

## **NEWS BULLETIN**

Good morning and welcome. Today how we can give a helping hand to kids who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, too close to Chernobyl. Exam year students are feeling the heat and we'll be talking to someone with whom we will discuss how appropriate are standardized tests such as Selectividad. But first a quick look at today's local press with Patricia.

Good morning Javier. This is some of what we can read in today's local papers:

“New steps to restrict access of motor vehicles to the old city quarter will be phased in over the next months. Those include bollards that will literally cordon off the area. However, these bollards, which are retractile, will allow trucks and vans for loading and unloading, emergency services such as ambulances and fire brigade, and residents in the area to drive in and out. This is viewed by Burgos City Council as yet another big boost into making the old city quarter a pedestrian-friendly area.”

“Retail business in the old city quarter is calling for immediate action on the part of Burgos City Council in an effort to put a stop to seven-digit losses. They are being caused, according to the Old City Quarter's retailers association, primarily by the ongoing road surface and pedestrianization work in many streets and that is putting many shoppers off. They demand discounts on parking fees, proper signposting and making traffic head a different direction in some one-way roads.”

“As spring time sets in so does the First Communion season. The Consumer Watchdog warns that spending for this big day in the lives of so many boys and girls is escalating and running well into 3,000 euro. It is probably girls with their communion dress, communion veil and jewelry that might cause a greater drain on the family economy”.

“El Cid, the warrior and the man, will be the theme of a conference to be held in Burgos from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. Alberto Montaner Frutos, the editor of a best-selling version of El Cantar de Mio Cid, has been appointed chief supervisor. Lecturers from a good number of universities are expected to make presentations and take part in workshops on various aspects of this mediaeval hero”.

That's all for now, more news at 11.

## The Chernobyl Children

Our next item will be concerned with the worst nuclear disaster in our history, which unfortunately slipped many people's minds very quickly, too quickly. This disaster is the Chernobyl accident. We are joined in our studio by Arancha ..... who has had a first-hand experience with the legacy of this disaster, isn't that right Arancha?

**I** Good morning, Javier. Yeah that's right.

**H** Why shouldn't we forget this disaster?

**I** You see, it was not just the economic fallout that followed...

**H** ... you mean the economic side effects, the complete devastation.

**I** ... and the health problems that linger on because people still live in highly contaminated areas.

**H** ... and to solve this, well, to give a little hand you contacted whom?

**I** I came across this advertisement of *Un Hijo Más*

**H** Is it a registered charity or non-for-profit company of some kind?

**I** It is a non-profit organization.

**H** It asked for host families to come forward and help children from badly hit areas, is that right?

**I** It organises two-month trips for hundreds of affected children every year.

**H** which I guess are meant to be a respite from the contamination because these poor souls suffer from the constant bombardment from low level radioactivity. Our listeners should know that people in those areas suffer from a breakdown of their immune system due to constant radiation. In other words, they are more likely to contract all sorts of diseases.

**I** It is meant to be a break all right, Javier, but in every sense. The most important components of the program are the host families. Any institution can feed and cloth a child in need but only families can provide the caring love these children need.

**H** Let's get personal here. You did this, you brought a kid over, didn't you?

**I** We did.

**H** No regrets...

**I** absolutely none.

**H** His name was.....

**I** Alexander. He was eight, or so they said.

**H** You told me before we went on air that during their stay the children undergo extensive medical testing and will receive medical and dental treatment. Do they have medical insurance to cover treatments, or accidents or illnesses that occur during their visit or while in transit?

**I** They are beneficiaries of our entitlement for as long as their stay.

**H** How did he manage?

**I** He was OK. At first, he was confused and couldn't get things across. But he picked up Spanish quite fast ...

**H** did he? I'm not surprised.

**I** At the end of his eight-week stay he looked gorgeous. I think he had gained some centimetres in height and two or three kilos in weight.

**H** So good nutrition, healthy exercise and loving parents do the trick. Do you get any assurances that they recover their immune systems in a significant way?

**I** They say they do anyway.

**H** Did you feel tempted to formally adopt him?

**I** Well, you see. There's no question about that. When you fill in the application form you commit yourself to not applying for adoption.

**H** I see. Before we go Arancha. How do you qualify? Are there many strict requirements to meet?

**I** No there aren't any and they are not very strict. They just want to make sure the kids fly into caring homes. That's all really. When you apply for a place you are asked to fill out some forms and questionnaires. Then you go through an interview and they reply to you in no time.

**H** .... strong competition?

**I** I guess so. Many families are keen to host and would be qualified. The problem is that may not be able to afford it.

**H** Is that so? How much is the cost of the whole operation.

**I** I don't want to go into small detail but I can tell you that most of the expense of hosting is borne by the host families.

**H** That covers ... what? transportation, clothing if necessary, food, medical bills, and any expenses incurred while the child is here, is it?

**I** That's correct. About 1.000 E in all.

**H** Ok, that's all. It was good to talk to you.

## **I** My pleasure

**H** I must say. It was really uplifting. Just a quick reminder. For all those listeners who might have been touched by the story and would like to make some contribution to the good cause you should know that you might give cash donation to this or other programs and by doing so help host families cope with these kids' stay with them.

You may choose to sponsor a child instead. In such a case, you will be subsidizing a designated qualified family that would like to host a kid.

And remember there is something else on the plus side: all contributions are tax deductible.

## Reflections on Selectividad

The debate has once more begun and the battle lines are drawn. In the blue corner sit parents and students' associations up and down the country who believe that a child's education is about more than academic results and demand that Selectividad be dumped. In the red corner sit education officials with a long history of attempts at reshaping it, all in vain.

Our next guest is Matthew Wellings. He's been a teacher for a number of years and is well acquainted with our educational system.

**H** Good morning Matthew and many thanks for coming.

**I** My pleasure.

**H** In very broad terms. Has Selectividad served us well?

**I** It's difficult to say. Probably it's a level-playing field where pupils of all backgrounds and all academic abilities that sit this exam can compete with no handicaps. It's the lesser evil.

**H** So there's something wrong with it.

**I** I'm personally in favour of a specific entry exam administered by the Faculty you intend to enrol into. However, I concede that it would be rather impractical.

**H** Parents send their kids to this or that school because they are after academic success, let's say, primarily. Do you think then that it would be appropriate to have Selectividad results published?

**I** What do you mean published?

**H** .... in the form of a comparative table of academic results where you would have schools at the top boasting highest pass rates.

**I** I .... I don't think so. I know that parents would then learn what to expect academically from each school, but in reality I think it would give them a blurred picture, distorted, .... because it would encourage overgrading.

**H** You mean that at school teachers would give their pupils higher grades than they deserve to boost their chances of passing the test.

**I** Yeah.

**H** But somehow schools, particularly, most private schools wholly subsidized by the state, are constantly trumpeting their success with Selectividad as a way to increase enrolment.

**I** They do and I can understand why they place so much emphasis on it. They need to keep afloat financially.

**H** I have alluded to those academic or information tables and I'd like to come back to them. Being aware of the fact that academic achievement is most critical to thousands of parents, would it not be a fantastic idea for schools to publish not only results but things such as the social outreach of the school, its drop-out rate, what sports it does, you name it.

**I** It would be great but only from the parents' point of view. Schools tend to resent having to live up to their promises. I'd also include in that list Javier, things such as whether it has a bullying policy or what religious ethos dominates the school.

**H** Should education like other aspects of life be open to public scrutiny then?

**I** Parents are entitled to make informed choices. Transparency, openness and choice are not dirty words and those who say they are arouse parental suspicion. After all, when it comes to our own children, it is always parents, not teachers, who know best.

**H** Would you think that Spain is ....., probably in a very subtle way, slipping into a two-tier education system where state-run schools keep deteriorating, in terms of discipline problems, violent behaviour, poor performance, whereas private schools open up their doors to best-performing, highly motivated pupils?

**I** I wouldn't know. I guess in private schools teachers may still remain very much in control and that attracts students with an appetite for learning. And that, in turn, creates a more favourable climate, so the positive influence is two-way.

**H** Very well, I think that we must go. Thanks again for coming and keep up your good work.

**I** I look forward to coming back.

**H** No problem.

## Selectividad hype

These days all across Burgos there are many boys and girls doing exam year. They will be leaving school in about three months' time, only to face the only obstacle that will stand between them and College. The name of it: Selectividad.

The hype, the commotion that every year surrounds this standardized test administered nationwide might be a little excessive.

To discuss this we have someone here in our studio who knows pretty well the kind of anxiety that school-leavers might be going through. Good morning Diana.

**I** Good morning, Javier. How are you?

**H** Probably much better than you might be.

**I** Absolutely.

**H** Now, Diana. First. Do you think that we adults, say teachers, parents, you name it, are blowing the whole thing out of proportion? Is Selectividad such a turning point in your life as we say it is?

**I** No it's not. Well, it might be. Like you said before. If you fail it you cannot go on to College, which can be irritatingly frustrating.

**H** And this scare tactics, you know, daddy or mummy telling you look you cannot fail us, we've put in for you so much.... Does it serve a purpose?

**I** In a way, it does. But it adds to the pressure that keeps building up.

**H** As to the test itself. Is it relatively manageable, as some successful past-pupils describe it?

**I** Personally, I don't think that the papers pose much of a challenge. I rely on good timing myself and plan my test revisions very meticulously. So by the time I sit the actual exam I face the whole situation quite confidently.

**H** I see. I guess this is a long-distance race and now you need to break into a sprint, don't you?

**I** Well, yes. It's a way to see it.

**H** Let's imagine for a second that the big day has come and our students take the papers, one by one. If we had a close look at statistics that have been made public, over 88% of candidates do pass Selectividad in June. That's a huge percentage. So probably you're dead right. It is a test ... I'll try and couch this so that none of our listeners will

take offence. Selectividad may not be that sort of insurmountable barrier that some say is.

**I** I'd say it's 75% you and 25% luck.

**H** This test holds the key for entry into third-level education. Are you one of those victims of stifling indecisiveness as to what degree to do or what university to apply for?

**I** It took me a while but I think I've made up my mind.

**H** Would you mind if I asked you what....

**I** No, no. I don't. I think I'd go for architecture.

**H** You sure about that?

**I** Absolutely.

**H** I heard it's long hours and limited lifestyles.

**I** I don't mind. I know I'm up to it and nothing else would satisfy me so fully.

**H** Do they have a minimum grade?

**I** What do you mean?

**H** You know, at some Faculties there is a limited number of places available and therefore they impose a ceiling grade or cap, below which you are not allowed to enrol.

**I** No, no. They are not queuing up for that degree you know.

**H** I see. Ok, Diana. From me I wish you luck with the exam. Always remember that in a few years' time nobody will particularly care what grades you achieved in Selectividad, you will have a qualification of some sort to your name and you will have built up some work experience. The world will be opening up for you and real life begins.

**I** Thanks.