

May 27th 1959

Sir,

We, the undersigned, members of the Anglo-Catalan Society, have read with grave disquiet the report in the Times of May 18th that the annual meeting of the Institute of Catalan Studies in Barcelona was broken up on official orders and that the names of all those attending were taken by the police as they arrived.

This academic organisation, formed some fifty years ago on the model of the Institut de France, is devoted to the study of Catalan culture and has, in the past, welcomed and honoured at its meetings speakers from many European universities, including those who write this present letter. Similar actions by the present Spanish government have, as many of your readers will know, taken place only too frequently in Catalonia since the end of the Civil War, and the general result has been to deprive nearly a fifth of the population of Spain from having any proper instruction in or even elementary knowledge of its linguistic and cultural heritage. It is difficult to see how this can be reconciled with "the strongest and most loyal expression of Spain's intention to collaborate fully in the complete fulfilment of all the aims of UNESCO stated in its charter" (the words of the Spanish delegate in 1952). Perhaps this refers to the fact that now one can send private greeting cards in Catalan instead of writing them in Spanish and submitting them to the Censor.

If there is any reason other than a deliberate effort to curtail academic freedom on political grounds, we have failed to unearth it. Perhaps the latest ambassador to the Court of St. James can explain what the authorities considered provocative about the main address, "Catalonia in prehistoric and medieval times", which was to be read by an ex-rector of Barcelona University and for many years an honoured member of the staff of UNESCO. Generalissimo Franco might have at least learned from the late comrade Stalin that even the efforts of an extreme dictator failed to uproot and destroy regional loyalties and traditions.

Yours faithfully,