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News

GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP RAISES HEAD AGAIN

Staff Reporter / 2010-03-18 13:56:00

After the story of political pictures being removed from an exhibition in Valencia, another case of political censorship is hitting the news.

Again it involves Town Hall corruption. In 2006, former Environment Minister Cristina Narbona commissioned a documentary for TVE state television about the destruction of Spain's coastlines, which was financed with €1,292,871 of public money. Now, the same ministry has refused to allow the project to air because it objects to two minutes that cite town-planning corruption as one of Spain's coastal maladies.

The man in charge of the project and its scriptwriter, Miguel Ángel Losada, who is also head of Granada University's Coastal Department, has refused to eliminate the segment, which is tucked into the 12th of the documentary's 13 episodes.

"Unfortunately, corruption is part of our story. This is censorship," he said. The series, "Las Riberas Del Mar Océano" or, "The Banks Of The Ocean Sea" is anything but neutral, in particular the chapter dedicated to legislation. Over a series of striking images, many of them shot from the air, a narrator speaks: "The coast is where a substantial part of environmental and town-planning crimes, of illegal housing and of demolition sentences are concentrated.

Behind it social complicity and corruption hide, apparent through the collusion of certain bureaucrats, public workers, professionals and companies. Why have there been so many excesses, abuses and so much corruption?" The documentary collects testimony from legal experts such as Tomás de la Quadra, the Environment Ministry's fiscal coordinator, Antonio Vercher — who defines the deterioration of the coast as "a collective suicide, which is massively regrettable"— and Fernando Palao, author of the 1988 Coast Law. Palao, who was the Public Works Ministry's secretary of state until a year ago, pleads for "a stricter application" of the law.

The accord struck between the University of Granada and the Environment Ministry established 10 objectives, the first of which read: "To convey that the coast belongs to all citizens, and that we have the right and responsibility to use and protect it [...]." When the Ministry saw the final project, months ago, they cited six technical objections. According to Losada, he accepted all of them except for the demand to axe the two-minute corruption montage, which used shots from daily newscasts about corruption scandals in Telde (Gran Canaria) Andratx (Ibiza) and Marbella, among others.

A spokesperson from the Ministry admitted to not approving the two-minute segment. In the government's opinion: "The situation of Spain's coastlines derives from poor urban planning, and an excess of building, independent of whether, regrettably, any corruption occurred in the costal zones."

Tags: Government, Corruption, Valencia

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