sure the issue remains open for discussion and stays in the news until the documents are retrieved.

International support for the Commission

From the time of its creation in January 2002, the Dignity Commission has been convinced that: 1) to achieve the return of the "Salamanca Papers", the role of the mass media would be crucial; 2) to cause an impact on the mass

⁵ A theory no university in the world gives credit to.

media - and hence Catalan public opinion - it would be necessary to resort to new strategies. From day one, the adopted strategy avoided "classical" campaign styles and sought instead more effective and ambitious methods: that of a campaign based on international support.

The main objective was to draw up an International Manifesto (Declaració Internacional) that could be supported by personalities from around the world, especially academics. Legitimacy for the cause would be sought with the endorsement of people with academic credentials. Over the course of spring 2002, a team of people, under the auspices of the Dignity Commission, began to seek support for the campaign. The following Manifesto was sent to personalities and academics to solicit their support.

Support for the Dignity Commission

The signatories of this Manifesto - university academics of different disciplines - have been informed about the fact that the Salamanca Civil War Archive is largely made up of documents accumulated by the State Office for the Recovery of Documents Office, an entity set up by military dictator General Franco for the seizure of materials obtained in a selective fashion during and after the Civil War and which were to be one of the main sources of information used in an unprecedented wave of repression against democrats in "special courts" after 1940.

We are also aware that at the Salamanca European City of Culture, 2002 festivities, the organising body has programmed an exhibition of "War Propaganda" in which part of these documents are to go on show, without any form of consent from the rightful owners of these papers (the Catalan Government, Catalan town halls, unions, political parties, private individuals etc.).

Given that the Spanish Government ratified (9 June 1960) The Hague International Agreement on the Protection of Cultural Goods in the Event of Armed Conflict (14 May 1954), which decrees the immunity of goods and the duty that binds holders to protect them from any form of forceful requisition or appropriation, resulting from international conflicts or not.

Given that UNESCO's International Archives Council has repeatedly stated that legitimate owners have the right to recover documents that have been taken as the spoils of war or stolen during an armed conflict (Resolution 46/10 of UNO's 1991 General Assembly).

And given that from 1978 until today, the elected representatives of the Catalan people and the Catalan Parliament itself have unanimously voted (Resolution of 18 May 1989) and repeatedly demanded the return of the stolen documents - both public and private - we believe it to be in our full right to give our support to the Dignity Commission in its campaign and to urge the Spanish authorities to:

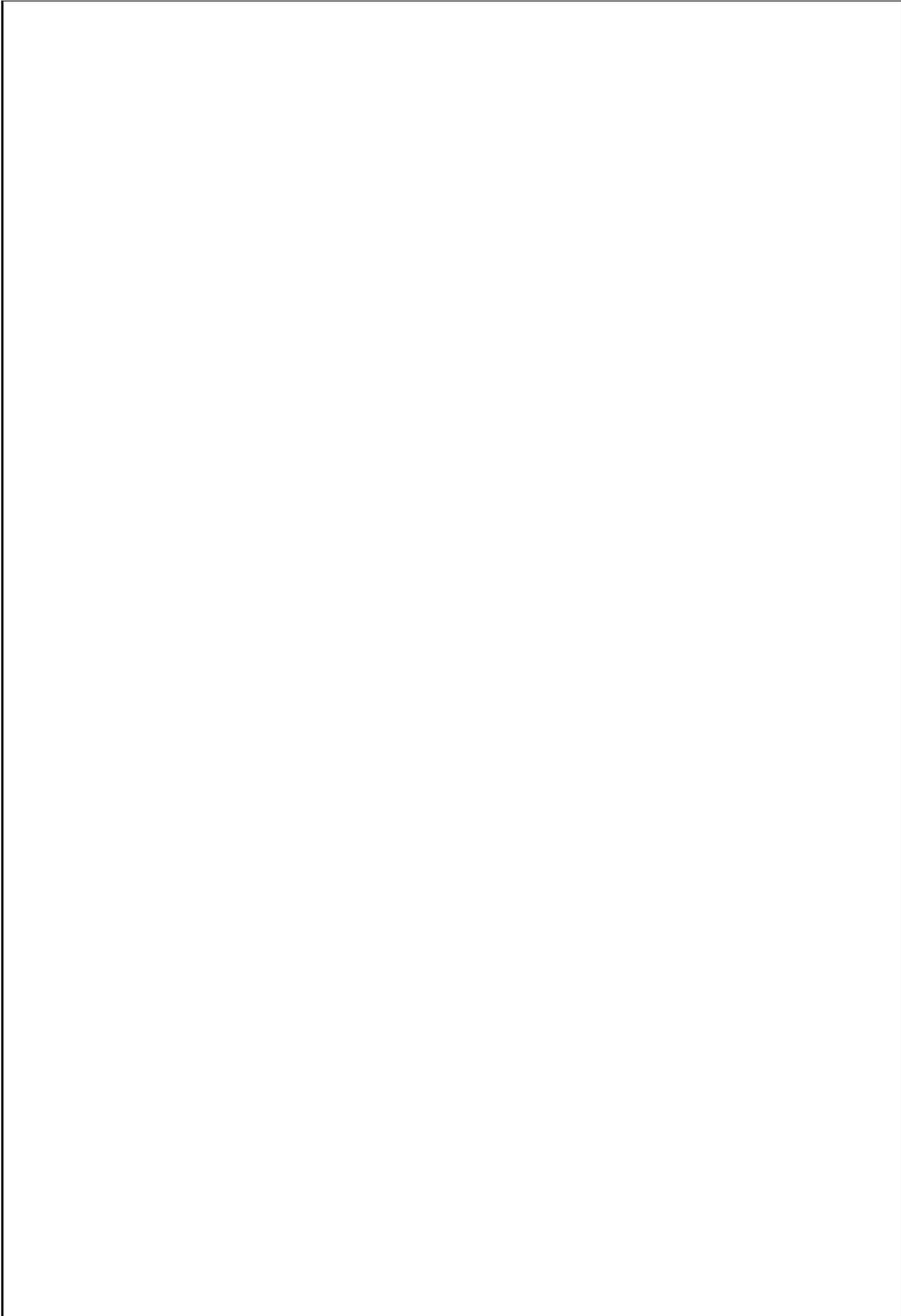
- Fulfil, without further delay, the agreement reached by the Spanish Cabinet on 15 March 1995 that orders the return of the documents.
- Suspend and withdraw from the Salamanca 2002 programme the exhibition "Propaganda en Guerra" (War Propaganda) if it fails to have the explicit permission of the Catalan authorities.

To head the list, the Secretariat of the Dignity Commission thought that it would be a good idea to unite a series of names of people that might act as a reference for academic, political and social circles. These names could serve to bestow prestige on the cause and help the campaign to attract more attention. The list, that was to become longer as the days went by, gained the support of the following personalities, amongst whom are two former Heads of State and two winners of the Nobel Prize for Peace:

Hebe Bonafini, (President of las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo), David Cardús (Professor of Medicine at Texas Bates University), Noam Chomsky (Professor at MIT), Francesco Cossiga (Emeritus President of Italy), Françoise David (President of the Federation of Quebecois Women), Peter Gabriel (musician), Baroness Gloria Hooper (Member of the House of Lords), Federico Mayor Zaragoza (former Secretary General of UNESCO), Rigoberta Menchú (Nobel Peace Prize winner), Danielle Mitterand (President France Libertés), Georges Moustaki (musician), Joan Oró (NASA scientist), Sgouridis Panagioty (Vice-President of the Greek Parliament), Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Nobel Peace Prize winners), James Petras (Professor at Binghamton), Paul Preston, (Professor at LSE), Joan Rigol (President of the Catalan Parliament), Nawal El Saadawi (Egyptian writer), Mário Soares (former President of Portugal), Mikis Theodorakis (musician), Virginia Tsouderos (former Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece), Howard Zinn (Emeritus Professor Boston University).

When news of this international support came out, there was a shock wave in the mass media, not only in Catalonia, but throughout Spain and even beyond. One American journalist would describe the campaign as "the most important effort to put the Catalan cause on the world map in 25 years". The scenario chosen for the presentation of the Manifesto was the main hall of Barcelona Central University in a ceremony chaired by University Dean Joan Tugores. Representatives of the families affected by the robberies and representatives of the principal parties likewise affected - or those giving support to the Dignity Commission - were all present. Those addressing the sizeable audience were to be Toni Strubell, coordinator of the Dignity Commission, the Catalan Government's Director General for Heritage, Marc Mayer, the historian and pioneer researcher at the AGGCE, Anscari Mundó, and the Emeritus Professor of Southampton University, Dr. Henry Ettinghausen.

Extensive reports on the event were published in all Catalan newspapers and in very favourable terms. *La Vanguardia*, for example, placed a red headline (above the main headline) on its front page with the news: "Manifiesto mundial por los "papeles de Salamanca"."⁶ On page 40 there were photographs of Noam Chomsky, Paul Preston, Mário Soares and Peter Gabriel next to a report signed by the renowned cultural commentator, Josep Maria Sòria. It was headed: "Intelectuales de todo el mundo exigen el retorno de los "papeles de Salamanca"."⁷ *El País* gave less space to the news,



⁶ World Manifesto for the "Salamanca Papers".

⁷ "Intellectuals from all over the world demand the return of the "Salamanca Papers"." See photograph section.

It is important that the 'Salamanca Papers' should be returned to the people. Memory is the history and life of peoples. It is necessary, both for the present and for the future, that the events lived in Spain be evaluated and known. I send you fraternal greetings of Peace and Goodwill.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel
Holder of the Nobel Peace Prize

Thank you for your invitation. It is with pride that I sign your petition. Looking forward to meeting you in Barcelona.

Francesco Cossiga
President Emeritus and Life Senator of Italy

I should like to take this opportunity to show my appreciation of this important initiative that the Dignity Commission is undertaking with a view to recovering important historical documents that disappeared from Catalonia during the Franco dictatorship.

Mário Soares
Former President of Portugal

In the name of Rigoberta Menchú, President of our Foundation, we wish to show our commitment by joining you in the noble aim of restoring such an important and painful part of the history of Spain to its lawful owners: the victims. For our part, in the light of the struggle for justice in the face of the Guatemalan genocide, we have decided to set up a major centre for the documentation of Historical Memory in all instances in which the tragedy experienced by different peoples can be recorded and preserved so that the truth and the justice of the victims' cause may be vindicated and proper legal evidence provided for trials for crimes against humanity under international law. You may therefore count on the personal and institutional support of the Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation for the campaign to have the 'Blood Papers' returned.

Alfonso Alem Rojo
Executive Director, Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum

To keep the Catalan papers in the Salamanca archive is not just a crime against history but an insult to the victims of fascism. I give all my support to those who are working to achieve their return to the Catalan archives from which they should never have been taken.

Noam Chomsky
Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

First of all, I wish to express my support for the movement to have returned to Catalonia the Catalan papers held in the Salamanca archive. The materials now kept in Salamanca were plundered and scrutinised by people who were looking for evidence of crimes, such as membership of left-wing, freemason, Catalan nationalist, or simply democratic, organisations. These archives constitute the database that made possible the repression carried out in the 1940s under the infamous Law for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism. The fact that the Salamanca archive has not returned these papers to their rightful owners can only be described as scandalous. The argument on which this is based is that they now form part of an important archive. However, why on earth cannot the originals be given back and copies made in order to preserve the integrity of the archive? That would have been the most proper and democratic thing to do, and 25 years have gone by in which that could have been done.

Paul Preston,
Professor of History, London School of Economics

Pleased to send my whole-hearted support to this worthy cause, though I am no academic, but merely an elderly researcher for a Scottish National Party Member of the Scottish Parliament. I am based in Oban in the Western Highlands of Scotland and was a first-time visitor to Catalonia and Barcelona last year.

Kenneth McColl, Researcher, Ayrshire, Scotland

I support this campaign, for what I understand from your message to be the reasons.

Thomas N. Bisson
Professor, Harvard University, USA

I fully support the efforts of the Dignity Commission and the UNESCO Centre in Barcelona to recover the documents taken by Franco's army in 1939, and not yet returned to their rightful owners: the Archives of the Catalan Government, University Libraries, Trade Unions, political groups etc.

François-Pierre Gingras
Professor, Université d'Ottawa, Canada

From my point of view, these documents form an integral part of Catalan history. Therefore, it would be more than reasonable that these documents be returned to Catalonia so that they can be given a place in one of the archives or museums of Catalonia.

Auke van der Goot
Civil Servant, Ministry of the Interior, The Netherlands

I sent the message to all American scholars that I know who care about Catalan affairs. I hope that helps. Good luck with your campaign and thanks very much for doing this. You should be given the Cross of St George!

Martina Milla Bernad
Lecturer, Emory University, USA

I want to make public my support for the efforts being made by the Catalans to recover the 'Salamanca Papers'.

Thomas Harrington
Assistant Professor, Trinity College, Hartford, USA

I am sending this message to give my support to the campaign that fights to have the documents belonging to the Generalitat de Catalunya returned to their rightful owner by the Spanish Government.

Cristina Sanz
Associate Professor, Georgetown University, USA

I would like to lend my support to the Dignity Commission's attempt to repatriate Catalan public records plundered by the Franco regime. At this late date, it is inexcusable for the Spanish authorities to continue hoarding public property stolen by the fascists. The fact that these records were used to repress and butcher representatives of a legitimate democratic government should further give pause.

Jan Reinhart
Library Manager, Rutgers University, USA

It is completely unacceptable for a democratic Spanish government worthy of the name to retain as war booty documents belonging to the autonomous government of Catalonia. To include them in an exhibit of war propaganda is insulting to the memory of Catalans who died in defense of the Republic, and to the many who were forced into exile or suffered reprisals at the hands of the Franco regime. Such uses of these documents continue the Spanish Civil War into the present, and prevent the completion of the transition to democracy.

Susan DiGiacomo
Assistant Professor, Amhurst College, USA

I send you my deepest support and solidarity in your cause. I wish you lots of success!

Silvana Piga
Archivist, Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina

Cursed be those who presume to rob peoples even of their memory! Condemned be those who in their hypocrisy continue to enjoy the fruits that Fascism extracted from our lacerated flesh! In solidarity, from a country that knows why it is suffering.

Jorge Rodolfo Busch
Engineer, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina

An archive is an important research tool, and I fully support your desire to see it return to Catalonia!

Daniel Pfeiffer
Computer Scientist, Université Pau Sabatier, Toulouse, France

I have the war experience (as a citizen, not as a soldier!) from the former Yugoslavia (I'm Croatian), similar issues are well known to me. They were done from all three (or four) sides of the former Yugoslavian conflict, and, in fact, still at work. Years are needed for such a things to be corrected, souls to be satisfied. But it would never work without constant pressure on the governments and organisations to clear the things. That's why I strongly support such efforts. The victims have a right at least to this last act of dignity made in their honour: that the truth is presented. The truth is, especially in wartime, a very elastic word, it is up to the community of the victims, and not the torturers and murderers, to decide what to do with the documents. What would happen if the Auschwitz and similar documents were left to Germans and Austrians to handle?

Veneko Cemeljic
Lecturer, Universität Potsdam, Germany

I would be delighted to support the campaign, but would like to ask you to consider the extension of the campaign to include all treasures that were plundered from a huge number of countries during various periods of invasion, colonisation and exploitation. A huge number of treasures that we removed from South Africa sit in Europe, particularly. Egypt's archaeological sites have been plundered for centuries to stock European and American museums and private collections, as no doubt is the case in South America. Few of these countries have the power to create a strong enough voice to demand what is theirs back. The extension of your campaign will add voice to this.

Brian Garman
Lecturer, Rhodes University, South Africa

From what you have told me of the case of the Salamanca Blood Papers and the campaign that has been organised for their return to Catalonia from Salamanca and the work of the Dignity Commission, I would tend to agree that documents stolen by Franco's army in 1939 be returned to their rightful owners: the Catalan Government. I hope this message can assist in advancing the cause.

Robin Palmer
Associate Professor, Rhodes University, South Africa

I do wholeheartedly support your efforts to get the papers back and placed in a properly constituted archive.

Kay McCormick
Associate Professor, University of Cape Town, South Africa

I give my full support to your case. It is deplorable that these very important documents have not been returned. Please inform me of the ways in which I can make my voice count.

Nelia Saxby
Professor, University of Cape Town, South Africa

I am very happy to add my name in strong support of this campaign, the goals of which I share completely.

David Blackburn
Professor, Harvard University, USA

I wish to support your case. We in South Africa know what it means to go through a process of democratization. Good luck!

Piet Erasmus
Professor, University of the Free State, South Africa

I wish to express my solidarity with your campaign. As an Argentine citizen, I cannot fail to remember the suffering and pain suffered by thousands of Republicans who went into exile in my country. Over the years, thousands Catalan militants have made invaluable contributions to the struggle of the people in Argentina. The campaign to recover the documents and to reconstruct the memory of the people in Spain and in Catalonia is the struggle of all those who fight, as did our comrades in the 1930s in Argentina, in Europe and in every continent, for a world that is different, possible and necessary.

Emilio Horacio Taddei
Latin American Council for Social Sciences, Buenos Aires, Argentina

I wish to urge the return of the Catalan papers, now constituting archival material, taken at the end of the Civil War, to their rightful owners
Dr. Nathaniel Smith
Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, USA

I was unaware of the business that you have explained to me, but I am very happy to add my support to your appeal. I simply do not see why the Catalan documents should not be returned to Catalonia.
Maurizio Punzo
Professor, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy

I hereby declare that, if UNESCO regulations have been infringed, I fully support the demands of the Dignity Commission for the so-called 'Blood Papers' to be returned to their original archives. At the same time, I must say that I disagree both with the perpetuation of a spirit of conflict that confuses 2002 with 1950 which Madrid expresses in a rhetoric that presumes to treat Catalonia like a rebel province and which Catalonia expresses in a Catalan nationalist discourse that presumes to treat Spain like a foreign country that sent its troops in to occupy the Catalan lands.
Hans-Ingo Radatz
Associate Professor, Katholische Universität Eichstätt, Germany

I wish you success in the return of the papers in what appears to be a terrible case of injustice which has been allowed to persist.

Ralph Summy
Consultant, University of Queensland, Australia

I back you very willingly. It is not just a question of rational scientific research, but also of respect for history and for the political and cultural roots of the citizens of Catalonia. Please keep me informed.
Dr. Giuliana Laschi
Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy

I support your request to bring these stolen archives back. I consider the government's plans not to bring these archives back to the legitimate owners and to use them for its own purposes as an intolerable offense to democracy in general and to the democratic strivings of the Spanish peoples and their researchers in particular.
Alf Johansson
Professor, Oslo University, Norway

I received your appeal from the Dignity Commission and I back your call for the return of these documents. Failure to return them would mean perpetuating Francoist practices.

Tahar Mansouri

Professor, Université de Mannouba, Tunis, Tunisia

I support your request to bring these stolen archives back. I consider the government's plans to not bring these archives back to the legitimate owners and to use them for its own purposes as an intolerable offence to democracy in general and to the democratic strivings of the Spanish peoples and their I very much support your campaign. You might find it helpful to get in touch with the University of Iceland. It and the Icelandic government fought a similar battle with the Danes in the 1950s and 60s for the return of manuscripts that were taken to Denmark during the colonial period. Iceland won the debate and all the manuscripts were returned home.

Dr. Astvaldur Astvaldsson

Lecturer, University of Liverpool, England

All the best in your efforts. We Greeks also want the marbles of the Parthenon back from UK.

Domna Pastourmatzi

Associate Professor, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Please add my name to your list/petition regarding these Catalan archival materials. Frankly, I am surprised that King Juan Carlos has not already seen to this outrageous abuse of authority. Now that that bastard Franco is dead, maybe my conscience will allow me to visit Spain!

Eric A. Arnold

Associate Professor, Denver University, USA

Please keep me informed of the campaign. Indeed, I feel strongly about this, since, in the early nineties, when I resided in Barcelona, I was forced to make the journey to Salamanca in order to consult this very archive.

Dr. Chris Ealham

Head of Studies, University of Wales, Cardiff

I would like to express my support. It is high time that these documents were returned to where they rightfully belong. I will pass this information on to my colleagues.

Dr. Caragh Wells

Lecturer, University of Bristol, England

We back the creation of the Dignity Commission with total conviction and hope that it will have the strength to attain its objectives. We express our solidarity and identity with you.

Nilda Tincopa Montoya

Defence Team & Peasant Consultancy, Organisation for the Defence of Human Rights, Peru

From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru, I salute the creation of the Dignity Commission and trust that the demands you have put forward will be met.

Viviana Valz Gen

The Truth Commission, Peru

Thank you for your mail about the Salamanca papers, of which I was quite ignorant. I wholeheartedly lend support to the Dignity Committee in their attempt to redress a palpable and long-standing injustice. I believe that the authorities should, without delay, return the archives to their rightful owners and submit an apology.

Richard A Cardwell

Professor, University of Nottingham, England

Please add my name to the list of those calling for the return of the Salamanca Blood Papers. The return of these papers is of vital importance. It is a matter of justice; it is a matter of historical accuracy; it is a matter of preserving the truth for the future. I support your efforts whole-heartedly. Please let me know what else I may do to help.

Mark Leier

Associate Professor, Center for Labour Studies, Simon Fraser University, USA

I believe that it is the responsibility of government to preserve all official documents from the past. The responsibility is all the greater when documents have been politicized by being used for purposes for which they were never intended. The Catalan papers should be returned to Catalonia and made available for scholarly use.

Nicholas Canny

Professor, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

I write, as requested, in support of the campaign for the return of the Salamanca Papers. As a specialist in 20th-century Portugal, I feel particularly strongly that material of this type relating to this period of Iberian history should reside in its appropriate location with the greatest degree of access.

Dr. Norrie MacQueen

Head of Department, University of Dundee, Scotland

I am delighted to back the absolutely legitimate request for the return of the 'Blood Papers' to Catalonia. They were stolen and criminally exploited. The Spanish government is under an obligation to redress this extremely grave injustice and, at the same time, to respect the autonomy of Catalonia as regards what it holds most precious: its culture, its past... its own archives.

Edmond Orban

Professor, Université de Montréal, Quebec

I wholeheartedly support the Dignity Commission and join academics throughout the world who are demanding that documents that were confiscated - and used to incarcerate, and in some cases assassinate, Spaniards who supported the legitimately created Republic - be returned to their rightful owners. It is an outrage that these documents are still under lock and key in Salamanca so many years after the end of the Franco Regime, since they suggest that the suppression of information continues to be a reality in Spain.

Shirley Mangini

Professor, California State University, USA

I think that the looting by the Spanish authorities of the Catalan documents held in Salamanca is unsurprising, although that does not make it any the less of an outrage. The syndrome of empire still rules the minds of the current Spanish government, which is in so many respects the heir of Francoism. Frustrated as it is by the total impossibility of regaining the hegemony it once enjoyed thanks to the silver stolen from America, it is only to be expected that it will do its best to rely on what remains of its right of conquest.

Josep Maria Muria
Director, Colegio de Jalisco, Guadalajara, Mexico

Thank you for sending me the texts on the stolen documents. As things are presented in them, I don't see how anybody could fail to support your case. The only thing I don't understand is, why do they (whoever it exactly is) refuse to return the papers to Catalonia? It seems to be a clear-cut case in every respect. Anyway, you have my support, if you think you are in need of a voice from Israel in this quite horrific time in our region.

Moshe Zuckermann
Professor, University of Tel Aviv, Israel

I hereby fully support the initiatives re. the 'Blood Papers'. I hope that proper action will be taken, since culture - in the widest sense of the word - is the most precious thing mankind possesses!

Hans Keman
Professor, Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands

I strongly support the case you are making. Access to the historical record is, I believe, a basic human right in any advanced democracy. I myself work on the East German secret police and have noted with grave disquiet that, since early March 2002, after a request from the German Government and former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, these archives which were open to scholars are now, to all intents and purposes, once again concealed from them. It is, therefore, important that those with the power to restrain access to the public record should be reminded about the serious consequences of their actions.

Anthony Glees
Professor, Brunel University, England

I declare my total support for the Dignity Commission's campaign to bring to public notice the case of the 'Salamanca Papers' and to demand that the Spanish State return to us all the official documents of the Catalan Government that were looted in 1938 and 1939 and, what is more, used in order persecute, repress and imprison a great number of citizens, leading to the death of many of them. These papers should never have left Catalonia or, at the very least, they should have been returned as soon as democracy was restored. The fact that they were not returned then actually raises questions about the restoration of democracy.

Joan Sola Casadevall
Professor, Pennsylvania State University, USA

I add my protest to the many that have been made at the persistent failure of the current Spanish Government to return to Catalunya the archives that were plundered in Catalunya by Franco's Nationalist forces at the end of the Civil War and which were then used by the Franco dictatorship to oppress, persecute and even eliminate many who had sought to defend democracy against fascism.

Henry Ettinghausen
Professor Emeritus, University of Southampton, England

Please add my name to the list of academics urging the Spanish government to return the documents pillaged from Barcelona in 1939. As a lover of the city and its heroic past, I am glad to be included.

Christine Stansell
Professor, Princeton University, USA

I wish to express my complete support for your struggle to persuade the Spanish Government to return the documents that were pillaged in Barcelona in 1939 and never restored to their rightful owners. We want you to know that you are not alone and that we shall continue to accompany you in your just fight.

Manuel Ortega Hegg
Director of Casc, Universidad de Centroamérica, UCA, Nicaragua

You have my support for your petition. My parents are Civil War exiles.

Victoria L. Garcia
Lecturer, Princeton University, USA

I gladly subscribe your campaign against all tyranny. Franco was a tyrant. Other nations in Europe have done the same kind of pillaging. The Louvre and British Museum would be half empty if the stolen objects in them were to be returned from them.

Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe
Historian, University of Nevada, USA

Support from Spain

Sadly, it has not been widespread practice in Spain to support Catalonia in its attempts to recover the Catalan documents withheld at Salamanca. Traditional political attitudes and tabu still have too great a role to play in such affairs. Perhaps because our energy has been largely directed elsewhere, it has not been an absolute priority of the Dignity Commission's to seek that support, in quantitative terms at least. Nevertheless, it has been a question of some strategic importance for the Dignity Commission to gain support in Spain where possible.

Traditionally, the solidarity of Spain with Catalonia has been a controversial issue and one that some might consider to be a contradiction in terms. Some scholars have even suggested that anti-Catalan feeling is one of the pillars on which the nationalist ideology of many Spaniards seems to be built. With the same degree of logic as that articulated by Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset when he prescribed "*conllevancia*"⁸, the widely held view of many Spaniards as regards the "Salamanca Papers" could be summed up in the motto "refuse them all and you will come out on top". Another common Spanish attitude was parodied by Xavier Rupert de Ventós⁹ when, at a press conference in October 2002, he said the memorable phrase: "archive it all and you will come out on top", a statement which in turn reflected Miguel de Unamuno's warning to the Francoists in 1936: "you will win but you will not convince". A connection all the more profound since both sentences were uttered in Salamanca.

Disregarding any scientific criteria regarding archive science, Spanish politicians of all walks have seen the controversy over the "Salamanca Papers" as a vote-winner that exploits the anti-Catalan feelings of large portions of their constituents, whose thinking may be influenced by the envy of regions suffering long-term economic depression (no fault of the Catalans, it must be pointed out), and who are unable to tackle the causes of their endemic problems. For the local Castilian ruling class, the confiscation of documents that are of high symbolic value for the Catalan people seems to be preferable to the articulation of policies aimed at restoring economical, industrial and demographical equilibrium between Spain's various autonomous communities.

⁸ A conservative attitude that believed in nipping in the bud any petition for self-government so as to curb further calls and avoid the creation of "precedents".

⁹ Dignity Commission member, philisopher, ex EMP and writer.

Indeed, the question of the “Salamanca Papers” has gone beyond a mere discussion of where documents can best be stored. It has developed into a full-scale dispute at State level. As far back as 1978, this became evident in the statements of Adolfo Suárez’s Culture Minister, Ricardo de la Cierva, who said that returning the Catalan archives would “break up the history of Spain”. He added that it was “but a short step to breaking up Spain itself”. Seventeen years later, President Aznar was to resurrect that very same idea when he said that if the Catalan papers were returned from Salamanca, “the very Spanish nation would be placed in jeopardy”. Unfortunately, this is the sort of apocalyptic attitude that has generally persisted in Spain’s emotional reaction to Catalan demands. An instance of that reaction is the strident cry uttered to the crowds by Sr. Torrente Ballester from the balcony of Salamanca town hall in 1995: “the papers are yours by right of conquest” he bellowed. It also includes a whole range of statements by mayors, regional and provincial presidents in Castile-León. Perhaps the instance many Catalans have considered the most insulting came in 1995 when the Socialist mayor of Salamanca, Sr. Málaga, ordered the main door of the Archive to be protected by two local policemen as if Catalan commandos were about to forcefully make off with the papers!

It is also significant that it is not only the conservative Popular Party (PP) that has sought to legitimise the Francoist confiscation of Catalan documents. The Socialist party, too, is fully implicated, despite the fact that it had suffered the confiscation of its documents after Franco’s military coup in 1936. It is sad proof of the fact that in Spain totalitarian ways and nationalist pride seem to carry greater weight than ideological considerations such as solidarity, the need to repair the harm done by brutal fascist repression or the obligation to review the narrow-minded concept of “archive unity” that is made. But even today, mainstream officials in Madrid, of whatever political hue, only seem to take into consideration arguments that the Francoist ideologists themselves might have been proud of coining. In addition, Madrid’s position is also favoured by the group interests of the archivists of the National Archive, and, in particular, those of the archivists at Salamanca’s Civil War archive.

Nevertheless, there have been laudible exceptions to these attitudes in Spanish society, though they are rarely to be found amongst leading PP or PSOE politicians. First and foremost, the case must be mentioned of Teresa Carvajal, a former independent city councillor for the PSOE on Salamanca city council. The first time the Dignity Commission heard about the position of this

praiseworthy defender of Castilian and Leonese heritage was in a letter that appeared in *La Vanguardia* a few days after the Dignity Commission's first press conference in Salamanca. In the letter headed "From Salamanca", Teresa Carvajal lodged a complaint about the official boycott faced by the Commission's first visit to Salamanca on 14 October 2002. In her letter, the councillor asked: "How is it possible that local media failed to announce the dignified and democratic visit of a group of Catalans whose intention it was to inform the residents of Salamanca about why they want to recover part of their identity?". The letter concluded with an expression of thanks: "In the name of those of us who want this country's foundations to be based on dialogue and participation, we wish to show our gratitude for the heart-warming visit of this large group of people". The publication of this letter came as a breath of fresh air and was in stark contrast to the total boycott of the Commission's first press conference. The fact that a Salamanca city councillor, no less, had spoken out in favour of the Commission was seen as a sign that, officialdom aside, a warmer reception awaited the Catalan demands than had at first been thought.

Since then, the relationship between Teresa Carvajal and the Dignity Commission has become stronger, despite the fact that she had not been able to attend the press conference on 14 October 2002: no-one in her party, the Socialist PSOE, which had been officially invited, had informed her. At a later stage, she was to act as honorary hostess to the Commission's second visit to Salamanca, taking part in the protest against the opening of the "War Propaganda" exhibition on 12 November 2002. A delegation of Comissió supporters, amongst which Mariona Companys –grand niece of President Lluís Companys- was to stand out, protested at the opening of the event with a banner that read: "Is war loot culture?" That evening, Teresa Carvajal organised the impromptu conference given by Carles Fontserè and Toni Strubell at Salamanca's legendary *Ateneo*. On the Commission's third visit, she gave an exhilarating speech in favour of dialogue and common sense. She again criticised the attitude of the local authorities and their "lack of courtesy" towards the Dignity Commission. Teresa Carvajal's co-operation and contributions have been constant and most positive ever since.

Another letter appeared in *La Vanguardia* on 26 October 2002. It came from another important source of support in Salamanca, that of José A. Frias, the director of the Library Science Department of the University of Salamanca, who was sympathetic to the Dignity Commission's position. In his letter, the professor pointed to the fact that in Salamanca there was more support for the

return of the Catalan documents than one would think. "In many fields", the letter said, "there are professionals who have defended the return of the documents to Catalonia and we have made our position known in the past". He also expressed his concern at the fact that the decision to retain the Catalan documents in Salamanca had been taken without consulting his Department - Library and Document Science - and added that he considered the Salamanca documents to be "spoils of war" which should be "returned as soon as possible to their rightful owners".

The support given to the Commission's position by Salamanca journalist Aníbal Lozano was another outstanding feature of the campaign and the one which best illustrated the intolerance and aggressive nature of Salamanca's ruling class. In his *Tribuna de Salamanca* column, Aníbal Lozano on 13 October 2002 published an article that favoured the return of the Catalan documents: "What cannot be forgotten under any pretext is the Archive's origin and what it was used for, even in the post-war years: to nourish repression over the next forty years... It is like the moral heritage of what was taken from them, and, bearing this in mind, there should be no conditions attached to its transfer... Furthermore, it is unacceptable for Salamanca to retain confiscated original documents if it seeks to become a symbol of modern times."

After publishing this article, Lozano was deprived of his daily column in the *Tribuna de Salamanca*. Barcelona's *La Vanguardia* newspaper redeemed the situation with an honourable offer to publish a weekly column of his, a gesture which Lozano gratefully accepted. One of his first columns in this newspaper was to be a passionate tribute to Carles Fontserè, the civil war artist¹⁰ associated with the Dignity Commission and with whom he had recently dined. Aníbal Lozano has since been in permanent contact with the Commission and has attended various meetings both in Salamanca and Barcelona.

Teresa Carvajal and Aníbal Lozano typify the very best of the Castilian tradition of a liberal spirit and a sense of brotherhood amongst nations, an attitude opposed to the imposition of Castile's "right of conquest" over the other national communities of the Iberian Peninsula. They represent a liberal tradition that exists in Castile which, though important, has tended to be overwhelmed by dictatorships and the militarist, austere and intolerant façade that history has favoured and made predominant in this country. Both of them struggle, each in their own way, for the democratization of Castile's mass media, and for the strengthening of the liberal tradition of Castile which, though

¹⁰ Much of whose work is held in Salamanca.

demanding rights, heritage, history, and popular spirit, nevertheless rejects the bullying nature of her tyrants and its political embodiment in centralist thought. In an interview with Xavier Ayén, in *La Vanguardia* (18.10.2003), Aníbal Lozano expressed his objections to the political climate of Salamanca: “These documents resulted in the torture and death of a lot of people, even of folk from Salamanca. It is a moral imperative that they return to their place of origin. Salamanca is showing itself to be an awfully conservative city, willing to defend something indefensible. There is fear. It is a society where many do not say what they think. I do. Why not? Are we not free to do so? The Salamanca right wing has nothing to do with Gallardón [liberal Madrid PP leader] or with the Catalan right wing. I wish it did! Here they want to preserve what Franco gave us when he turned us into a fascist stronghold during the Civil War.”

To express its gratitude for their contributions, the Dignity Commission paid tribute to Teresa Carvajal and Aníbal Lozano at a memorable meeting in Barcelona’s Ateneu on 22 May 2003. Before a full house, speeches were made by Toni Strubell and Jordi Porta, the President of Catalonia’s largest cultural association, Òmnium Cultural. Members of different Catalan parties (CiU, ERC, ICV and mayor of Arbúcies, Jaume Soler) presented them with two plaques commemorating the event. The event received full-page coverage in *Avui* and *El Punt* newspapers.

Without leaving Salamanca, it is also most fitting to mention the position of Izquierda Castellana, a local left-wing party, and its enthusiastic support for the Dignity Commission. This party offered support to the Commission on its first trip to Salamanca on 14 October 2002. In addition, local officials of “Izquierda Castellana” courageously helped to carry the banner in protest at the opening of the “Propaganda en Guerra” exhibition on 12 November 2002. Izquierda Castellana also organised a meeting in favour of the return of the documents to Catalonia. With over three hundred people in the audience, the meeting included speeches by Catalan History Professor, Borja de Riquer, and Josep Maria Sans i Travé, Director of the Catalan National Archive. Professor Jose Luis de las Heras, Professor at Salamanca University’s Geography and History Department, also participated in the meeting, showing slides labelled in Catalan. The response of the audience - mostly local students and intellectuals - was truly surprising both in terms of numbers and attitude. Applause for the three speakers’ arguments was encouragingly warm. Dr. Heras has since been very active throughout the period 2002-2004 with articles in the press, participation in debates and radio programmes on the subject.

At a State level, Spanish support for the Dignity Commission's position was strengthened with a Manifesto signed in the summer of 2002 by over a hundred professors and university lecturers.¹¹ The manifesto, published as a letter in Madrid's *El País*, demanded that the Spanish State should abide by the international treaties it had signed (The Hague International Agreement on the Protection of Cultural Goods in the event of Armed Conflict and UN General Assembly Resolution 4 6/10) and that the Spanish Government fulfil the agreement signed by the Spanish Cabinet on 15 March 1995 regarding the return to Catalonia of the Catalan archives held at Salamanca. This letter also called for the suspension of the exhibition "Propaganda en guerra" because "it had not received the authorisation (...) of the Catalan Government or the private individuals and legal entities affected by the Francoist confiscations in 1939".

Despite the fact that the Manifesto was signed by eminent academics, such as Javier Tusell and Miguel Rodríguez y Herrero de Miñón or politicians such as Gaspar Llamazares, it was published in only a few newspapers, thus limiting its repercussions. This confirmed a certain tendency in the Spanish media to play down a matter that was beginning to stir too many consciences and that was becoming increasingly hard to explain. In addition to their support for the Manifesto, Javier Tusell and Miguel Rodríguez y Herrero de Miñón also expressed their opinions on the question of the "Salamanca Papers" in articles and interviews in the media.

The Demonstrations of 15 October 2002

The demonstrations of 15 October 2002 marked a key moment in the Dignity Commission's campaign. For the first time, the Dignity Commission called a major demonstration to protest about the government's failure to return Catalan documents from Salamanca. The day for the demonstration was not chosen at random. A number of factors made 15 October a suitable day, two of which are especially noteworthy: it was the date initially chosen for the opening of the "Propaganda en Guerra" exhibition as part of the Salamanca 2002 programme; and it was also the sixty-second anniversary of the execution of Lluís Companys, President of Catalonia between 1933 and 1940. In co-operation with the Association Conèixer Catalunya (ACCAT), the Dignity Commission planned a day of protest in Barcelona. The aim was to make

¹¹ Although the campaign was conducted separately, one single list of signatories is reproduced included in Appendix 2.

known to the Spanish government that the institutions and citizens of Catalonia objected to the Ministry of Culture's unilateral decision, announced through associated bodies, not to return any documents to Catalonia from the General Civil War Archive in Salamanca. Rallies were called at two different points: the first at 7.30 p.m. in front of the Government Delegation building, in Barcelona's Pla de Palau; and the second, an hour later in Plaça del Rei, larger city spaces being unavailable at the time.

The Pla de Palau rally was a simple though massively attended meeting at which a letter addressed to the President of the Spanish Government was read out. The letter expressed the opposition of the Catalan people to the government's decision to retain their documents at Salamanca. Salvador Arderiu, a popular radio speaker and town councillor in Sallent, was to read the letter:

To the Prime Minister of Spain:

Dear Sir,

The Dignity Commission is an organisation which arose from the heart of Catalan civil society and which, seeking to achieve the return of Catalan documentary heritage from the Republican period, has thought it fitting to send you this letter by way of the Office your Government has in the capital city of our nation. We wish to approach you and give our opinion on your Government's decision not to return the Catalan archives at present withheld in the newly created General Civil War Archive in Salamanca. The people of Catalonia, their institutions and political and social organisations of every nature, feel profound regret and indignation at this decision. It cannot be forgotten, as is generally known, that these documents were seized by the army of occupation that entered Catalonia on the orders of rebel General Franco in 1938-1939. The archives of hundreds of city halls, those of practically all democratic political parties, those at the headquarters of unions, dozens of cultural associations with no involvement in politics, as well as the libraries and archives of private individuals and families of the most representative figures of Catalan nationalist, republican and democratic forces, were all ignominiously looted in an act of barbarism that was inspired by the Nazis themselves. Catalan political parties and society have never ceased to demand the return of these documents, and have unceasingly protested their confiscation as a means of exerting a wave of repression and physical elimination without precedent in our recent history. Use of these documents led to thousands of people being shot, interned in concentration camps or suffering repression of the most diverse forms in a never-ending series of criminal atrocities. Due to the way in which the political transition to democracy was conducted as from 1975, however, those responsible for these crimes have gone unpunished. We remind you of these events, Prime Minister, because the role that you have played has disappointed us, as indeed has the attitude of your

government. Any government with the least degree of humanity, sense of decency and justice would have immediately ordered the return of these documents to their rightful place. It should have done so if only out of respect for all those who gave their lives, and with a view to returning to their rightful place archives that were looted from and belong to a country that has always loved freedom and culture.

A few weeks ago, the Communication Officer of your party, Sr. Don Rafael Hernando, filled us all with hope when he made the following statement to the press: "Any possible step that may serve to console people still affected by situations arising from a conflict such as the civil war, to overcome their suffering or reconstruct their past and bring solace to their spirit, must be welcomed by and seen to by our Government." But time has shown us that the hopes raised by these words were unfounded. If we are to judge by the respect that your government has shown for Catalan feeling, we must conclude that Catalans are not seen by your government as a "people". We have neither been well received nor heeded. No attention has been paid to our suffering nor to our need to reconstruct our past, to use the words of Sr. Hernando. On the contrary: no one has brought solace to our spirit, as promised by Sr. Hernando, "solace" to overcome the trauma, human and material losses caused by the Civil War. Our sensitivity has not been in the least taken into consideration by the government you preside over. With this new case, your government – the greatest benefactor of the Francisco Franco Foundation, adorer of massive Spanish flags in Madrid's Plaza Colon and persecutor of those who have protested that the King was made to lie when he claimed, in an official speech, that the Spanish language had "never been imposed" nor the Catalan language prohibited - has decided to bless the "right of conquest" that has so characterized the Castilian way of understanding the Iberian peninsula and, alas, the world.

We want you to know, Prime Minister, that as regards the stolen Catalan archives, there are more reasons to fill many Catalans with indignation. Even members of your own party in Catalonia seem disturbed over the issue. The reason for this is that your government is promoting an exhibition called "Propaganda en guerra" which is about to be opened as part of Salamanca's 2002 European City of Culture programme. The reason for our indignation arises from the fact that, as you know, a significant portion of the materials involved form part of the archives stolen from the Catalan people by Franco. The fact that permission was not even requested from the legitimate owners of these documents says little in favour of the sense of civility and respect of the organisers of this exhibition. This opinion is not only held by Catalans who are aware of the case. Many hundreds of European intellectuals and professors have condemned the shame involved in the fact that objects seized by fascists are to be exhibited at a European City of Culture event. As has been asked by several high-ranking personalities from Greek public life, what would Melina Mercouri, creator of the European City of Culture event seventeen years ago, have thought of this? What would she say if she were alive? She strove to make this event a catalyst of brotherhood amongst nations and an event that would promote the values of democracy and justice throughout Europe. What would she say today on seeing that the event is to be used as a showcase for taunting and slighting our people and Europe's democratic tradition?

As Carles Fontserè, the indefatigable member of the Dignity Commission, has said, only an unworthy government would exhibit looted posters and documents. This wise observation should lead you, Prime Minister, to a profound reconsideration of your policy regarding this question, bearing in mind the basic criteria of UNESCO on the need to return to their rightful owners documents that have been stolen in time of conflict or war. The fact that the former Secretary General of that body, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, spoke out in favour of the return to Catalonia of the Catalan documents should have prompted you to react. But unfortunately this has not been the case.

To finish this letter, Prime Minister, we would like to ask you three questions that many Catalans would like to see answered. What type of private property does your government intend to show respect for in the future? When will you admit that the argument regarding the “unity” of the Archive is unsound and opposed to UNESCO principles? And lastly, when will you be willing to admit that the appeal your government is making in favour of the “need to keep all at Salamanca” is nothing more than a ploy to justify the repressive policies promoted by Franco? For it has now become apparent to all that your government has absolutely no intention of making Salamanca the seat of a major Civil War archive, as stated: neither are the contents of the five great Castilian archives holding most of the documents on the Civil War to be moved, nor are there signs that your government plans to stop subsidising the Francisco Franco Foundation’s Archive, thus reinforcing its status as a strictly private Madrid-based Archive given to the promotion of the “values” represented by Franco. These policies prove that the Salamanca Archive means little more to your government than a way of ensuring the continued retention of archives seized by Franco.

When you have answered these and other questions, maybe many Catalans will come nearer to overcoming some of the profound mistrust that they increasingly feel towards your government and its policies.

Yours faithfully,

The Dignity Commission.

This letter was read out to thousands of people at the Pla de Palau. As it was being read, hundreds more continued to pour into the square from all directions. Among those present there were politicians from all the Catalan parties - except PP, of course - and personalities from all walks of Catalan public life. When the letter had been read out and its contents enthusiastically applauded, it was delivered to the Spanish government’s office in the square. The letter was not answered.

After the Pla de Palau event, the crowds in the Pla de Palau began to move towards Plaça del Rei, where at 8.30 p.m. there was to be a second

meeting under the slogan “Diguem no a la foscor del neofranquisme”.¹² Observers say that the wide Via Laietana avenue was blocked for half an hour as demonstrators made their way there. Unfortunately, when those at the head of the column reached the avenue, they found that the streets on the other side were already jammed full. It had become impossible to reach the square, the only one that the city authorities had allowed to be used for such a meeting. This resulted in a situation where Plaça Sant Jaume, the square housing the Catalan government and Barcelona city hall, and all the adjacent streets, had to accommodate the large number of demonstrators who followed the meeting over loudspeakers. As *El Temps* magazine put it, people “could hardly believe what was happening: the Plaça del Rei was jam packed”. According to *El Temps*, “the majority of demonstrators had to follow the meeting from adjacent streets, from windows and balconies, and from the Plaça Sant Jaume”, where, with the aid of councillor Jordi Portabella, loudspeakers had been placed at the last minute to enable people to follow the meeting. This great response from the people of Barcelona and surrounding districts to the call was seen as a major success, all the more so considering the insignificant amount of publicity the event had been given. Word of mouth, one advertisement in the newspaper *AVUI* and e-mail campaigning had made the day possible.

The meeting “Diguem ‘no’ a la foscor del neofranquisme” was called and organised by the Dignity Commission with the aid of ACCAT, a Catalanist organisation presided over by the venerable cultural activist, Josep Espar Tícol. The meeting was presented by Joel Joan, a very popular Catalan actor who starred in the prime-time comedy series “Plats Bruts” on Catalan TV, who had recently won the prestigious Ondas Prize. He was the ideal man to strike the right balance between a sense of purpose and the spontaneity required for a public meeting of this kind. For an occasion held under the traditional Catalan slogan of “Diguem no!” (Let’s say no), singer Raimon and his song of that very title had a key role to play. The high point of the evening was the moment when his song was sung, spectators chorusing the words at the top of their voices. Just then, thousands of sparklers were lit, an image that made the front pages of most of Barcelona’s newspapers the following day. After that, three hundred members of the Catalan Choir Federation sang a choral version of the same song. The audience filling the square and all adjacent streets, repeated the song, creating an electric atmosphere which was to receive intensive coverage by television and radio stations; one radio station, Catalunya Cultura, broadcast the whole meeting. After two versions of “Diguem no!” had been

¹² “Let’s say no to the darkness of neo-Francoist Spain.”

sung, Teresa Pàmies¹³ addressed the audience on behalf of the Dignity Commission. She read out the Manifesto “No a la foscor del neofranquisme” with great feeling and determination:

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We are gathered here tonight at the summons of the Dignity Commission, in the historic Plaça del Rei, because there are things that cannot be accepted in the present situation of our country. We are gathered here because we could not continue to be silent spectators of a political situation which increasingly fills our hearts with anxiety and unrest. We are gathered here because we cannot tolerate injustice, because we are rebels against the impositions of a government that fails to respect our national dignity. The use made by the governing “Partido Popular” of its overall majority gained at the last elections has led to a situation which, if we are to continue to be faithful to the traditional love of freedom that characterizes our country, we are obliged to denounce before our people, before the political authorities of the State and all Europe. We can not tolerate this dark shadow looming over us. The path towards democracy and the full recovery of national and social rights that many Catalans considered to be guaranteed by the 1978 constitution has turned out to be a path of growing uncertainty, darkness and increasingly few guarantees. If it is intolerable that the government party uses the constitution as a weapon against all those who do not think like it, it must be seen as even more hypocritical that most of this very party, particularly its current leader, were opposed to the constitution twenty-five years ago, a position stated overtly.

Today, with an overall majority that permits abuse of every kind imaginable, this party has now shown its true colours in its excessive power, its inquisitorial intolerance and undisguised admiration for Franco’s dictatorial regime. We have entered a period in which we are constantly being reminded of this. On the one hand, we find instances in state or regional parliaments in which condemnation of the Franco regime is not openly forthcoming from PP. On the other hand, we see that a foundation promoting the “values” of Francoism (namely the Franco Foundation) is the government’s most highly subsidised foundation each year. Again we cannot fail to perceive how the government spends tens of thousands of euros to produce a gigantic replica of the flag with which Franco’s rebel troops took Barcelona in 1939, while at the same time urging the tame State prosecutors to prosecute those citizens who have denounced the fact that the King should have claimed in a speech that the Spanish language had “never been imposed”.

The past months have been marked by signs, gestures, laws and speeches that have filled us with foreboding and reservations. Nonetheless, no event has raised as much indignation as the government’s refusal to return to Catalonia the Catalan documents and archives withheld at Salamanca. Some may feel this can be attributed to scientific criteria, but only a blind person could come to believe this. Professor Paul Preston has recently pointed out that there can be no scientific reason for not returning the documents to Catalonia. This same historian headed the list of over 700 academics

¹³ Recent winner of Catalonia’s most prestigious literary prize and one of the most famous victims to be affected by Franco’s seizure of the Catalan documents.

from across the world who, four months ago, backed a worldwide call denouncing the fact that the Spanish government was unwilling to return archives which are the property of the Catalan people.

But in contrast to the dark prospect offered by the Aznar government, there are also numerous signs of hope as epitomised by the massive turn-out for today's rallies in Barcelona. Moreover, we must also refer to a factor the Spanish government had clearly not been expecting: as time goes by, more and more people are beginning to lose their fear. More and more people are beginning to ask questions about their own past and that of the country. Recent television broadcasts on the Catalan network have had massive audiences when censorship has permitted them to be broadcast. People are beginning to talk about the mass graves which were the result of Franco's repression. Though they date from a time long before those of other regimes, such as those in Argentina, El Salvador or Chile, it has taken much longer for those in Spain to be investigated. People are beginning to ask why. If Pinochet's career could be questioned, people are wondering why it is still taboo in Spain to condemn the dictatorship which preceded the present regime. People are beginning to grasp the great difficulties that the Catalan nation is exposed to in the present media, cultural and political framework under current legislation".

In addition to the contributions made by Raimon and the federation of choirs, the meeting had one other cultural highlight. The organisers invited the poet David Jou to read a poem on the question of the Catalan archives in Salamanca that had been specially written for the event. David Jou himself read the poem with a dignified voice.

The last person to speak at the meeting was Toni Strubell, co-ordinator of the Dignity Commission. He reflected on the meaning of the two historic protests - on 14 and 15 October 2002 - and regretted the fact that in Salamanca the local authorities had failed to receive the group of one hundred and sixty Catalans who had visited Salamanca the day before. He also gave thanks to the mayors, city councillors and many other representatives of institutions, Parliament and Senate members and, above all, those victims of confiscation accompanying the Dignity Commission, for going on the trip to Salamanca. He called for applause for all of them. He pointed out that the journey to Salamanca had surprised people because it had been steeped in emotion and dignity. He referred to the speeches made there by Rosa Maria Carrasco, who had asked to see and recover the letter her father had addressed to his family shortly before dying before a firing squad in Burgos; or the words of Carles Fontserè calling for the return of the magnificent collection of his posters still withheld at Salamanca. Strubell also showed the Commission's gratitude to all the groups and individuals in Salamanca who had

shown solidarity towards the Catalan demands, and also the 700 professors and intellectuals from around the world, headed by Mário Soares, Francesco Cossiga, Noam Chomsky, Nawal el Saadawi and Paul Preston, who had shown support for the Commission's Manifesto, and for whom Strubell also called for a round of applause. In conclusion, he speculated on the possible future of the Catalan archives and mentioned the confusion over the issue in the Catalan section of the governing party (PP), as shown in the recent contradictions between Ministers Piqué and Rajoy, who just before the beginning of the meeting had described the affair as "closed". Strubell spoke with irony of things that the PP may consider to be "closed", since in 1975 it had also appeared that Franco's tomb was "closed", despite the government's temptations to open it and release the essence it contains. He ended his speech by saying that without the return of the Catalan documents from Salamanca, the confrontation that the Civil War represented could not be considered to be over, and that, therefore, the "right of conquest" still applied.

The meeting received massive coverage in the media. It was given front-page headlines in all the major Catalan newspapers, extensive reports in magazines, TV news and commentaries on radio chat shows. The Dignity Commission and the ACCAT association were very grateful to Joel Joan, Raimon, Teresa Pàmies, the Catalan Choirs Federation and poet David Jou for their participation in this memorable event.

Further activities of the Dignity Commission

During the course of the years 2003 and 2004, the activities of the Dignity Commission have not ceased. It would be impossible to give details of them all. On the one hand, the Commission participated in hundreds of meetings throughout the Catalan countries. Five meetings organised by local groups such as Ciudadanos por el Patrimonio, Izquierda Castellana and Foro de Izquierdas-Los Verdes, were also attended in Salamanca. Some of these events took place in the magnificent setting of buildings as emblematic as the Salamanca Atheneum Club - where Carles Fontserè made a memorable speech - or the Faculty of Geography and History of Salamanca University. One debate with archivists and university professors, held on 17 June 2004, was broadcast on Salamanca's local TV station. As regards other meetings, two warm tributes staged in Barcelona stand out. The first was paid to journalist Aníbal Lozano and city councillor Teresa Carvajal, both of Salamanca, and was

held in the Barcelona Atheneum Club on 22 May 2003. The second tribute was for Southampton University Emeritus Professor Henry Ettinghausen, and was held at the Farinera del Clot in Barcelona on 19 December 2003. Both tributes were very well attended and speeches were delivered by Toni Strubell, professor Til Stegmann of Frankfurt University, Matthew Tree - the prize-winning English author who writes in Catalan - and Henry Ettinghausen himself. Xavier Borràs read a poem dedicated to Ettinghausen, which had been written by Montserrat Milian. These tributes had been designed to show gratitude for these people's support for the Dignity Commission.

The official campaign for the return of the documents also continued its course. Many institutions and bodies, following the Dignity Commission's recommendations, took the first steps to enable legal proceedings to start with official demands for the return of their property. Amongst those involved were the political parties ERC and PSUC, trade unions UGT and CADCI, city halls such as Tarragona, amongst others, as well as private individuals such as the Capo and Cambó families. A report was also sent to the president of the Council of Europe's Culture department, Ms Viviane Reding, calling for Europe's involvement in this issue. Apart from this, the meeting held on 13 April 2004 with Nobel prizewinner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel must also be mentioned. Mr Pérez informed the Dignity Commission¹⁴ of his intention to write a public letter to the Spanish president, Mr José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, reminding him of his duty as president to have the documents returned to the Catalan people. The letter was duly sent and widely referred to in the Catalan and Spanish press the following week.

As regards political contacts, several meetings held at the highest level stand out. The first was called at the Ministry of Culture in Madrid by Culture Minister, Ms Carmen Calvo, on 26 May 2004. This meeting was to last over two hours. In representation of the Commission, two former presidents of the Catalan Parliament, the Right Honourable Heribert Barrera and the Right Honourable Joan Rigol, and the current vice-president of the Valencian Parliament, Mr. Joaquim Puig, were present, as were the president of the Catalan Archivists' Association, Mr Joan Boadas, Salamanca University history professor, Dr. José Luis de las Heras, Mr. Jordi Font, director of the Catalan Theatre Intititute, and four members of the Dignity Commission's Secretariat: Mr. Toni Strubell, Mr. Josep Cruanyes, Mr. Enric Borràs and Mr. Pep Guia. The Minister ensured

¹⁴ Accompanied by representatives of the Catalan parties supporting the Commission: Dolors Comas and Josep Altayó (ICV), Josep Camps (CIU), Xavier Menéndez (PSC) and Elisenda Romeu (ERC).

the Commission's delegation that Catalonia had already lost once in 1939, and "would not lose again now".

On 28 June 2004, the Dignity Commission also held a meeting with Catalan Culture minister, Ms Caterina Mieras, at the Ministry in Barcelona's Rambla Santa Mònica. Like the meeting with Minister Carmen Calvo, this one was designed to prepare the way for the creation of a committee that was to be created to give advice to the Spanish and Catalan governments regarding the possible return of documents to Catalonia and Valencia. This step had been facilitated by an agreement reached in the Spanish Congress on May 18 2004 by the parties PSOE, ERC and IV-IU-ICV parties, which stated a will to "resolve the conflict" caused by the confiscation of documents in the Civil War and their continued retention in Salamanca. The terms of this agreement stated "that the legitimate aspirations of several Catalan institutions and other institutions, amongst which are the Catalan Parliament and the Valencian "Corts", shall be reconciled with the unity of the current General Archive". For the Dignity Commission, despite being a formula that improved on the impasse experienced under the former government, the text was not enthusiastically welcomed because it endorsed the "unity of the archive" of the current Archivo General. The fact it failed to assure that documents will definitely be returned was also seen as disturbing. Time will tell if there is real political will behind this initiative to ensure justice or if it merely seeks to allow the new Spanish government time to manoeuvre. Catalan society and the Dignity Commission must continue to follow developments closely until all the documents are recovered.