

THE JAPANESE IN CATALONIA



FOR THE JAPANESE, CATALONIA IS A GATEWAY TO THE COMMON MARKET. ON THE ONE HAND, ITS PORT FACILITATES THE TRANSPORT OF LARGE, HEAVY GOODS BY SEA, AND ON THE OTHER, GOOD MOTORWAYS CONNECT THE CATALAN INDUSTRIAL AREAS WITH THE PRINCIPAL EUROPEAN CITIES.

FRANCESC CABANA ECONOMIST

Catalonia is an industrial spring-board for the Japanese in Europe. Their investments here are comparatively recent, of course, because until now they preferred to export directly from their own country. However, protectionist barriers and the high rate of exchange of their currency are two good arguments in favour of their investing abroad.

Catalonia is one of the most developed parts of that Spain that joined the Common Market in January, 1986, and Barcelona, the Catalan capital, is without any doubt the industrial capital of the state. Catalonia represents only 6% of Spanish territory but it accommodates 16% of its population, generates 20% of its production, and 25% of Spanish exports come from firms established in Catalonia.

The European multinational companies have been present in Catalonia for some years, attracted by an industrial structure which, though at first centred round the textile sector, is now well diversified. At present, metallurgy, chemicals, textile and construction are the four chief industrial sectors in Catalonia. Amongst others, Olivetti and Pirelli represent Italy; Bayer, Basf and Hoechst, the German chemical industry; Nestlé, Sandoz and Ciba-Geigy, Swiss industry; ICI, the British; Rhone-Poulenc, the French; Solvay, the Belgian, and Akzo, the Dutch industry.

The North-American investments arrived later and normally did so through participation in already established Catalan firms. They occupy positions in the chemical sector (FMC, CPC), in the food sector (Nabisco Brands, Borden, Ralston Purina) and in the car and steel sector (Bendix-Allied, General Cable). The Japanese have been the last to move in but they have finally done so with vigour and briskness. The Japanese firms that are only here to commercialize their products have tended to establish themselves in Madrid, but the majority of those who have installed or bought industrial plants are to be found in Catalonia. Of the big Japanese firms outside of Catalonia we only find Fujitsu, promoted by the *Instituto Nacional de Industria* (public sector), or Nippon Steel with Acerinox, promoted by a Madrid bank.

The most important Japanese investment is the one that has procured a majority interest in the Barcelona firm Motor Ibérica, S.A., a company created by Ford of America during the twenties and which was then controlled by the Canadian Massey Ferguson. Motor Ibérica manufactures industrial vehicles -vans, an all-terrain vehicle, tractors- and agricultural machinery.

However, the most spectacular showing by the Japanese is in the electronic consumer-goods sector. Sony, Sanyo and Matsushita -Technics and Panasonic-

have been in Catalonia for some years and manufacture videocassettes, colour televisions, hi-fi equipment, etc. To this list of firms working in the sector we can also add the more recent presence of Sharp and Pioneer.

There is a great motorcycle tradition in Catalonia and it is therefore not surprising that the Catalan Derbi should have been 1986 world-champion and runner-up in small-engine categories, or that the Japanese Honda should be in partnership with the Catalan Montesa, or that Yamaha should have their only European industrial plant here, in Catalonia.

For the Japanese, Catalonia is a gateway to the Common Market. The country has the necessary industrial infrastructure and a good communications network. On the one hand, its port facilitates transport of large, heavy goods by sea, and on the other, good motorways connect the Catalan industrial areas with the principal European cities.

A Japanese school, opened in 1985 has joined the already established German, Italian, North American and British schools the city has. When we come to look at the quality of life and the cultural activity in Barcelona, we must not forget that this is the country of artists like Miró, Picasso, Dalí and Tàpies, and the architect Gaudí, possibly one of the Catalans best known in Japan. ■

SONY

Video Betamax Hi-Fi

RESIDENCIA MONTECAL

 **BIC**

PARA MESA Y COCINA

Sal Costa

muebles
MURASA

RONAL DETE

DORINTO

RELOJERIA

PARATOS DE PRECISION

RAIG SA

HERNANDEZ

EL PATI

L. FAIS