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## The failure of the Francoist Movement Press Group to convert *La Voz de Castilla* into a prototype to save its newspapers

**Abstract**

The situation of the Press Group of the Francoist Movement was, by 1970, very worrying. Half of its newspaper titles, among which *La Voz de Castilla* (1945–1976), were recording substantial losses and low circulation rates. A marketing study stands out among the measures that the National Press Delegation took to relaunch this newspaper, the conclusions of which it intended to apply to other newspapers of the press group facing similar circumstances. This hitherto unknown marketing study is brought to light in this paper through an in-depth study of the causes that contributed to the failure of the Francoist Movement press, in a context marked by economic development and greater press freedom enshrined in the *Ley de Prensa e Imprenta* [Press Law of 1966]. The marketing study, with some results that could be extrapolated to other failing newspapers of the network, was a damp squib. It was withheld from the management of the Burgos newspaper and never applied. Readers turned their backs on *La Voz de Castilla*, because of its markedly ideological stance and because it was so closely controlled from Madrid that they considered it was not defending the interests of Burgos.

**Keywords**

**Burgos, Spain, marketing study, Francoism, *La Voz de Castilla*, Press of the Movement.**

### 1. Introduction

The panorama for daily newspapers, which up until the *Ley de Prensa e Imprenta de 1966* (LPI) [Press Law of 1966] had presented a uniform and monotonous landscape, started to change towards the end of the 1960s. The uniformity that the newspapers had to observe during the enforcement of the totalitarian Press Law of 1938 (Barrera, 1995a: 44) as a consequence of previous censure, guidelines, and control over sources of information (Sinova, 1989; Pizarroso, 1989) would give way to a more varied universe of journalism where the newspapers would emphasize their individual qualities.

With the Press Law of 1966 came the “Fraga spring” (Cisquella et al., 2002: 27), as that new period of openness was called, in which greater freedom of expression, the suppression of previous censure laws, and freedom for the firm were affirmed. Pure liberalizing rhetoric, a facelift for the regime to gain legitimacy abroad and to adapt to the intense economic and social changes that the country was living through. The law was still typical of the Francoist dictatorship: the rights that were recognized in it were left dead in the water immediately afterwards, due to the serious limitations and restrictions that they incorporated (Dueñas, 1969; Fernández Areal, 1971, 1973; Molinero, 1971; Riquer, 2010). The journalists had to handle everything with kid gloves to sift through this ambiguous legal framework, which was in addition applied in an arbitrary and discretionary way against troublesome media. Self-censure was rife for fear of fines, seizures, suspensions, definitive closures, dismissal of directors... a whole sanctioning apparatus that contributed to placing extraordinary constraints on freedom of expression.

Nevertheless, and despite all these precautions, the majority of experts coincide in pointing out that the Press Law of 1966 led to an improvement in the practice of professional journalism and they recognize that it represented a crack in the wall that newspapers and above all magazines exploited, to open up the path towards their liberalization (Albert, 1990; Martín de la Guardia, 2008; Seoane & Saiz, 2007; Terrón, 1981).

It was precisely this timid liberalization of news media that overcame the anti-newspaper discourse of the early years of Francoism, plagued by profoundly monotonous and uniform news reports (Martín de la Guardia, 2008: 31), where all the newspapers appeared to be edited with a single template and responded to a “totalizing uniformity” (Fernández Areal, 1971: 174). The newspapers set themselves up as a sort of parallel parliament, a forum for the exchange of political ideas, which went as far as the arbitrary decisions of the Ministry of Information permitted it to go. Some journalists sought to exploit that “semi-freedom” (Barrera, 1995b: 450) to convert themselves into spokespersons defending renewal and progressively pushing back the limits of that freedom of expression. There was also an increased number of publications, as a consequence of the freedom of the firm recognized in the new legal framework. In 1970, 118 newspapers were published in Spain, 4 of which on sports, 4 three-weekly editions and 33 Monday Broadsheets. Of the total of all newspapers, 75 were private property and 43 belonged to state agencies (Pizarroso, 1994: 315). With regard to their locations (Nieto, 1973: 182), there was a concentration of sales in Madrid (33.59%), followed by Barcelona (20%).

The Press Law of 1966 changed the panorama for journalism and would bring even further consequences (Chuliá, 2001: 169–200) for the three groups of newspaper firms: a) those of the Movement, which defended the fundamental essence of the regime. The liberalization of the press did not bring with it a wider margin for maneuver, but on the contrary: as the Government felt increasingly vulnerable, it tied down those newspapers even further. b) Those opposed to the Movement, a press group standing in opposition to the regime, within which very few newspapers and many magazines were active. *Madrid* stood out among the newspapers and, among the magazines, *Triunfo*, *Destino*, *Cambio 16* and *Cuadernos para el Diálogo*. c) The more prudent ones, less likely to exasperate the Government. The paradigm was *ABC*, but they also included *La Vanguardia* and *Ya*. The evolution of the circulation rates of these three groups was unequal. The first group lost readers, the opposition press gained them and the circulation rates of the intermediate group varied.

### 1.1. The Press Group of the Movement

As is known, the Press Group of the Movement emerged at the height of the Civil War as a consequence of the seizures by the Falange of Republican newspapers, as well as the assets

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and patrimony of the parties and groups integrated in the Popular Front (Álvarez et al., 1989; Bullón & Togores, 2002; García et al., 2002; González, 1990; Zalbidea, 1996). They constituted authentic spoils of war that, following the Decree of Unification of the FET (*Falange Española Tradicionalista*) [Traditionalist Spanish Phalanx] and of the JONS (*Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista*) [Committees of the National Syndicalist Offensive] of April 1937, came to depend on the embryonic dictatorship. Nevertheless, the press group of the Movement would not be officially launched until the Law of 13 July, 1940, had been passed. In the meantime, it had already been converted into an authentic emporium of media sources, with over 40 newspapers scattered across the different Spanish provinces under the iron rule of Madrid.

These media were not launched with a commercial or a lucrative end-purpose, but a political one, in as much as their purpose was not to make a profit, but to disseminate the essential principles of the State. Far from proposing commercial objectives, they would be “half political, half cultural” (Iglesias, 1975: 70–71), so they had to sustain themselves with subsidies from the National Delegation of Press and Propaganda [*Delegación Nacional de Prensa y Propaganda*]. However, “here lies one of the dramas of this very wide network of communications media” (Martín de la Guardia, 1994: 61), because over time they had to compete under the laws of the market.

All of the newspapers of this chain, the flagship of which was *Arriba* (Madrid), concerned with the mission of legitimizing the dictatorship, offered the same content, recounted in the same way, however geographically distant they were. Following the Press Law of 1966, the controls over them would not be relaxed and the newspapers continued to be tied down. Even though they upheld the essential message of the regime, they adapted their discourse to the new circumstances of openness. The propaganda therefore continued, although it was oriented towards the interior and exterior necessities of the regime.

The decade of the seventies constituted a tipping point for these official newspapers (Martín de la Guardia, 2000). Their sales dropped and their losses accumulated day by day. The private press groups were gaining ground among the news media (Alfárez, 1986: 19), so much so that their circulation figures that had represented 58.8% (973,423 copies) in 1945, rose to 74.0% (2,304,619 copies) in 1970. On the contrary, the newspapers of the Movement lost influence and their circulation dropped from 41.2% (604,772 copies) in 1945 to 26% in 1970 (Davara, 2005: 134).

By 1971, a year in which there were 40 newspapers of the Movement, only 8 were controlled by the *Oficina de Justificación de la Difusión*<sup>1</sup> (Iglesias, 1975: 72–73), and none reached circulation figures of 50,000 copies, except for *Marca*. Of those 40 newspapers, 26 had a circulation of fewer than 10,000 copies. In view of these poor figures, “their political weight” was “more than doubtful” (Bustamante, 1982: 199), taking into account that their existence was justified on political grounds. An irrational economic management and the constant loss of readers, as well as their lack of political clout, would lead to calls for their reform that were periodically voiced, but always delayed by the static inertia of the regime (Martín de la Guardia, 1994; Pascual, 1993; Zalbidea, 1996).

One of the newspapers of the Movement that experienced this decline and maintained little less than a testimonial circulation was a newspaper printed in Burgos, *La Voz de Castilla* (1945–1976); the last newspaper founded by the press group of the Movement and one of the first to close down. It had since its beginnings been failing. In the year of its launch, it generated losses and after 1960 constant threats of closure weighed down upon its head.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office for the Justification of Circulation, founded in 1964 on the model of the Audit Bureau of Circulation of the United States was responsible for monitoring and certifying the circulation and the sales of newspapers and magazines.

The sixties were especially hard for the newspaper, absolutely abandoned by the National Press and Radio Delegation of the Movement [*Delegación Nacional de Prensa y Radio del Movimiento*] (DNPYR) –on which these newspapers were dependent–, which far from implementing measures aimed at the modernization of its installations and equipment, left it to sink even deeper in the mire by applying a very extreme policy of cuts (Sanz, 2015).

In 1970, the newspaper group became aware of the situation, in which not only the Burgos newspaper, but half of the other newspaper titles found themselves, and it set up an investment plan to relaunch the most indebted newspapers and those with more precarious infrastructures (Montabes, 1989: 40). A total of 3,5 million Pesetas were invested in a new headquarters for the *La Voz de Castilla* and in the renovation of its obsolete machinery. In addition, and surprisingly, the DNPYR decided to commission a marketing study with the idea that its conclusions would help save the Burgos newspaper and others living through similar circumstances. The management of the newspaper knew nothing of this initiative. The directors of the press group withheld it and never made it public. It was, therefore, never shared and has only now been brought to light.

## 1.2. Official press versus private press

This paper presents an analysis of an up until now unknown marketing study that was commissioned by the DNPYR for *La Voz de Castilla* in 1972. Its examination will allow us to delve deeper into the reasons why the respondents in Burgos increasingly distanced themselves from the official newspaper and supported the private and veteran *Diario de Burgos*, in the new context of heightened economic development –the capital was experiencing an economic boom (Andrés, 2014: 82) as a consequence of its new status as a Pole of Industrial Promotion and with strong growth in its population, due to immigration from rural villages (Palomares, 2002: 607)–, political flexibility, more openness towards the exterior, and the liberalization of the press,.

Although the marketing study was conducted in order to research the provincial market and to establish on a scientific basis the reasons why *La Voz* was left without readers while its competitor was gaining them, some of the conclusions could certainly be extrapolated to other provinces where the newspapers of the Movement were also in decline and the newspapers managed by firms were irreversibly winning the circulation war. It was considered so by the DNPYR, which sought to give the market research of *La Voz* greater scope: not only would it solve the problem in Burgos, but it aspired to “initiate the application of a system of renovation that, with the necessary adaptations, would apply to other newspapers of the Chain”<sup>2</sup>.

The citizens of Burgos held an opinion of the newspaper of the Movement that might well have coincided with the opinions of other readers who were distancing themselves from the official press in other parts of Spain. It is highly plausible that the assessments that are reflected in the marketing study would have coincided with those of other readers of the provincial press, if we consider that the whole network maintained a very orthodox line with the orders issued from Madrid; messages previously prepared as notes or press releases after the Press Law of 1966 were sent to the editorial offices; they drew from the same sources –Efe and its branches Cifra and Alfil, as well as Pyresa, that belonged to the same press group as the Movement–; and, they had the same collaborators. We therefore consider that we have a relevant piece of market research, even though it focuses on the province of Burgos, because it also helps us to understand the reasons why readers from other provinces would have lost confidence in the Falange newspapers.

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<sup>2</sup>Correspondence from the Economic-Administrative Director to the Director of the Commercial Division. Madrid, 8 February 1972. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505.

Why were the private newspapers read more often? What aspects of the Movement did they value? Which sections were preferred? What differences were there in the way they processed the news? What was the real influence of the *La Voz de Castilla* and the *Diario de Burgos*...? These are some of the questions that this study will attempt to answer.

## **2. *La Voz de Castilla*, on the “black list” of the Press of the Movement**

The losses of *La Voz de Castilla* continued to rise throughout the 1970s, as mentioned in a report of April 1970 produced on the occasion of the visit of the national Press delegate, Alberto Leiva Rey, to the newspaper in Burgos<sup>3</sup>. In 1968 and in 1969, they had already reached two million Pesetas, in each financial year, thereby duplicating the amount of 1 million that, at the start of the decade, had been set as a limit on the losses that *La Voz de Castilla* should not exceed. And that was without having made investments in machinery and without having increased its print runs. Its circulation figures also underwent a significant reversal, in as much as they dropped from 1,344 daily copies in 1960 to 1,095 in 1969.

Any comparison with its competitor, the *Diario de Burgos*, explained in the aforementioned report as “strongly linked to the principles of the liberal monarchy of Alfonso XIII, who has now inherited Estoril”, held no ground. The print run of the *Diario de Burgos* was around 10,000 or 11,000 copies, so it represented “a newspaper of great influence in the capital. It has a wide circulation, as it is a doyen of the press that will very soon celebrate its eightieth birthday”<sup>4</sup>.

*La Voz de Castilla* could not have ended the decade in a worse way. In the five-year study completed by the Central Administration (1965-1970), over the past year, the losses increased to 147.5%, such that they would rise to over 5.1 million Pesetas –with expenditure at 10.9 million and income at 5.8 million Pesetas–, and that was due to a excessive rise in publication costs and general expenditure, as well as a considerable reduction in income from advertising<sup>5</sup>.

With these data, the newspaper was placed on the “black list” on which 23 other firms were found from the total of 50 that then formed part of the Press of the Movement. Of those, only 26 generated a profit. Among the most indebted were *Arriba* (Madrid), *La Prensa* (Barcelona), *Solidaridad Nacional* (Barcelona), *Jornada* (Valencia), *Libertad* (Valladolid), *El Pueblo Gallego* (Vigo), *Amanecer* (Zaragoza) and *Arriba España* (Pamplona)<sup>6</sup>.

Circulation at the end of 1970 was truly worrying. While the circulation rate of the *Diario de Burgos* stood at around 14,164 copies and that of *Hoja del Lunes* recorded 1,166, *La Voz de Castilla* was in third position with 1,008 daily copies, representing 6.1% of the Press Group belonging to the Movement<sup>7</sup>. In terms of the population of the province of Burgos, estimated at 342,003 inhabitants in 1970, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics, the market share of *La Voz* was 4.7%<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Report on *La Voz de Castilla*. Madrid, 8 April 1970. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.21 Caja 12 TOP 53/15.607-15.709.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> List of expenditure, income and results of *La Voz de Castilla* from 1965 to 1970. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.15 Caja 181 TOP 53/17.408-17.503.

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum of the Plans of Income and Expenditure of the operation of the Press Group of the Movement, and the budget of small investments for 1970. National Delegate of the DNPvR of the Movement, Alberto Leiva Rey. Madrid, 7 March 1970. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 1.29 Caja 41 TOP 53/23.201-23.501.

<sup>7</sup> Circulation figures of *La Voz de Castilla*. 1970. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.15 Caja 181 TOP 53/17.408-17.503.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

## 2.1. The arrival of Cano Vera

On 12 June 1968, the new director of *La Voz de Castilla*, and the youngest in Spain, José Juan Cano Vera, took up his position<sup>9</sup>, having been posted from *El Eco* (Canarias), where he had been editor-in-chief. The managers of the Press Group of the Movement brought him up to date forthwith on the newspaper, whose management was now in his hands, and the burden that it represented for the press group. What is more, they talked over the two roads to choose: “Either promote it or abandon any task aimed at its survival”<sup>10</sup>. Cano thought he would be able to save it from ruin, if two conditions were met: investments, on the one hand, and a gradual change in the contents towards less fundamentalist and more open expressions of opinion, on the other hand, in harmony with the changes that were taking place in Spanish society towards the end of the sixties. In his opinion, it was still possible to save it: “it’s an opportunity that’s requested before the final coup-de-grâce”<sup>11</sup>.

Cano Vera was insistent in his requests for new investments and the expansion of the staff that the newspaper required. Those in charge of the press group were fully aware of the problems associated with such a small staff, formed of 38 people<sup>12</sup>, despite which “they have achieved an active team that can unashamedly be placed, with regard to their activity and good behavior, among the most important of our firm”. The director was described as “the engine of this team”, and was recognized as investing “enthusiasm and passion” in his work: “Against the inertia of so many of our newspapers,” it was explained, “bundled into unchangeable formats that each day make them appear repetitions of themselves, *La Voz de Castilla* shows itself to be a lively, changing and suggestive newspaper”<sup>13</sup>.

The announcement of the imminent demolition of the headquarters of the newspaper in 1971, located at the time in the former *Casa del Pueblo*, in the *calle Fernán González*, led to its abandonment. While the search for new installations and their refurbishment were underway, *La Voz* moved its printing works to Valladolid, to the workshops of *Libertad*, while its editorial team remained in the city of Burgos. On 12 October 1971, the newspaper would inaugurate its pristine headquarters, which meant respectable premises in the *avenida Reyes Católicos* and the renovation of its printing works.

Their opening constituted an upheaval, as both the management of the Press Group of the Movement and the *Voz de Castilla* itself, with Cano Vera still at the helm, wished to exploit the investment, so that the newspaper would once again gain ground and attempt to take off.

Months after the opening, the managers in Burgos considered that the panorama was “difficult but not desperate”. They remained convinced that “with effort, work and resources”, although they could not expect miracles, it would be possible to achieve “concrete and positive objectives”<sup>14</sup>.

In the situation report produced to understand the needs to be addressed before the move to the new headquarters, attention was focused on the “very intense competition” that the *Diario de Burgos* represented, which had resources that were “the most up-to-date with regard to technology”<sup>15</sup>. The competition that other newspapers from Bilbao and San Sebastián represented was reviewed, as well as those from Madrid: *Pueblo*, *Ya*, *ABC* and

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<sup>9</sup> *La Voz de Castilla*, 13-VI-1968.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from the director of *La Voz de Castilla*, José Juan Cano Vera, to the technical director of the Press Group of the Movement, Jesús Vasallo. Burgos, 15 July 1968. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.23 Caja 12 TOP 53/15.607-15.709.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Explanatory memorandum of the Current State of the Expenditure and Income Plan for the year 1969. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 1.29 Caja 41 TOP 53/23.201-23.501.

<sup>13</sup> Notes on *La Voz de Castilla*. Madrid, 8 April 1970. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.21 Caja 12 TOP 53/15.607-15.709.

<sup>14</sup> Management report of *La Voz de Castilla*. Burgos, May 1971. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.23 52/15.234.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

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*Informaciones*, and the radio stations: Radio Castilla, qualified as “millionaires”; Radio Popular as, “not up to standard”, and Radio Juventud, “with difficulties”. In Aranda and Miranda, the *Cadena Azul de Radiodifusión* (CAR) had set up two other stations broadcasting on FM (frequency modulation), but more profitable than those of Burgos<sup>16</sup>.

Despite the new stage that the newspaper was beginning, what is certain is that both its results and its sales were still very far from making it profitable. If in 1971, it was in the red by 7,138,747 Pesetas, by 1974, its debts had increased to 9,721,676.

The director of the Production Division could not explain the fact that newspapers like *La Voz de Castilla* and *La Gaceta Regional* (Salamanca), *El Correo de Zamora*, *Jaén* and *Sevilla* saw their losses increase despite having either new installations or modern technology, or both at the same time. He noted the need to “take urgent measures” to avoid negative results in those newspapers in which significant investments had been made<sup>17</sup>.

### **3. Burgos, test bench for the press group**

The enthusiasm of Cano Vera to breathe new life into the publication, perceived by the national managers, linked to his good relationship with the then technical director of the Press of the Movement, Felix Morales, meant that the possibility of relaunching the newspaper, which had entered a new stage with the latest investments, was taken very seriously in Madrid. From being a newspaper that had been left abandoned to its fate, and at all times weighed down by the threat of closure, it now appeared that it had awoken the attention of the directors of the press group, who were ready to join the battle to help it move forward.

The Technical Committee of the DNPYR had positioned itself on the frontline of that battle, at the start of 1972. It was this Committee that initiated the marketing study of the readers of *La Voz de Castilla*, which were completed with other aims by the Commercial Division responsible for distribution, sales, and publicity<sup>18</sup>.

The director of the Commercial Division was in full agreement with the cross-cutting work between the departments of the Press Group of the Movement that commenced with *La Voz de Castilla*, which was going to be converted into a prototype of how to save a failing newspaper, a situation that other newspapers of this news emporium also experienced:

I attach great importance to the matter of *La Voz de Castilla* as it gives us the opportunity to establish new systems for distribution, sales promotion and advertising and it even becomes a challenge for our organizational capacity.

My work will, principally, consist of coordinating all commercial aspects [...] in such a way that in a few months we will manage to turn *La Voz de Castilla* into a type of newspaper the experience of which we can bring to others with similar characteristics that are, right now, in need of new strategies for action<sup>19</sup>.

The DNPYR was willing to study the reasons why its sales were so low with a view to establishing measures to reinvigorate them. And so it was that on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 1972, an appointment was fixed for the managers of the Technical Committee, the Commercial and Research Division, as well as the heads of Publicity and Distribution of the Press of the Movement, who together with the director and administrator of *La Voz de Castilla*, met to

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Report of the director of the Technical Committee, José Antonio Serrano Montalvo, following his visit to *La Voz de Castilla*. Madrid, 19 February 1972. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (o3) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505.

<sup>19</sup> Correspondence of the Director of the Commercial Division to the Economics-Administrative Director, Madrid, 10 of February 1972. Ibidem.

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study the possibilities of increasing the advertising revenue and the sales of the newspaper. Each of the senior managers of the press group then released a report setting out the measures, which were then adopted. We can highlight the step taken by the head of Advertising Promotion, who considered that advertising was allocated “few resources”, given that only the administrative manager held responsibility for it.

The real problem of our newspaper in Burgos is its low sales volumes and the great unfamiliarity among the public in Burgos with regard to its contents, its new format and other aspects, which means that with our distribution levels, sales of advertisements are nigh on impossible, given that the applicable rates at present are similar to those of the *Diario de Burgos* with a print run of 15,000 daily copies<sup>20</sup>.

In fact, the difference with regard to the circulation rates of the *Diario de Burgos* was astonishing. While the circulation of the leading Burgos newspaper was around that figure of 15,000 copies, *La Voz de Castilla* had a real print run of 1,307 copies. And despite all that, the advertising rates were very similar.

### 3.1. The marketing study

The conclusions of these reports were not communicated to *La Voz de Castilla*. Neither were they the only ones not to reach the Management of the newspaper. The marketing study was ready by April 1972. The results were published in five volumes that were never presented to either the director or the manager of *La Voz*, as José Juan Cano Vera recounted<sup>21</sup>. It was therefore a surprise to find these unknown documents in the AGA that were never brought to the attention of the newspaper in Burgos. So the proposal also failed to convert *La Voz* into a test bench, whose experience could have been transferred to other newspapers of the press group experiencing economic difficulties.

No more was known of the measures to take so as to improve the circulation rate. Moreover, two months after the aforementioned meeting in February, the manager of *La Voz de Castilla* wrote to the Economics-Administrative Director requesting that they send him the initiatives that, following the study, had to be put into practice.

Given that a prudential time has elapsed and unaware of the decisions that may have been adopted, or that will be taken in this respect, I would ask you to tell us something on the matter, as we are minded to await the results of everything that was discussed here, so as to act in consequence<sup>22</sup>.

The administrative steps that initiated the wide-ranging and complete marketing study conducted for *La Voz de Castilla* began with the director of the Technical Committee of the DNPvR, who requested authorization to spend 60,000 Pesetas on the study<sup>23</sup>, to be conducted by Metra Seis Marketing<sup>24</sup>, with its headquarters in the *Paseo de la Castellana, 86*,

<sup>20</sup> Report of the head of Advertising Promotion, Antonio Ávila Pérez de Bustos, on his visit to *La Voz de Castilla* and the possibilities of its advertising promotion. Madrid, 19 February 1972. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505.

<sup>21</sup> “I never knew a thing. I only repeatedly argued that the newspaper needed a total change of technology and more human resources. They left us high and dry”. Interview with José Juan Cano Vera, director of *La Voz de Castilla* from 1968 to 1974.

<sup>22</sup> Correspondence of the administrator of *La Voz de Castilla*, Manuel González, to the Economics-Administrative Director of the Press of the Movement, Abilio Bernaldo de Quirós. Burgos, 4 April 1972. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505.

<sup>23</sup> Correspondence of the director of the Technical Committee to the Economics-Administrative director. Madrid, 20 October 1971. Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.15 Caja 176 TOP 53/16.408-16.503.



Madrid. The firm had previously conducted other studies on image and distribution for different publications of the press group, such as *Marca*, *Levante*, *Odiel*, *Diario de Cuenca*, *Arriba*, *7 Fechas* and *El Ruedo*. None of them, however, of the intensity invested in *La Voz de Castilla*, which took up, as we have mentioned, five volumes, all of which have a 10 placed before their numbering, suggesting that 9 other studies of the same type had previously been completed.

The marketing study had the title of a “Psycho-Sociological and Distribution-based Study of *La Voz de Castilla*”. Volume 10.1 referred to the “Summary of Results and possible measures to be taken”; Volume 10.2 to “Analysis of results”; Volumes 10.3 and 10.4 to “Tables of survey results at sales outlets”, respectively, and finally, Volume 10.5 included “Group meetings and in-depth interviews”<sup>25</sup>.

As referred to in Volume 10.2, the objective of the aforementioned study was to understand two aspects of the provincial market for the daily press in Burgos: the reader of the newspaper and the distribution network. The end-purpose that the Delegation proposed was to take steps to increase the distribution of *La Voz de Castilla*, after detecting the problems, which were summed up as follows: problem of competition, not only of the press in Madrid, but also in the north of Spain; problems of image and distribution.

A quantitative analysis was completed to understand the reasons for the low circulation of *La Voz de Castilla* and the high number of readers of the *Diario de Burgos*, and a qualitative analysis, which attempted to look at the motives why the readers of the press chose a particular newspaper.

In structuring the sample, the universe was defined as the totality of men resident in Burgos of over 15 years in age. The exclusion of women, as explained in the report, was due “to the scarce few newspaper readers in this sector of the population”<sup>26</sup>. The sample size, of a random nature, was 164 people, with an error margin of 5%.

Quotas were set for the selection of participants, so that the range of social strata and ages would be represented. From the total, 74 were under 35 years in age; 67 were between 35 and 55; and, 23 were older than 55 years. By social classes, members of the working class came to 67, followed by the middle class, 49, and the upper class, 48.

It was mentioned in the study that the market in Burgos was “very interesting”, because its readership rates were “quite high”. Some 12,500 copies were sold every weekday and on Saturday in the provincial capital, a figure that reached around 18,500 on Sundays. Bearing in mind the 119,919 inhabitants of the capital, according to the census of 1970, there were an estimated number of 29,875 households, considering the national average of 4 people in each home. By dividing all newspapers sold by households, indexes were obtained of 0.45 newspapers read on weekdays and Saturday, and 0.63 newspapers read on Sunday, in each household.

In a screenshot of sales from kiosks in the capital, Burgos, *La Voz* was in fifth place, with a total market share of the press of 3%, *ABC* represented 4%, *Informaciones*, 7%, and *Pueblo*, 10%. The *Diario de Burgos* controlled 50% of the newspaper market. By large groups, the local press was the most widely sold, followed by newspapers from Madrid, and in a more modest way, from the north of Spain.

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<sup>25</sup> The five volumes are found in different files of the AGA. While the four volumes were held at A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505, the fifth was found at A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.15 Caja 176 TOP 53/16.408-16.503.

<sup>26</sup> “Psycho-Sociological and Distribution-related Study of *La Voz de Castilla*”. 10.2, Analysis of the results, p. 14. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505.

#### 4. The scourge of the Falange

Before summarizing the conclusions drawn from the study, it is of interest to dwell on some of the expressions of anonymous readers who participated either in the group meetings or in in-depth interviews<sup>27</sup>.

In response to one of the questions “What do you think Burgos newspapers should be like?”, the interviewees answered that they wanted “clear ideas, because there are many people here, above all recently, who have come from villages, and if those people have to read erudite words, they won’t understand them”. They affirmed that newspapers should “tell the fundamentals” and “give themselves a little more freedom”. They thought it was a good idea that they report strikes like those of Ulster, but they asked “And those in Bilbao?; strikes in those places... but those in Barcelona? [...] they should tell us what happens in Spain”. They complained that the Burgos newspapers gave no information on the reasons for newsworthy events: “Whoever is the second minister in such and such a place is of very little importance to me [...] I’m interested in the background to what happens. We’re told, for example, that SEAT is at a standstill, but why? What has happened and what is happening?” One of the interviewees asked for “maximum independence, truthful news, without manipulating it or bending it or trying to give it another slant, instead of the one it has in reality”.

The participants in the in-depth interviews were clear that *La Voz de Castilla* was a newspaper of the Movement and that “for that reason alone it is therefore dependent on a series of conditions... you have to think that whoever reads it is fanatical about the Movement, not of the Movement in itself, but in reality of the Falange”. People thought that it was still carrying “that sort of millstone around its neck” of a newspaper “put together by Falangists and it was going to tell the life of José Antonio again and the affairs of the Falange”. The newspaper firm of the *Diario de Burgos* was typecast as “staunchly Monarchist” and one of the interviewees claimed that it suppressed any news that might bother anybody from Burgos. “Of course”, the interviewee affirmed, “that means that it has no bad feelings from anyone, it is considered a newspaper on the sidelines of politics; something that’s not quite true, but in the end, they know how to do that quite well”.

Another reader stressed that idea, for whom the tendency of one of the newspapers “contrasted both of them, because we could say that one is sort of sitting on the fence without defining itself, and the other defines itself”. And that self-definition of *La Voz de Castilla* was in his understanding what “reduced sales”.

On the contrary, another person thought that if *La Voz* were “more Falangist, it might possibly have more readers”. Taking into account that the present Government, as the reader specified- was not Falangist, he could not understand why *La Voz* always said it was right. He made it clear that the newspaper would be more successful if it managed to show a “more courageous” attitude, even though they might fine it or suspend it: “They would sell more afterwards. Let them fine it, if that is what it needs!”

Another difference that affected the newspapers was that while *La Voz* occupied itself in greater depth with government issues, with a more extensive coverage, the *Diario de Burgos* was less diligent:

On the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Spain to open some activities here, the *Diario de Burgos* set aside three complete pages with photographs, and part of another two pages to the

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<sup>27</sup> “Psycho-Sociological and Distribution-related Study of *La Voz de Castilla*”. 10.5. “Group meetings in-depth interviews”, pp. 1-63. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.15 Caja 176 TOP 53/16.408-16.503.

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visit of the Prince. There were ministers here, Franco was even here, and they were not given as many pages<sup>28</sup>.

One of the questions that was openly debated referred to the somewhat belligerent attitude that *La Voz de Castilla* maintained with regard to local politics. The newspaper of the Movement had no other way of differentiating itself from its competitor than through criticism of municipal decisions, a fact that caused more than one head on encounter with the city authorities and that in October 1974 would cost the head of its director, Cano Vera. These reproaches were usually published in the section “Espolón”, a long-standing column of the newspaper that was a means of letting off steam, probing the limits of the timid concessions to freedom of information in the Fraga Law.

In this sense, one of the interviewees highlighted that it had always been *La Voz* that had given “a greater boost” to the polemical questions of the city:

There was a case here, a scandal like Matesa but on a much smaller scale with the Silk factory and *La Voz de Castilla* was a very brave newspaper, because it published the names on the front page of the newspaper with a few comments that the *Diario de Burgos*, generally, silenced completely, as if it had never existed<sup>29</sup>.

The editor of *La Voz*, Vicente Ruiz de Mencia,<sup>30</sup> also confirmed as much. He recalled that three businessmen from Burgos had been imprisoned under accusations of fraud and embezzlement, following the closure of SESA (Sociedad Española de Seda Artificial) [Spanish Artificial Silk Company], in June 1966, and that the *Diario de Burgos* had published nothing on this thorny issue, while *La Voz de Castilla* had given it very exhaustive coverage<sup>31</sup>.

## **5. Readers identified with *Diario de Burgos***

The results produced by the marketing study<sup>32</sup> remarked on the predominant role of the *Diario de Burgos*, with which the inhabitants of Burgos identified totally: of the 164 people interviewed, 128 read it every day, while only 35 did so with *La Voz de Castilla*. The most important restraint on the expansion of *La Voz de Castilla* was precisely this identification. The most frequently cited motive to justify the purchase of the *Diario de Burgos* was “out of habit”, while *La Voz* was preferred for its own values. In the minds of those interviewed, as referred to in the study, the ideological image of *La Voz de Castilla* appeared much clearer than that of the *Diario de Burgos*. Among the readers of the newspaper of the Movement, the most closely followed sections were sports, local information and international news, while in the private newspaper, the international section was preferred, followed by sports, local news, and authored columns.

One of the objectives of the study consisted in assessing the possible measures to be adopted, taking consumer preferences into account. Therefore, with regard to the format,

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Vicente Ruiz de Mencia, editor of *La Voz de Castilla* from 1960 to 1976.

<sup>31</sup> *La Voz de Castilla* published various articles on the matter: “La antigua S.E.S.A. ha hablado [The former S.E.S.A. has spoken]”, 5-VI-1966, p. 4; “El problema de la S.E.S.A., noticia de teletipo [The problem with S.E.S.A., telegraphic news]”, 6-VI-1966, p. 4; “Hechos y situaciones de un grave problema burgalés” [Facts and situations of a serious problem in Burgos], 7-VI-1966, p. 4; “Dónde se terminan los hechos y comienzan las conjeturas” [Where the facts end and conjecture begins], 8-VI-1966, p. 4; “El jurado de empresa de la S.E.S.A.” [The works committee of S.E.S.A.], 10-VI-1966, p. 4 and “S.E.S.A., ¿final?” [S.E.S.A. The end?], 20-VI-1966, p. 4; “Absueltos los procesados de la S.E.S.A.” [Those on trial in the S.E.S.A. case acquitted], 1-VI-1971, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> “Psycho-Sociological and Distribution-based Study of *La Voz de Castilla*”. 10.1, Summary of results and possible measures to adopt, pp. 3-5. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505.

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they recommended reducing its size and stapling it; increasing the number of pages; printing with two inks more frequently and including more graphical information. In relation to the content, they insisted more on the assessment of news items in terms of the mentality of the market in Burgos and recommended the inclusion of shorter news items complementing the basic information. They spoke about “weighing matters up and no extreme opinions”, and suggested that the authored columns be enlarged so as to give the newspaper more personality<sup>33</sup>.

The sections that had to be strengthened were identified, such as the increase in international and national news and local current affairs; in the way of writing the headlines: “Dramatize the headlines, but keep their connection with the text”, and in the advertising: “More death notices, and if they’re not sent in, prepare a section on obituaries”, and the report went on to say that there was also a need to promote special publicity of certain activities such as messages from anonymous societies, flat rentals, patents, court reports, etc.

In the final conclusions, it affirmed that the newspaper had to promote the fullest possible identification of *La Voz de Castilla* “with the inner being and behavior of the city and the province”; to reinforce the image of independence with regard to the guidelines from Madrid; to use the image of the dependency of *La Voz* on a press group to reinforce the image “of a larger news network and resources”; to search for emotional bonds with the city; to exercise criticism through the presentation of “emotional commentaries”, which might hurt to do so, but are necessary, avoiding harsh criticism where possible, as this should be “felt”, in the same way as “the flaws or illness of a family member” may be commented upon; all actions of *La Voz* should be aimed at a basic and primary aim; “To make the newspaper one of them, of the city”; *La Voz* should have a “local” spirit; seek to be highly original, although respecting the conservatism of its readers, in other words “it should fight the *Diario de Burgos* as an equal, but a different partner”; reinforce, through advertising, especially at sales points, the weak “local” image of *La Voz* and not confuse “veracity with aggressiveness”, as the inhabitants of Burgos –the report warned– desire a serene presentation of reality.

An in-depth study was, therefore, prepared for *La Voz de Castilla*, which neither the director nor the manager, who administered their own very modest questionnaire to newspaper vendors of the capital, ever had the opportunity to read<sup>34</sup>. Among the negative aspects of the newspaper, the kiosk vendors highlighted “its origin” and “excessive politicized news”.

In the first of both cases, almost all of them expressed the idea, and 19 did so categorically, that the fact of it being a newspaper of the Movement meant that it deserved less credit and interest from readers. Unfortunately, it is a reality that has been proven on many occasions, despite this City having a markedly Falangist character.

In the second of the cases, they also declared their opinion in the sense that the newspaper published too much politicized information, both at a national and at a local level<sup>35</sup>.

The administrative manager added other reasons from his own inquiries that, he said, “vendors and readers don’t know”, such as the scant little help that they received from the entities and people linked to the Movement, such as the Provincial Directorate, the Youth

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Correspondence from the administrative manager of *La Voz de Castilla* to the Commercial Division of the Press of the Movement. Burgos, 3 December 1971. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 7.9 Caja 8 TOP 53/23.502-23.505.

<sup>35</sup> Report on the interviews administered to newspaper vendors in the city of Burgos. A.G.A., M.C.S.E. (03) 71.23 52/15.234.

Delegations, the Delegation of the Women's Section, Provincial and Local Councils, as well as bodies dependent on the Trades Union Organization, local corporations and delegations of the different ministries. He commented that they ignored the newspaper listings, both for facilitating information and for placing official announcements. And he concluded: "It is more than demonstrated that our own men are those that give us the least help and therefore any possible solution has to be sought through the normal reader, without any sort of commitment"<sup>36</sup>.

## **6. Conclusions**

With the opening of its modern headquarters in October 1971, *La Voz de Castilla* embarked on a new stage and from that point had installations and machinery adapted to the new reality that Burgos was experiencing; extensive economic development thanks to its attraction as a Pole of Industrial Promotion.

The complete marketing study that, coinciding with the renovation of its infrastructure, was completed for the newspaper in Burgos, in an attempt to improve its circulation and at the same time to serve as a pilot project to save other failing publications of the press group of the Movement, was left to flounder, because both its preparation and its conclusions were hidden from the Board of Administration and the Board of Management, so that the proposed measures were never undertaken. It is therefore surprising that the directors of the Press of the Movement, who had left the Burgos newspaper unattended over two decades, threw themselves into the task of its salvation at the beginning of the seventies. It was, however, a fruitless task. A further failure of the disastrous management of those responsible for the press group, intent on managing the different provincial headlines by telephone from Madrid and unable to apply the corrective measures that the situations would have required.

The "Psycho-Sociological and Distribution Study of *La Voz de Castilla* contributes testimony from readers that implies a further contribution to investigations on the press during the final years of the Franco regime. Due to the directive and institutional management that characterized the Press Group of the Movement, due to its mimetic way of producing and processing information, these results may be considered appropriate to analyze what happened to the other failing newspapers of the Movement that had their scope of operations in different Spanish provinces.

The work was ready in April 1972, six years after the entry into force of the new Press Law of 1966. It made clear that if the new legal framework and its more open policy on news had prejudiced some newspapers, then these were the newspapers of the Movement. In comparison with the *Diario de Burgos*, freer from the ties of censorship and the provisions of the Press Law of 1938, *La Voz de Castilla* continued to be subjected to tight control. Moreover, its marked ideology was deserving of less credibility than the private newspaper. Curiously, and despite the 27 years of the newspaper of the Movement in the life of the city, it was not considered a local product.

A voice crying out in the wilderness might in some way summarize the scant influence of the newspaper among the inhabitants of Burgos. The readers turned their backs on it, because they considered that its contents were absolutely mediatized. Let us recall that the section of preference was the Sports section, certainly because it was the least politicized. There again, its criticism of the actions of Municipal managers, a loophole that it exploited through the Press Law of 1966, was not to the liking of the public in Burgos, more in harmony with the conservative *Diario de Burgos*. On this point, the paradoxical situation was

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

striking, in the sense that the newspaper of officialdom and of the regime would end its days questioning the work of the local authorities.

*La Voz de Castilla* lost the support of its readers and of organizations with links to the Movement in Burgos. It neither had their economic help, through the placement of advertisements, nor of contents providing information. As happened with other entities, they would prefer to maintain good relations and to support the newspaper of greater influence in the city, the *Diario de Burgos*, with a very much wider circulation, which was therefore preferred both for news and for placing advertisements.

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