

PRESENTATION

Present-day research into communication provides one of the principal political and epistemological challenges of communication.

The tendency is discovered to confuse effective participation in political life with token participation, and the observation is made that the apparent proliferation of broadcasting stations is cancelled out by the concentration of communicative production.

The functions of the mass media in an emergency situation such as the 23rd. February 1981 should be explained in accordance with their own peculiar structural conditions, conditions which will allow of no fundamental changes.

THE MASS MEDIA IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

Both the political situation on the 23rd. February in Spain, and the aftermath of the kidnapping of Aldo Moro in Italy almost three years previously are beyond any doubt analogous as far as the reaction of the mass media is concerned. Shortly after Moro's kidnapping, an investigation was carried out in Rome into the role of information services in an emergency situation. The «centrality» assumed by the media in such situations was verified, as well as the appearance of a new awareness of moral, political and professional responsibilities with regard to the work of the professional informant in an extreme situation. Because

of its undoubted interest, in this number of ANÁLISI we offer a sample of the results of this investigation.

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ECONOMIC POWER AND POWER OF COMMUNICATING

There is a close relation between the cost of every form of technology communication and the size of the audience reached by each medium. Grouping the media according to their scale of audiences they can be divided into four categories of increasing costs: microcommunication, meso-communication, macrocommunication and megacommunication. The low-cost and socially powerful FM radio stations show an interesting exception to this rule. The social productivity of the economic investments in the media technologies is moderate for the micromedia, poor for the mesomedia, good for the macromedia and very good for the most expensive electronic megamedia (TV and radio networks, satellites).

RESPECT FOR THE PERSON IN THE SPANISH CONSTITUTION

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 establishes the maintenance of personal freedom and rights solidly and firmly protected by the Law. Spanish laws may not transgress the universal principle of human rights, which are placed at the pinnacle of Spanish Justice, above the Constitution itself.

The freedom of information is limited by those rights recognised in the Constitution itself, especially the right of honour, of privacy, of one's own image, and the protection of young people and infants.

Privacy and information are two conflicting concepts, both defended by the Constitution. The human person is often ill-treated in the interest of information. Those who consider that their privacy has been invaded may have recourse to the Constitutional Tribunal and even to the European Commission for Human Rights.

THE MEDIA AND THE 23rd. FEBRUARY

The live broadcast of the attack on the Spanish Parliament brought the media into action as events developed. The media had their share both in isolating the attempted coup as well as forming public opinion.

The radio was the outstanding communication medium on the night of the 23rd. February. Taken as a whole, it proved to be of vital importance in keeping open the communication channel between a society and its democratic institutions.

The press was irregular in its reactions. Some dailies, such as El País and Diario 16 came out on the very night of the attempted coup, while others followed their normal publication schedule. The press carried off an impressive feat of collecting and collating information. Thanks to photographs taken of the Spanish Parliament by EFE Agency reporters, dailies were able

to publish the first pictures of the coup attempt.

Television was not up to the communication requirements of Spanish society in such a situation. The democratic overhaul of Spanish television is still in its early stages. Television's «scoop» was to record the assault on the Spanish Parliament.

ELEVEN NORTH-ATLANTIC VERSIONS OF THE 23rd. FEBRUARY

Eleven general-information weeklies from six North-Atlantic states provide, with their versions immediately after the attempted coup on the 23rd. February, the confirmation of the prevailing common production model in present-day journalism which was designed by the US industrial machine. Within its guidelines, Time provides the best report, and Der Spiegel — by means of an interview — the most plausible explanation. A structural analysis and the study on comparative politics which Europeo and L'Espresso respectively publish later on, cannot be made using this hegemonic model.

THE AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENT OF THE 23rd. FEBRUARY

Spanish Television «spontaneously» produced the best documentary in its history on the 23rd. February, when its cameras

installed in the Spanish parliament building in Madrid were witness to the assault led by Lieutenant-Colonel Tejero. Nevertheless this priceless historic testimony was not broadcast live, but was recorded and put on the air only after many hours' delay. An analysis of the conditions of production and broadcasting of the document, together with the structure of its discourse, forms the subject of this report.

STATE, ORDER(S) AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The operation known as 23-F in Spain, —i.e. the attempted coup d'état on the 23rd. February 1981, led by Generals Mi-

lans del Bosch, Armada, by Lieutenant-Colonel Tejero and other high-ranking army officers— failed as a classic military takeover. It would be quite a different matter to analyse its political «effectiveness», and therefore its dissuasive-persuasive success as an integral part of a major operation of reform of the previous dictatorial State and the consolidation of the new model, comparable to those already existing in Western Europe. The main aim of this paper is to show how the events of the 23rd. February represent the climax of the transformation of the Spanish state, but maintaining the hypothesis that it was all possible due to the new type of control exercised on the main channels and flow of information characteristic of industrialised societies.