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## Questions for InfrequentAllele

Posted by TLJ - 2008/08/06 21:10

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In another thread you said you wanted to "get back to talking about the Batman movie, or the price of petrol, or the impending end of the United Kingdom which is my favourite comedy viewing at the moment."

Living abroad, do you pick up any indication of the locals' understanding of your favourite comedy viewing ? How do they perceive UK politics ? What coverage was given to the triumph of last May ?

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## Re:Questions for InfrequentAllele

Posted by InfrequentAllele - 2008/08/06 23:25

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I live in Spain, in la Comunitat Valencia, one of the country's autonomous regions. The Valencian Community is bilingual, Spanish and Catalan. I live in a Spanish speaking district. There is very little support here for the local nationalist party, El Bloc Valencià . Even so, there's a lot of interest in Scotland, and a surprising amount of support for Scottish independence.

The big argument in Spain regarding the Basques, Catalans and Galicians is that the Spanish constitution states that Spain is "una nació e indivisible" - one nation which can't be divided. This phrase was inserted into the constitution during the transition to democracy in order to appease supporters of the former dictator Franco. According to the constitution, the Basques, Catalans and Galicians are "nacionalidades históricas" (historic nationalities), but not nations. In Euskadi they are currently debating whether they have the right to hold a referendum about whether they have the right to hold a referendum on independence. Juan José Ibarretxe, the Lehendakari (the Basque First Minister), is being threatened with legal action by the Spanish government over the issue.

The borders of the Scottish nation coincide with the political frontiers of Scotland. The Basques are divided into Euskadi and Navarra in Spain, and there are three additional Basque provinces across the border in France. Catalunya comprises less than a half of Catalan speaking territory. Most of Valencia and the Balearic islands are also Catalan speaking, so is a strip along the border with Aragón, and there's a Catalan district in southern France. Basque and Catalan nationalists aren't just faced with the campaign for self-determination, they also need to unite their various territories into single countries. There's no prospect of that happening any time soon and not a great deal of support for it in the Valencian Community or the Balearics. Navarra seems split right down the middle between the traditionally Basque speaking north and the traditionally Spanish speaking south. So even though the 'devolved' governments of Catalunya and Euskadi have greater political powers than the Scottish Parliament, in many ways the campaign for Scottish self-determination is far more advanced than its Basque and Catalan counterparts.

Naturally Basques and Catalans tend to support Scottish independence, but I've even heard Spanish people opposed to Basque or Catalan self-determination use Scottish independence as an example - they say Scotland has the right to self-determination because it was once an independent nation state, which (they claim) was never the case with the Basques or Catalans. Basques and Catalans argue back that Navarra and Aragón were the Basque and Catalan states - although both states always contained a large number of Spanish speakers.

Because Scotland was once an independent nation state, and moreover one which 'freely' entered into a union with England, the Spanish don't see Scottish independence as setting a precedent for the Basque Country or Catalunya. The Spanish government was opposed to Kosovan independence because Kosovo was never an independent nation before, and so does potentially set a precedent for the Basques and Catalans. The British constitution, such as it is, already acknowledges the status of Scotland as a nation and Scotland's right to self-determination. Scots aren't a "historical nationality" in a constitutionally unitary nation state. I'd be surprised if a Spanish government put up serious opposition to an independent Scotland automatically entering the EU. The legal status of Scotland is quite different from that of Catalunya.

There was a fair bit of coverage of Glasgow East on Spanish telly. I saw Alex Salmond getting interviewed on TVE1 from Garrowhill Bowling Club - my dad's second home. (Actually it's more like his first home, according to my mum.) There were good articles about the SNP victory in the Spanish press too. The left-leaning El País made a point of stressing the social democratic credentials of the SNP. The right leaning ABC's line was more like - "See how bad socialism is! It makes people want to secede." But it wasn't against Scottish independence as such. Mind you, I don't really read El ABC, on account of it bringing me out in a nasty rash.

None of the Spanish papers I read followed the Labour / Tory party line that Scottish independence would result in us being a basket case. In fact El País mentioned that the prospect of improved economic development and control of oil and renewable energy resources was one of the major driving forces towards independence. They know we're a rich country.

