

¿Qué? Podcast, Season 3, Episode 7

Simon: He says, “Tv colorin...Tv col..” aaaah!

Music intro

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 is always seeking a lively and engaging debate, but to be honest, is struggling to find one of those in Spain this week.

Whether you support the Socialists, pity the PP, or would always vote Vox, we are here for you! Vamos a llenar vuestras urnas!

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

[Sound bite of Emilio Botín] “If you don’t know very well your customers, don’t lend them any money.”

Simon: *Spanish accent* Thank you for that Emilio, it is so nice to hear from you today!

Today is Wednesday, November 6, 2019 and I am here as ever with my...cherished colleague...I was scrambling round last week for an adjective, this week I thought about it...my cherished colleague Melissa Kitson. How are you Melissa?

Melissa: I’m good

Simon: What do you have to tell us this week? This is my favourite part of the podcast

Melissa: I get really stressed, I’m like what’s happened?!

Melissa: What do I have to say? I...have no news, what have I been doing? Throws me into an existential doubt about not doing exciting things

Simon: You’ve been bending

Melissa: I’ve been bending, yoga, xtanga, yeah

Simon: And today we've been sharing baby picture of ourselves with each other
laughter which was fun

Alright, yeah well we've not had a huge amount of correspondence this week which is a shame so we encourage you to get in touch with us, you can find me on twitter @simoninmadrid you can also use the #quepodcast - which I'm pleased to say a few of our loyal listeners have been using this week after we complained last week that it wasn't getting too much use - or you can email EnglishEdition@elpais.es

Tell us where you're listening from, why you're listening and suggest topics for us. Also go and leave us a review on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts from and share this episode on social media! Please get the word out, to other people who might be interesting ...interesting' *laughter* ...or indeed interested!

I heard from Greg Gibson this week. He wrote me about the Franco exhumation! He said, "TV coverage in the UK was generally poor for Franco's exhumation." - *laughter* I'm not really surprised Greg, I don't think it was ever going to be something they clear the schedules for!

But he said, "Any chance you could explain the differences between Spanish flags over the years in a future episode? I wasn't really aware of the significance of the pre-constitutional flag. Thanks for your great podcast." - Well thank you very much for that message Greg. And that is a good point actually, about flags, we haven't discussed that. You've got the Republican flag of course, which is that er...what was that? Sort of three colours..

Melissa: With the purple

Simon: Yeah with the purple, and that was used until the Franco era. Now, under the Spanish law you can wave that where you like; not in stadiums due to a sports law which forbids the use of political flags at sports events. Apparently the interpretation of that law, as to which flags can be shown or not, is fairly open.

As for the Franco era Spanish flag, that is of course the famous, or infamous I should say, flag which has got the black eagle in the middle of it. I mean it looks the same as the current flag apart from this very menacing looking eagle.

If you google that pre-constitutional flag the second thing that comes up is where to buy one, so there's obviously, in these strange times that we live, there's obviously quite a good trade in pre-constitutional flags going on.

That eagle is the San Juan eagle. That was the symbol of the evangelist in medieval art apparently. Now I'm going to sound very erudite with that I'm going to tell you but this is all from an article from our beloved colleagues at Verne, we haven't done this in English but it is available in Spanish. "In the heraldic tradition, this symbol makes reference to power and respect" apparently and it was adopted as a symbol in the 15th Century and then Franco and his merry band of fascists *laughter* started to use it from 1938 onwards.

And it was the official flag of Spain until the constitution was approved in 1978 when we switched over to...oh 'when Spain,' I should say...Look at me *laughter* "When we, we the Spanish!"...when Spain switched over to the current flag.

Now, this was a key issue in the exhumation of Franco because Franco's grandson - the self-styled Francis Franco - he took the pre-constitutional flag that was placed on Franco's coffin, during his original burial in 1975, he took it with him which he was then...basically authorities then took it away from him because it is illegal to fly that flag or to show that flag in places that are basically run by public administrations, and that is according to Spain's Historical Memory Law. So that means you couldn't hang a pre-constitutional flag outside a council building, for example, as much as Vox might like to do that.

We also heard a couple of times this week from Mr Alan Jones. He says, "What is it with politicians and their academic qualifications! Will you talk about it on #quepodcast?" - Not this week Alan but that is a good subject, that's something that's come up before. We must have spoken in the past about Cifuentes, Cristina Cifuentes, who eventually, with a combination of dodgy academic qualifications and face cream, ended up wanting to resign.

We heard from the mythical sea monster, Chris Thompson. He says, "Perhaps on the #quepodcast you can say something again about how unpleasant Señor Abascals comments and policies are. The Pablo's, Pedro and Albert didn't."

So that leads us very nicely into our main topic of the week which of course is Sunday's general election but, most importantly, Monday night's debate between the prime ministerial candidates. So, Melissa why don't you tell us what went on on Monday night?

Melissa: Yes, so, well, with the election coming up just days away Spain's political parties have been busy campaigning to win over voters.

Recent polls show that no political party is likely to win a majority in Congress, meaning that Spain could face more political deadlock after Sunday's vote.

The center-right Ciudadanos (or Citizens) is expected to be the biggest loser on election night, with a voter intention survey from EL PAÍS indicating that the party could win just 14 seats – a massive drop from the 57 it earned at the April election.

The Socialist Party and the Popular Party have been competing to win over these disillusioned voters, with both groups fighting to position themselves as the center. This is what we saw on Monday night during the televised debate.

[Sound bite of debate]

Pablo Casado, the leader of the Popular Party, has adopted a more moderate tone, abandoning his more extreme proposals, such as his pledge to restrict abortion, which led the party to its worst ever election result in April.

Spain's caretaker Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez meanwhile, took a tougher stance on the issue of Catalonia. **[Sound bite of Sánchez]** At a televised election debate on Monday, the Socialist leader promised to criminalize the organization of illegal referendums, like the one in Catalonia. **[Sound bite of Pablo Iglesias]**

This shift to the center has alarmed Pablo Iglesias, the leader of the anti-austerity party Unidas Podemos, who told Sánchez during the debate not to compete with the “ignorant and aggressive right.”

Polls show that Sánchez is likely to win the election but fall short of an absolute majority – meaning that, like in April, he will need the support of other parties if he is to be sworn back into office as prime minister.

But the Socialist leader has refused to enter a coalition with Unidas Podemos. **[Sound bite]** Indeed during the debate, Sánchez repeatedly pointed to their differences on the subject of Catalonia and the economy.

The failure of Socialist Party and Unidas Podemos to reach a governing deal is the main reason why Sánchez decided to call a new election – the fourth in as many years. There is now growing concern that the two parties will yet again be unable to break the political deadlock.

In the meantime, the far-right party Vox looks poised to take up to 13.7% of the vote and 50 seats in Congress on Sunday, making it the third-strongest political force. This would be a major gain for a party that won 24 seats in April, and earned less than 0.2% of the vote at the 2016 election. **[Sound bite of Santiago Abascal]**

During the debate on Monday, Vox leader Santiago Abascal was able to share his message with an audience of 8.2 million people. He falsely claimed that immigrants were responsible for a rise in violence, that the gender violence law had not reduced the number of women murdered, and that 70% of gang rape defendants were foreigners.

Unfortunately, few of his claims was challenged in the debate which leads us to question what will happen on Sunday and whether his message will get through to voters.

Simon: Absolutely. So I think the first thing to say is that the candidates looked awful *laughter* they just looked so bad! Now, we've mentioned in the past, Melissa has a massive crush on Pedro Sánchez but I think even you would admit Melissa that he looked terrible in the debate. They just all looked like they had these dead eyes.

Melissa: Yes, I mean look, I'm not going to say I have a crush, I think he's a handsome man, *laughter* let's clarify...

Simon: Yeah I just thought they looked terrible. I don't know what it was, was it the makeup? Or the lighting? I mean it was just so sterile as well, the format...I thought it was interesting that Santiago Abascal was bang in the middle of the five candidates, which almost gave him more protagonism.

There were all these awkward shots as well, you know, someone would be talking and the camera would cut to someone else, either the presenters or another one of the politicians; and they were either looking down at their notes, looking around, signaling silently to producers or it just looked...Oh and the graphics! The graphics were terrible!

People were saying, "is this some sort of malfunction?!" when they split screen. They had this weird little play symbol flashing across the screen and these black... *laughter* Veronica is nodding her head! Veronica works on lots of videos as well, I'm sure you could have done something more professional looking in 10 minutes, Veronica. I mean, it just looked awful!

Veronica: I don't know about that, but yeah it looked...

Simon: *laughter* Well it looked like something out of the nineties, I mean it just was very very strange.

And also lets just mention the ridiculous timetable, I mean this is so Spanish. It started at 10pm and didn't finish until about, nearly one o'clock in the morning on Tuesday morning which is just absurd. I think the format was too long anyway but it should have started earlier, I mean it was insane to expect people to stay up that late to watch a political debate.

Interesting to see that the number of people watching fell slightly compared to the debate before the April election. It was 8.6 million people compared to 8.9 back in April. It did get a bigger audience share but I mean, I don't know what to read into that. It could be, depending on what was on the other channels at the time.

Now, the Oscar for the greatest performance definitely goes to Albert Rivera. I mean I was looking more at Twitter in the early part of the debate because it was just peoples comments, people are so quick on Twitter, people are so funny!

[Sound bite of Albert Rivera pulling out a brick at the election debate]

They were saying that Albert Rivera was basically Mary Poppins because he just kept pulling out these props, it was like stunts.

The first thing that he pulled out was this massive chunk of paving stone *laughter* which apparently was from one of the projectiles that had been ripped out of the floor and flung at police officers, riot police in Catalonia during the recent disturbances.

Someone on twitter the next day actually managed to buy one of those paving stones on Amazon *laughter* it caused such a stir! Within seconds there were just memes of him all over Twitter, holding up and waving around this paving stone.

He then unrolled this massive big piece of paper which was to show **[Sound bite of Rivera]**..It was like three pieces of A4 glued together...

Melissa: Sticky tape *laughter*

Simon: Yeah it was! It just looked so cheap! Which was to show all of the concessions that governments have made to Catalonia or something, I can't even remember what point he was trying to make, I was so distracted by the big piece of paper.

Then somebody immediately said on Twitter, “all he needs now is a pair of scissors for a game of ‘scissors, paper, stone” *laughter* which just had me in absolute stitches.

But they all had various props to wave at each other, mostly news headlines or tweets, which just looks...I just think it looks terrible.

I think Rivera definitely came off the worst. He seems to get really excited and very sort of jumpy and I don't know what's going on with him.

He released this weird Instagram video at the weekend with a puppy... *laughter* where he said, he smells the puppy and he goes, “ooh he still smells of milk,” or something really bizarre! And then said something like, “oh if they attack me at the debate, I'm going to set the puppy on them,” or something like that!

[Sound bit of Rivera with the puppy]

I mean, the polls are looking so bad for him maybe he's just thinking, “ah I've got nothing to lose, lets just do whatever” *laughter*

One of the big questions being constantly thrown at Sanchez in the debates: “Who are you gonna do deals with? Who are you gonna do deals with?” I mean, obviously we're going to have to have deals done otherwise we're just going to be stuck in this groundhog day of elections and no deals. But the candidates were saying, “who's it gonna be with? Separatist with ‘golpistas”

‘Golpistas’ is a great word which is very hard to translate into english

Melissa: Coup plotters

Simon: Coup plotters! Thank you, yeah, that's a great way of describing it.

And Pablo Iglesias who is of course the man that failed to come to an agreement with Sánchez and vice versa; he was very much on this idea of, “Sánchez, are you going to do a deal with the PP?” Is a PP/PSOE deal possible? Surely not, it would seem extremely unlikely but who knows. I mean, what is going to happen when we come out of what is undoubtedly going to be another inconclusive election on Sunday?

Going back to Vox, as you mentioned Melissa, the candidates were very keen not to engage with Santiago Abascal, almost treating him like he wasn't there. But that's really dangerous considering there was no one there to call him out. No one was calling him out on his claims! No one was calling him out on those numbers that he was coming up with, most of which were very questionable, plus the whole thing about blaming

immigrants for all the sexual assaults in Spain, all this kind of stuff, all this rhetoric that he comes up with.

He really did have the biggest platform that he's ever had to get across what his party's policies are and he kind of seemed to relax into it didn't he? He was not so great at the beginning but relaxed into it. So, let's not forget that in April we were all sort of expecting Vox to do really pretty well. In the end it didn't do as well as some people feared and some of the polls were saying.

But who knows, this time around their message might have taken deeper root, because let's not forget we've just had all of this mess in Catalonia with the protests, up until now the protests in Catalonia have been mostly peaceful.

Who knows, let's see how it's going to sit with the voters come Sunday.

There were a few other funny moments. Iglesias got a good quip about money in envelopes when Pablo Casado said something about, "if you vote for the Socialists, if the Socialists get into power, every Spanish family is going to have to put €1000 in an envelope and hand it over to him." And I think to be honest in these kind of debates Pablo Iglesias often comes across the best. He just always seems very kind of calm and he doesn't get too emotional.

I thought some of the body language was appalling, but particularly Pedro Sánchez. He just seemed to be looking down all the time, making notes. I guess, a lot of the time maybe he wasn't aware that he was actually on camera at the time, but they didn't come across well did they?

And I thought the closing argument, Sánchez's closing argument was particularly bland.

And Pablo Casado said the creepiest thing *laughter*!

He just started off his, they call it the 'minuto de oro,' the closing statement, he said, "**[Sound bite Pablo Casado's closing argument]**" - which is basically, "I'd love to be in your house, look into your eyes and give you my hand," *laughter*

Which is just the creepiest thing I've ever heard! Especially by that time, if anyone was still watching they were probably in bed *laughter* Just like, "no Pablo, get out of my house."

So, all in all, it was a pretty depressing display, it doesn't exactly inspire much confidence. It certainly doesn't inspire much confidence that these five men can get together and do any kind of deal any time soon.

Music interlude

Simon: Alright, so let's move on, just briefly, to a second issue.

We got a nice message from Sofia Cabrejas. She says, "Hi Simon, I'm listening from Washington D.C. I'd love to know how the #MeToo movement has extended to Spain. Thanks!"

So yeah, it has kind of been in the news recently for reasons we shall hear about now. So, Melissa, tell us a bit about #MeToo in Spain.

Melissa: The MeToo movement in the United States – or YoTambién as it is known in Spanish – had an important impact on Spain. Following the accusations against Harvey Weinstein, several Spanish actresses including Aitana Sánchez-Gijón, and television presenter Carla Hidalgo, came out to share their own experiences with sexual harassment in the film industry.

More than 3,000 women involved with the arts also formed a collective known as Pandora's Box, which was formed to support artist Carmen Tomé after she accused a high-profile male curator of groping her in the bathroom. This collective warned in 2018 that they would they would expose repeat offenders but have yet to do so.

The real impact of the MeToo movement has been seen on the streets, with women's groups – not celebrities – leading the charge against the sexual abuse and discrimination.

Instead of Weinstein, Spain's women's movement has been galvanized by La Manada, a group of five men who gang raped an 18-year-old woman at the 2016 Running of the Bulls fiestas.

The first major protest took place in December 2017, when thousands of women in several Spanish cities marched in the street after it was revealed that La Manada had organized a private detective to spy on the victim.

More marches were held after a court sentenced the men to the lesser crime of sexual abuse, ruling that violence and intimidation were not used against the victim – which is a requisite for a rape charge.

The indignation over the lenient sentence prompted Spanish women to share their accounts of harassment on Twitter with the hashtag #Cuentalo or Tell it. Many of the stories were very shocking with women describing how they were raped by their fathers and their complaints were ignored by the police.

The outrage over La Manada also led to the biggest women's day marches Spain has ever seen. This year, around 800,000 women took part in mass marches across Spain. For the past two years, women's groups have also called a general strike for March 8, which was observed this year by around 5.3 million women, according to unions.

Although the La Manada ruling was overturned by the Spanish Supreme Court, which found the men guilty of rape and raised their prison terms, there were more protests just last week over a gang rape case in Manresa.

In this case, a 14-year-old teenager was gang raped by a group of men in an abandoned factory. Like in the initial Manada ruling, Barcelona's High Court found that the men were guilty of the lesser charge of sexual abuse – not assault. The court based this argument on the fact that the victim was in an “unconscious” state, meaning the defendants did not have to use violence or intimidation to coerce her.

So, while the women's movement has grown significantly, it would appear that men in Spain can still escape rape convictions for having non-consensual sex with a minor.

Simon: Yeah so I think what this really shows is that the current sexual assault laws in Spain are just absolutely not fit for purpose. I mean, we've already had these two really shocking cases, as you mentioned Melissa. We've had the Running of the Bulls and the Manresa case and I think something needs to change very soon.

The Popular Party actually set up a commission to investigate what needed to be done in the wake of the Running of the Bulls case but the conclusions of that report have not yet been acted on. It is in the Socialist Party's manifesto, that there will be a change. But there's by no means a clear consensus about exactly how far this law should go.

I think, in terms of the reactions to these cases, I think it's something that Spain should be particularly proud of. The way that the women's day has found this widespread

support, not just protests but an actual general strike. I mean, you went on strike didn't you?

Melissa: Yeah! I striked, I stroke *laughter*

Simon: You stroke *laughter* Yeah you stroke! I think it should be something that Spain should be particularly proud of. I think EL PAÍS as well, let's give ourselves a little pat on the back, you know, we've got our first ever gender correspondent now, Pilar Alvarez, who is basically looking over all of these issues within the sociedad section. Definitely around here as well I think it's noticeable there's a lot more women in senior roles than there used to be.

I saw a tweet recently saying, "Spaniards at the general election this weekend get to vote between this white 40-something-year-old man, this white 40-something-year-old," because they are all, all the candidates are white, they're male, they're around 40. So it was very noticeable that there's no female candidates.

Music interlude

Simon: All right, so let's wrap up there, that was episode seven, I believe, of season three!

My name is Simon Hunter

Melissa: I'm Melissa Kitson

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 the lovely warm podcasting studio in the EL PAÍS newsroom under the expert guidance of our producer Veronica Figueroa - who is very good at sneaking up on people while they're at their desks, and making them jump out of their skins!

And you can listen to it on your favorite podcast app. You can also request it via Alexa, Siri or your Google Assistant. We'll be back next week with a brand new host of issues. *Cough, cough* Elections!!

Thank you for listening, adios!

Melissa: Ciao!

