

In any further communication on
this subject, please quote

No.

PB1029/14.

and address, not to any person by
name, but to—

The Under-Secretary of State,
Foreign Office,
London, S.W. 1.

(Fold here)

ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE

Professor F. Pierce,

President,

"The Anglo-Catalan Society",

University of Sheffield,

SHEFFIELD

Yates.

FOREIGN OFFICE

(Fold here)

TUCK IN THIS FLAP

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The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign

Affairs presents his compliments to

Professor Frank Pierce, The
Anglo-Catalan Society

and, by direction of the Secretary of State,

acknowledges the receipt of his

letter of the July 24th, 1956, which
is receiving attention.

Foreign Office,

July 31, 1956.

24th July, 1956

H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Office,
Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.

Sir,

The Committee of the Anglo-Catalan Society, concerned by an apparent cessation in the BBC's broadcasts in the Catalan language, on June 20th of this year approached the Corporation with a request for information about this seeming change in policy.

In his reply to our letter, the Controller European Services prefaced his remarks with the statement that the responsibility for deciding in what languages (and how much in the chosen languages) the BBC broadcasts to Europe lies not with the BBC but with the Foreign Office. He then gave us to understand that BBC broadcasts in Catalan have been discontinued, that Spanish regional-interest programmes will now be broadcast in Castilian, and that no reasons have been given to listeners in the Catalan-speaking areas of Europe for the cessation of BBC broadcasts in their language. Indeed, it would appear that this fundamental change in policy has been treated as no more than a change in programme material.

The Committee of this Society have been asked by many friends in Catalonia why these Catalan-language transmissions, of an essentially non-controversial nature (as more than one of the undersigned can testify from participation in them), have been discontinued; why the transmitters of Prague, Belgrade and Moscow should be permitted a monopoly in Catalan-language broadcasts - particularly in view of the highly controversial nature of their programme material and its presentation; and why the BBC has said nothing about this change in policy. The

Committee have been unable to find any satisfactory answer to these queries; a request that the BBC inform listeners to the Catalan regional programmes why these have been discontinued has been met with the statement that this is not customary.

We the undersigned wish, therefore, to draw your attention to the unfortunate results of the cessation of Catalan broadcasts and to urge upon you the desirability of beginning them again together with the other programmes in regional Peninsular languages. Since, as has been said, these broadcasts are cultural and academic, we feel sure that the BBC would again be performing an important task in international goodwill.

We remain, Sir, your obedient servants,

Prof. Frank Pierce (University of Sheffield)
President

P. Russell-Gebbett (University of Nottingham)
Honorary Secretary

G.W. Ribbans (University of Sheffield)
Honorary Treasurer

Helen F. Grant (Girton College, Cambridge)
Member of Committee

In any further communication
on this subject, please quote

No. PB 1029/15
and address—

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but to—

"The Under-Secretary of State,"
Foreign Office,
London, S.W.1.

FOREIGN OFFICE.

S.W.1.

August 2, 1956.

Sir,

I am directed by Mr. Secretary Lloyd to acknowledge receipt of the letter written by your Committee on the 24th of July about the cessation of the British Broadcasting Corporation's broadcasts in the Catalan language.

The decision to terminate these broadcasts and replace them by broadcasts in Castilian was taken after careful consideration. It was felt that such transmissions which rarely related to the United Kingdom itself, were less a contribution to the national interest than a concession to regional sentiment in Spain, while the use of Castilian to fill in the time formerly occupied by broadcasts in Catalan, Galician and Basque should enable a wider circle of listeners genuinely interested in this country to hear the B.B.C.

I am,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

Cc B Stewart

The President,
Committee of the Anglo-Catalan Society.

Reply(Copy)

Sheffield
15:viii:56

Dear Sir,

I wish to thank you for your letter of August 2nd concerning the cessation of broadcasts in Catalan by the BBC. I shall communicate the contents of your letter to my committee when it meets again in September. Meanwhile, may I make the point that Catalonia has long been strongly pro-British in its sympathies and interests (for example, much more English literature exists in Catalan translation than in Castilian), indeed, much more so than any other part of Spain. To those of us who have taken part in BBC broadcasts in Catalan and who know the interest they aroused, there can be no doubt that they were a distinct "contribution to the national interest." The substitution of Castilian for Catalan programmes can only lower our prestige in Catalonia.

Yours faithfully,

President, Anglo-Catalan Society
Professor of Spanish