



The ORACLE

Costa de la Luz

FREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE MONTHLY
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5 March 2008
Issue 26
Huelva & East Algarve



RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

Calling all Oracle readers - Are YOU up to the challenge?

Sport Relief Mile Fun Day in Isla Canela - Saturday 15 March, 11am for a prompt 11.30 race time

A HEART-STOPPING MOBILE BILL

Vodafone sends €47,000 bill to young Ayamonte woman charged as if on Roaming in Portugal

Manuel J Albert / Jon Stevens

There are letters that arrive that can be shocking. However, 20 year old Vanessa Segura from Ayamonte received a bill this month that was enough to give anyone a heart attack as mobile phone provider Vodafone charged her €46,733.96 for the use of the internet through her mobile phone. The move was immediately condemned by consumer group Facua who demanded that Vodafone, who have a presence in over 60 countries, rectify the situation and has called for the mobile phone giant to give an explanation as to why a citizen of Spain is being charged as though she is in Portugal, despite being on Spanish soil.

"When I received the bill, I did not realise," recalled Vanessa. "I automatically read €46.73, which is around what I usually pay. I didn't realise and forgot all about it. Other bills they sent me afterwards were completely normal."

However, the fateful day of the mega-bill arrived with the postman on February 15.

"We received a letter from Vodafone maintaining that we owed almost eight million pesetas (€47,000)," continued Vanessa. "I couldn't understand it but it was my mother who realised that we had been served a bill so high."

Helped by her friends, soon realised that between September 11 and 20 last year, Vanessa accumulated hours of internet use over the Vodafone Portugal network. Due to the proximity of Ayamonte to Portugal, the area either side of the River Guadiana has competing signals from the two countries. In most cases it is easy to see that your provider has changed as it carries a different name, however Vodafone operates in both countries and for some it is quite easy to miss the two letter code - ES or PT - used to distinguish the networks.

"I knew then that this had to be an error," said Vanessa. "My computer is set up to only connect to the Spanish network and I always check that it is correct. In any case, the hours of activity took place either late night or early morning, times when I do not use it."

Upon contacting Vodafone to explain the error, the situation did not become any clearer.

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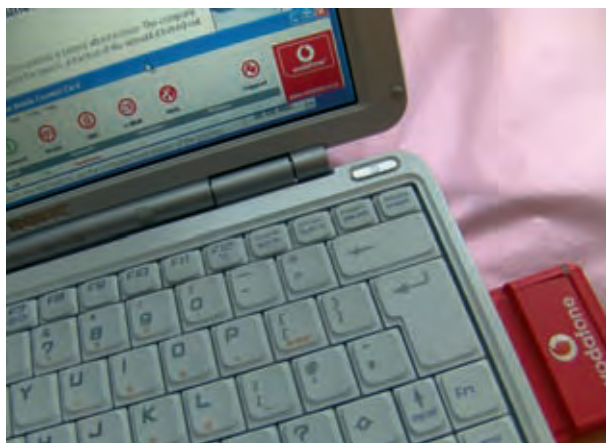
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ELECTIONS '08

PSOE Edge Ahead As Election Goes Down to the Wire



Photo: Reuters

Spain's socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and his conservative challenger Mariano Rajoy traded harsh accusations during their second live television debate ahead of the impending March 9 General Election. In a near repeat of the first debate at the end of February, they interrupted each other constantly, accused each other of lying and bickered over the economy.

But the angriest exchange came over terrorism: "Whatever next Sunday's result is, the Socialist Party will support the government of Spain in the fight against terrorism without condition. That is the solemn promise I am making in the name of my party", said Zapatero.

Undeterred, Rajoy reverted to his familiar stamping ground of illegal immigration: "We have to expel all those foreigners that commit crimes even if they've been in Spain for five years. The law has to prohibit massive regularisation. We have to create an immigration agency."

Various viewers' polls published immediately after the debate gave Zapatero the lead with 49-51 percent of those interviewed finding his performance stronger than Rajoy's who was backed by 30-32 percent. However, analysts say Spaniards seem unlikely to be swayed by arguments from either side.

The last opinion polls before the March 9 poll gave Zapatero's governing Socialists a lead of around two percentage points over Rajoy's opposition Popular Party.

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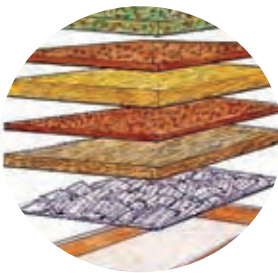
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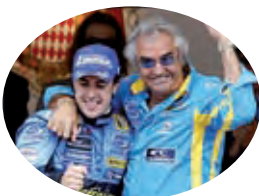
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What's on your mind? Let us know!

The
ORACLE
Costa de la Luz

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Editors Note

If you're living in Cadiz and are reading this little message to the readers then you have obviously a) been to Huelva recently and b) not realised that there is now an edition of The Oracle dedicated to Cadiz.

As part of our continued revamp programme for 2008, The Oracle has broadened its horizons with a team down in Cadiz providing the residents of that province with the kind of quality paper you have gotten used to. This is not a hollow brag – I was told this month that The Oracle is of far higher quality than The Mirror, The Times or The Mail. Apparently when it comes to cleaning windows, The Oracle is far more absorbent and last much longer than the aforementioned papers. Hey, you need to take your compliments wherever you can get them!

The eagle-eyed among you will have noticed a date change on the front cover. This was because we wanted to be able to print as close as possible to the elections being held on March 9 so that the news we are covering this month is as fresh as possible. You can catch the eight-page election special in the centre section from page 21-28.

Also, Semana Santa is upon us as well and we wanted to be able to bring regular readers and tourists a comprehensive guide to the most important local processions. Whilst most towns will have their own 'pasos', it is in the cities where the experience is truly unforgettable. No need to mention Seville, of course, as it is almost impossible to avoid one procession or other at any time of day during Semana Santa. So we have brought you all the major processions you can expect to find in the cities of Huelva, Jerez and Cadiz now that the schedule has at last been finalised. This you'll find on pages 18-20.

In a packed month, let's not forget the BBC Sport Relief Spain event The Oracle is organising in conjunction with Isla Canela Resort and Ayamonte Council. I expect to see you all there in Isla Canela Marina on Saturday 15 March for our fun day and sponsored mile run. Sponsor forms and details of how to register are on pages 15 and 16.

And as a prelude to the Inaugural Martine Barthelemy Memorial Golf Tournament on March 24 at Isla Canela Golf Course, I've written a personal tribute to this marvellous, heroic woman who we lost last September. Find that on pages 12 and 13.

Plus don't forget all our other regular items.

Enjoy.

Jon Stevens

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Costa de la Luz

MANWY'S WORLD

BY MANUEL CADAG



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Vodafone Warned to Clear Up Confusion

Vanessa spent a long time being passed from pillar to post as she tried to get answers from the Vodafone customer service call centre, but found it difficult to get straight answers.

"I made my case, but often I was attended to by foreigners who couldn't really understand me," continued Vanessa. "I was getting dizzy with all the switching back and forth between the departments and in the end they simply put me onto a recorded message saying that the bill was correct."

Unclear of how to proceed, she sought the advice of the council whose citizen's consumer advice office drafted a complaint against the company. This seems to have done the trick as only a few days later, Vanessa received a call from Vodafone saying that she would not have to pay the bill after all.

Vodafone issued a statement saying that the 22 days under dispute in the bill has been nullified as the charge was for services "that had not been taken on voluntarily" and that the "client was completely unaware of what was happening".

However, for Facua, this is not the end of the matter as it says they have received many complaints about Vodafone and its roaming charges. In early February, Sergio D.B. from Seville successfully challenged a bill of €8000 for two days internet use from his mobile phone whilst in Portugal, thanks to Facua who argued that the charges accumulated between April 29 and May 1 2007 did not correspond to the terms and conditions as laid out in the service agreement offered to the client.

Local UK-born resident John Messenger, who now lives in Costa Esuri, received a bill late last year of €600 for internet use over four days. John was so incensed by the situation that he threatened to take the case to the EU had he failed to get a satis-

factory result.

"Brussels are not taking this roaming thing very lightly anymore," said Mr Messenger. "I was more than happy to take it to that level as what they did was completely unwarranted. I live on a pension and €600 for me is an awful lot of money. The whole situation made me quite ill with worry."

He also approached the town hall who again drafted a letter of complaint. The amount was soon written off, but the problems didn't stop there.

"When the original bill came and I refused to pay, they cut me off," said John, "I managed to get the bill written off but then they had the cheek to charge me for incom-

pletion of my 18 month contract. As they were the ones who cut me off in the first place, with a massive bill to boot, I feel they really need to take a look at their practices and see if they really do think it fair to charge me now

for the rest of a contract I have no access to. This was explained to them in writing almost two months ago and I've not heard anything more about it. Hopefully that's the end of it."

In December, the multinational was fined €1.4m for rounding up amounts in their bills, an act that generated "many thousands of millions" according to Facua who believed the fine to be an "insignificant" drop in the water.

Facua are now demanding that Vodafone investigate these and other cases thoroughly to avoid issues like this occurring in the future. They also want to know if the 'Ayamonte issue' is an isolated case or are other border towns with Portugal and France also affected. If the company fails to deliver satisfactory responses, Facua will consider starting proceedings against Vodafone through the appropriate regulatory bodies.



Too Close to Call

Just days before the most keenly contested general election in recent memory, the PSOE socialist government cling to a slender lead. But will voter apathy be their downfall?

Spain's electoral campaign has never been a decorous affair, but the final nationally televised electoral debate between Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Popular Party (PP) candidate Mariano Rajoy was often downright nasty. For long stretches, it sank into a cacophony of insults, interruptions, and petty squabbling over who was the bigger liar. Yet in the end, Zapatero offered more concrete prescriptions for the next legislature, and that, it seems, persuaded the Spanish public to deem him the victor of this second debate, just as it had after the first, held a week earlier. Whether the governing Socialists can translate that momentum into victory in the March 9 national elections, however, will likely depend on voter turnout.

The race is certainly tight. The Centre for Sociological Research, Spain's main polling institution, released a survey on February 16 giving the Socialists a slim 1.5 point advantage over the Popular Party. Other more recent polls suggest that lead is now around 2 points. Either way, says University of Murcia political scientist Ismael Crespo, the Socialists have to hope for a high turnout. "The PP's ranks are very loyal; 80 to 85% of those who voted for them in 2004 will vote for them this time," he says. "But traditionally, about 20% of leftists abstain — they're generally disenchanted with government and only mobilize in times of crisis."

That's not to say that most voters across the political spectrum don't care about the issues. Spokespersons for both major parties agree that the economy has become the election's central concern. After four years of unprecedented prosperity, Spain's economy, like so many others, has recently suffered, with growth slowing in the fourth quarter of 2007 to 3.3% (down from 4.3% in the fourth quarter of 2006) and unemployment rising to 8.6%. With 35.9% of Spaniards rating the economy "bad" or "very bad" (up from 25.4% the previous year), both parties are seeking to portray themselves as fixers of the country's financial problems.

The opposition Popular Party's strategy has been predictably simple: Blame the

Socialists. "The government has provoked a crisis of confidence," says Gustavo de Aristegui, the PP's foreign affairs spokesperson and a candidate for parliamentary reelection. "Their economic policies have been very risky, very irresponsible, and Spanish families are paying the price." The PP has also linked economic woes to what it believes is widespread anxiety over Spain's burgeoning immigrant population. During Monday's debate, Rajoy blamed Zapatero for 2005's mass regularization of immigrants, arguing that they "couldn't all fit." Borrowing a page from French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Rajoy also repeated his party's call for greater "control and order" of immigrants, promising, if elected, to require them to sign a contract agreeing to conform to "Spanish values."

The Socialists, on the other hand, have emphasized the international nature of the economic crisis and reiterated that they are better equipped to handle future problems. "We've reduced the public debt and increased the surplus," says Socialist Party campaign director Oscar López. "And we've shown, by raising the minimum wage, and by offering a €400 rebate to all tax payers, that we know how to help Spanish families."

The hostility with which the parties' candidates slugged it out during the debate may prompt some voters to turn away and throw up their hands in despair. Yet that may be just the point. As PP senior strategist Gabriel Elorriaga recently admitted in an interview with the Financial Times, his party hopes to encourage potential Socialist voters to sit this one out. "Our whole strategy is centered on making Socialist voters waver," he said. "We know they will never vote for us. But if we can sow enough doubts about the economy, about immigration and nationalist issues, then perhaps they will stay at home." For the Socialists, that could be the worst outcome of all.

**THE ORACLE
ELECTION SPECIAL
Pages 21-28**







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PP Candidate Javier Arenas pledges to make Huelva-Cadiz link and Huelva Airport a reality should he win Junta poll

The candidate for the leadership of the Junta de Andalucía, Javier Arenas, of the right-of-centre PP party, has pledged to build 1,500 km of new motorway links and is committed to the launch of the Huelva-Cadiz dual carriageway connection if he wins in the March 9 poll.

In a public speech given in Tomares, Seville, Arenas presented his transport plan stating that alongside education and health, the Andalusian infrastructure was where the region lags behind the rest of Spain. He also pointed out that the Huelva-Cadiz link will become a reality due to the "huge demand" for it called by the citizens of both provinces.

Arenas said his plan would be spread over seven years at a cost €4.5bn, some 1.8% of GDP. The plan would also see the extension of the AVE high speed rail network into a further eight cities throughout Andalucía.

Of particular interest was his commitment to back the various airport projects currently being mooted in cities such as Huelva, Cordoba and Campo de Gibraltar stating that "it is essential" for the local economy and for the achievement of full employment in Andalucía to have an improved infrastructure in all its facets.

In the opinion of the PP candidate, the improved infrastructure would help facilitate greater labour mobility and create a significant backbone in the autonomous region which will affect the quality of its citizens.



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Andalucian Doctor Fired For Not Speaking Catalan

The work situation of a hard-working doctor from Andalusia has evolved into a political hot-potato this last month as it transpired that he had been fired from his job in Gerona, Catalonia for apparently not speaking Catalan, the regional language widely used in public sector employment in the autonomous region. With the national elections just around the corner, the right wing PP have been quick to make political capital out of the situation, pointing to the PSOE government's policy of granting even more autonomy to the region, thus creating "the unacceptable situation of a country within a country".

The doctor, identified only by his initials H G B, has now sought refuge in the courts in the hope of finding a suitable solution to his ordeal. He had an impeccable service record, never having received any complaints from either his bosses or patients in the five years he had worked at the hospital and was considered to be a responsible professional, devoted to his patients and work, with plenty of overtime under his belt. However, neither his attitude nor his professionalism has helped him to keep his job.

In their defence, the respondent in the case, SPASS, has reiterated that the reason for dismissal of the employee is not related to "language", but "with the contractual relationship between employer and worker" claiming that the doctor had been neglecting his contractual obligations. However, they did acknowledge an incident between doctors that was language related in which the complainant was involved.

The linguistic tension within the hospital was nothing new to the doctor, who had become used to the rude attitude and insulting jokes at his expense from his companions, who had no qualms about making fun of his Andalusian accent or reproach him regarding the lack of knowledge of the Catalan language.

The plaintiff, in fact, says that during the five years that he worked in the hospital, he had been continuously pressured by his colleagues and had to put up with unfortunate discriminatory conditions because of his origin and for the fact that he did not speak Catalan, two facts already known when they hired him.

It was precisely the constant pressures and malicious comments he received that ended his desire to learn the Catalan language.

Such a dismissal involves a violation of fundamental rights and the plaintiff is seeking for the court to declare it as invalid and to compel the company to reinstate him.

More so in his favour is the fact that the vast amount of his work involved routine medical examinations performed on workers, mainly builders, 95% of which were immigrants who did not understand Catalan.

The Andalusian political heavyweights were keen to muscle in on the case with both leaders of the main parties claiming their full support and "solidarity" for the Andalusian medic. The PSOE president of the Junta de Andalusia, Manuel Chaves,

believes the doctor's rights have been jeopardised and says that the law is "very clear" on the matter and is there to support any person who feels their rights have been violated.

Chaves had previously stated that he intends to introduce classes in schools for the regional languages to improve the chances of Andalusian workers gaining work in other parts of the nation.

His PP counterpart Javier Arenas, however, took issue with Chaves' comments saying it was wrong to equate the learning of autonomous languages with improved job opportunities "as this serves only to accept the discrimination" and has nothing to do with equal rights for all. Arenas believes that this equation "gives the Catalans more opportunities to work than Castellanos" arguing that they can work both in their own province and anywhere else in Spain but the same is not true of the Castellanos who are prevented from working in Catalonia if they do not know Catalan.

If elected president of the Junta, Arenas promised that schools will see "much, much more Spanish, much more English and much more French" being taught.

"The problem is not that we can study Catalan in Andalusia," he explained, "but that the children and grandchildren of Andalusia who left to work in Catalonia can not count on the full equality and opportunities through the Spanish language, the language of which we all feel proud. Any Andalusian should be able to work in Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country on the same terms using a common language, as they would receive in Andalusia. I want a Spain and an Andalusia equal for all."



Concern Over Students' Irresponsible Sex Attitude

A study carried out in Spanish universities has revealed some shocking statistics in young students' attitude to sexual relations, with some 57% of Andalusian students participating in unprotected sex.

Despite massive campaigns promoting safe sex and raising the awareness of the risks of unprotected sex, not just in universities but from school-age too, it is clear there is a lot more work to do. TV, radio, institutions and social groups all try to hammer home the message into the consciousness of young people of behaving responsibly, but that message doesn't seem to be getting through.

The Andalusian figure is the second highest in the country, behind Catalonia.

The study sample was 3,537 students in 38 educational institutions throughout the country by doctors Jose Rodriguez Carrion and Clara Isabel Traverso Blanco of Jerez University. In general, most respondents believed that whilst sex education was good in Spain, they did need more information. The Andalusians occupy second place behind Murcia in young people's poor evaluation of sex education, with many of the students believing they need more information about the risks sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and pregnancy. Within this group, it is women aged 15-30 years old who are the most worried about the lack of education.

"Every parent thinks their child is a virgin," joked Dr Rodriguez Carrion. "Every young person copes very well with the practical, but they must have skipped the theory class!"

That he uses humour to illustrate very serious points is a trait he takes into the classroom.

"When they laugh, they lose the feeling of embarrassment," he explained. "This is when they dare to speak up a bit more. The most important thing is that they ask questions."

According to the study's co-author Dr Traverso Blanco, high school sex education does not go far enough and stressed the need for continual sex education during the formative years.

"At present, they just teach what the sexual organs are," complained Dr Traverso Blanco. "It's a biology class!"

With the draw of the internet and TV, she went on, means there's a wealth of information out there but not of any real quality or substance. Children need counselling as well as basic education, they need to be made aware of all the risks and all the options available.

They both spoke of the "disturbing" figures at a press conference as the data was released. 53% of Andalusian students resort to the 'withdrawal' method, or coitus interruptus, as a means of contraception, a figure only surpassed in Asturias with 54%.

Another worrying figure was that 37% of Andalusian students had taken the morning-after pill meaning that more than one in three had resorted to it at least once. This "abuse" was a dangerous precedent according to Dr Rodriguez Carrion.

"It is essentially a hormone overload drug that should not be used more than twice a year," he warned.

Despite the average age of having penetrative sex for the first time is around the national average of 17 ½ years old, Andalusia has the highest number of people who lose their virginity under the age of 15. The legal age is 16. This worries Dr Traverso.

"The situation for young girls who participate in sexual relations very early is a very delicate one," said the doctor. "Many girls are not aware of the risks they expose themselves to when not protected and many do it to please the boyfriend."

In case of pregnancy, according to Traverso, girls are faced with two options: leave school and have the child or have an abortion. Considering that 90% of abortions in Spain are not carried out in public hospitals, this further complicates the young woman's decision.

Both doctors are in doubt as to their conclusion.

"Double protection," they say. "The pill for protection against pregnancy, the condom to protect against disease."



The Best Local News Every Month

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88 Year-Old Spaniard Gets Civil War Bullet Removed 70 years On

An 88 year old man has undergone an operation in Spain to remove a bullet which has been lodged in his left arm for the past 70 years and which has almost cost him his life. The Diario de Alto Aragón reported that Faustino Olivera went to the doctors two years ago after feeling some pain in his left arm. It seems an infection had finally taken hold around the bullet dating from the Spanish Civil War and was finally operated on to remove it.

The story commences when Faustino was recruited by the Nationalist army in August 1938, when Faustino was just 18. He was trained in the barracks based in Huesca and from here sent to the Front. In the early morning of November 11, 1938, as Faustino

Olivera was resting on his side, in a trench on the land of a Catalan farmhouse, his brigade came under attack. In the crossfire, a bullet from a 'mauser 98' rifle ricochet off his gun and had embedded itself in his left arm. He immediately ran to the mobile hospital unit, where they had inspected his wound and hence immediately transferred him to Fraga. There they could not find the bullet so he was later taken to Zaragoza to be operated on but they too did not find the bullet. As commented by Faustino, "I harbored by suspicions because there was only an entry hole and no exit hole. As soon as my wound healed, I was sent to the Front again".

Two years ago, Faustino went to see Doctor Luis Güerri as he began to have pains in his left side and it was there, after an x-ray that they discovered the bullet.

The doctor informed the family that Faustino was suffering from an infection caused by shrapnel, which had caused severe inflammation. For the past two years, every two months, Faustino had been attending the hospital to remove liquid from his body but towards the end the pain was too much and a large lump had appeared.

His nephew is currently the proud owner of the bullet which he describes as an 'emotive souvenir'.



Spain Still Attractive to Property Investors

Agencies

Despite all the negative publicity which has emerged in recent months, Spain remains a popular destination with British overseas property investors. That's the message coming from estate agency website Primelocation.com.

Business director at the website Louise Hall commented: "It is a peculiar market in many ways that has remained consistently in the number two position for property searches for UK buyers, behind France in the number one slot."

At present, of course, one may expect France to stay in front, given its highly-competitive mortgage market, as described by Blevin Franks. It said Spain's northern neighbour's banks had survived the subprime crisis relatively unscathed and had managed to boost its fourth quarter of 2007 mortgage lending by 3.8 per cent from a year earlier thanks to a series of attractive deals. In such circumstances, none would expect Spain to be likely to usurp France as number one right now.

Yet nor is Spain likely to fall to number three, whatever the attractions of Portugal or any other country. "This is despite the fact that the market, particularly in the south of Spain - the Costa del Sol in particular - has had a difficult time in the doldrums, with over-hiked prices as well as issues over land ownership," said Ms Hall.

One factor in this, she noted, is that Spanish property today is not all about the Costas. "But of course, Spain like France is a big country, so there are plenty of other regions that people will look to buy in, provided they are served by good transportation links to the UK."

Good transportation, of course, means tourist links. Buy-to-let investors may have been heartened recently by forecasts that tourism in Spain has been tipped to continue increasing, therefore potentially raising the number of opportunities for renting holiday homes.

The move away from traditional areas was supported by Seville-based tourism expert Hernan Gallego. "With the increasing attraction of up and coming areas such as Cadiz and Huelva, more and more people are shunning the more established areas of the Costa del Sol or Costa Blanca in search of the better quality of life offered by the two Costa de la Luz regions."

Another such prediction has appeared this week, with tourism marketing company The Network predicting that Spain is one of the most popular destinations in the short-haul popularity stakes, Easier has reported. Paula Lacey, business development director for the Network, said prospects for bookings in this area were "hugely encouraging".






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¡Viva la Life on Mars!

Award-winning BBC hit comedy-drama *Life on Mars* is about to land in Spain after Antena 3 signed a deal to buy the rights at the BBC Showcase trade fair in Brighton.

The time-travel police mystery centres on the life of Detective Sam Tyler, played by John Simm, who has a car accident in the present day and wakes up in 1970's

Manchester. Arguably, though, the real star of the show is the sexist, hard-living DI Gene Hunt, played by Philip Glenister, who gets the lion's share of the script's funnier lines. The show explores the relationship between the two characters to reflect the different attitudes to policing between the two eras.

This is the first time that the BBC has sold a show in scripted format to Spain and Claudia Danser, head of Iberia at BBC Worldwide, is excited by the sale.

"This is a very exciting deal for us, not only because it is the first scripted-format sale in this territory, but also because it signals a move into local drama series", she said. "These are some of the highest-rating programs on Spanish television and Worldwide's expansion into this area shows its continuing growth in Iberia."

Antena 3 licensed the format to produce eight episodes, and has already short-listed three independent Spanish production companies to make the series. BBC Worldwide's international formats team will executive produce the series with input from Kudos, the programme's original makers.

"I am delighted to announce that we will be making a Spanish version of the wonderfully original *Life on Mars* series," said Mercedes Gamero, the head of acquisitions at Antena 3. "We expect the unique twist on the traditional police drama will



be very popular in Spain and we are looking forward to recreating the success it has had in the UK."

Vida en Marte, to give it its Spanish title, will be set in Madrid but in 1978 instead of 1973 to reflect the changing society the country underwent following the death of General Franco and his dictatorship in 1975. The year is an interesting choice for the show as in 1978 laws were introduced to guarantee equal civil and political rights. Moving the show forward also allows it to avoid the more sensitive subject of a police drama set in a police state.

"We need to move the series forward to 1978 to recreate the characters," explained Gamero. "For example, no women were allowed in the police force under Franco. Under Franco, the police were seen as an important arm of the political regime. By 1978 there was a new openness in Spain which would have been challenging to some members of the police. There was a culture of machismo among Spanish men which has changed a lot."

The show has already spawned a sequel in the UK featuring the chauvinistic hard man Gene Hunt called *Ashes* to *Ashes*, whilst the US version produced by the man behind *LA Law*, Ally Mc Beal and *Boston Legal*, David E Kelley, premiered in January. The Spanish version will air in prime time at the beginning of 2009.

Inspector Jefe Gene Hunt

One of the most memorable TV characters in recent years has been the creation of the macho, hard-drinking, bully but loveable rogue that is Gene Hunt but how will he translate into Spanish?



She's as nervous as a very small nun at a penguin shoot.

Es tan nervioso como una monja muy pequeño en una caza de pingüinos

He's got fingers in more pies than a leper on a cookery course.

Tiene sus dedos en más tartas que un leproso en un curso de cocina

Don't move, you're surrounded by armed bastards!

¡Alto, está rodeado de cabrones armados!

You great soft, sissy, girlie, nancy, French, bender, Man United-supporting poof!

¡Nenaza blanda, floja y maricon, hinch del Barça!

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Nunca habrá una mujer como primer ministro siempre que tengo un agujero en mi culo



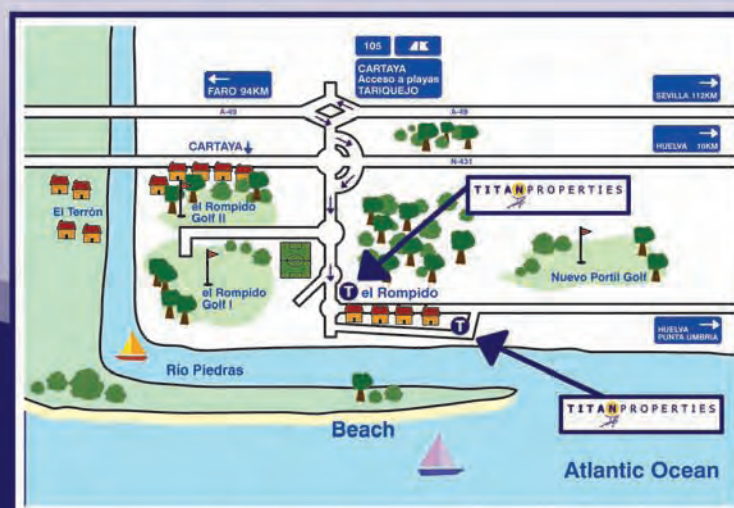
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Kamikaze Driver Released on Bail

Courts in Huelva allowed the release on bail but withdrawal of the driving licence for the 61 year old kamikaze driver, from Estoril (Portugal), who was arrested on the 20 October 2007 for driving more than 40 kilometres in the opposite direction on the A-49 towards Seville.

It is claimed that the court had taken this decision after an appeal hearing, at the request of driver's lawyer, where it was debated whether to keep her in prison, where she had remained since the 23 October or release her on bail.

After being accused at the outset of the alleged offences of reckless driving, she was then charged with disobedience as she did not obey the instructions of the Guardia Civil. The court is looking into the psychiatric report re-

quested by the defense and the medical reports of the two victims, one of whom is pregnant, and which were slightly injured while trying to move out of the way of the 'kamikaze'.

The Guardia Civil arrested the driver who had reached a velocity of 200 kilometres per hour creating "chaos and panic" amongst the road users and causing three traffic accidents, which resulted in two minor injuries.

Sources from the Emergency Services had said that they had received more than 80 calls from drivers who had come across the 'kamikaze' driver and had ensured that the vehicle was traveling towards Seville in the opposite direction.

She was finally stopped near San Juan del Puerto, precisely half an hour after the first calls were received.

Huelva Ideal for Natural Energy

The deputy of the department of Renewable Energies of the Provincial Council of Huelva, Maria Jose Cortil, highlighted the excellent geographical and climatic conditions that the province of Huelva has for the exploitation of natural energy sources.

In this sense, Cortil indicated that the current energy model "is almost entirely dependable on fossil fuels, where the province offers an excellent geographical and cli-

matic condition for the establishment of facilities for natural sources of energy."

As an example, Cortil referred to the more than 2,800 hours of sunshine every year, the presence of moderate winds throughout the year, the numerous rivers with the adequate potential to establish mini hydraulic sites, the important agriculture and livestock sector, the large forest exploitation areas, and the fast growing food and agriculture industry.

Drugs Binned

Special Police Task Force uncover innovative new way to smuggle in drugs from North Africa

The battle between the drug traffickers and the police continued as usual this last month with arrests and many kilos of assorted drugs seized in a variety of operations throughout the province.

However, earlier in the month, authorities were alerted to a new way of getting the drugs into the country from Africa as the government delegate for the north African Spanish enclave, Ceuta, Jenaro Garcia-Arreciado, reported that gangs were using dumpster trucks bringing rubbish to landfill sites on the mainland to smuggle their goods, the A-49 towards Seville.

With land limited in Ceuta, the enclave's accumulated rubbish must be transported daily to landfill sites in the Cadiz area and it is among these rubbish bags that Garcia-Arreciado claimed the drugs were being brought in.

So it was then that not long later, the investigation bore fruit, resulting in over 50kg of hashish seized with an estimated street value of

over €200,000. The novel and hitherto undetected method of transportation was uncovered by the Organised Crime Special Response Group (GRECO) and the operation led to the arrest of Medina Sidonia resident and dumpster truck driver, JMG, 35 years old, who was caught as he was trying to recover the package disguised as rubbish in the town's landfill site.

The accomplice, who was to collect the package for further distribution, managed to escape on foot despite armed agents firing warning shots over his head.



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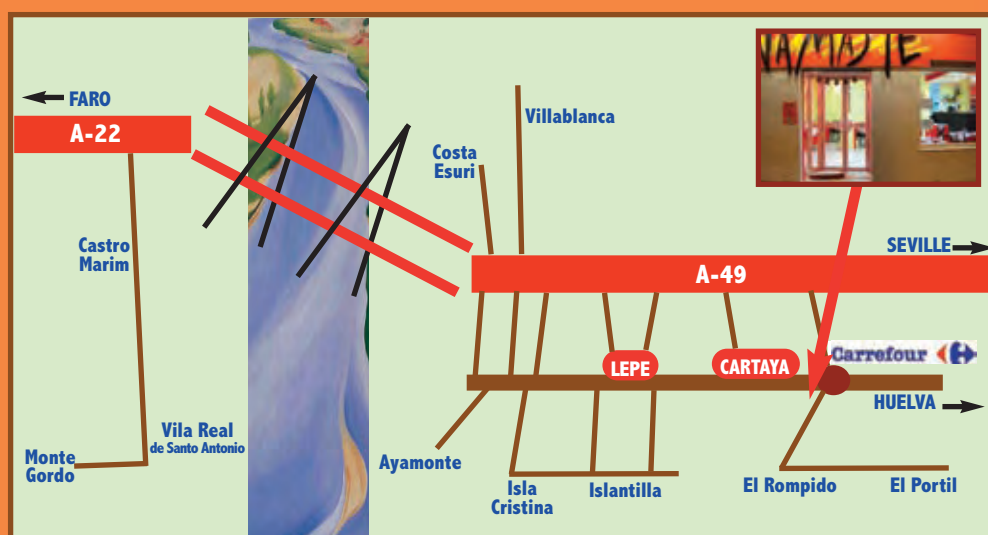


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Huelva's Riverbanks Classed as "Outstanding"

Belinda Lopez Diaz

The Ministry of Environment belonging to the Government of Andalucía has identified a total of 862 kilometres of river banks that stand out for the "outstanding" state of its vegetation, its ecological wealth or socio-cultural and landscape attributes throughout the province of Huelva.

These river sections, which are integrated in the first Inventory of Riverbanks of Excellence in Andalucía, have been identified through remote sensing techniques and this year, they will be examined through a series of fieldworks, amounting to an investment of 300,000 euros allocated to the project by the Andalusian Water Agency.

In a itemized format, and taking into account that a single stretch of outstanding bank can meet the requirements of more than one of the three typologies studied, the inventory has already identified 621 kilometres of riverbanks in the province of Huelva for the excellent condition of its vegetation; 33 kilometres for their environmental value and 32 kilometres and eight places for their unique socio-cultural and scenic value, a criteria based on the hydraulic infrastructures considered for their historical heritage, the link between the villages and the rivers and the landscape characteristics.

Likewise of the 4,623 kilometres of riverbanks described as "outstanding" in all Andalucía, over 500 meet the requirements of more than one of the previous typologies mentioned, thereby becoming stretches with the most



value in the autonomous region. Upon completion of the fieldworks that are currently being carried out, these riverbanks could even become protected. Among these are areas belonging to the River Múrtigas, that has the three typologies; La Rocina in Doñana, and areas of the River Chanza.

The Ministry of Environment's inventory is collecting preliminary data which will be completed during the fieldwork in the coming months and which makes up the first phase of a program that will develop plans for conservation and restoration as well as an information tool for the management of the Inventory of Riverbanks of Excellence.



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Martine Barthelemy: 1953 - 2007

Alongside her life partner Chad, Martine Barthelemy was a much-loved trailblazer in the most recent stage of ostensibly aimed at the emerging British market, but always with at least one eye on the Spanish and Portuguese on March 24 at Isla Canela Golf Club, The Oracle Editor JON STEVENS pays homage to this remarkable woman

There are times when Punta del Moral at Isla Canela and Isla Cristina on the other side of the water seem so close they almost touch. A long stone jetty stretching out from the lighthouse in Isla Cristina makes it seem even closer still. At low tide, it is very tempting to even try to swim it. You'd be mad, as this is a major fishing vessel lane and the currents are fierce. But for those who don't fancy the 30 minute drive all around the houses just to get a quick pint of Strongbow not available in Cristina, the swim suddenly looks very attractive indeed.

Being an extremely hot day, I found myself thirsting for an ice cold pint of Strongbow which at this time was only available in The Outback Inn, the Australian pub in the Centro Comercial in the marina at Isla Canela. I'd noticed that the tide was low and it really did look like you could walk it. So I set off from the lighthouse, down the long jetty and came to the delightful little beach which is only accessible at low tide. I could almost touch that cider. Just a short little swim and I'll be there, I thought.

The seabed on the Punta del Moral side is very muddy, so there I was, like the Man from Atlantis, emerging from the sea, sodden, shoeless and muddy and trudged my way across the car park towards nirvana. Watched every step of the way by Martine in an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

It is this laughter that is my abiding memory of Martine Barthelemy, the French co-founder of The Outback Inn who lost her long battle with cancer last September. Her laughter was infectious. When something tickled her, it really did tickle her with a huge belly laugh that was so uncontrollable that it more often than not ended in tears.

"I can't believe it, are you crazy?" she said through the guffaws as I stood at the bar, dripping wet awaiting my well-deserved pint. "I knew it was you when I saw someone coming out of the water."

I didn't have the heart to tell her that my grand plan of swimming the small distance between the two points hit trouble almost immediately as I got caught up in the currents, which even in 40° summer is ice cold. A passing jet-skier came to my rescue and gave me a lift across. But why let the truth get in the way of a good story as a now thoroughly tickled Martine went around the bar telling everyone what had happened. "Can you believe this crazy Welshman?" she was telling them. "Just for a pint of cider. Stupid man!" She even went to the bar next door to give them the scoop.

Talk to people who knew Martine and they all have similar stories. She loved life, no matter what it threw at her, which is why it is even more tragic that she was robbed of the life she loved so much so young.

Martine, along with her life partner and ex-Australian rugby international Chad Smith, arrived in the Costa de la Luz in 2000. They had spent several successful years in the

Algarve and were looking for a new challenge. They met in 1993 whilst Chad was working in Real Estate and had a small bar. They met in a shop and immediately hit it off. Soon they opened a string of pubs and restaurants together including the hugely successful Puccini's Italian Restaurant in Albufeira's Montechoro district. However, they were tiring of Albufeira, particularly the in-fighting and back-stabbing among the foreign business owners. They had always wanted a return to Martine's native France and were hoping to open a hotel in Hossegor, near her Biarritz birthplace. As has happened to many of the best laid plans, golf intervened.

On a trip to the Isla Canela Golf course, Chad was taken around the newly built Centro Comercial. There was very little there but Chad had seen enough to know the potential was there for something very big indeed. Martine, the real boss of the partnership no matter what Chad says, soon came to give it the once over and was impressed with what she saw. And so it was that The Outback Inn was born, the first English-style pub in the province, despite neither was English.

"It was the best decision we ever made," recalls Chad. "I could see it straight away but I didn't want to influence Martine. I played it cool and suggested in passing that she should go and look for herself. She did and came to the same conclusion as I did."

People who know the pub as it is today would not recognise the pub as it was back then. Where the restaurant is and the main lounge area of the bar was all outside terracing. Year on year, though, Martine saw her vision of a top quality restaurant complemented by a first class traditional pub realised. As a couple, Martine and Chad were perfect for each other. Truth be told, without Martine there to ground him, The Outback Inn could have been the size of the whole Centro Comercial if Chad had had his way. He would also have been bankrupt. Martine had the business brain and knew immediately what would and wouldn't work. This was also demonstrated in her judge of character and could accurately assess who she could and couldn't trust within minutes of meeting them.

To those who knew her, she was simply known as Mother because of her big-hearted, generous caring nature. She was also someone who commanded great respect be-

cause you were almost afraid to get on the wrong side of her, not because she was a tyrant but because she made people feel that they didn't want to disappoint her, let her down. If she did get angry with you – which in fairness could happen quite a lot – you felt like a scolded child who realises he has to be on his best behaviour

to get back in Mother's good books. That was the mother in her. For lots of people who worked for her or were in her company quite a lot, this was a wonderful quality, as our own mums were so far away.

For Lisa Oakham, who began working for Martine and Chad in 2003, she was very much the mother figure.

"She really took me under her wing," says Lisa. "I started working there not long after arriving in Spain. For me, at the beginning it was like one long holiday. I loved going out, partying til dawn, really letting my hair down. Taking me on was a bit of a risk, really, but Martine helped me settle down. Now I am a proud

mum of two and I am still working there."

Despite her modern outlook and her 'joie de vivre', Martine had quite an old fashioned set of morals. She valued loyalty above anything else. You could be the best worker in the world but she would still have taken the mediocre, loyal, dependable worker any day.

"My partner and I worked at The Outback together and we worked really hard one summer working non-stop without a day off," says Lisa. "Martine called us in for a meeting and we were a bit nervous. What have we done wrong? Are we being sacked? No. Instead, she gave us two tickets for an all expenses paid week in Tenerife. That is how she rewarded loyalty."

Then there was George Popov, the Bulgarian waiter who kept turning up at The Outback Inn like a loveable bad rash you can't get rid of. Now, George isn't the easiest of people to work with and it is true to say that there have been several personality clashes between him and other staff over the years. Yet despite many periods of not working there, some voluntary others not so, he regularly came back to Mother's open arms. Like the proverbial black sheep of the family, he was still family and Mother always forgave him.

One particular George incident, although hilarious to all who were privileged enough to witness it, pushed Mother's patience to the limit. He had borrowed Martine's car to run some errands during the day. It was a normal June Saturday, quite busy but about to get much busier as a party of 200 were expected in the restaurant for a buffet that evening. George knew he didn't have much time so he



Martine with Chad and best friend Ana



A younger Martine



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A Universal Mother

tourism in the province of Huelva. In 2001 they opened a large pub and restaurant with an Australian theme, markets. In a personal tribute, ahead of this month's Inaugural Martine Barthelemy Memorial Golf Tournament who lost her battle with cancer last September after a three year struggle.

"I put the handbrake on and put it in gear," protested George to a distraught Martine as she watched her Renault Espace take its place among the yachts of the Isla Canela rich.

The scene was now attracting a crowd, all trying to suppress their laughter. A very British thing, finding amusement in other people's misery. Some experienced sailors warned that the car was in danger of colliding with the moored yachts causing massive damage, so some local lads were dispatched to dive in with some rope and attach it to the tow bar. This rope was then tied to a Land Rover, very much parked on terra firma. This steadied the car until the arrival of the crane to take the car out of the water.

"I definitely put the handbrake on and put it in gear," insisted George. The car was lifted out of the marina, water escaping from every orifice. Back on land, the car was found with the handbrake off. "The force of the water must have done it!" ventured George, but by now that story, like the car, was not going to float.

But like all good mothers and their errant sons, Martine forgave George. In fact as summer approaches, don't be surprised to see George once more back in the family fold.

Whilst looking for ideas for the new restaurant menu, a recce trip to Seville was called for. For Chad and me, recce was code for pub crawl – for Martine and my significant other it was code for El Corte Ingles and other, countless shops. But it was on this trip that Martine showed a dark side to her nature, hitherto unseen. Now I always knew she was a hoarder and she had a fantastic ability to wheedle out an amazing bargain leaving many a bedazzled trader in her wake, but I never knew anything about her light fingers. So there we were, visiting many of Seville's fine eateries, acting as Martine's accomplices as we were forced to shield her as she pocketed menu after menu. This penchant for petty pilfering was justified, in her mind, as: "People nick my menus so why can't I?"

Martine was to spend more time in Seville but it certainly wasn't through choice. In November 2004 the unimaginable happened. She was diagnosed with bowel cancer, something that had taken the life of her father not long before. Martine immediately knew the writing was on the wall, but it was not in her nature to give up. If you had to use just one phrase to describe Martine it would have to be 'joie de vivre' because she really did have a joy for life. She was almost indignant at the news. I can almost hear her say, "Who is this upstart trying to deny me the thing I love so much?" She had surgery to remove the cancer and underwent six weeks of intensive chemotherapy.

By April 2005, it was clear that more treatment was needed. She battled bravely for the next two years, so much so that many were unaware of her illness, and those who were aware wouldn't have believed the severity of it. She maintained a presence in the restaurant that she loved so much, plying the genial host to her loyal customers. Possibly, only she really knew how serious her illness was and she was determined not to let it get in the way of living the time she had left. By the beginning of 2007, she knew it was just a matter of time.

"Over the years we've had loads of dogs," says Chad. "A few years ago we said enough is enough, and decided not to have any more. I'd always wanted a Labrador puppy, but she wouldn't let me as we have had a terrible time with the dogs. We get so close to them that it is really tough on us when they get ill or pass away. In January 2007, whilst undergoing another round of treatment in Seville, she told me 'You can have that Labrador puppy now because you're going to need a friend'. She knew, even then."

Not long later, she needed to have more treatment but could not take the radiotherapy. Another round of chemotherapy ensued but it did not work. By June, she was given a choice – another, but much stronger round of chemotherapy which at this stage was very high risk, or simply let the disease take its course. Ever the fighter, Martine chose the chemo, despite the risks.

"By August, the chemo had done nothing except destroy all her organs," recalls Chad. "The doctors knew what was coming, as did her family who came down here from Biarritz. But I never, ever thought this was it. I never thought she'd go."

Martine died on September 1 2007 surrounded by her family and the man she loved



THE HAPPY COUPLE: Chad and Martine complemented each other perfectly

so much and had enjoyed such a great adventure with. She was only 54.

Martine had a wicked sense of humour and found the hilarity in even the most macabre of circumstances. On a trip to Huelva in the searing midday heat of high summer, she decided to stop off at McDonalds to bring back to Isla Canela a Big Mac for her beloved Chad. In the car with her was Barry Oakham, father of Lisa. Martine asked if he wanted anything, to which he said no.

"She left me in the car and without thinking she locked the doors," explains Barry. "In she went, seemingly to pick up a burger. Wouldn't take long, I thought. Anyway, I was starting to get hot and couldn't open the electronic windows. The doors were locked and I couldn't get out. But how long could a burger take to buy? It was around 40° outside and felt like double that inside the car. Ages past and I was really suffering. I couldn't breathe, I was burning up. I thought 'This is it! I didn't have her number to phone her to let her know what was going on. I had to phone my daughter in the pub who then got Chad to call her. She was sitting down, chomping down a Happy Meal, blissfully unaware of me frying away in the car. I saw her running towards me, still chewing away, and to my relief I managed to get out. She didn't stop laughing all the way back to Ayamonte."

I only knew her for six years but I'm privileged to have known her at all. Like many, I referred to her as Mother. It would be remiss to say that she was everyone's cup of tea. With Martine you get what you give. You can even be a bad penny, a bit of a rogue, but if she saw something in you, some redeeming quality, then you had a friend for life, someone who could always look beyond the faults. In fact, in her own mischievous way, she probably was drawn more to the flawed than to the perfect. After all, perfection doesn't need attention, or anyone to look after it. Like all good mothers, Martine needed people and other things in her life to care for. I have no doubt in my mind that she is up there right now whipping those errant saints into shape, nagging St Peter to give people second, third and even sixth chances before shipping them off down below. In a month where Mother's Day is celebrated in various countries, it is only fitting that we should take time out to acknowledge a woman who for many will always be regarded as Mother. God bless you.

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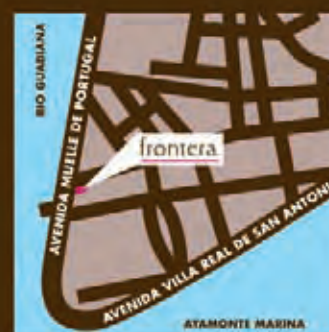
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Drama, Passion, Tradition: Holy Week in Andalusia

What is Semana Santa all about?

Put simply, the Holy Week of Andalusia is the staging of the Passion of Christ in different episodes which are shown in the realistic sculptures that are lead in the big carriages accompanied by "nazarenos", the penitent members of a brotherhood.

The origin was found in the doctrines of the Council of Trent. First they adopted the form of a "way of the cross", later the special devotion to certain images resulted in the creation of religious associations. During the Baroque period they worked as a base for organizations of guild nature and therefore they kept the names of the guilds as their reason for their origin; "the bakers, the negroes, the cart users..."

The next step was when these brotherhoods became the main bonding element of the neighbourhood or the parish. The main obligation of these religious associations is to bring their members during the penitence period from their headquarters or chapel to the Metropolitan Cathedral and from there back to their church. This route is planned prior to the procession and is subject to a very strict time schedule which cannot be changed. If for any reason, such as weather or a greater force the procession cannot be completed the float is cancelled and the brotherhood will have to wait a whole year to try it again.



CADIZ

Palm Sunday

BORRIQUITA

Start & Finish:
Alameda Marques
de Comillas
15.15 - 00.15
Main Section:
20.00 - 21.30

SAGRADA CENA

Start & Finish:
Compás de Santo
Domingo
18.45 - 01.15
Main Section:
21.10 - 21.40

LAS PENAS

Start & Finish:
Sagasta
18.30 - 01.30
Main Section:
21.35 - 22.50

HUMILDAD & PACIENCIA

Start & Finish:
Pl. San Agustín
19.30 - 02.30
Main Section:
22.20 - 23.35

JEREZ

Palm Sunday

EL PERDON

Start & Finish:
Ermita de Guía
17.00 - 23.00
Main Section:
19.20 - 21.19

EL TRANSPORTE

Start & Finish:
Merced
17.15 - 01.30
Main Section:
19.35 - 21.12

LA CORONACION

Start & Finish:
Arcos
17.30 - 00.45
Main Section:
20.00 - 21.37

LAS ANGUSTIAS

Start & Finish:
Plaza de las Angustias
18.30 - 00.15
Main Section:
20.30 - 21.52

HUELVA

Palm Sunday

BORRIQUITA

Start & Finish:
Porche de San Pedro
16.05 - 22.30
Main Section:
18.45 - 19.45

SAGRADA CENA

Start & Finish:
Presbítero Pablo Rodríguez
16.15 - 00.15
Main Section:
19.40 - 20.40

REDENCION

Start & Finish:
Plaza Paco Toronjo
18.00 - 01.30
Main Section:
20.45 - 21.41

MUTILADOS

Start & Finish:
Doctor Cantero
Cuadrado
18.00 - 01.30
Main Section:
21.10 - 22.18

Holy Monday

LA PALMA

Start & Finish:
Virgen de la Palma
16.15 - 01.35
Main Section:
19.45 - 21.00

NAZARENO DEL AMOR

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Francisco
16.15 - 00.40
Main Section:
20.50 - 22.05

PRENDIMIENTO

Start & Finish:
Alameda Marques
de Comillas
17.15 - 01.45
Main Section:
21.55 - 23.10

VERA CRUZ

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Francisco
19.45 - 02.20
Main Section:
22.45 - 00.00

Holy Monday

SAGRADA CENA

Start & Finish:
Plaza Rafael Rivero
17.30 - 23.40
Main Section:
18.45 - 20.19

CANDELARIA

Start & Finish:
Plaza de la Constitución
16.45 - 01.15
Main Section:
19.15 - 21.07

LA VIGA

Start & Finish:
Reducto Bueno
Monreal
17.45 - 23.15
Main Section:
19.45 - 21.28

AMOR & SACRIFICIO

Start & Finish:
Puerta del Sol
18.00 - 00.00
Main Section:
20.00 - 21.36

Holy Monday

CAUTIVO

Start & Finish:
Plaza de la Misericordia
16.30 - 02.45
Main Section:
20.15 - 21.31

CALVARIO

Start & Finish:
Jesús del Calvarios
21.00 - 00.45
Main Section:
21.30 - 22.10

TRES CAIDAS

Start & Finish:
Presbítero Pablo
Rodríguez
18.15 - 03.05
Main Section:
22.00 - 22.45



Holy Tuesday

PIEDAD

Start & Finish:
Plaza de Pío XII
18.15 - 02.00
Main Section:
19.30 - 21.00

JESUS CAIDO

Start & Finish:
Doctor Gómez Ulla
16.30 - 01.30
Main Section:
20.45 - 21.50

ECCE - HOMO

Start & Finish:
Ancha
17.45 - 01.00
Main Section:
21.35 - 22.45

COLUMNA

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Antonio
18.15 - 01.15
Main Section:
22.20 - 23.35

Holy Tuesday

LA CLEMENCIA

Start & Finish:
Avenida León de
Carranza
16.15 - 01.00
Main Section:
18.30 - 20.19

LA DEFENSION

Start & Finish:
Divina Pastora
18.15 - 23.05
Main Section:
18.50 - 20.07

EL AMOR

Start & Finish:
San Juan
17.45 - 00.20
Main Section:
19.00 - 20.39

DESCONCUELO

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Mateo
17.00 - 00.30
Main Section:
19.20 - 21.32

Holy Tuesday

SAGRADA LANZADA

Start & Finish:
Avenida Cristóbal Colón
17.40 - 01.30
Main Section:
20.00 - 21.06

ESTUDIANTES

Start & Finish:
Federico Mayo
18.00 - 00.15
Main Section:
20.55 - 21.43

PASION

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Pedro
20.10 - 02.15
Main Section:
21.40 - 23.12



The Solemn Passage of Penitents



These are the crucial stages of the solemn week. After the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem celebrated on Palm Sunday, the days leading up to Holy Thursday shows Christ continuing his work aware that the end will soon be upon him.

The main Holy Thursday processions celebrate the Last Supper in which He created the Eucharist and washed the feet of his disciples to show that we must clean our hearts. Following the betrayal of Judas, Jesus Christ was arrested, judged before Pontius Pilate, and condemned.

The processions that take place overnight into Good Friday are the crescendo of Semana Santa and are the most solemn of all.

These processions are usually the hardest and longest which is why they are popular with Penitents who are seeking special intervention from Heaven or are repaying a previously asked for favour from God.

It is not unusual to see bare-footed penitents and also some particularly penitent souls who resort to walking some of the route down on their knees. No room for Easter Eggs here.

HUELVA

Holy Wednesday

PRENDIMIENTO

Start & Finish:
Antonio Rengel
16.30 - 00.55
Main Section:
20.20 - 21.20

VICTORIA

Start & Finish:
Presbítero Pablo
Rodríguez
17.00 - 03.30
Main Section:
20.40 - 22.00

ESPERANZA

Start & Finish:
20.25 - 03.45
Main Section:
16.30 - 00.55

Holy Thursday

VERA CRUZ & ORACION

Start & Finish:
Méndez Núñez
19.45 - 00.40
Main Section:
20.30 - 21.26

BUENA MUERTE

Start & Finish:
Tres de Agosto
19.25 - 01.00
Main Section:
21.20 - 22.02

JUDIOS

Start & Finish:
Plaza de la Merced
20.30 - 02.30
Main Section:
22.07 - 22.55

PERDON

Start & Finish:
Plaza Cristo del Perdón
00.00 - 10.30
Main Section:
04.10 - 05.38

MISERICORDIA

Start & Finish:
Pasaje Cristo de la
Misericordia
00.00 - 03.45
Main Section:
01.00 - 01.52

NAZARENO

Start & Finish:
Méndez Núñez
04.00 - 12.30
Main Section:
05.00 - 06.04

CADIZ

Holy Wednesday

CIGARRERAS

Start & Finish:
Compás de Santo
Domingo
17.00 - 02.00
Main Section:
19.30 - 20.45

SENTENCIA

Start & Finish:
Merced
18.00 - 03.00
Main Section:
20.25 - 21.40

AGUAS Y LUZ

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Felipe
Neri
16.15 - 00.45
Main Section:
21.15 - 22.30

EL CAMINITO

Start & Finish:
20.00 - 01.00
Main Section:
16.30 - 00.55

Holy Thursday

AFLIGIDOS

Start & Finish:
Sagasta
19.15 - 01.15
Main Section:
21.30 - 22.40

ORACION EN EL HUERTO

Start & Finish:
Tolosa Latour
17.45 - 05.15
Main Section:
22.05 - 23.15

EL NAZARENO

Start & Finish:
Santa María
20.45 - 07.00
Main Section:
22.55 - 00.05

SANIDAD

Start & Finish:
Plaza de Pío XII
00.00 - 06.30
Main Section:
02.25 - 03.40

DESCENDIMIENTO

Start & Finish:
Sagasta
00.00 - 05.45
Main Section:
03.00 - 04.15

EL PERDON

Start & Finish:
Plaza de Pío XII
02.50 - 10.50
Main Section:
03.30 - 04.50

MEDINACELLI

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Francisco
02.00 - 07.30
Main Section:
04.35 - 05.50

JEREZ

Holy Wednesday

SOBERANO

Start & Finish:
Huelva
14.45 - 02.40
Main Section:
18.45 - 20.43

EL CONSUELO

Start & Finish:
Ronda de los Viñedos
17.00 - 01.30
Main Section:
19.00 - 20.51

TRES CAIDAS

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Lucas
17.45 - 23.15
Main Section:
19.45 - 21.37

SANTA MARIA

Start & Finish:
Plaza de San Mateo
16.50 - 23.30
Main Section:
19.25 - 21.11

LA AMARGURA

Start & Finish:
Medina
17.45 - 01.45
Main Section:
20.35 - 22.18

PRENDIMIENTO

Start & Finish:
Plaza de Santiago
19.00 - 03.10
Main Section:
21.15 - 23.04

Holy Thursday

LA REDENCION

Start & Finish:
Avenida San Juan
Boscoa
16.30 - 00.15
Main Section:
19.30 - 21.01

VERA CRUZ

Start & Finish:
Plaza de Melgarejo
18.30 - 23.30
Main Section:
19.50 - 21.12

LA LANZADA

Start & Finish:
Plaza del Carmen
19.15 - 23.00
Main Section:
20.10 - 21.33

EL HUERTO

Start & Finish:
Alameda Cristina
19.30 - 01.00
Main Section:
20.43 - 22.05

MAYOR DOLOR

Start & Finish:
Plaza de la Encar-
nación
18.45 - 23.15
Main Section:
20.45 - 22.37

EL SILENCIO

Start & Finish:
Plaza León XIII
02.00 - 07.10
Main Section:
03.00 - 04.43

BUENA MUERTE

Start & Finish:
Calle Nueva
03.30 - 09.30
Main Section:
03.51 - 05.17

CINCO LLAGAS

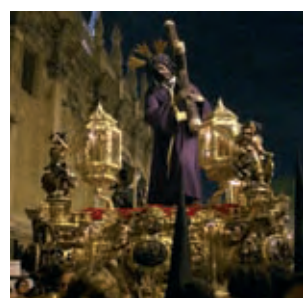
Start & Finish:
Plaza Esteve
02.40 - 07.10
Main Section:
03.55 - 05.23

EL NAZARENO

Start & Finish:
Alameda Cristina
03.30 - 09.00
Main Section:
04.14 - 05.55

LA YEDRA

Start & Finish:
Empedrada
01.00 - 11.00
Main Section:
04.45 - 06.38



**Ahh! Semana Santa, here again.
What a wonderful display....**

A Seville Civilian

with Tim Toohar

Not So Great if you Have to Work in it!

Growing up on the outskirts of London in the seventies, Easter was never much to write home about, never amounting to a lot more than a couple of weeks off school, with the afternoon of Good Friday probably spent watching 'The Robe' on the telly while it chucked down outside, and a couple of Easter Eggs on the Sunday morning. It always felt like an afterthought in the Christian calendar, something tagged on to give everyone a holiday to look forward after Christmas and late winter's oppressive cold. In Catholic Spain though, things are very different. Easter is the main event, the jewel in the crown, and nowhere more so than in Seville.

For an entire week the city ceases normal business for an orgy of spectacle and sound, a seven-day celebration of sacrifice and suffering. Moments in Semana Santa are like Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ' writ large as street theatre. Festivities begin on Palm Sunday, when tradition dictates that you wear something new. Thus the centre of the city looks like a giant wedding reception with thousands of people parading to and fro, sporting the latest finery. It's also the day when the city starts to grind to a standstill. Semana Santa doesn't leave room for anything else in the city centre. It consumes it whole.

The one local I spoke to about the week did so happily but only if it was under a cloak of complete anonymity. That's pretty apt as the Nazarenos who lead the pasos through the city do so with their faces hidden. What's important is the image of Jesus or the Virgin, not the individuals who guide them through the city's ancient streets. My interlocutor's reason for not wanting to be named is a little more prosaic though. If you're from Seville, you cannot criticise the city. Not to outsiders at any rate. Sevilla es una maravilla. That mantra always holds true when the locals talk about the place that is their home. My friend wanted to remain anonymous for fear of being seen to be talking the city down, even though he didn't really do anything of the sort.

"Speaking very generally," he began, "there are two types of people in Seville. Those who love Semana Santa and those who don't. The ones who don't, normally leave the city at the earliest opportunity. And they stay away for the entire week. Even those, like myself, who love it often leave on the Thursday or the Friday. One thing I don't like is working that week, but, thankfully, where I am, we only have to work Monday and the mornings of the Tuesday and Thursday. It is a lot busier now than it was twenty years ago. Now there are so many tourists. Every year more and more tourists come for the week. But even though the city is hectic there are always moments of great beauty, such as when two pasos meet and they stop to face each other, almost as though the two images being carried are greeting each other. Mary stops to say hello to her son in the middle of Sevilla."

My anonymous friend always goes to the beach on Maundy Thursday, but many of the city's non-Spanish residents don't have the luxury. When asked how he felt about Semana Santa, long-time inhabitant of the city, Craig Cavanagh, told me, "Easter in Seville is an unmissable explosion of colour and fervour, unfortunately the practicalities of the event make life extremely difficult. I try not to stay in the city during Semana Santa but I have done and every time I've done so I've

regretted it. If you try and leave your house to buy bread, or anything that involves moving through the centre of the city, it's just impossible. Every single part of the centre is rammed. Everything is more expensive too. Bars stop doing their normal menus and just dish out as much as they can that's as quick and as cheap to make as possible. Bocadillos abound."

Not all the English-speaking inhabitants of the city are so down on the week though. Harriet Cole, a teacher in Nervion, says, "I really enjoy Semana Santa because it's so busy. There are people in the streets, there's a good atmosphere. The bars are open all night and the kitchens don't close. If you don't have to work and you can enjoy it and you make sure you have the official guide so you know where to avoid if you don't want to be stuck waiting for a paso to pass, then you can have a really good time. It's a good week for going out. The Thursday night is one of the best nights of the year for going out. Some of the pasos are spectacular as well. The Esperanza de Triana is beautiful. People strew rose petals onto the Virgin from the surrounding rooftops as she leaves the church."

Brendan Martin, landlord of the Merchant's Malt House on Calle Canalejas in the centre of the city is looking forward to this year's celebrations, "It's going to be strange for us this year as St Patrick's Day falls during that week, and that's obviously always a big night for us. By and large business is better during Semana Santa than it is normally, though it tends to be new customers as a lot of our regulars are away. Ninety nine percent of the customers are Spanish. The best night of the week is the Thursday which has become a big clubbing night, which really has nothing to do with Semana Santa. Kids will tell their parents that they're off out to watch pasos and they go to clubs instead. The centre of the city is packed; you're likely to find about a million people on the streets. There really is something for everyone that night."

"Running the business is more difficult for us. We have to make sure that all our deliveries happen as early as possible in the morning. After eleven o'clock the delivery vans aren't allowed into the centre. No traffic is allowed into the city at all. You have to make sure you predict what you'll need so you don't run out of anything. Some of our suppliers prefer to get everything delivered the week before to make things easier during the week itself. On a personal level I really like Semana Santa. There's a really special atmosphere. If you let it affect you it can be difficult so you just have to choose not to. If you live along one of the routes then it can be difficult, but if not there's much to enjoy."

Finding a place to stay in the city during Semana Santa, whether it be hotel, hostel or flat, is never easy and the prices can increase severalfold, but if you do manage to find somewhere or can just come for the day, then it's something that has to be done. Life might be harder for the people who live here, who don't appreciate all the pomp and circumstance, but without Semana Santa Seville really wouldn't be Seville. It's the calm before Feria's storm. The penance before the party to come. Which might be the wrong way round, but who said life had to make sense.



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Spain Decides

One of the most exciting general elections this young democracy that is Spain has seen for many a year is unfolding as we speak – and we are not part of it. Whilst we may reside in this country, pay its taxes, have investments here and abide by its laws, we have absolutely no say in how we are governed apart from choosing our local mayor.

Not much we can do about that today, but it has been a fascinating campaign up to now and for those who have missed it, in these pages The Oracle gives you its coverage of the Spanish General Election 2008.

PP Cuts Lead to 2%

In one of the final opinion polls before the March 9 election shows that opposition party PP have closed the gap on the socialist PSOE to just two percentage points. headway in a hard-fought, often bitter campaign.

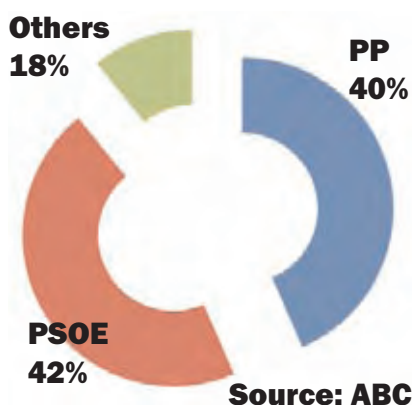
This will be received particularly well in the PP party headquarters in Madrid after most commentators believe the party's leader Mariano Rajoy lost out in the televised debate with prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the first such debate in 15 years.

This now means that the forthcoming election may be the most hotly disputed in the history of Spanish democracy given that there is a margin of error of 2% in the survey. Based on previous surveys, PSOE have remained fairly stagnant whilst PP climbed 8 tenths over the previous seven days. This upward trend shows that, at grass roots level at least, PP are enjoying the better of the early stages of the campaign.

The prime minister and the opposition leader clashed on the economy, Basque separatism and immigration in the TV debate. Zapatero and Rajoy deluged each other with statistics on every-



Zapatero (left) & Rajoy before the debate



shouting match over failed peace talks with the armed Basque group ETA.

Rajoy attacked Zapatero repeatedly over his failed peace talks with ETA, saying Zapatero had raised the possibility of making concessions to the group - a taboo for any Spanish government. Rajoy also assailed Zapatero's recent admission that the government had been in contact with ETA even after it broke a cease-fire in 2006 and killed two people in a car bombing.

"You lied. You fooled all the Spanish people," Rajoy said. "You toyed with the law."

Zapatero hit back saying "You were the ones who lied", alluding to the March 2004 Islamic terrorist attacks in Madrid, which Rajoy's party, in power at the time, initially blamed on ETA, even as evidence of Islamic involvement emerged.

But there were no personal insults, and neither committed a major gaffe or scored a knockout punch.

The debate was important because the two men's parties are neck-and-neck and polls suggest there is an enticing number of undecided voters.

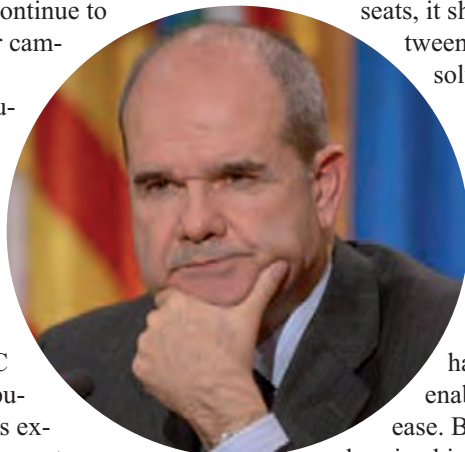
Chaves on Verge of Losing Absolute Majority in Junta

Latest opinion polls show that PSOE could be about to lose their absolute majority in the Junta de Andalucia as PP under the helm of Javier Arenas continue to make headway in a hard-fought, often bitter campaign.

Andalucia has never known any other autonomous parliament than PSOE and current president, Manuel Chaves has been in power since 1990. However, not gaining the absolute majority is nothing new as Chaves failed to do this in 1994, 1996 and in 2000 meaning he was forced to seek out alliances with other parties.

In a poll for the ABC newspaper by IMC published on March 2, PSOE are losing popularity as the campaign wears on with Chaves expecting some 48% of the vote while PP can count on 39%. With Izquierda Unida and Partido Andalucista collectively

polling around 11%, PSOE would be forced into seeking support, most likely from Izquierda Unida. Converting the data into seats, it shows that Chaves' party would expect between 54 and 56 seats and 55 is needed for an absolute majority.



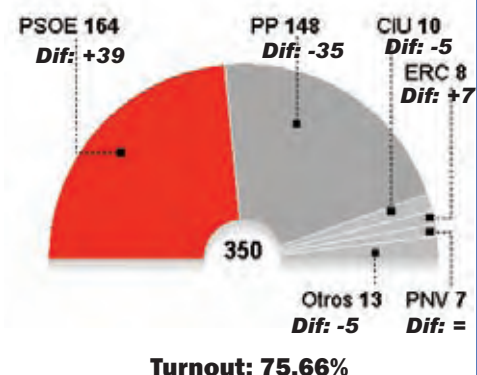
Moreover, the survey showed that PSOE had dropped seven tenths in just seven days whilst PP had gained 3 tenths. With the election campaign reaching its final week, should this trend continue, it is unlikely that Chaves would reach the magic number of 55 seats.

These figures will frustrate Chaves who has enjoyed the last four years unchallenged enabling him to push through his policies with ease. Brokering a deal with other parties will undermine his long term plan for the region, obliging him to make compromises he may not necessarily want to do.

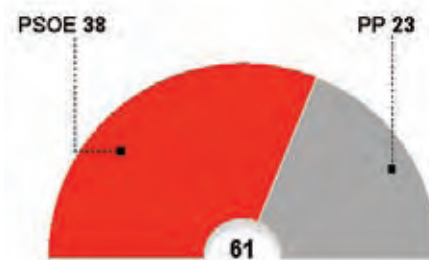
Previous Results

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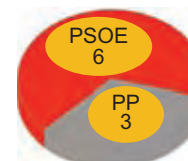
National



Andalucia



Cadiz

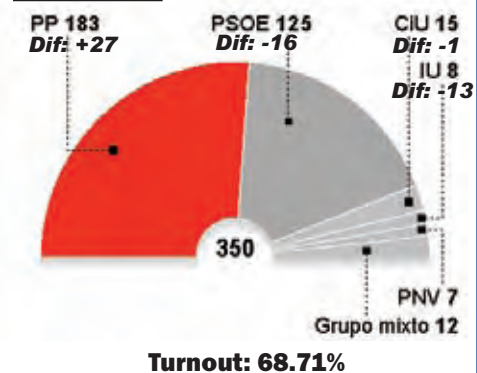


Huelva

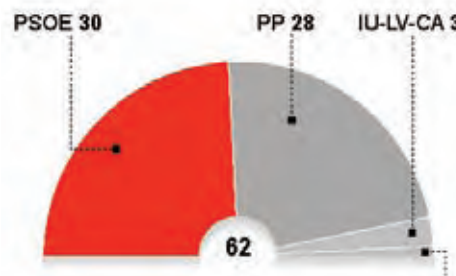


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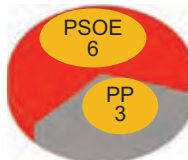
National



Andalucia



Cadiz



Huelva



JUNTA DE ANDALUCIA 2004

Andalucia

Turnout 75.85%

PSOE - 61
PP - 37
IU - 6
PA - 5

Cadiz:
PSOE - 8
PP - 5
PA - 1
IU - 1
Huelva:
PSOE - 7
PP - 3
PA - 1

ELECTIONS '08

Once an Ace in the Hand, Spain's Economy a Problem for ZP in Run-Up to Elections

Associated Press

Just months ago Spain's thriving economy looked like an ace in the hand for Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero as he geared up for this month's general election. But with negative economic data spilling out daily, it's become a something of a stone around his neck as polls consistently show the now-slowing economy to be among Spaniards' chief worries in the March 9 vote, along with immigration and terrorism.

A Gallup poll last year showed 68% of Spaniards felt the economy was going well. Back then, the ruling Socialists had an average four percentage point edge over the conservative Popular Party. But most surveys now show the two parties neck and neck, with unemployment and economic problems occupying second and third place in people's concerns, after terrorism.

"It's surprising Zapatero did not call elections earlier," said Juan Carlos Martinez Lazaro, an economics professor at the Instituto de Empresa, a Madrid business school. "In electoral terms, he may have made a mistake because from now on the economic figures are not going to be good."

Hours after the electoral campaign officially began at the stroke of midnight on February 22, a poll by the Cadena Ser radio station showed the two parties in a dead heat — the same tight race seen in public opinion surveys for weeks. The new poll said Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's Socialists had a 1.5 percentage point lead over the opposition conservatives. But the margin of error was 3.1 points, meaning that cushion is hardly solid.

Spain has been one of the European Union's top economic success stories for more than a decade. But an international financial crisis — triggered by the U.S. sub-prime mortgage crash — coupled with a slowdown in Spain's overheated construction sector has set off alarm bells.

Job-wise, figures are getting gloomy. After a decade creating more than 600,000 jobs a year and dramatically reducing one of the EU's highest unemployment rates from 25% in 1994 to 8.6%, unemployment is on the rise. The January annual rate of 4.3%, up from 2.4% a year ago in January, 2007, was the biggest jump in at least a decade.

Inflation reached a 12-year annual high in January at 4.3%, more than double the EU average. A consumer confidence indicator tumbled in January for the ninth straight month.

Zapatero's Socialists say that while there are problems,

Spain's economy is buoyant enough to weather the storm. "It's inevitable that people should be concerned but there is no need to take hasty measures," said Finance Minister Pedro Solbes.

The opposition Popular Party, citing high inflation and rising unemployment, accuses the government of ruining a healthy economy it inherited upon taking power in 2004.

"The profits from the past are finished and the question is 'What now?'" said its leader, Mariano Rajoy speaking at the official campaign launch in Cadiz.

Most economists expect Spanish economic growth to slow but still produce healthy numbers this year and next.

"I don't see a recession. We will grow at a slower pace, that's all" said Xavier Vives of the IESE business school. "Compared to other European countries, Spain has a budget surplus and its public finances are in better shape."

Spain has endured a lot in the past four years: a terrorist attack by Islamic extremists that killed 191 people in March 2004 on the eve of the last election, sweeping social reforms like legalisation of gay marriage, divisive changes that gave more self-rule to semi-autonomous regions like Catalonia, and failed peace talks with the armed Basque separatist group ETA, which is now back on the offensive.

Despite all that, the campaign for the March 9 vote has essentially boiled down to debate about a once-booming economy that is starting to lose its lustre, with inflation and unemployment rising and growth slowing.

Ironically, the right wing Rajoy depicted himself as the candidate of everyday, hardworking people — "the ones who get up at 7, who struggle to make it to the end of the month, who worry about their children," — normally the ground occupied by the socialists.

Zapatero, he said, has spent these last four years working on things that mean nothing to the average Spaniard citing the PM's Alliance of Civilizations, a UN-backed initiative to encourage dialogue between Muslim nations and

the West, and his drive to give regions more say over their affairs.

"You have to think about human beings, not civilizations and territories," Rajoy told the rally at Cadiz. "We have had enough of governing from the moon."

Zapatero, addressing a rally in Madrid, accused the Popular Party of being authoritarian, backward-looking and insensitive to immigrants, an apparent allusion to a proposal from Rajoy to make them sign a document pledging to learn Spanish and respect Spanish customs.

Spanish voters, Zapatero said, will choose between "a policy of dialogue and coexistence or a policy of 'I am in charge here;' between a policy that favours freedom, modernness, a Spain that is caring, and a policy that is authoritarian, stale and uncaring, like the one the Popular Party has represented."

Under Spain's bonanza, housing prices rocketed by some 200 percent in the decade to 2007, placing them out of the reach of many Spanish workers. Once rock bottom interest rates have risen sharply, leaving many homeowners struggling to pay their adjustable rate mortgages.

Traditionally a low-wage country, an influx of some 4 million immigrants in recent years has helped keep wages down and given rise to a social class called 'mileuristas' — people who earn €1,000 a month or less. In Madrid alone

Spain boasts the EU's fifth largest economy, posting average yearly growth of 3.75 percent, double the

European average, for the past 12 years. Some now predict it could slow to 2 percent this year, while Solbes maintains it will remain above 3 percent.

"There's a pervading sense of pessimism because of the bad statistics and everyone talking about crisis," said Martinez. "But this is not a crisis, it's just less growth. There have been worse situations before."

The Socialists insist Spain is actually better off than ever. For the first time per capita gross domestic product, a key measure of people's wealth, is above the EU average and ahead of Italy's.

Ironically, Zapatero's and Rajoy's electoral promises virtually mirror each other leading many to believe it will make no difference who wins.

The Socialists pledge a tax rebate of €400 to 13.5 million workers while Rajoy promises to exempt 7 million low-wage earners from paying income tax altogether. Both promise to create more than 2 million jobs.

Things are terrible. We haven't got a cent. Everything's going up and wages are going down all the time
Loli Garcia
a 50-year-old office worker

Personally I can't complain, I have a job and they pay me well. But there's too much of a difference between those who are well paid and those who can't make ends meet
Jose David Caceres, 30

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ELECTIONS '08

Chaves Cash Promise to Kids Dismissed as 'Bribe Ploy' Gimmick

Basque Bomb Puts Police on Maximum Election Alert

The fight for the presidency of the Junta de Andalucía rumbles on with incumbent president Manuel Chaves of the PSOE-Andalucía party announcing in a rally in Huelva capital that should he win re-election, all 18 year olds will be provided with a cheque "for around €60" to be spent "on cultural activities", a plan that would have a budget of €740m in the next legislature.

However, his PP counterpart, Javier Arenas, accused Chaves of trying to emulate a similar policy of Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, instead of formulating his own manifesto. Arenas pointed to the national policy of giving away gifts to the electorate as they try to win over voters, such as the planned bonus cheque for those who file their tax returns on time.

Arenas said that his party had approached the electorate intelligently, saying that those who had attended their organised events has done so because "their hearts and heads are for Spain and for Andalucía" and have no need of "free" incentives to listen to his party's policies.

Speaking in Huelva in front of around 500 people from the field of culture, the PSOE-A leader said that the aim of the cheque for the youngsters is to encourage

them to participate in local culture and to train them in the importance of being culturally aware. Through this act, he hoped that the field of cinema and theatre would be strengthened for the future.

However, some opposition figures suggested that a €60 cheque for young people amounts to "no more than a cynical bribe" for first time voters. They say this is another in a long line of "gifts for votes" such as free holidays for housewives, free housing and single rooms in hospitals.

"What does Chaves intend to do with this €60 cheque – give it out every month, weekly or is it a daily thing?" questioned Arenas. "After 25 years [in the Junta], what you cannot do is show a lack of respect to the citizens with false promises."

Chaves said his proposal for cultural cheques for the youth was "loaded with symbolism".

"In Spain there are people who don't understand what the diverse Spain is or what pluralism means," he told the Huelva rally. "Maybe this is because they haven't read the constitution, which refers to plurality of people, cultures, identities and ideas. There are some who do not want to understand that it is that diversity that strengthens the communal project that is Spain."

While the nation's leaders have been exchanging verbal grenades in the run up to the March 9 general election, Basque terrorist group announced their arrival in the electoral campaign with the bombing of a regional branch office of ruling party PSOE in the town of Derio in the early hours of February 29.

Spain's security services are now on maximum alert as they seek to avoid another election influenced by terrorism.

The bomb exploded shortly after ETA had made a call to warn of an explosion at the site, a regional interior ministry spokesman told journalists. Although no one was injured, several bomb disposal experts had been at the scene at the time of the explosion trying to find and disarm the device. Investigators believe that the bomb, of about three to four kilograms, was designed to kill, as it was not primed to explode at the announced time, but only when handled.

"It was an evil trap set by ETA," said Interior Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba, after the device went off at the foot of a television mast near the city of Bilbao. "We believe that ETA is going to try to kill before the elections."

Rubalcaba said that any ETA attacks would fail to influence the election outcome.

"I think that ETA knows that if it is seeking to change the will of the Spanish people, staging an attack will not achieve that," he told national television channel La Sexta.

In 2004, just three days before the last general election, radical Islamic terrorists bombed several trains as they approached Madrid's main train station, Atocha, killing 191 people. In the confusion that followed, and given that ETA were thought to be planning train attacks and attacks on Madrid and just weeks previously had a



Scene of the ETA bomb blast at the PSOE office in Derio, Basque Country. No-one was hurt

vanload of explosives seized, the ruling PP party claimed that the Basque separatists were the most likely culprits. However, as the day wore on into Friday, it was becoming more likely that radical Islamists had been responsible. After the bombing, all election campaigning had been suspended, but PP have since accused PSOE of campaigning behind the scenes to give the appearance that PP blamed ETA as a smokescreen to cover the possibility that Spain had become a target for Al-Qaeda related groups as punishment for Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar's support of Tony Blair and George Bush's stance in the invasion of Iraq. It has been alleged that some PSOE officials ensured the rapid spread of this theory in the knowledge that in the highly emotional state of the electorate, the PP government would be punished in the Sunday election. Prior to the bombing, the best the socialists could have hoped for, according to critics, was preventing the government from achieving an absolute majority. What transpired was an absolute reversal of fortune for Mr Zapatero as the fired up electorate staged a massive protest vote against the government.

The day after his election, Zapatero announced the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq, to the amazement of many other countries around the world.

Observers have claimed that this Al-Qaeda attack was the most successful of all in that it is the only one that has effected a regime change. 9-11 only served to galvanise US support for George Bush's presidency whilst no change was achieved after the the July 7 London bombs.

Rivals in Profligacy

It is fitting that bonanza is a Spanish word, as Spain's voters are experiencing one, in an orgy of tax-cutting promises. Curiously, it coincides with the election on March 9. The ruling Socialists and their People's Party (PP) opponents, it seems, just cannot give stuff away fast enough.

The prime minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, kicked off last summer with his "baby cheques", worth €2,500-3,500 per new-born child. His PP rival, Mariano Rajoy, then pledged to take 7m low earners out of income tax and give working women a special tax cut. The Socialists hit back by scrapping the "patrimony tax", a wealth tax on personal assets that is unpopular with middle-class voters; they now promise to take €400 a year off 13.5m people's income-tax bills.

Each side accuses the other of buying votes. Each offers the same defence, claiming that they are trying to boost the economy as Spain's property bubble bursts, global markets get nervous and unemployment jumps. Both accusations and defences have some validity.

Tax cuts could pump €6 billion-16 billion a year into the pockets of taxpayers. That would be a boon, for after ten years in which the economy grew by over 3% a year, growth this year is likely to fall to 2.4% (say the optimists) or even below 2% (the pessimists). Last year's budget surplus was worth over 2% of GDP. Prudent housekeeping, Mr Zapatero asserts, means there is money to spend from the piggy-bank. The PP, meanwhile, likes to hark back to tax cuts when it ran Spain in the late 1990s. Within two years, growth had

pushed income-tax receipts up, not down.

Other piggy-banks are also being raided. Spain's social-security system has been boosted by a rise in the workforce, thanks to the arrival of almost 4m immigrants in the past seven years. Both parties want to dip into this pot: Mr Rajoy promises to raise the minimum monthly pension from €493 to over €650; Mr Zapatero wants to push it up to €700.

Voters may be forgiven some confusion, as the electoral bonanza blurs differences between left and right. Tax cuts will stimulate the economy and return resources to citizens, argues the supposedly leftist Mr Zapatero. Increased spending on pensions is just, necessary and possible, says the conservative Mr Rajoy. Some voters may conclude that, whoever wins on March 9th, they cannot lose.

Yet not all will gain. It is hard to restore fiscal prudence after a fit of indulgence. And unemployment is now a big worry, as construction firms and estate agencies fall over themselves to lay off staff. In January state unemployment offices reported a monthly leap in jobless figures of 132,378. Overall unemployment is modest by past standards, at 8.6%. But El País says that January's rise was the biggest in three decades. The unemployed will benefit neither from tax cuts nor from pension rises. They can only pray that a cash injection into the economy creates new jobs.

Mr Zapatero, who has a narrow lead in most opinion polls, is also praying—for no more bad economic news before March 9th. Otherwise he too may be out of a job.

Reprinted from The Economist

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Zapatero's Irrelevant Spain: The Destruction of a Legacy

Spain's place in the world at the beginning of the year 2008 could not be more pitiful, especially if we bear in mind the position it could have enjoyed had the policies laid down by the governments of José María Aznar been continued, says **RAFAEL L BARDAJÍ** in an impassioned report for the Strategic Studies Group

It is true that the process whereby Spain re-established a sense of normality in its foreign relations began after the end of the Franco dictatorship, during the Transition and under the auspices of the first democratic governments. After two centuries of profound introspection, it seemed that Spain would once again open up to the main international trends and influences.

It is also true that during the PSOE period with Felipe González in government, Spain's presence at various multi-national institutions increased in both quantitative and qualitative terms – although this did not always happen harmoniously or according to the growing importance of the nation. This could be witnessed in the case of NATO whereby a peculiar model, not especially advantageous for our national interests, was adopted. Nonetheless, this model served to alleviate the psychological traumas of the Left.

Spain's true leap forward came during the eight-year premiership of Aznar. This rapid growth occurred for various reasons. First, and most importantly, it was due to his ambition to ensure that Spain, as he himself never ceased to declare, should become one of the most important democracies in the world.

This vision, which dominated his two terms in government between 1996 and 2004, entailed putting an end the neutral image of Spain implemented by the Socialist government. It created a Spain, which was neither a large nor a small country, neither passive nor active, neither particularly supportive nor totally irresponsible. In accordance with the definition cultivated by our own diplomats at the time, Spain was different. The worst aspect of this exceptional status was that it restricted Spain to a secondary role in international affairs. Within the EU, Spain always voiced its opinion in fifth place, after the big four had spoken. Our policies were often nothing more than pure alignment (or slavish compliance) with the positions adopted by Paris.

Aznar was the first Spanish Prime Minister to seriously consider shedding this role of obliging second-tier nation in order to place Spain among the great nations of Europe, among the EU Member Countries, in Trans-Atlantic relations, in Latin America and in the Mediterranean and North Africa. Furthermore, he was the first Spanish Premier to do so based on another strong conviction: that to be a leading player in the world, first it was necessary to play the part at home. The initial emphasis on prosperity and on opportunities not only led to spectacular national growth, both also introduced a climate of openness that was quite unprecedented. The welfare of Spaniards, the country's dynamic economic performance and the country's presence on the world markets provided the solid foundations for a more profound and far-reaching national project: a Spain that was not only the eighth most important power in the world, but a Spain that also sought to take its rightful place in international politics.

This meant rigorous policies at home, credibility abroad, a sense of solidarity towards our allies and a commitment to democratic values and institutions and security throughout the world. Aznar brought prosperity to Spain, but also a sense of responsibility. The country's increasing participation in peace support operations, its full integration into the Atlantic Alliance and its cooperation in the war on terror can only be understood in the light of this two-sided approach. It was a question of the economy, but also a matter of politics.

Had it not been for the dramatic terrorist attacks of March 11th, even the Azores photograph (with Aznar standing between President Bush and Prime Minister Blair a few hours before the Iraq intervention) would still occupy place of honour on the nation's mantelpiece. As Durao Barroso stated at the time, Spain was rubbing shoulders with the most important country in the world and the world's oldest democracy, with its closest neighbour playing host.

In fact, if PSOE had not won the traumatic elections of 14 March 2004, we could assume that Spain would have avoided

becoming what it is today - virtually a pariah State. Our leaders would have sought to defend our national interests and succeeded in doing so. As a result, the country would not only be occupying its rightful place in international affairs, but it would no doubt continue to be respected by all. None of this is the case today.

How to spoil a legacy in just four months

In March 2004, Spain was still a pale reflection of what it could have become. Before voluntarily stepping down, the Spain lead by José María Aznar was on its way to become a European power with a determined Atlantic vocation and a global presence. Spain had not only outgrown its old clothes, but its new clothes promised to be of much better quality. This dream was to be rapidly destroyed by the policies of the new Socialist Government under Rodríguez Zapatero.

It is quite possible that the current Prime Minister rose to his position accidentally, as the Wall Street Journal concluded at the time, and that he was therefore somewhat ill-prepared for his new responsibilities. However, the truth is that his vision of Spain and the country's role in the world must have been already decided and he wasted no time in introducing new foreign policy guidelines. And since the summer of 2004, his policies have unfortunately remained substantially the same.

The first Zapatero obsession was to break off relations with the America of George W Bush. Not everything came down to the Iraq question. In fact, for the new Spanish Socialists, Iraq was nothing more than an outward expression of all the ills Bush represented: a God-fearing Southerner given to championing the export of freedom and prepared to use force to do so if necessary.

Either through ignorance or bad faith, Rodríguez Zapatero saw the American Democrats as his salvation. He was well aware that Spain could not stand up to the United States and come out unharmed, but he thought that if he directed his discourse solely at Bush's Republican Administration, he could limit the damage. This explains his public pronouncements in favour of George W Bush's opponent, Senator Kerry. However,

his approach turned out to be really quite an exceptional risk. When Bush swept to victory at the elections in November 2004, the current Spanish Government suddenly found itself staring at the abyss, a position it brought on itself. Instead of humiliating Bush, Rodríguez Zapatero simply succeeded in humiliating Spain. Since the re-election of the American President, Spain has been consigned by America to the same status Franco's Spain enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s: a Kleenex ally, one you can rely on if useful, but one who is ignored in all other respects. The unfortunate gestures, misunderstandings and humiliations that Spain has suffered are well enough documented without us having to embarrass ourselves by recalling them all here again, ranging from the grand Bush-Zapatero Summit in Istanbul, which lasted all of 7 minutes and 30 seconds (including the consecutive translation), the American denial that Moratinos had been asked to mediate with

Syria, the lighting visit of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and the more recent three supporting votes for the candidature of the Spanish general, Félix Sanz, for the chairmanship of the NATO Military Committee.

Rodríguez Zapatero's second great obsession is to become somebody among the Europeans. When the Socialist Prime Minister talked about returning to the heart of Europe, what he really meant was that Spain should become an appendage to the Franco-German Axis or, more precisely, the Chirac-Schröder Axis. This was partly because Spain shared the same continental status as these two countries, but, above all, because under these two leaders, France and Germany had become a world-wide point of reference for opposition to America's hegemony. Rodríguez Zapatero conceived of Europe as a construction that had been raised to combat America, one that should serve as a counter-weight and a means of restricting the freedom of action of the USA in international affairs. However, this was not the Europe that Europeans wanted.

Four years later his vision has evaporated. Merkel's Germany is clearly pro-American in all important respects, and Sarkozy has just declared his undying love for America during a triumphant visit to Washington. Italy has preserved its good relations with the Bush Administration and Gordon Brown in London is not even contemplating damaging his country's traditional Special Relationship with its cousins across the Atlantic. In this respect, Neo-Socialist Spain has been left out in the cold. The paradoxical result of this situation is that, in order to alleviate its isolation, the Rodríguez Zapatero Government has been forced to accept a series of measures that are as unpalatable to its tastes as having to maintain and even slightly increase Spain's troop numbers in Afghanistan, send soldiers to the Lebanon and accept the NATO anti-missile shield, not to mention refusing to remove Spain's military contingent in Kosovo even if the province should unilaterally declare its independence.

At the heart of the European Union, which represents the maximum expression of the new Europe for Spain's current leaders, the current Government has not accomplished a great deal either. In fact, quite the contrary is true. On the one hand we might mention the question of funds, which Rodríguez Zapatero renounced gratuitously with a phrase that will surely go down in history: "It is amusing to watch how they fight amongst themselves in order to defend their interests," in reference to the meetings at the EU Council Summit. On the other hand, we might mention the whole matter of the European Constitution. Here the government first said one thing and then, subsequently, proclaimed the opposite. After the failure of the text in France and Holland and all the anguish that the Constitution should finally succeed. Moratinos dreamed up the Spanish position of a "Constitution Plus". More text, not less, was the slogan. He even designed a parallel mini-Summit in order to create a club of supporters for this idea, a meeting that was only attended by second-ranking civil servants, we might add, and that was opposed by the German Presidency of the EU. A few months later, once a consensus had been forged between Berlin and Paris regarding a more light-weight treaty, Madrid abandoned its dream of a beefed-up version, along with its friends and supporters in order to accept the new model, which was precisely the one that was most detrimental to Spain's interests, as it removed the country from the leading group within the EU and consigned us to an inferior level.

In short, Nicolas Sarkozy, with his natural sense of ambition, was to design a wide-ranging alternative for the Mediterranean Region that did not rely on Spain. He also passed through Morocco and Algeria, achieving everything that Spain has failed to achieve over the last few years, due to the fact that its weight and influence has diminished substantially in this part of the world.

In effect, with regard to the Sahara problem, when Rodríguez Zapatero came to power he seemed to declared that "I will resolve this in six months." But the time has passed and in spite of the radical shift in Spanish and Socialist policies regarding the region, and in spite of the ongoing winks and concessions to the King of Morocco, neither the Sahara matter nor bilateral relations have improved. In fact, as I write these very lines, the Moroccan Ambassador in Madrid continues to be absent, having been recalled for consultations following the Spanish Foreign Ministry's poor management of the visit that Their Majesties the King and Queen made to Ceuta and Melilla. Within the field of diplomacy, gestures are as important as words and, whatever might be said regarding the matter, not having the Moroccan Ambassador in Spain is not a good sign for the close relations that this Government has sought to establish with Rabat.

In Latin America, the government's policy could not be

more foolish. First, it attempted to join a wide-ranging anti-American front and, in doing so, fanned the flames of all imaginable populist and indigenous movements within the Region, as in Bolivia and in Venezuela under Chávez. Second, the government challenged the American giant in its own backyard with measures such as the sale of weapons systems, some of which required a US licence, to the dictator's regime in Caracas. Third, it abandoned Spain's investors within the Region, requesting instead that they submit to the new leaders, who shift between the most archaic Socialist tendencies to an attitude informed by historical resentment.

In the end, all the government has achieved is to ensure that Spain loses its traditional allies, abandons the freedom agenda set in motion by Felipe González and brought to maximum fruition by Aznar, becoming a victim to the whims of the new petrodollar dictators. As we could observe at the Summit in Chile, anti-Americanism has mutated into an anti-Spanish stance, a position encouraged precisely by those same leaders to whom the current Spanish government has held out its hand time and again. Four years after assuming the reins of power, Rodríguez Zapatero has no real friends in Latin America. Neither good friends nor bad friends. And this is not for want of trying. His policy towards Cuba has been so scandalous that, in the end, what Zapatero aspired to achieve, namely to get the EU to accept the Castros as something normal, has slipped from his grasp, thanks to the moral stature of nations such as the United Kingdom, Holland and the Czech Republic.

The flagship project of this Prime Minister's foreign policy, namely his so-called "Alliance of Civilisations," has been nothing other than a fiasco that has brought few or no benefits to Spain, and, to top it all, we are paying huge bills to the UN for the privilege. The leading role that Moratinos attributed to himself in the Middle East has been shown for what it is as a result of his inability to pull off any initiative in the Region. Furthermore, it was pathetic how he went begging to Washington in order to ensure that Spain was also invited to the recent Annapolis Summit. The pride Felipe González felt during the Madrid Summit in the early nineties is just a distant memory now. If the Zapatero-Moratinos duo ever dreamed of serving as privileged intermediaries vis-à-vis the Arab world, the Arabs themselves have turned their backs on them once again. They do not need either the Spanish government or the Spanish Foreign Office to tackle the Palestinian question, nor do they need them in order to approach the United States and the EU. Spain simply does not count for anything.

In short, there is no region in the world where Spain is better off today, after four years of the Rodríguez Zapatero Government, than it was at the beginning of 2004, before the current Prime Minister's rise to power and destruction of the country's foreign policy. And there is no reason to believe that, should he continue to lead the nation for another four years, Spain's image, importance and role will be enhanced in any part of the world.

The nonsense of 21st century socialism

In international politics, a country has a role to play if it is strong and if it stands firm in the face of the vicissitudes of world affairs. Although in a rather negative sense, the foreign policy of the Rodríguez Zapatero Government is extremely coherent with regard to its domestic policies. It is based on a dream of creating a strong nation through diversity and extreme decentralization, a policy that, in the end, has only led to a Spain that is weaker as a nation and one that is perceived as being weaker by the rest of the world. To the bewilderment of Spain's leader of Post-Modern twenty-first century Socialism, his conception of what harmonious international relations should be has not always been very warmly received



Ex-PM Aznar



by his alleged friends. This was certainly the case with the French President, who refused to sit down with the Heads of the Spanish Regional Governments who had been invited to join the Spanish delegation at the first Bilateral Summit between Spain and France after PSOE's election victory.

His ongoing attitude of appeasement through greater and greater concessions, as witnessed in his approach to the ETA problem, also translates in international affairs into what one shrewd British diplomat has called "a policy of preventive surrender". That is to say, no red lines have been laid down in the negotiations that should not be crossed, whilst Zapatero has been prepared to immediately accept what the other side demands. The example of Gibraltar, in which he accepted a Tripartite Forum and abandoned any attempt to recover this occupied territory, is quite typical of his approach. He gives in to everything without anything in return, apart from a nice photo with is counterparts.

His liking for minorities and his attempts to make them the social norm has not been very enthusiastically welcomed by Spain's partners and allies either. The Left's obsession with the Palestinian question, for example, led to that photo of Rodríguez Zapatero wearing the kefiya or Palestinian headdress, an image that circulated around the world. And this was precisely at a moment in which Israel's security was at stake as it waged a war in the Lebanon against Hezbollah and suffered a series of constant attacks launched from a Gaza Strip controlled by Hamas. With his policy of criticising Israel, based on no other criteria than that of romantically siding with the resistance (in spite of the fact that it is made up of terrorists), the Spanish Prime Minister has won the honour of being the only Western leader ever to be publicly praised by the leaders of Hizbollah.

Zapatero's anti-militarism has led to a number of painful situations, such as his lack of concern regarding the safety of Spanish troops deployed on peace missions in extremely hostile environments. His lack of concern led him to send our soldiers on high-risk missions with the same levels of preparation and material as if they were embarking on low-risk ventures. This approach is at the root of the deaths that Spain has suffered in the Lebanon and in Afghanistan and, what is more, it has led Spain's troops to reduce their duties in order not to expose themselves to danger, to the point where they are shut up in their garrisons practically all of the time. What better proof do we need of the Government's negligence than its sudden rush to purchase anti-mine armored vehicles as part of an attempt to cover up its hopeless military planning?

The Che Guevaraian approach of the Post-Modern Left has also wreaked havoc with Spain's interests in Latin America, especially its commercial interests. In order to get on with the new Latin American despots, the Government has chosen not to defend Spanish companies, who, without the nation's support, have been left at the mercies of Bolivia's nationalising whims or the constant threats of the oil-rich dictator of Venezuela. The fact that it was the King of Spain who had to intervene in an attempt to change the rules of this dangerous game, by publicly standing up to Chávez, speaks volumes about Spain's Socialist Government.

It is possible that Rodríguez Zapatero aspires to lead the new European Left and that his rapid international tour promoting the ABBA Government (as it has been defined by a prestigious Spanish-British historian, namely that of Anything but Bush, Blair and Aznar) was an attempt to consolidate this alleged leadership. After all, the old European Left was searching for a young leader who was supposedly qualified for the task. However, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero must have disappointed them as well. His project has dissolved like sugar in a glass of water. Spain, a country that fails to bother the United States, that is completely ignored by London, Paris and Berlin, that has lost its voice and vote in the EU, that is despised by its supposed friends in Latin America - who continue to insult the Spanish nation - and that is marginalized by its neighbors in the South, cannot be the leader of anything, except perhaps the world's leading laughing-stock. Nobody can enjoy a strong position in world affairs whilst being so weak at home.

And nobody can be taken seriously abroad if he does not take his international duties seriously. And Rodríguez Zapatero

shied away from the rest of the world as soon as he realized that his impossible policies were going awry. Over the last four years, he has been the leader who has undertaken the least number of trips abroad, as well as being the Prime Minister who has attended the least number of bilateral meetings in Spain's recent history. Although the Government has sought to fill this dreadful void with its international agenda, this policy is like water: tasteless, odorless and colorless.

Rodríguez Zapatero perfectly embodies what a Spanish diplomat sarcastically exclaimed in the late eighties, to the effect that Spain's foreign policy consisted of three principles: Spain always forms part of an axis; Spain always mediates in something; and Spain always ends up dropping its trousers. It is a shame that Zapatero's axis consists of the Castros, Chavez and Evo Morales and that Spain does not even have a role or room within which to mediate.

How to recover Spain's place in the world

We cannot expect anything good from the New Socialism of Rodríguez Zapatero. It is a disaster and it would be naïve to attempt to reach any kind of agreement with this radical and extravagant PSOE. Any kind of consensus would be based on such a minimum understanding that it would be quite meaningless. Another thing to keep in mind, is that some remnants might remain in PSOE of what Spanish Socialism has always been, namely a pragmatic force channeled within the context of wide-ranging international movements and not within the extremist margins of the current government.

The problem is that, in order to defend its interests, Spain needs to be strong. This requires inner strength. Strength capable of projecting a credible image abroad. First of all, Spain should attempt to recover the normal coordinates of any liberal democracy that is firmly anchored within what we call the West. This means re-establishing a cordial dialogue with Washington, whoever may sit in the White House, as well as resuming our place among the big four of Europe. Spain's voice must be heard and taken into account.

Spain must put an end to its fickle policies in Latin America and clearly support the freedom agenda within the Region. Furthermore, it must promote the universal values of freedom and respect for all persons throughout the world, placing special emphasis on the Arab world.

This will not be easy, partly because Rodríguez Zapatero has created an anorexic Spain that no longer has the muscle to take on the great challenges presented throughout the world, ranging from globalisation to international security. A radical transformation of the country's intelligence services and Armed Forces are a sine qua non condition for Spain to be able to operate in the new context of the 21st century.

Nevertheless, international credibility is a little like a Chinese vase. When it breaks, it can always be glued together again, but it is never quite the same. Rodríguez Zapatero has destroyed Spain's image and, even though we might manage to repair it, Spain would have to make new gestures in order to prove its commitment and solidarity and recover the levels of credibility it enjoyed before March 2004.

In the last analysis, Spain needs a new social contract, not simply a consensus among parties, in order to be able to successfully meet the challenges of tomorrow and the day after that. It is essential that Spaniards understand what it means to be a great country, one that is prosperous and responsible. And it is also essential that they understand that we are not living in a world of fantasy, as Rodríguez Zapatero would have us believe. At the end of the day, although Bin Laden may not place Spain in its headlines, al-Qaida has mentioned the country fourteen times since March 2004 and it has threatened Spain in all of them.

The Spain we need cannot be built by the current Prime Minister, because he has channeled all his energies in the opposite direction. If his errors with ETA have begun to have tragic consequences only recently, the country has been paying for his strategic and foreign policy errors for some years now. Rodríguez Zapatero constitutes a heavy mortgage for Spain. And I, for one, do not want to have to continue paying it.

ELECTIONS '08

An Accidental Leader

Elected as Spain's leader three days after the Madrid bombings and pursuing a liberal agenda, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero sleeps well

Thomas Catan and Robert Thomson

There is more than a little bit of Blair about José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, a Socialist who has cut corporate taxes and a charmer whose presentational and glad-handing skills are so pronounced that his opponents insist that he is the embodiment of Spanish spin without substance.

Yet this almost accidental prime minister, elected three days after the Madrid bombings, has emerged in the past four years as a surprisingly powerful leader, and he sits comfortably in an office that itself is a political statement: the floors are stripped bare, the desk is more architect than politician and a Miró stares confusedly down at him — it is Ikea meets Tate Modern.

He is one of a generation of European politicians of the Left who has drawn inspiration from the electoral suc-

cesses of Tony Blair, but foreign policy differences have put distance between them. Señor Zapatero's first political act was to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq and the disagreements have proliferated as quickly as issues have arisen. While, in public, Mr Blair has been sympathetic to Israel's policy in Lebanon, Señor Zapatero has been openly critical, describing the Israeli offensive as an abuse of force.

Like Mr Blair in his early years of government, Señor Zapatero put his energies into tackling one of the most intractable conflicts in the country's history. After the announcement of a permanent ceasefire, his Government began controversial talks with Eta, the Basque terrorist group responsible for about 800 deaths in more than three decades and sometime partner of the Irish Republican Army.

"In my opinion we have the best opportunity to see the end of [Eta's] violence and terrorism," he said at the time. "We will be working very cautiously and discreetly. They were two pieces of advice that Tony Blair gave me. And I'm trying to be very disciplined. But it will take time. The history has been one of a great deal of pain."

That ceasefire has now collapsed, as did talks following the Madrid airport bomb at Christmas 2006. It has been alleged, though, that secret talks have continued behind the scenes.

The Prime Minister also vigorously promoted the devolution of more powers to Spain's regions. The conservative Opposition accused the him of presiding over the break-up of the nation, a possibility he dismisses. "I'm a firm believer... of bringing power closer to citizens," he said. "Those who criticise me in Spain say that the State has very little power. Nevertheless, they are still very intent on recovering it. It's a total contradiction — they know it's not true. There is no risk of fragmentation."

The Prime Minister has also angered the Roman Catholic Church in Spain by introducing liberal social measures, including fast-track divorces and same-sex marriage, and he has scrapped a measure by the previous conservative Government to make religious instruction in schools compulsory. Hence, for the Church, Señor Zapatero has

become the patron saint of secularism, but the Prime Minister suggests that the priests should not blame the Government if Spaniards are increasingly turning away from institutional religion.

"It is the people who decide whether they have more or less religious vocation. It is religious denominations who have to analyse why they have more or less followers," he says. "I believe that spiritual values are not only religious values."

I think that modern-day democracy has very ingrained values, very spiritual values, such as peace, solidarity towards those who need it the most."

Both his language and his frenetic legislative activity have infuriated conservatives, who had expected to win the 2004 election and remain convinced that the explosions which took 192 lives just before the election were too sophisticated to have been the work of a motley collection of Islamic extremists, and so must have been, in some unspecified way, the handiwork of Eta.

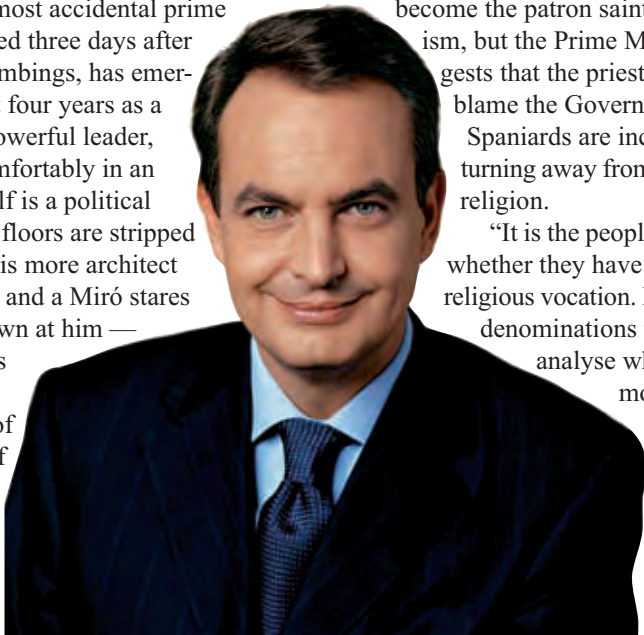
The conspiracy theory debate rumbles on in the Spanish press, but there is little doubt that Señor Zapatero's policies have been popular. More than 90 per cent of Spaniards had opposed Spain's involvement in the war in Iraq and overwhelmingly applauded his decision to bring their troops home. Two thirds approved of his move to legalise homosexual unions.

The even-tempered, easy-smiling and camera-friendly Prime Minister insists that individual issues are not keeping him awake at night and that there should be a punishment for any individual in public office who does not appreciate the privilege or complains about the pressure.

"I sleep very well," he says, explaining that he normally gets seven hours regardless of the stresses of the job. "It's clearly one of the things I'm most lucky about. I think that's thanks to my daughters."

The 47-year-old Prime Minister could go on for a long time — his grandmothers have lived beyond 100 years of age — but he insists that political leaders should not stay too long in office because democracy needs frequent change to stay fresh.

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Rift Between Vatican and Madrid Deepens

Jose Luis Rodriguez met with the Pope's representative in mid February in a tense meeting in the Vatican as the socialist leader sought assurances that the papal office would insist that church leaders in Spain refrain from 'meddling' in the country's forthcoming election.

The intervention followed a communique released at the beginning of February where the Spanish Bishops Conference made clear its view that Spanish voters should not back parties that support gay marriage or other social reforms the church frowns on such as 'divorce express', or that support negotiations with armed Basque militants — clearly references to the governing Socialists.

Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero enacted legalisation of same-sex marriages and streamlined divorce procedures, and tried in vain to negotiate a peace accord with the armed Basque group ETA in 2006.

Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, speaking in the southern city of Cordoba, criticised the church hierarchy in Spain as "fundamentalist and neo-conservative."

He said the church does not represent a majority of Spanish Catholics and is "using terrorism politically to divide all Spaniards."

Moratinos added: "We want to maintain a better level of relations with the Holy See, but we do not understand this posture."

In Spain, the Catholic Church's leaders have long sided with the right and they supported the fascist forces of late Gen. Francisco Franco in the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War and his ensuing near four-decade dictatorship.

Under democracy, the church has consistently backed the conservatives in elections although it never names any political party.

In its statement the Spanish

Bishop's Conference said that while "Catholics may support and join different parties it is also true that not all (electoral) programmes are equally compatible with the faith and Christian demands in life."

The statement cited Pope Benedict XVI in urging protection for the tradition

For those of us who love freedom, let bishops take care of their herds, but since they receive €950m a year from the Spanish government they should at least show some respect and not bite the hand that feeds them. Otherwise, refrain from any subsidy from the Spanish government and the Church would be absolutely free to say what they feel like

Fernando Cano, Madrid

tional form of marriage, and it criticised government moves to restrict religious teaching in school.

On the issue of talks with armed groups, the bishops said: "A society which wants to be free and fair must neither, explicitly nor implicitly, recognise a terrorist organization as a political representative of any sector of the population."

The Government reacted with fury, accusing the bishops of wishing to return to the Franco era, when they held sway over the Spanish population. It also hinted that it may revisit a 2006 agreement with the Vatican that safeguarded state funding for the Catholic Church in Spain.

"The bishops' alliance with the Popular Party will fundamentally alter the relationship with the Government," the Socialist Party leadership cautioned.

Zapatero told Monsignor Manuel Monteiro de Castro, the Papal Nuncio, that the Church must respect the elected Government and refrain from campaigning for the opposition before the March 9 general election.

Relations between the Church and the Government took a turn for the worse in December, when a 150,000-strong march in support of the family turned into an anti-government tirade.

Bishops told the crowd that the "family is under strong attack" and gave warning that under Mr Zapatero's rule "we are heading towards the end of democracy".

The Contentious Issues

- **GAY MARRIAGE:** In 2005 Spain became one of only three countries to legalise full, same-sex marriage
- **RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION:** The Socialists scrapped plans to make religious education compulsory in schools
- **EXPRESS DIVORCE:** New fast-track divorces are regarded by the Church as an attack on the traditional family
- **CITIZENSHIP CLASSES:** The Church regards the introduction of the EU-mandated course as an effort to usurp its role in the moral education of children
- **PEACE PROCESS:** Bishops say that negotiations with Eta were immoral
- **HISTORIC MEMORY LAW:** The Church says that efforts to redress grievances of victims of Franco's regime are "historical manipulation"

The church is free to give its opinion, and even eventually give recommendations as to vote, as we all are, including the Junta Islamica, or Spain's embarrassing troupe of heavily subsidised millionaire actors, or Gay organisations who all ask openly for a vote for Zapatero. Why shouldn't the church be entitled to have its say?

Manuela Fernandez Flor, Paracuellos

ELECTIONS '08

Migrants Voted On But Not

Voters in Spain Election

Integrate or Emmigrate

At the head of a close election on this is suddenly a matter of intense debate. The opposition People's Party (PP) leader, Mariano Rajoy, wants future immigrants to swear to respect Spain's customs. This has provoked jokes about siestas, bull-running and dancing in spotty dresses—three national customs. But it is also a reminder that the election is about more than an economy suffering from high inflation and a burst property bubble.

Mr Rajoy wants immigrants to sign a legally binding "integration contract". This would oblige them to learn Spanish, to work hard to integrate — and to return home if they are unemployed for too long or commit a crime. The proposal was ridiculed by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the Socialist prime minister. Spain's foreign-born population has increased fivefold to some 10% in the past seven years, but he claims this has caused few problems.



Photo: EFE

PP leader Mariano Rajoy has brought the subject of immigration to the forefront of his campaign

Mr Rajoy used a television debate with Mr Zapatero to accuse him of encouraging an avalanche of immigrants. The Socialists retorted that a xenophobic heart was beating in the PP; the PP said all it wanted to do was to restore order to a chaotic system. Many Socialists seem pleased that Mr Rajoy has chosen to play the immigration card. Mr Zapatero's government has devoted much time to social issues, an area where it feels comfortable. It has legalised gay marriage, made divorce easier, introduced a sex equality law and weakened the Catholic Church's influence over education. Most of these measures have proved popular; PP opposition has allowed the Socialists to preen themselves as a nice party fighting reaction.

A few months ago, however, the PP switched the thrust of its drive to win back the power it lost in 2004. With growth slowing, unemployment rising and inflation hitting 4.3%, it began to focus more on the government's economic competence. Mr Rajoy signed up Manuel Pizarro, a businessman who was formerly deputy chairman of the Madrid stock exchange, for his team.

Mr Rajoy's immigration plans have given the Socialists a chance to divert the debate away from the economy and claim once again to be more positive, caring and tolerant, painting the PP as a jumble of angry negatives. The interior minister, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, asserted that, after months behind a moderate mask, Mr Rajoy had at last revealed himself as "authoritarian and anti-social".

The voters may yet come to a different conclusion. A pre-debate poll in El País showed that 56% liked Mr Rajoy's immigration contract. The PP is aiming at working-class voters the Socialists usually rely on. They are often the first to worry about the impact of immigration on their neighbourhoods and local schools, as well as the first to lose their jobs in an economic slowdown. Mr Rajoy wants these voters either to switch allegiance or just to stay at home. Then Mr Zapatero may find that seeming nice is not enough.

Reprinted courtesy of The Economist

Sonia Dowsett/Reuters

The 50 or so immigrants queuing in the Madrid winter sunshine can't vote in the Spanish election in March, but find themselves one of the main issues.

Waiting for hours to renew residence permits outside a modern ochre and blue government building, they read and chat to while away the time. Their concerns as workers are similar to those of Spaniards facing the end of an economic boom marked by rising inflation and unemployment.

But as foreigners they cannot vote on March 9. The Spanish constitution allows third-country nationals to vote on the basis of reciprocal agreements. Currently, only Norway has such a contract in place.

Herbert Lawani, a 27-year-old Nigerian with his own asset management business, would like to vote for the conservative Popular Party, as he believes they would steer the economy back to an even keel.

The Popular Party, however, has just made immigration one of the election's biggest issues, calling it a "problem" and proposing measures to compel immigrants to integrate, including restricting the use of Islamic headscarves.

"I would like to vote, but I don't think I can," said Lawani, dressed in a leather jacket and ironed shirt, who was pushing a young baby in a new pram.

He has lived in Spain for nine years and sudden price rises are a concern. "I'm finding it very difficult these days, it's not like before," he said. "Even the Spanish are complaining."

Although headlines have focused on desperate Africans trying to enter Europe by sailing to the Canary Islands in rickety open boats, these kinds of migrants are actually a tiny minority of foreign residents in Spain.

The largest migrant groups are represented by Moroccans, Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans, many of whom came to the country in the first half of the decade seeking work in Spain's now-fading construction boom. The number of foreign residents surpassed four million for the first time in 2006, reaching nine percent of the population at a faster rate of growth than the rest of Europe put together. These first-generation immigrants came to Spain during a period of strong economic growth and their jobs are now vulnerable as many work in the troubled construction sector, some on temporary contracts.

The Popular Party hopes a tough stance on immigration will be a vote winner with working-class Spaniards worried about job security as the fast-growing economy



Immigrants queue patiently at a Social Security office in Madrid

begins to slow.

Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero is wary of appearing a lenient gatekeeper for economic migrants seeking entry to Spain, despite dismissing the opposition proposals as xenophobic.

His government granted an amnesty to nearly 700,000 illegal workers in 2005 in an attempt to harness more taxes. Spain, with one of the lowest birth rates in Europe, depends on foreign workers to fill its tax coffers.

"The legalisation of those workers was certainly a very positive move, but it generated a negative perception of immigration in the public's eyes," said Ricard Zapata-Barrero, politics professor at Barcelona's Pompeu Fabra University.

Spaniards regularly rank immigration as one of their major worries in opinion polls, alongside unemployment and terrorism.

"We Spanish need immigration, but within reason," said 29-year-old Pilar Torio, pregnant with her fourth child, looking after toddlers in the playground of a high-rise, red-brick apartment block near a shanty town in Madrid.

"I wanted to put my girls into a public nursery here and I couldn't because all the places were taken by immigrants, and many are illegal," she said.

Back at the work permit centre, 28-year-old supermarket worker Luz Adriana Ochoa Calderon from Colombia says she would like to vote for the Socialists if she could, and likes the way they have given more opportunities to women.

"We immigrants deserve to vote, we have the same right just by being here," she said, pushing strands of blonde hair from her face. "We pay taxes, so why shouldn't we have rights?"

Editor's Comment

This is a particular bugbear for me and many others in a similar situation to myself. Being a UK citizen, I am of course eligible to vote in all UK elections. I've been of voting age for 17 years. However, 13 ½ of those, I've lived away from the UK, 11 of which have been spent in Spain. My property, business, job and my life in general is based in Spain and decisions made in Madrid have a massive effect on my life here. Yet I cannot participate in the democratic process.

Bizarrely, my vote can affect the lives of people living in the UK, despite the fact that any decision made in Westminster has absolutely no effect on my life whatsoever.

The only solution available to me is to renounce my UK citizenship and become a Spanish citizen. Is this really something I want to do? Well, not particularly. I am

a European citizen and this should be enough — we are, after all, allowed the luxury of free movement between the member states. Surely the time has arrived for another solution to be sought.

Maybe members of EU countries could be allowed to vote in another country's election if they have lived in that country for a designated period of time, can prove that their primary source of income comes from that country and that is where their taxes are paid.

Maybe to vote back in their own country, they must serve a qualifying period of continuous residency of, say, two years. Surely as 21st Century democratic nations, we can come up with a system that does not disenfranchise many thousands, if not millions if we look Europe-wide, of voters.



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No Happy Ending Without Advice

A friend was taking his pet cow to market the other day when a man came up to him and asked him to swap it for a handful of magic beans. He had been expecting to get a few euros for his cow, but the man made a pretty convincing sales pitch about thematic beans.

"You may never have heard of these magic beans," he said, "but I guarantee they will produce more money for you than selling your cow for cash."

It sounded too good to be true. How could my friend refuse?

Now, of course, this did not actually happen. This tale is obviously ridiculous - you'd have to be a fool to take up an offer like that. And yet so many consumers out there do. Just look at the recent crackdown on "boiler room" scams.

The UK Financial Services Authority has finally moved (albeit after the horse has bolted) to shut down UK firms that have aided those overseas firms that lure consumers into defunct companies with the promise of high returns.

The recent past is littered with similar such episodes - some of them specifically targeted at the UK expatriate market: Home Income Plans, Precipice Bonds, Inheritance Tax/Equity Release Bonds...

We must feel sorry for the victims, many of whom were already on meagre pensions and have consequently lost their savings or put their home at risk with no chance of getting their money back. Some of these people were duped and were fi-

nancially ignorant. However, for some others our sympathy is limited because of one reason: their misfortune comes from their greed.

If they had not been so eager to dispense with common sense to get something for nothing, they would not be in the position they are in.

Seeking financial advice from a reputable source should have revealed a scam that was too good to be true.

We know that these firms are using some elaborate tricks to snare their prey.

They are bullies and play on the fears of the consumers. However, we cannot escape from the fact that essentially those tricked have fallen for the advice of an anonymous caller who has convinced them to spend their money (or turn their house over to some anonymous company) on something they have never heard of. All it has taken is the promise of a massive payout.

Why and how does anyone fall for this kind of financial advice (if that's what you can call it)?

It's worrying as it underlines how many people view financial advice as something you get from a mate down the bar.

If normal punters are convinced by the 'free' advice from a salesman promising whopping returns, will they ever be persuaded to part with good money for quality advice that offers a lower return for your investment?

Terry Vaughan is Director of The Mortgage Shop Plus Cdl in Ayamonte and its associate company in Jersey, Channel Islands.
Contact: +34 637 11 81 99 or email terry.tms@hotmail.com



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Praise for the New Look

Dear Sir,

Congratulations! I have followed The Oracle from the outset and the last edition (Feb '08) is the best yet.

I notice you do not have a letters page, so may I be the first to contribute? I hope in the future both the Spanish and foreign community will have some lively banter in these pages on all sorts of topics of this lovely region of the Costa de la Luz. So come on guys, put pen to paper and let us hear your views - good or bad - as it makes for good press!

I am looking forward to joining in on the BBC Sport Relief mile event on Saturday 15 March and hope that many expats will join in for this very worthy, fun cause.

Yours Faithfully

Annie Keen

Ayamonte, Huelva

...and by email:

The Oracle is perfectly presented, together with comprehensive coverage of a wide range of very interesting and topical subjects. You and your staff are to be complimented for journalistic expertise. Keep up the good work. It is truly appreciated.

Michael Purvis, Lancashire & Ayamonte

Congratulations on the new look Oracle. I have been reading The Oracle for some months since I started to buy my apartment on Rago2 Costa Esuri. It was always an interesting read, but the new paper has more depth and more adverts especially for properties. Getting the PDF version means that I read The Oracle as it looks as a printed version.

Well done and may the Oracle continue to get better and better.

Mike Cutler, Costa Esuri

With the new format, incisive reporting and colour you now have a newspaper to match and better all those on the Algarve and the Costa del Sol.

John Mustow, Milton Keynes & Costa Esuri



Been sent a humorous email? Care to Share?

Email: theinbox@theoraclecostadelaluz.com

A lawyer purchased a box of very rare and expensive cigars, then insured them against, among other things, fire. Within a month, having smoked his entire stockpile of these great cigars and without yet having made even his first premium payment on the policy the lawyer filed a claim against the insurance company.

In his claim, the lawyer stated the cigars were lost "in a series of small fires." The insurance company refused to pay, citing the obvious reason, that the man had consumed the cigars in the normal fashion.

The lawyer sued and won!

Delivering the ruling, the judge agreed with the insurance company that the claim was frivolous. The judge stated, nevertheless, that the lawyer held a policy from the company, which it had warranted that the cigars were insurable and also guaranteed that it would insure them against fire, without defining what is considered to be unacceptable "fire" and was obligated to pay the claim.

Rather than endure lengthy and costly appeal process, the insurance company accepted the ruling and paid \$15,000 to the lawyer for his loss of the cigars in the "fires".

After the lawyer cashed the check, the insurance company had him arrested on 24 counts of arson!

With his own insurance claim and testimony from the previous case being used against him, the lawyer was convicted of intentionally burning his insured property and was sentenced to 24 months in jail and a \$24,000 fine.

This is a true story and was the First Place winner in the recent Criminal Lawyers Award Contest.

Thanks to Jerry in Villablanca for that one!

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At Last News of Superior

Thank you for informing us about the shenanigans over at the Superior offices in Spain. We'd been desperately worried having heard about the demise of the company here in the UK and like I imagine so many others, we tried to get information regarding our purchase.

We phoned Spain several times to get no answer whatsoever. We emailed and contacted the Bristol office. We were getting worried, especially as we were hearing horror stories over the internet.

We just needed to be reassured, and as it turned out we have nothing to worry about, but for a long time we were scared witless thinking that we'd lost our savings. All because nobody wanted to talk to us.

Not long after your article was published we received the news that all was A-Okay and we got reassurances that our purchase was not at risk.

At our time of life we cannot afford many scares like that! Thank you for helping us to put our minds at rest.

Mr & Mrs W. E. Leary, Sussex



Last Month's Front
Page Featuring the
News of Superior's
Downfall

Coffee Break

Modismos

How well do you know your Spanish Idioms?
Look at the following and choose which of the options is the correct English equivalent.

1. Servir lo mismo para un barrido que para un fregado:

- a. to make a clean sweep of it
- b. jack of all trades
- c. a broom is as good as a mop

2. El hijo de la gata, ratones mata

- a. while the cat's away, the mice will play
- b. to play cat and mouse
- c. like father, like son

3. Entre pitas y flautas

- a. what with one thing and another
- b. he who pays the piper calls the tune
- c. clean as a whistle

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

ANAGRAM CROSSWORD

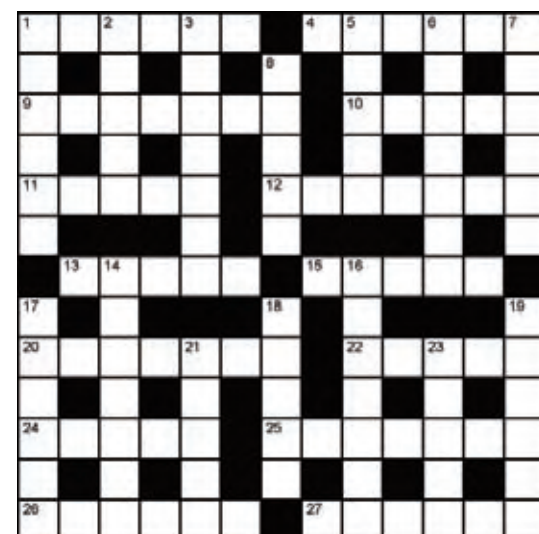
Puzzle No: A0308

Hone your Scrabble skills by rearranging the words in the clues to fit in the grid.

Target time: 20mins

Down:

- 1 TITHES (6)
- 2 URINE (5)
- 3 TINGLED (7)
- 5 HIDER (5)
- 6 RESIDES (7)
- 7 ISSUED (6)
- 8 FINER (5)
- 14 ARBITER (7)
- 16 MOORHEN (7)
- 17 DENTED (6)
- 18 MELTS (5)
- 19 THRUST (6)
- 21 GOATS (5)
- 23 COLTS (5)



Across: 1 NIGHTS (6); 4 DASHED (6); 9 OUTLINE (7); 10 TRESS (5); 11 CENTS (5); 12 ENSURED (7); 13 CURED (5); 15 ACHES (5); 20 MATURER (7); 22 CURER (5); 24 BUDGE (5); 25 OUTLOOK (7); 26 TESTED (6); 27 LESSEN (6)



Level: Easy

Puzzle No: S0308

Fill in the grid with the numbers 1 to 9 so that each row, column and 3x3 block contains all the numbers 1 to 9.

Tips at: www.sudoku.com



The News Wire with Scoop

Easyjet to Charge for Emotional Baggage

Cut price airline Easyjet is introducing charges for customers who travel with too much emotional baggage. The announcement was made in an attempt to avoid delays caused by family arguments at check-in and boarding; henceforth Easyjet will have a strict rule of 'one simple divorce case per passenger'.

One regular flyer turned up at Seville airport yesterday with her grown up son from her first marriage who was still not talking to her second husband.

"The check-in lady asked me a series of questions about the divorce and all the suppressed anger and guilt felt by the kids, and I had to pay an extra €39.99 plus IVA," said Sarah Johnstone. "I complained that this sort of money-grabbing reminded me of my absent Dad who just took, took, took but left me nothing in his will – and they added another €29.99."

The new charge is part of a raft of revised charges from the no-frills airline, including extra payments for seats for those who opt not to stand for the duration of their flight. There has been criticism of the airline for their decision to charge for oxygen in the event of emergency. "The oxygen masks will still drop down from the overhead lockers as required by law" explained Stelios Haji-Ioannou, the company's pioneering founder. "But now the supply of oxygen is activated by a simple slot-meter that takes Euros and pound coins."

Nervous passengers can also rent the life jacket under their seats and buy a scratch-card to win a place in the life-raft.

The new charges come hot on the heels of last year's 'pay as you weigh' pricing policy that imposed extra charges for customers exceeding the airline's recommended flying weight. Under their revised terms and conditions those passengers deemed to be 'fatties' are now charged an increasing scale of penalty charges for the extra fuel costs they incur the airline.

Stelios said he had done his utmost to deter fat people from flying on his airline, over-pricing the sandwiches or just having no food on sale whatsoever, but fat people simply resorted to boarding his planes with big bags of sandwiches, crisps and fizzy drinks.

Easyjet's check-in staff have now been instructed to look out for people misrepresenting their weight on their booking forms. As well as having to measure the dimensions of their hand luggage, passengers are now be required to pass through a metal frame of fixed width. If they cannot squeeze through, an alarm sounds and a red light flashes the word 'Fat Bastard' above their heads.

However Easyjet was prepared to concede that it was highly discriminatory to include pregnant women in the 'Fat Tax' scheme. Instead mothers carrying unborn children will simply be charged the price of two passengers.



Rosa Parks' Heroic Sit-In Revealed as Superglue Prank



Photo: United News

Civil rights leaders in America have admitted that Rosa Parks, the black woman who famously refused to vacate her seat on the bus for a white man, was not quite as much of a heroine as was previously thought. Montgomery County files, released last month after their classified status elapsed, have revealed that she was actually physically unable to get up having been super-glued to the chair.

"The record needs to be set straight," said Sgt. Bill Huckey of Montgomery County Police. "Us cops have been painted as the bad guys. When the bus driver told her to give up her seat she tried, but it was impossible."

History shows that it took three policemen to physically remove Ms Parks from the bus, but Huckey claimed "we'd no way to dissolve the glue, it was brute force or nothing."

The super glue had actually been placed on the seat by her mischievous nephews as a prank, who had no idea that the whole thing would precipitate a civil rights campaign, the mobilisation of the National Guard and the end to legal segregation.

Black Civil Rights leaders were quick to make her a heroine and a focus for the movement and she was happy to accept the fiction of her dignified protest if it stopped her nephews getting into trouble. However after a while some Civil Rights leaders, notably Martin Luther King Jnr, did accuse her of 'milking it a bit'.

"She didn't even use the bus as a general rule," said one, adding that Rosa was a bit of a 'one-hit wonder' and that "her later work lacked the same impact".

The Rosa Parks revelation follows the debunking of a number of heroic myths as historical papers have become available. Gandhi's salt march was because he was too mean to get the train to the seaside while Mother Theresa was actually making quite a profit charging for bed and breakfast. However the recent suggestion that Princess Diana may have actually been a rather dim Sloane Ranger who was desperate for media attention has been declared as one piece of revisionism too many.

The page you have just read is a news parody. Its stories are not fact checked and its opinions are not fully thought through.



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The Litter Problem

Maaïke van Poelje

If you have pet dogs or cats and you're thinking of having a litter of puppies or kittens from them, I urge you to think it over very carefully indeed.

The amount of comments I've heard bandied about: "But someone told me -" always a suspect way to start a sentence - that a female dog needs to have puppies at least once; it's good for her health."

Another one: "It's so nice to have puppies. I would love my dog to have a litter for the wonderful experience."

First of all, the rumour that a female dog (or cat) has to become a mother at least one time in her life, is complete nonsense. There is no medical or physical need whatsoever for a female dog or cat to have babies. Most vets do recommend to have your dog spayed after her first 'period'. Normally the first season is with nine months of age so this means that you should wait until your dog is about ten or eleven months old before having the operation. With cats you have to act even sooner as with as little as 6 months

they are 'ready' and sometimes this can even be with four months.

Secondly, it is astonishing how many unwanted puppies and kittens are born every day, especially here in Spain where the large amount of stray and abandoned animals is still a huge problem.

As an animal-aid organisation we see so many just born animals entering our refuge. Some are born in the wild, others are dumped in the trash or at the side of the road. Every time it is heartbreaking to realise they are just the tip of the iceberg of the total amount of animals that are not cared for and not looked after. And what to think of all the neglected puppies which end up in another kind of kennel and are just spending the short time they have behind bars, sleeping on the cold cement?

This is the reason why all of the dogs that enter our refuge and most other private refuges around Spain and Portugal are castrated or spayed as soon as possible. It is the



only way to stop all the unnecessary suffering.

With this in mind, I ask you to think very carefully before you decide to have a litter of puppies or a nest of kittens. Our advice is to have your dog spayed or castrated as soon as they are fully grown. This way you will save yourself, the animal-aid workers and many animals a lot of problems. And if you want to have puppies, get in contact with your nearest animal refuge centre and they will be happy to give one -or more- in adoption.

A Closer Look

with Steve Mehlmann

A wooden vessel is composed of hundreds of pieces of timber all held together in a variety of ways. As witnessed sadly when the 137 year old 'Maria Assumpta', hit the headland off the northern coast of Devon in 1995. One minute a magnificent square rigger under full sail, next minute matchwood! Nowadays if one is building in wood it is most likely to be thin strips glued together using an epoxy resin with every component 'engineered' to be a light as possible commensurate with its function.

In the olden days this sort of engineering was very much more hit and miss and so wooden vessels were massively built and components with a lot of shape were created using lengths of curved wood preferably naturally grown. Why do you think the ship builders were sited in places like the New Forest?

Where the curves were severe the length of naturally grown curved timber available was inevitably shorter and so doublers were fitted to overlap the joint. A bit like bricklaying but on its side. Most frames were built this way. Planking was fitted over these frames being steamed to allow it to follow the curve of the hull.

On Kirkenes, the Colin Archer ketch being rebuilt in Vila Real, the frames are massive each one about 6 inches thick with a similar sized doubler close fitted alongside and space at 18 inch centres. The planking is 1 1/2" thick and as she is a double ender the curvature at stem and stern is severe with each hull plank secured at the stem and stern using metal nails



and to stop the planks from shearing on the frame by using 'trennels'.

Trennel is short for tree-nail which as the name implies is a nail made from wood. The grain runs along the length and the timber used needs to have good tensional strength.

Trennels can also be seen on other old vessels such as the Victory in Portsmouth and have the finished appearance of a round dowel about 1 1/2 inches in diameter located on the centreline of the frame. In fact they are surprisingly well engineered, tapered at the outboard end and then driven into the hole through the plank and frame. To secure them in place there is a saw cut made in the inner end into which a timber wedge is driven which effectively prevents the trennel from coming out.

Interestingly this principle can be found on modern staylock rigging terminals and the ends of rod rigging so perhaps the old technology was more advanced than I have given it credit for.

Why am I talking about this? Well Kirkenes has now been replanked from the keel up and the old planks cut off using a chain saw resulting in lots of small pieces of well seasoned hardwood some of which I have been using in my wood burner and several of which have the remains of the 'trennels' still fitted.

I feel slightly guilty as another piece of history goes up in flames but console myself with the fact that this timber has now done the main job for which it was cut and is fulfilling a secondary function - keeping us warm.

IMPROVE YOUR GAME WITH PETER BALLINGALL

"There have been many teachers through the history of golf but there have been very few great teachers. Peter Ballingall is one of that rare breed because he is one of the game's great communicators. His approach is both simple and straight forward, but much more importantly; it works because of his rare gift of easy communication."

Malcolm Campbell, Golf Writer and Author



Contact me if you want to improve your game
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E-mail: pballingall@golfeironpido.es
Web: www.peterballingall.com

No Dig Gardens: All Year Round Veg - Part 3

So, we've selected our veg, built our garden base. Now it's time to prepare the seeds

Preparing Your Seedlings!

No dig gardens are more successful if you plant seedlings rather than seeds. The seeds can get lost in the mix and you are less certain about where everything will come up. With seedlings, you have a better idea of where things are. Also, with the rich organic materials in this sort of garden you can plant more intensively than you would with a normal garden.

Planting vegetable seedlings rather than seeds, is usually easier and more successful in the organised chaos of a no dig garden. When you also grow your own seedlings, it is far more economical than purchasing them, as well as being quite gratifying.

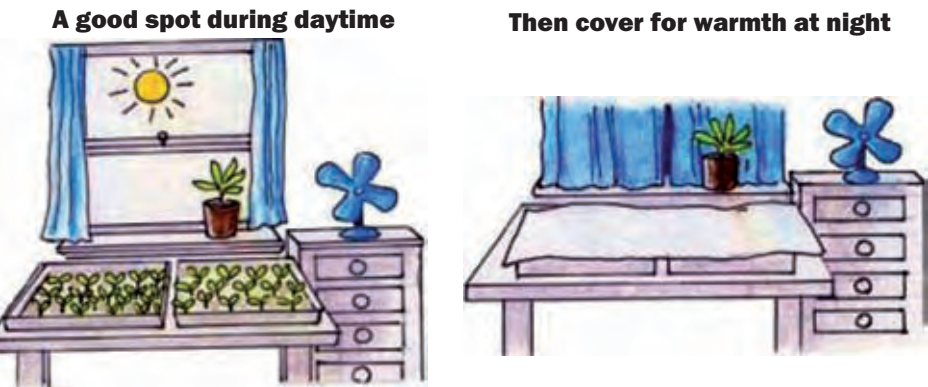
What will do well? Remember that we live in the Northern Hemisphere Temperate Climate zone as pointed out in part one, so consult your chart also from that edition to find out what is best for your area (or consult the web page listed above). Beans, peas, capsicum, eggplant, tomato, lettuce, sweet corn, broccoli, spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts and vine crops like melons and pumpkins. Root crops should not be tried until the bed is more mature.

Backtime the date you think you'll be frost free and start your vegetable seedlings about 6 weeks earlier. Of course, you will have to start them off under cover or indoor, so this will guide you, Starting seedlings indoors.

Starting Seedlings Indoors

Get a head start on the season by starting seedlings indoors. If you live in a cool area, you can use a greenhouse or cold frame, otherwise get the most from your growing season and start seeds indoors... window sill, top of the fridge or the coffee table.

Or think about an enclosed porch, a garage, a shed or basement. Growing seeds inside is pretty straightforward. Give them air, light, water, warmth—and they'll sprout. Easy peasy!



Gardening tips for indoor seed growing

- Make sure you have sufficient counter space to work on, or keep a protective covering handy to spread out if necessary, so you can do your seed planting without an almighty mess.*
- Don't start planting seeds too soon. In 4-6 weeks they will be ready to go out into the garden. If you are still experiencing frosts, it will be off with their heads!*
- Prepare your containers. Do you have enough trays, egg cartons, yoghurt containers or jiffy pots. Make sure they have drainage holes... and if left over from last season, check for rotten bottoms.*
- Your indoor seedlings are going to need a lot of light once they germinate... more light than an adult plant, to make them grow fast and strong.*
- So unless you have brilliant natural light, try and arrange lights over your seedlings. Preferably use fluorescent or one of the latest energy saving lights. They are more economical, they cover a larger space, they run cool (without burning the plants) and they use less electricity than incandescent lights. You may need to have these lights on for up to 15 hours a day.*
- Put a fan in the room on low to keep the air circulating. This is surprisingly important. If the air is static the plants will not prosper.*
- Seeds need a warm environment to germinate. They will be comfortable with temperatures between 15-21°C (60-70F) during the day and will generally tolerate 10-15°C (50-60°F) overnight.*
- At night, covering them with plastic, fabric or newspaper can assist in keeping them warm until they sprout.*
- Make sure your indoor seedlings are kept moist but not soggy. Once proper leaves appear (the first two are just seed leaves) feed them with a weak fish fertilizer mixed with water.*
- As the seedlings mature and near time to enter the garden proper, they need to be 'hardened off'. This means moving them outdoors for progressively longer periods each day.*
- Start toughening them up, by putting them in a protected part of the garden and bring them back in at night. As they get stronger, they will be well prepared to withstand the actual conditions full time in the garden once you turf them out for good.*

How to Germinate Seed Vegetables

Vegetable seeds need a light, friable soil that will hold moisture to grow. Seeds must absorb 40-60% of their weight in water to trigger germination. They also need air. When they sprout, they take up moisture from the film of water around the soil particles and they take up air from the space between those particles. So soil quality is important.

A good seed raising mixture could be the answer if you are unsure of the quality of your soil. Individual peat or plant fiber pots are a great invention because the whole thing goes into the ground without disturbing the roots of your baby plants.

Warmth is most important for germinating seeds. Most garden seeds will germinate if soil temperature is around 20C (68F). For colder climates seed beds must be kept warm either by having them in a sunny protected spot in or near the house (like a porch or garage, out of the elements) or in a glass or plastic covered cold frame.

SEED	Germination Days
Broccoli	6-10
Cabbage	6-10
Carrots	10-21
Cauliflower	6-10
Cucumber	6-10
Leeks	10-14
Lettuce	6-10
Onions	10-14
Parsnip	21-28
Peas	7-10
Pumpkin	6-10
Swede	6-10
Tomato	10-14
Turnip	6-10

Some seeds germinate faster than others. You should have some idea when to expect your seeds to sprout to gauge your success. For planning purposes, look at the guide. For most vegetable seeds you can expect a germination time of 6-20 days. In another 4-5 weeks, those seedlings should be transplanted into your no dig garden bed.

Good vegetable gardeners learn from trial and error; better gardeners write it down; the best gardeners buy a ruled notebook and fill up the columns with a sow-by-sow account. As one of the best gardeners, you'll pat yourself on the back each season as you ferret through your previous plant propagation records to see—clear as mud—exactly the dates seeds were sown; when they germinated; the success rate; time when ready for transplanting, and finally when you sat down to eat your carrot and swede mash.

More info available from www.no-dig-vegetablegarden.com

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starting from € 100



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Panorámica Golf & Country Club	Castellón
Foressos Golf	Valencia
Costa Esuri	Huelva
Benalmádena Golf	Málaga
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ROSALES

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Cadiz Britons Embrace Europe

Taking the next logical step forward, the beginning of 2008 saw the British Golf Society of Cadiz, unlike the country from which it took its name, fully embrace the European ideal by converting into the European Golf Society of Cadiz.

This momentous occasion was not exactly marked by resounding choruses of Ode to Joy accompanied by lavishly expensive fireworks displays, but a fantastically positive step forward it was for the group of international friends united by Golf.

The basic idea remains the same under the stewardship of Thomas Ulland and Michael Ryan in that by acting as a collective, the members of the society can play golf at a variety of courses throughout Cadiz at knock-down rates. Enthusiasts can enjoy discounts of up to 50% on 12 different courses throughout the province, giving them the freedom of where and when they want to play their round of golf.

The Society is based on the beautiful inland links course of Golf Melia Sancti Petri in Chiclana de la Frontera. The organised competitions on different courses are open to all European golfers living on the Costa de la Luz. The EGSC has members of all ages and all standards ranging from single figure handicappers through to beginners. Nobody feels out of place or embarrassed at their level as the aim is to have a day's golf with a few laughs thrown in at every one's expense. If you are interested in the EGSC please check their website www.enjoycadizgolf.com



New Order at Ayamonte Golf

The Ayamonte Golf Society, which welcomes members from throughout the whole province of Huelva, has recently announced the formation of a new committee to take over the running of the popular club.

Of particular note is the appointment of Jerry Simpson as the new Captain. As part of this new regime, Jerry says that they are actively encouraging new members to join and take advantage of the benefits the society enjoys. One example is the recent golf day at Quinta do Vale just over the border in Portugal where a round of 18 holes, a buggy and lunch cost just €40, thanks to society subsidies.

"We will soon be launching our own website," continued Jerry. "This is essential as it will give information to everybody advising on future monthly events, results, charity days, and other society news including the Gala Championship with dinner and dance arranged for early autumn."

Jerry can be contacted on +34 615 665 626.



Talking Golf

with Peter Ballingall



The Good Old Days of Golf

Peter takes a look back to the old days when Golf really was an exclusive game

It is not how well one plays the game that counts, it is the way that one plays the game that matters!

In the old days, when golf clubs were for members only, long before the advent of commercially economic golf resorts, newcomers were taught "how" to swing the golf club by the Club Professional. Once they were deemed to have reached an acceptable level of competence they were taught "how to play the game".

Accompanied by a member, or members, of the committee - or even the Pro - they would play on the golf course either to learn or to demonstrate the essential rules of etiquette and good behaviour, also the rules of golf. It was only when they could maintain their position on the course regardless, within reason, of how many shots they played were they deemed fit and ready to play unaccompanied in this way.

This system died when the profit-seeking tourist golf locations arrived on the scene.

The problem of slow play, un-repaired pitch-marks, lack of consideration for other players and so on is not confined to Spain or The Algarve; it happened also in the UK many years ago.

When Editor of Golf Monthly some years ago Malcolm Campbell wrote "There are thousands of hitters of golf balls out there now but where have all the golfers gone?"

What is to be done? Have all the social decencies in our society declined so much? Is there no place any longer for common courtesies - even on a golf course?

I do believe that there are many, many, decent people still about and that the inexperienced players of today simply do not know what to do, where to put themselves or how to keep moving at the same pace as the rest.

Here, therefore, are a few pointers to help you:

- Keep up with the match ahead rather than stay ahead of the match behind. This may mean, for the newcomer on occasions, to pick up the ball and walk on!

- Be prepared. Go to your own ball and prepare to play - but keep alert.
- Provided that you are not too close to the other members of your group make all your practice swings as you wait your turn to play - rather than wait your turn to play then begin your practice swing routines.
- Watch carefully where your errant shots go - even those of your colleagues.
- You are not permitted 5 minutes to look for a lost ball. You will, if you think that it may be lost, play a provisional ball immediately. If it is important that you find the lost ball invite the players following to play through then continue your search.
- When Chipping & Putting leave your clubs at the exit part of the green - never at the front of it. There is nothing more irritating to those playing behind than to see players having completed the hole return down the fairway to retrieve their clubs. Take a couple of clubs to make your Chip Shot in case you change your mind.
- Leave the course the way you would like to find it. Divots will be replaced neatly. Pitch-marks must be repaired: they are evidence of a good approach shot coming down from aloft! "Has anyone seen my pitch-mark"? If you see a pitch-mark anywhere on the green repair it.
- Do that what you think is fair. Treat others in the way you would wish them to treat you!

The truth is that experienced players playing behind care not at all how many shots the players ahead take so long as they can see they are keeping up with the players in front and that they can see that everyone is busy and ready to play.

They will be nice to you, engage you in conversation in the bar afterwards and may even buy you a beer!

Peter Ballingall is a PGA Professional & Coach; he has written books and in publications about golf and he is currently the Golf Professional at El Rompido Golf

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Alonso Gears up Back Among Friends

Fernando Alonso, who left Renault after back-to-back world championships in 2006, has returned with hopes of reviving the team's fortunes. While Alonso was partnering British team-mate Lewis Hamilton at McLaren-Mercedes last season, Renault's fortunes slumped, with the French manufacturer unable to win a race and appearing only once on the podium.

Alonso eventually finished only a point behind champion Kimi Raikkonen in a Ferrari and level with Hamilton, before leaving the Anglo-German outfit where he had never felt at home.

"Being back at Renault I feel very comfortable. There are a lot of good feelings, happy memories and a positive feeling for the future," the 26-year-old Spaniard told the Formula One website.

"Of course, there have been changes to the team I left in 2006, but I still know most of the team and their approach to racing has not changed," he continued. "I think we have everything we need for success, and the team knows how to win because we have done this in the past. If anything the team is even stronger now as there have been improvements in many areas."

However with the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne looming on March 16, Alonso has admitted in various interviews it will be difficult for the R28 to challenge Ferrari, McLaren or teams such as BMW.

"When I signed for Renault I knew it was a team that was almost two seconds off the pace in Brazil (in the last race of 2007)," he said. "Already I knew with that difference (in performance) it would be really complicated to have a winning car. I already knew that the beginning was going to be difficult. Saying we should be between seventh and ninth on the grid in Melbourne is not pessimistic. What is certain is that we lack that little bit - four tenths or half a second - to be able to fight for the podium. With that handicap is it impossible to qualify among the top five. If you are in the top five, any failures for those above elevate you to the podium, but at the moment that is insurmountable."

However the return of Alonso - who is partnered by Brazilian Nelson Piquet, the son of triple world champion Nelson Piquet - will help restore confidence to Renault after its dismal 2007.

"Fernando would not have made up for the deficiencies of last year's car," said engineering head Pat Symonds at the launch of the R28. "We are now confident we have overcome those problems, and we are desperate to give him the car his talent deserves. I am certain that the combination of Fernando in a revitalised Renault will see him challenging for race wins."

Alonso says the missing element inside the Renault team garages at present is confidence. He told the French sports daily L'Equipe that, with back to back world championships under his belt, he left a team at the end of 2006 that was "brimming with motivation and belief".

On the back of the uncompetitive 2007 season while he raced at McLaren, however, Alonso reveals that he has returned to Renault this year and senses a slight change among the French team's ranks.

"I think what they need, or what we all need, is to regain that lost confidence," the 26-year-old explained.

Alonso said he is keen to personally ensure that Renault's team members return to top form soon.

"I do not want to see a single person in this team relaxing," he smiled.

Fernando Alonso, whose bitter feud with Lewis Hamilton helped make the 2007 Formula One title race compulsive viewing, believes his young British rival could be crowned world champion this year.

Alonso, the champion in 2005 and 2006, endured an acrimonious relationship with Hamilton at McLaren which ultimately led to the Spaniard returning to Renault after just one year.

"After one year's experience things become easier and that will give him an advantage," Alonso said.

Asked in a BBC interview if Hamilton, now entering his second year, could win the world title, Alonso, said: "Possibly, yes."

Hamilton was pipped for the title by just one point by Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen in 2007 in the last race in Brazil. But he stunned observers with his quick pace, which took him to four race wins.

"After a year, you know all the circuits and how the races go," added

Alonso. "You understand the pressures so there are many things that will give him an advantage compared to last year."

However, Alonso, who also won four races last season, believes Raikkonen remains favourite for the 2008 crown.

"The two Ferraris and two McLarens will be able to fight for the championship," said Alonso. "But if I have to name one then Ferrari and Kimi because he is the world champion and will be the driver to beat."

Before Fernando Alonso came along, Formula One was a minority sport in Spain, but now it is one of the few things that can push football off the front pages. The 26-year-old already has a remarkable CV despite still being in the early stages of his career.

Coming from a poor background, Alonso's amazing talent in karting saw him attract sponsors from an early age which allowed him to develop his career and ever since he has stepped up to Formula One he has been breaking records.

Alonso was third-youngest driver ever to start a F1 race when he made his debut with Minardi in 2001; the youngest driver to earn a pole position (in Malaysia in 2003 with Renault), the youngest driver to win a F1 race (in Hungary 2003), the youngest F1 champion (2005) and youngest double champion (2006).

Last season's brief spell with McLaren never went to plan, with his acrimonious feud with team-mate Lewis Hamilton seeing him become the victim of lots of bad publicity, especially in Britain, but he still became only the second man after Michael Schumacher to earn 100 points for a third consecutive season.



SPORT LIVE ON TV MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

FOOTBALL

THE PREMIER

SAT 8

LIVERPOOL V NEWCASTLE 4PM

SUN 16

MAN CITY V SPURS 5PM

CHELSEA V LIVERPOOL

SUN 23

MAN UTD V LIVERPOOL 2.30PM

CHELSEA V ARSENAL 5PM

SUN 30

LIVERPOOL V EVERTON 5PM

FA CUP QUARTERS

SAT 8

MAN UTD V PORTSMOUTH 13.45

BARNSELY V CHELSEA 18.30

SUN 9

MIDDLESBRO V CARDIFF CITY 3PM

BRISTOL ROVERS V WEST BROM 7PM

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

TUE 11

INTER MILAN V LIVERPOOL 8.45PM

UEFA CUP

WED 12

EVERTON V FIORENTINA 8.45PM

PSV V SPURS 8.45PM

THU 13

SPORTING V BOLTON 9PM

WERDER BREMEN V RANGERS 8.30PM

LA LIGA

SAT 22/SUN 23

SEVILLA V ATLETICO

SAT 29/SUN 30

BETIS V BARCELONA

REAL MADRID

RUGBY

6 NATIONS 2008

SAT 8

IRELAND V WALES 2.15PM

SCOTLAND V ENGLAND 4.15PM

SUN 9

FRANCE - ITALY 4PM

SAT 15

ITALY V SCOTLAND 2PM

ENGLAND V IRELAND 4PM

WALES V FRANCE 6PM

FORMULA 1

SUN 16

AUSTRALIA 5.30AM

SUN 23

MALAYSIA 8AM

CRICKET

NEW ZEALAND V ENGLAND

2ND TEST: WED 12-SUN 16, 10.30PM

3RD TEST: FRI 21-TUE 25, 10.30PM

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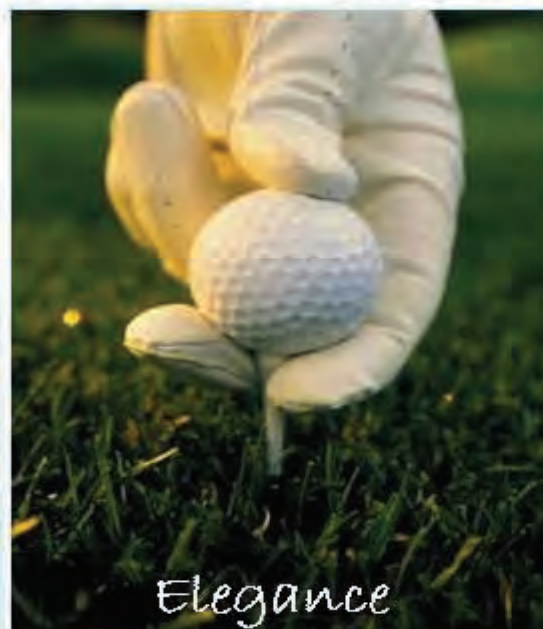


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COSTA ESURI, ISLA CANELA,
ISLANTILLA, EL ROMPIDO, NUEVO
PORTIL, BELLAVISTA, DOÑANA,
RIOTINTO & ALGARVE



		P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
1	Real Madrid	26	19	2	5	57	23	59
2	Barcelona	26	16	6	4	51	21	54
3	Villareal	26	14	5	7	43	35	47
4	At.Madrid	26	13	5	8	44	30	44
5	Espanyol	26	12	6	8	37	32	42
6	Racing	26	11	8	7	25	25	41
7	Sevilla	26	12	3	11	52	35	39
8	Almeria	26	10	7	9	22	23	37
9	Valencia	26	10	5	11	28	37	37
10	Getafe	26	9	6	11	32	35	33
11	Betis	26	8	8	10	31	36	32
12	Mallorca	26	6	13	7	37	39	31
13	Valladolid	26	8	7	11	32	43	31
14	Osasuna	26	8	6	12	28	31	30
15	Ath. Bilbao	26	7	9	10	24	27	30
16	Deportivo	26	8	6	12	30	38	30
17	Zaragoza	26	7	8	11	37	45	29
18	Recreativo	26	7	8	11	26	37	29
19	Murcia	26	5	8	13	20	38	23
20	Levante	26	5	4	17	22	48	19

LA PRIMERA LIGA	
08 - 09 MARCH	22 - 23 MARCH
Sevilla - Levante	Sevilla - Atlético
Zaragoza - Atlético	Levante - Villarreal
Barcelona - Villarreal	Zaragoza - Almería
Osasuna - Almería	Barcelona - Valladolid
Athletic - Valladolid	Osasuna - Betis
Racing - Betis	Athletic - Getafe
Murcia - Getafe	RACING - RECREATIVO
MALLORCA - RECREATIVO	Murcia - Espanyol
R Madrid - Espanyol	Mallorca - Deportivo
Valencia - Deportivo	R Madrid - Valencia
15 - 16 MARCH	29 - 30 MARCH
Atlético - Levante	Villarreal - Atlético
Villarreal - Zaragoza	Almería - Levante
Almería - Barcelona	Valladolid - Zaragoza
Valladolid - Osasuna	Betis - Barcelona
Betis - Athletic	Getafe - Osasuna
Getafe - Racing	RECREATIVO - ATHLETIC
RECREATIVO - MURCIA	Espanyol - Racing
Espanyol - Mallorca	Deportivo - Murcia
Deportivo - R Madrid	Valencia - Mallorca
Valencia - Sevilla	R Madrid - Sevilla

The

ORACLE

Costa de la Luz

Third Division - Group X					
	P	W	D	L	PT
1 San Fernando	28	18	8	2	62
2 Villanueva	28	16	7	5	55
3 Puerto Real	28	16	6	6	54
4 Pozoblanco	28	13	9	6	48
5 Linense	28	11	14	3	47
6 At. Sanluqueño	28	13	6	9	45
7 Sevilla C	28	11	12	5	45
8 San Roque Lepe	28	11	9	8	42
9 Los Palacios	28	10	11	7	41
10 Los Barrios	27	11	8	8	41
11 Ayamonte	28	11	3	14	36
12 Cadiz B	28	8	10	10	34
13 Cordoba B	28	9	6	13	33
14 Mairena	28	8	8	12	32
15 Cartaya	28	8	7	13	31
16 Dos Hermanas	28	7	6	15	27
17 Arcos	28	7	5	16	26
18 Cerro Aguila	28	4	10	14	22
19 Jerez Ind.	27	5	7	15	22
20 Xerez B	28	3	6	19	15

Primera Andaluza - Group 1					
	P	W	D	L	PT
1 Recreativo B	25	16	7	2	55
2 Chiclana C.F.	26	15	8	3	53
3 Tesorillo	26	14	7	5	49
4 Conil	26	14	7	5	49
5 Punta Umbría	26	14	6	6	48
6 Olimpica	26	13	6	7	45
7 La Palma	26	11	6	9	39
8 Cortegana	26	11	3	12	36
9 Rota	26	8	10	8	34
10 Sporting S. Fdo.	26	10	2	14	32
11 Tharsis	26	9	5	12	32
12 Cortijillos	26	9	5	12	32
13 Roteña	26	8	6	12	30
14 At. Cruceño	25	6	8	11	25
15 Barbate	26	5	9	12	24
16 Chiclana Ind.	26	7	3	16	24
17 Pastores	26	5	5	16	20
18 Chipiona	26	3	7	16	16

Regional Preferente				
	P	W	L	PT
1 Rosal	23	16	5	50
2 Isla Cristina	23	14	2	49
3 Olont	23	13	6	43
4 Aroche	22	11	5	39
5 La Orden	23	12	8	39
6 Hinojos	21	10	8	33
7 C. La Bota	23	7	5	32
8 Almonte	22	10	7	32
9 Moguer	23	9	11	30
10 Canela	23	7	9	28
11 Riotinto	22	5	7	25
12 Valdelamusa	23	5	11	22
13 Pinzon	23	6	13	22
14 Trigueros	22	5	11	21
15 Aljaraque	23	2	8	19
16 Bollullos	23	1	17	8

February Fixtures	
8-9 MARCH Cartaya v Pozoblanco Mairena v San Roque Lepe Ayamonte v Cerro Aguilar	29-30 MARCH Ayamonte CF v Cordoba Cartaya v Los Palacios San Fernando v San Roque Lepe
15-16 MARCH Pozoblanco v Ayamonte CF Cordoba v Cartaya San Roque Lepe v Villanueva	

February Fixtures	
8-9 MARCH Pastores v At. Cruceño San Fernandov Recr. Huelva B Tharsis v Valdereña La Palma v Rota Cortegana v Chipiona Tesorillo v Punta Umbría	29-30 MARCH Punta Umbría v Cortegana At. Cruceño v Chiclana Ind. Chiclana CF v Tharsis Ol. Valverdeña v La Palma Recr. Huelva B v Tesorillo

February Fixtures	
8-9 March Valdelamusa v Bollullos Riotinto v Pinzón Aroche v Isla Cristina Almonte v La Orden Moguer v Canela Trigueros v Hinojos Aljaraque v Rosal C. La Bota v Olont	Hinojos v Aljaraque Rosal v C. La Bota
15-16 March Olont v Valdelamusa Bollullos v Riotinto Pinzón v Aroche Isla Cristina v Almonte La Orden v Moguer Canela v Trigueros	29-30 March Riotinto v Valdelamusa Aroche v Bollullos Almonte v Pinzón Moguer v Isla Cristina Trigueros v La Orden Aljaraque v Canela C. La Bota v Hinojos Rosal v Olont

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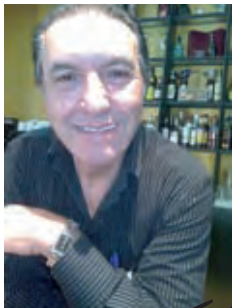
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Brazuelo de Cordero
Roast Shoulder of Lamb



A firm favourite for Spanish families whenever there's a big family celebration, roast lamb is relatively easy to cook and bursting with flavour. Although available throughout Spain, the best region is Valladolid, a province to the north of Madrid. This recipe here is a big seller at Casimiro's La Gola restaurant in Isla Cristina and as you can see it doesn't take much effort to cook this wonderful dish.

- INGREDIENTS (for 4 people):**
4 Shoulders of Lamb 700g each
Fresh Oregano & Parsley
Garlic, Salt & Pepper
Olive Oil
Water
White Wine, preferably Condado de Huelva

Find a baking dish big enough to take the four shoulders. Season with the salt and pepper and pour over half a glass of olive oil, half a glass of wine and then water until the meat is almost covered. Place in an oven preheated to 180°C and cook for 45 minutes, then turn the lamb and cook for a further 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, take the the fresh oregano, parsley and salt and pound them in to a mixture along with a couple of splashes of white wine. Pour this mixture over the meat and cook for a further 10-15 minutes. Let the lamb stand for a further ten minutes to let the meat relax. Best served with salad. Beautiful!



by *Casimiro Frigolet*
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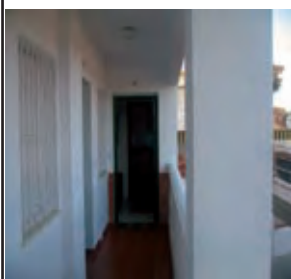
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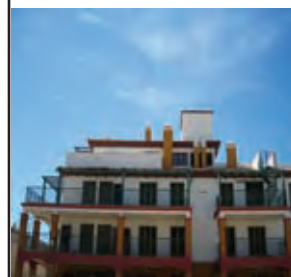
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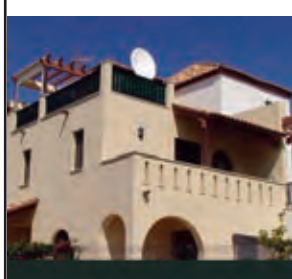
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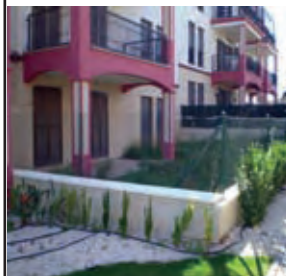
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