

¿Qué? Podcast, Season 3, Episode 5

Intro music

Simon: ...take all my clothes off

Melissa: *laughter* Woo! Applause for er...

Simon: There's your outtake *laughter*

Simon: Hello everyone! My name is Simon Hunter, I'm the editor of the English Edition of EL PAÍS, and this is ¿Qué? A podcast from El País that this week will do its best to shake off the rain of another cold drop, and offer you a clear blue sky of Spanish news.

Whether you're stuck in a rain-induced traffic jam in Madrid, stuck in a rain-induced traffic jam in Barcelona, or stuck in a rain-induced traffic jam anywhere in Spain, we are here for you, 'seremos tu paraguas.'

So sit back, relax, and let us break down all the Spanish stories that make you say,

[Sound bite] "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain"

Simon: Today is October 23, 2019 and I am here as ever with my treasured colleague Melissa Kitson, how are you Melissa?

Melissa: Hi! Good, not wet!

Simon: Are you enjoying the rain?

Melissa: I don't mind it

Simon: Does it rain in Australia?

Melissa: Of course

Simon: *laughter* Often?!

Melissa: Oh, enough for it to be annoying

Simon: Ok, so this isn't like some unknown phenomenon for you *laughter*

Melissa: No, but I was very excited when it snowed here last year

Simon: Yeah. How's your week been Melissa?

Melissa: Very nice

Simon: Any news?

Melissa: I got pot plants, for my birthday present

Simon: You got pot plants, now we were discussing whether you call them 'pot plants' or, what was the american one?

Melissa: Potted plants

Simon: Potted plants, pot plants. Yeah I said it sounded like *laughter* you were growing weed on your terrace, but no pot plants! You got pot plants, fantastic!

But enough of that waffle, as usual we will start this week with the correspondence we've got from our beloved listeners. Please get in touch you can find me on twitter @simoninmadrid you can use the #quepodcast or you can email EnglishEdition@elpais.es. The email option is what most people seem to go for, so keep them coming in.

Tell us where you're listening from, why you're listening and suggest topics for us. And leave us a review and share our podcast on social media, please! Get the word out, please!

We'd been lamenting the fact that we hadn't heard from our podcast hero Ryan V, and Ryan V has indeed got in touch.

He says, "Hey Simon, Veronica and a little kitten -

Definitely not upset by the intern stealing my thunder, although I'm not sure how quite to pass the time at work now. Surely actually working can't be the only solution?

Oh yes, and now that it's not my fingers taking the beating, I am very much in favor of longer episodes.

Cheers, Ryan V"

So, great to hear from you Ryan.

We heard back again from Carl Painter. I said last week, when we heard from Carl Painter, I'm sure I've heard from this guy before because his email comes through something like, "Area manager for Kennington Underground"...I mean he basically works on the London Underground and rather his name coming up his job title comes up so I knew we'd heard from Carl before. And lo and behold we had, many months ago.

Carl says, "I see that the first doctor (Doctor Vela) to have been judged in court concerning the "Stolen Babies" case has died recently."

And Carl says, "and thought that the history of this would be a good discussion point for the podcast as it would align with the soon to be disinterment of Franco under whose policies and dictatorship this practice flourished. Not sure if this topic has already been discussed but if not then perhaps this would make a good one for you to pass on to the wider audience.

Keep up the sterling work guys and many thanks."

So thanks for that Carl. That is indeed, that's a great topic. I don't think we've discussed the stolen babies have we?

Melissa: No...

Simon: No, we should come to that.

Veronica: Wait just a second

Sound bite: 1 minute, 37 seconds later

Simon: Veronica literally said to us when she stopped the recording, "don't say anything interesting" *laughter* I think we risk that every week, don't we? *laughter*

And, now our next piece of correspondence, keeping on the theme of the little kitten, is from Mr Alan Jones.

Now last week, Alan got in touch and said, "It really does sound like Melissa saying 'I'm a little kitten.' And I said last week, 'We wouldn't have done that would we?' and he repeated that on his tweet and he said 'Duh!' So I think he's realized that we were somewhat taking the mickey.

And, Alan has done this thing, I can't believe that you didn't... you must not have heard our previous episode Alan when we did this. He said he'd actually "slowed it down to

half speed and detected an 's' in there somewhere when you said little kitten- I think. An interesting exercise, by the way, that makes you sound completely drunk.”

Alright, drop in the effect, Veronica.

Speech slowed down to half speed

***Simon:** Here we are on the completely drunk podcast, we did this in another episode

***Melissa:** Uh-huh we did!

***Simon:** Do you remember?

***Melissa:** I did, I wasn't talking about being a kitten at that occasion

***Simon:** No this is true. I actually to be honest I, you know, freely confess, I drink a lot
laughter I talk a bit like this most of the time to be honest after about 10 o'clock of an evening

***Back to normal speed**

Simon: So yeah go back and check out that episode because it was very funny when we did that.

And now, he never fails to amuse me with his emails, Chris Thompson has been in touch.

He says, “I am a fan of your podcast.” Yes we know that Chris ***laughter*** you get in touch with me at two in the morning to talk about it.

He said, “It did, however, cross my mind that you've become a sort of *Informe Semanal*. A round up. A perfectly sound model for a podcast but anyone who has read El País in English already knows most of it.”

So he's saying that, “it's a reminder that you were, originally, more Jordi or Gonzo than Pedro Piqueras. Instead of the streets ablaze in Cataluña maybe it's how the Constitution gives no wriggle room or how what happens in Catalonia might play in Vitoria-Gasteiz. It's who is who in Ciudadanos and why they swap strategy overnight from one thing to another.

Just a suggestion. You're the journalists. You know this stuff. It's your podcast.

El abrazo de siempre, Chris.”

And Chris says, “P.S. You'll probably be able to say Cold drop again this week”
laughter yes Chris I did, I said it right at the beginning.

So yeah, very good point Chris. We would love to be able to spend a bit more time preparing the podcast but unfortunately we are absolutely flat out at the moment with everything that's going on. But hopefully, maybe in the future we can spend a bit more time, and do something that's a bit sort of further away from the content of our online edition, at the El País English edition, because yeah that's a fair point. People that have read the English edition will know what we are talking about.

Alright, so we've got an email from a new 'correspondee', 'corespondee'? A new listener called Gavin.

He says, “Hi Simon and Melissa,

I'm writing having watched TV tonight, *la sexta* have a live broadcast from the streets of Barcelona. I saw the arrest of your colleague Albert Garcia and first of all I want to say I hope he is ok, his family and all of you must be quite shocked.

But it occurred to me that we have a situation where the riot police have effectively become the physical representatives of the Spanish state live on our TVs every night this week.

This is not a good situation for the state to be in. What I'd like to know is who is advising the government? Their PR is awful. I know in general Spanish people are very parochial and don't look up to see what others think of them much, but this is a disaster, the world is watching and Sanchez is an idiot if he thinks it doesn't matter how this is seen abroad.

Thanks for reading, I hope Alberto is ok, and keep up the good work.

So, this leads us very nicely. Now, I said last week, I do apologize listeners, I said last week we were going to have a little Catalonia break but, actually what we didn't think about last week was the fact that we recorded on a Tuesday, the podcast didn't come out on a Thursday and we, sort of, were very much taken over by events by the time it was published.

The same thing might happen this week we are going to talk about Catalonia again, we are going to talk about Franco again, but to be honest they're just too important topics to leave aside, they're pretty much taking up all our time and effort.

So, Melissa, why don't you fill us in on what's happened since we spoke about this last week?

[Soundbite of protests in Catalonia]

Melissa: Hundreds of people were injured last week in the violent street protests that erupted in Barcelona in response to the Spanish Supreme Court ruling that sentenced nine Catalan separatist leaders to prison.

As we discussed last week, the leaders were found guilty of sedition and handed prison terms of between nine and 13 years for their involvement in the 2017 secession attempt. The ruling, which was announced last Monday, was met with anger by pro-independence groups, which blocked entry to Barcelona's El Prat airport and staged smaller protests in the city.

But since these initial protests on Monday, the violence has escalated. The largely peaceful daytime demonstrations throughout the week have descended into violence as groups of young radicals torched cars, set up barricades, and pelted police with rocks, Molotov cocktails and other projectiles. There were also reports of looting, and several bank branches were broken into.

Police responded to the protesters with rubber and foam bullets, tear gas, and on one occasion a water cannon. Nearly 300 officers and 600 protesters were injured in the clashes, and 200 people were arrested – including EL PAÍS photographer, Alberto Garcia.

But despite the unrest, Catalan premier Quim Torra, did not immediately condemn the violence. Three nights of disturbances passed before he made a late-night television appearance to say that the independence movement has never been violent, and never will be.

[Sound bite of Quim Torra]

But that was not enough for Spain's caretaker prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, who last week refused to take Torra's calls last week or meet with the premier when he made a

surprise trip to Barcelona on Monday. Sánchez has said that he will not speak with the premier until he officially condemns the violence.

But, this has not persuaded Torra to change his tune. Indeed, the Catalan premier is shifting the focus on the violent clashes away from the protesters and onto the police. Almost no charges have been pressed against the individuals arrested for their involvement in the violent clashes.

Meanwhile, Torra has said he wants to hold another referendum on independence before the end of his political term.

Simon: So, as usual, a lot to unpick there. Let's start with the mention of, as you said, Albert Garcia, very very strange. An EL PAÍS photographer, he was wearing a helmet, he was wearing his press accreditation, he was covered in cameras, very strange that they arrested him. He was released later on in the early hours of Saturday morning, he apparently was trying to photograph the arrest of a youngster, very strange that they would do that. We're still not really entirely sure why that happened.

As for the police, I think the thing is, I think the sad thing is, and I think what people are not aware of from outside of Spain - this is just how Spanish police operate. They just go around clubbing people, we've seen it when we had the Champions League game here not so long ago. I actually put out a tweet to say, you know, "any football hooligan thinking about trying anything on with the police, do not do it!" And lo and behold we got loads of videos, cell phone images of the police just charging in, quite often on horseback, and just absolutely clubbing people.

And I've seen, in 2011 I remember seeing a video of a riot policeman clubbing a child on the street during some protest, I can't remember when it was, it might have been the Catalan strike. You know, it just seems to be the way that they operate and it's brutal.

And, of course, the police violence took center stage during the 2017 vote on independence and in that case it was at the hands of the National Police and the Civil Guard because, of course, famously, the regional police, the Mossos, were standing back and letting things, you know letting events unfold because, for whatever reason that you want to interpret there - that they wanted the vote to go ahead, or they had orders to let it go ahead or whatever it was.

But people obviously have very short memories because the Mossos in the 2011 protests were absolutely brutal, when all the 15-M, the citizen movement sprung up

across Spain. When they cleared one of the squares in Barcelona they were just absolutely brutal and the Mossos do have a reputation for being particularly harsh.

So, in this case, in last week's incidents, it was as much the Mossos who were responsible for the police violence as it was the Civil Guard, in fact I'm not sure if the Civil Guard were on the ground, the National Police certainly were.

But yeah, I mean it was all very ugly scenes and I take Gavin's point about how bad it looks abroad but I think you do also have to factor in just how violent these protests were, especially on Friday night when it got really, really nasty. I mean we've got footage of youngsters throwing fireworks, they even launched a firework, a rocket, at a police helicopter. They were ripping out paving stones and throwing them, throwing rocks, steel balls, and of course as Gavin mentioned as well, just burning every single trash container they could get their hands on.

So this has really destroyed the, "Somos gente de paz" slogan which is "We are people of peace" which is what the pro-independence movement has been touting until now.

We have to keep it in perspective I think, EL PAÍS did a piece last week that said it was about 2,000 violent protesters, mostly young people, students, what they call "antisistemas," so kind of anarchist people. And then you have to compare that to this massive march that we saw, this massive peaceful march that we saw on Friday evening, which converged on Barcelona on Friday evening. Around half a million people, according to the organisers, turned out to protest on a day that there was a general strike being observed in Catalonia to object against the Supreme Court ruling.

The next day, on Saturday, the judge ordered the 'Tsunami Democratic' websites to be closed and their social media accounts to be closed. This is this leaderless, this seemingly leaderless, organization which has been basically organizing the protesters. They were the ones that told the protesters to go to El Prat airport, for example.

Of course, closing a website in Spanish territory these days is pretty futile because another mirror site will just open up outside of Spain but it's interesting that there's been this organization that's been coordinating protests.

And, very, very funny I said last week in my introduction about that #spainisafasciststate I think everyone, most English speakers have just been hanging their head in shame looking at the hashtags on twitter in the last week because it seems that there is no word that can be spelt correctly in these hashtags.

We've had #spainisafascit (without the S) estate (instead of state), and then we've had - #tsumani instead of 'tsunami', that one someone pointed out might actually be a play on words about 'mani' which is 'manifestacion' so who knows, I'm still not sure. I came up with a hashtag that had all the spelling mistakes in there but unfortunately it didn't take off, *laughter* I was a bit upset about that.

Yeah, and of course as you mentioned Melissa, all the while the Catalan regional government failing to properly condemn the violence or certainly being very slow to properly condemn the violence and there's a lot of talk.

And Gabriel Rufián who's a very controversial deputy in Spain's Congress for the Catalan Republican left, who's a real character; he's very famous for sort of high-profile *rifirafe* with other politicians, he was actually being shouted at in the street for being a traitor and so a lot of people were talking about him being devoured by the monster that he had helped to create.

So, I mean it seems to have calmed down now on the streets of Catalonia but we're certainly not out of the woods yet, and Sánchez just pretty much refusing to pick up the phone. There's this very funny clip going around which looks like it's from *Veep* or something like that, I don't know why they were filming him but, basically of Torra being told Sánchez won't pick up the phone. [Sound bite]

And also, you know, I hate to make light of the situation but there was, the only kind of funny thing I can find from last week which just - well I had to watch it again and again, it was so funny - there's a clip which was recorded from a couple of different angles of some violent protesters running away down a dark street in Barcelona and then a police van comes swinging round the corner and one of the Mossos in the police van says, over the tannoy,

[Sound bite] *in creepy voice* "Venir, somos gente de paz! Venir," which was very, very funny!

I think he'd been watching the new Joker movie, or someone said it was like that movie 'The Purge' you know, when basically *laughter* the police are out on the street to kind of, purge the criminals.

But, yeah, absolutely no end in sight with the situation and of course we are running into the elections so, who knows what the situation is going to be when we are left with the results of these elections because obviously what happens on a national level is going to have a very big effect.

For now, Sánchez has ruled out suspending the region's autonomous powers under Article 155 of the constitution, as happened after the 2017 independence drive. But who knows, once the elections are over maybe that option might be back on the table. There's certainly other political parties on the right who want to see it happen.

Music interlude

Simon: Alright, and now let's get onto our second story, we're here again, I think I even said in another podcast, let's leave this story until he's actually out. Now, by the time you hear this podcast, Franco should have been exhumed, so what's been going on Melissa, since we last spoke about this?

Melissa: Yes, well the big news this week was that the Spanish Government announced a date for the exhumation. So, if all goes to plan, Francisco Franco will be exhumed from the Valley of the Fallen, and transferred to the El Pardo-Mingorrubio cemetery, in Madrid, on Thursday.

The exhumation had been a signature initiative of the caretaker prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, and it was approved by Spanish Congress on September 13, 2018.

But since then, it has run into a lot of opposition from Franco's family, which wanted the dictator's remains to stay in the controversial monument which is located near El Escorial.

A series of several legal challenges ended in late September when the Supreme Court finally authorized the exhumation.

The Valley of the Fallen has been closed to the public for more than a week, and the 50-kilometer distance between the Valley and the cemetery will probably be covered by

helicopter, to prevent any potential roadblocks by pro-Franco demonstrations on the ground.

Simon: Well, I kind of feel like, finally, FINALLY, they're going to get him out the ground *laughter* all the hurdles now seem to be gone, the exhumation is due to happen on Thursday, the family objections have come to nothing, he's not going to go to La Aludena.

Again, this is happening just before the elections, the Socialist Party believes that this is a vote winner. I'm not sure about that, I mean I'm sure it probably is among their supporters, among the left, but is this going to convince a floating voter that they should vote for the Socialist party? I'm not sure, I think you'd probably speak to a lot of people on the street and they'd just say, "ah, they should have just left him where he is!" And I do kind of, I can't help but think that maybe they should have just left him where he is without kind of kicking up this hornets' nest.

We've got protesters, we had angry scenes outside at the weekend with people fighting with Civil Guards saying, "We want to go to mass!" "¡Queremos ir a misa! Queremos ir a misa!" and the police were stopping them **[Sound bite]**.

It seems like, it's kind of turning into a bit of a circus. State broadcaster TVE is going to send out 22 cameras on Thursday to cover the exhumation, it's like sort of event television even though, of course, the exhumation is going to be going on behind closed doors.

There's 22 family members who are going to attend the exhumation. They're going to have to go through metal detectors to make sure they're not taking in any cameras or phones or anything that they could record images with. So obviously, *Hello* magazine are not going to be in attendance, you're not going to see this on the front cover of *Hola* next week.

Obviously the family members that are going to be there is the usual rogues' gallery of Franco's grandchildren and various other relatives.

This is another bizarre thing that I read today, is that the son of Antonio Tejero, who is a priest is going to officiate the mass. Antonio Terjero is the civil guard who lead the coup attempt in the early 1980s in the Spanish Congress. Everyone will have seen those famous images of Tejero with his pistol in the air, the Civil Guard fired shots into the

ceiling of the Congress, those shots are still there. But the son of Tejero is going to be officiating a mass during the exhumation.

And then we've got this collateral damage as well, these poor brothers, the '*Hermanos Verdugo Jimenez*,' they are the company that's been tasked with actually removing the tombstone. After images of their van, which was approaching the Valley of the Fallen, were published online, they've actually been receiving abuse, and hatred and hate mail and God knows what else; and to such an extent they've actually had to file a complaint with the Civil Guard.

So, it really is descending into a bit of a farcical situation, you just have to wonder is Franco laughing from beyond the grave at the fact that even 45 years after his death he can still create such a fuss and such a division in Spain.

Just as a closing note, if we've got time we're going to translate this, I've just seen this fantastic article that explains how four other dictators are actually buried in Madrid. You've got Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar who was a Cuban military officer and politician who served as the elected President of Cuba and as its U.S.-backed military dictator. So there's one.

You've got Ante Pavelić who was a Croatian general and military dictator who founded and headed the fascist ultranationalist organization known as the Ustaše in 1929.

You've got Marcos Evangelista Pérez Jiménez, a Venezuelan military and general officer of the Army of Venezuela and the President of Venezuela from 1952 to 1958. He took part in a coup d'état, becoming part of the ruling junta.

And Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, nicknamed 'El Jefe'. He was a Dominican politician, soldier, and dictator, who ruled the Dominican Republic from February 1930 until his assassination in May 1961.

So I suggest, if anyone out there wants to invest in a new project, we are going to start dictator tours of Madrid! You heard it hear first! We will be going to El Pardo-Mingorrubio, is that how you pronounce it?

Melissa: err yes

Simon: More or less Melissa, yes, thank you. So yeah, bizarre. Once again, as we can see with the Spanish news, you really couldn't make it up.

Music interlude

Simon: All right, so let's wrap up this, the fifth episode of season three!

My name is Simon Hunter -

Melissa: I'm Melissa Kitson

Simon: Okay, good, alright

Melissa: Am I?

Simon: Yes you are! *laughter* So we're going with 'Melissa Kitson' this week and not 'a little kitten'. No need to slow that one down Alan!

Simon: And this was ¿Qué? A podcast that tries to explain what happens in Spain to those of us who sometimes get a little bit lost in translation.

This is an EL PAÍS production, it was recorded right here in a damp and rainy Madrid, in the EL PAÍS newsroom under the expert guidance of our producer Verónica Figueroa, who always comes with a spare microphone.

You can listen to it on your favorite podcast app and you can also request it via Alexa, Siri or your Google Assistant.

We'll be back next week with, hopefully, a brand new host of issues. Thank you for listening, adios!

Melissa: Ciao!