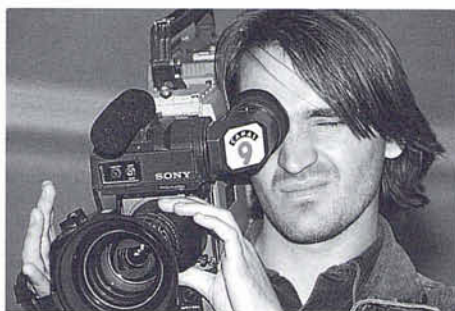


“CANAL 9”



A NEW TELEVISION CHANNEL, “CANAL 9”, HAS APPEARED IN THE PAÍS VALENCIÀ RECENTLY, A SIGN OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF CATALAN-LANGUAGE TELEVISION.



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Television in the Catalan-speaking territories has been consolidated in the last few months with the apparition of a new channel in the País Valencià, "Canal 9". This is a public channel, directly linked to the autonomous administration, and its creation was foreseen in the Statute of Autonomy. Broadcasting mainly in Catalan, in the Valencian dialectal variant, it has soon become an important communications medium. Its is unquestionably one of the most important initiatives on the part of the Valencian autonomous government, with its monotone socialist leaning.

It is a curious fact –and something unknown in the rest of Europe– that one of the prime objectives of Spain's autonomous governments has been the creation of television channels. Catalonia, Galicia, the Basque Country, Madrid and Andalusia all have their own channels, and now there is Valencian television. The keen observer of the situation in the peninsula will quickly realise that behind the television phenomenon there is a serious cultural and linguistic problem which has yet to be resolved. It is no coincidence that in most of the territories mentioned the language of the country is not Castilian, and in spite of this the national language is often in a delicate situation or quite simply in danger, as in the case of Basque.

The creation of local televisions has not therefore been a response to the whim of the politicians who want to lay their hands on such a formidable instrument of pressure and popular influence. The demands go back a long way, as this has been seen as one of the best ways of giving national cohesion to a commu-

nity whose external signs are threatened by its lack of resources.

The case of Valencia, the latest, has provided a perfect demonstration of the importance of television in a modern, developed society. In this respect, there is a tale to tell, one with widespread political and social repercussions. Catalan television, TV3, which broadcasts in Catalan, was gradually introduced into the País Valencià, thanks to the favourable reaction on the part of many civic associations and town halls, who saw in TV3 the chance to receive a new and competitive communications offer. Since TV3 is run by the Catalan autonomous government, it couldn't legally broadcast to the País Valencià, which is a separate autonomous community. But popular pressure and the lack of a legal framework allowed almost two million Valencians to see Catalan television. These events in the field of communications caused great excitement in Valencian society, since it showed, without problems or conflicts, that Valencians and Catalans could share the same means of communication in the same language. The unscientific arguments of those who claimed the two nations spoke two different languages collapsed overnight. At the same time, it was also shown that TV3 had no colonialist intentions toward the Valencians, in spite of being controlled by a public institution with a nationalist majority, and not a socialist one, like in Valencia.

In the short run, though, this political duality was to be a death blow to the continuity of TV3 as the television of a single linguistic area. The government in Madrid, in accordance with its ideological colleagues in Valencia, proceeded

to close the TV3 transmitters in the País Valencià, to help the introduction of the newly created Valencian Television foreseen in the Statute of Autonomy. In other words, at a historic moment in which everybody, throughout the western world, is introducing communications without borders and in which with a simple parabolic aerial one can receive television broadcasts from the four corners of the earth, the Spanish government decided to forbid the Valencians to receive a neighbouring television channel spoken in their own language. Needless to say, the Spanish government has done nothing to stop the reception of foreign television broadcasts in Spain. That would be absurd and troglodytic.

Obviously, this action was not a result of the wish to enforce non-existent laws so much as to stop the linguistic and cultural reunion of the communities of Catalonia and Valencia. This is a significant event which shows the importance of audio-visual communications in modern societies. Centuries of separation and division were beginning to be overcome thanks to the installation of simple television aerials.

Valencian Television has now been broadcasting for some months and has a large audience. TV3 has returned to the País Valencià, but will have to start from scratch, because it has been assigned a different frequency. The case of these two television channels and the political and even commercial passions they have released are undoubtedly worthy of study on the part of more than one theoretician in any country in the world. ■