

Presentation

The attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004, four days before the Spanish general elections of 14 March, brought about an exceptional situation both in the political and media systems. The debate over the impact of the tragic events on the behaviour of the mass media and its impact on mobilising opinions and votes is still well and truly alive. As a consequence of the attacks, the political parties ended the electoral campaign that same day. The attacks ushered in a dramatic 72-hour period in which the Spanish people were left in suspense about the consequences of the bombings and who had perpetrated them, as they prepared to go to the polls on 14 March. The media, and in particular the major television stations, were forced to tackle the exceptional situation to keep their viewers informed. In this regard, the exceptional events awarded absolute pre-eminence to the Spanish Government's sources in supplying information. Along with the other media organisations, the major television stations took on an indisputably central role in the public construction of this story of human tragedy and political conflict, and in the awarding of responsibilities for managing the available information.

The Catalonia Broadcasting Council presented the report entitled *The Television Treatment of the 11 March Attacks in Madrid and Subsequent Events Through to the Spanish Elections of 14 March* to the Parliament of Catalonia on 6 April 2004. It also presented a number of evaluative considerations on the television treatment of the attacks and the subsequent events through to the election night of 14 March, in which the PSOE was proclaimed the winner of the electoral contest. Having seen the importance that the Madrid bombings had on television information and programming, the CAC immediately proceeded to record, catalogue and classify all the programmes on the Spanish stations TVE-1, Antena 3 TV and Tele-5, and on the Catalan station TV3. This documentary material, which comprised the empirical basis of the abovementioned report and recommendations from the CAC, was used to prepare a broader and more systematic study, published here in this double issue of *Quaderns del CAC*.

We are sure that this effort on the part of the CAC technical services department shall be useful for analysts, academics and journalists interested in the issues it covers.

This double issue No. 19-20 of the *Quaderns* is also exceptional because it has been prepared entirely by the CAC's technical services department. We open with an article that puts the issue into a political context, from the CAC board member Joan Botella ("The Ides of March: Political Crisis, Media Crisis?") and continue with two articles on theoretical and methodological contextualisation by, respectively, Andreu Casero ("The Media and 11 March: The Construction of an 'Exceptional Case'") and Carles López ("Methodology and Design Processes of the Report on the 11 March Attacks in Madrid"). The next two articles, by Carmina Puig and Laura Rodas, examine the reaction of the stations on 11 and 12 March in terms of programming ("Television Programming on 11 and 12 March") and information ("Television Information on 11 and 12 March"). In the last three articles, Isabel Sánchez focuses the analysis on the day of reflection ("Television Programming and Information on the Day of Reflection"), Anna Estrada on the appearance of the actors ("The Actors On Screen") and Carmen Ortín on the election night of 14 March ("The Information of the Results of 14 March"). Finally, the 'Observatory' section features an article by Martí Petit entitled "Wi-Fi. The Opportunity to Broaden the International Bandwidth" and a report by Fernando Carderera entitled, "The Scientific and Technological Policies of Finland: New Technologies and the Information Society in Finland".

Josep Gifreu
Director