

[Transcript] The News Agents / It started out with a kiss, how did it end up like this? The Spanish sexism row.

Well, the celebrations for Spain's victory in the World Cup proved short-lived.

That is the sound of protest this weekend.

The very people who were celebrating a week ago are now protesting about the ludicrous head of Spanish football Luis Rubiales, who is refusing to resign, refusing to stand down, refusing to make any concession after he kissed on the lips the Spanish footballer at the moment when the World Cup was handed over.

It has been a ridiculous standoff that is taking place.

And now there is a counter-protest going on in southern Spain, located outside a church where Luis Rubiales' mother has locked herself and is going on hunger strike in order to end the quote's inhumane witch hunt about her son.

This is an absurd story in so many ways and it's a sad story because it's taken so much away from that victory from the Spanish women's team.

But it's more at this point now than just about football.

It's about sexism, sexism which goes beyond Spain and Spain itself, which is increasingly tearing itself apart.

Welcome to the newsagents.

It's John.

It's Lewis.

And there is that old phrase of clutching defeat from the jaws of victory.

And boy, have the Spanish football association managed to do that with the behaviour of Luis Rubiales and then the attempts to defend him in the face of a you've got to be joking attitude from everyone else who has seen the video of this man kissing on the lips the footballer Jenny Hermoso, who has reacted saying that was not consensual.

I didn't ask him to do that.

I didn't want him to do that.

Well, one of the lionesses has spoken out about the case.

This is Elatun.

Do you think he should resign?

Do you think he should go?

Yeah, I think so, yeah.

I think it's definitely too far gone now for an apology.

It's not something that you can apologise where they move on from.

It's much bigger than that now, so hopefully the right thing is done and that he needs to move on.

Yeah, and this is in the context, by the way, of previous question marks about his behaviour with regards to the team.

There was already a fractious relationship between the women players and himself for other things that have happened in the past.

This is a story which is just kind of cascaded very, very quickly.

So you have that victory and it has now got to the point where Rubiales has been suspended by FIFA for kissing Jenny Hermoso on the lips, something she said she did not consent to.

FIFA banned Rubiales from all football-related activity for 90 days now over his conduct

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and have launched an investigation into his behaviour, while simultaneously Spanish police are now investigating the Spanish Football Association president, Rubiales, for alleged sexual assault.

And all the time, by the way, Rubiales is refusing to step down, despite the fact that all of the women players have now said that they will not play on the team whilst he is in position.

And so, meanwhile, you've got the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, and his deputy, who are only actually the caretaker prime minister, because Spain's politics as we've covered on this show isn't a bit of a mess post its election in June, are saying they could pass a law to force Rubiales out.

And all the time, this is now creating new political division within Spain, partly because things are pretty politicised in Spain already at the moment, with more conservative forces saying no, this has been taken out of full proportion, more liberal forces saying this is outrageous, taken to the streets of Madrid and elsewhere, and you've got that unbelievable vigil taking place outside that church where Rubiales' mother is on her second day of hunger strike.

Yeah, I've thought of all the issues over the years where people have gone on hunger strike to correct injustices that are absolutely egregious and heinous.

And I thought, Luis Rubiales, hmm, maybe not quite so much as a cause, celeb for the rest of the world to stop eating food over.

It has been extraordinary, and we kind of were casting around about who would be the perfect voice to talk to about this issue, and maybe about what it says about sexism not only in Spain, but in other parts of the world as well.

And we are lighted on one name, of course, in particular, and that is Miriam Gonzalez Durantes.

She is a lawyer, Spanish born, founder of a charity Inspiring Girls, where you're looking to raise women up, young women up by having a proper mentoring scheme.

She's looking to do this around the world.

She's also got a good political insight because for the last four years she has been living in Silicon Valley.

And before that, she had a bird's eye view of British politics because she is married to Nick Clegg, who was the deputy prime minister in the coalition.

Last weekend, we saw Spain's empowered young women lifting the World Cup.

And yet ever since then, all we've heard about is Luis Rubiales.

What do you make of what has happened and his kind of defence of himself and making it all about himself, it seems?

I think that it has been clearly epitome.

He said, is it terrible that it happened?

Is it terrible that it has obscured, in a way, that enormous success?

And these were girls who had been complaining about employment conditions and they had a difficult situation.

Many of us look at them like they have got their almost on their own and against all odds and we should be celebrating massively.

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Having said that, since it happened, is good that we are talking about it and that these kind of situations get into the public debate and people can say how unacceptable it is. Miriam, what do you think it says about the Spanish FA and about culture within football and football management, at least in Spain, that in a way that he's still there, that despite the fact that the players have said that they don't want to play for him, despite the fact that there's been widespread condemnation of his behaviour, nonetheless, so much of the kind of power plays it would seem within the political structures of the Spanish FA and elsewhere have lined up behind him.

What does it say about the culture?

Well, I think that there are two things there.

One is, what does it say about the culture and what does it say about the structure?

It's terrible that those kind of things can happen and in public, because I'm absolutely sure that they happen a lot, not only in Spain, but in many other places when it's not in public, the fact that somebody feels with impunity to do that in public is a terrible thing.

A different area for me is what happens with the structure and something that sometimes it is not seen properly from outside Spain and perhaps it happens in other countries is that in Spain, certainly, there is a certain politicisation of the football structures through a body called Consejo Superior de Deportes whose top appointment is the political appointment.

In some cases, people who are not necessarily figures in the sports, they are just close to the government and that needs to be corrected.

So what should Luis Rubiales do?

Well, in my view, resign, of course.

I mean, I'm pretty sure for even one of those issues, I mean, I'm absolutely sure that if just the gesture that he made touching his genitals when he was in the official balcony there, you know, I'm absolutely sure that if a woman would have done that, she would be out of the job just for that.

Of course.

And do you think this is Spain's Me Too moment or is that sort of too patronising to Spain to think that they haven't been wrestling with these issues as well?

Spain has gone through the Me Too moment when everybody else has gone through the Me Too moment and those moments, happily, I think they are globalised and they have affected the whole world.

I think it would not be the right picture to look at this particular situation and to interpret from that, that sexism or wrong behaviour happens in Spain more than anywhere else.

In my experience, and I have lived in four different countries, UK, Belgium, US and Spain, there is sexism pretty much everywhere.

It manifests itself in different areas and in different fields.

We have now seen this in Spain, but we are seeing also that, you know, in terms of equality, there have been an enormous amount of progress in other areas.

So I think that rather than pointing to one specific country, we can all learn from

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these issues in as many countries as possible.

And I'm just fascinated by what you just said there, because I wonder how it does present itself, that sexism, how you would characterise it between Belgium, the US, the UK and Spain?

Well, in Belgium, I lived many years ago, but for example, I can tell you that I have lived four years in Silicon Valley and the way in which many women are obscured, they're all that you see is powerful, many women don't work, you know, I have been in dinners, for example, where the women didn't talk and they just listened to the men.

This is the kind of thing that I used to see in Spain in the 70s and 80s.

Here in the UK, you have other set of challenges, the sexism in media, for example, in the W, that is something that I have experienced directly.

You know, they kind of cover pages that we have had in the UK with Lexi, with one newspaper talking about the legs of the two most prominent women, political women in the country.

Of Nicola Sturgeon and Theresa May, yeah.

Yeah, that was talk about their shanks.

You know, that, for example, in Spain, you would have had to resign and there would be movements towards resignation.

Here, it is in other areas.

I think that, you know, it's very important that men, like you, realize that this is a general issue and that we see manifestations in different countries, in different areas, but we have to fight against them all.

And luckily, I think that the good thing is that people are put in openly about it.

It's fascinating, remember, what you say about Silicon Valley and the way that sexist dynamics sort of play out differently there, because I think a lot of people who aren't necessarily familiar with California or Silicon Valley might assume that it is this deeply sort of futuristic place, that it's a place of kind of, you know, very liberal values, but that doesn't accord with your experience of living there for some years now.

But I think that part of what happens there is that, A, the whole company move and it's massive companies.

It tends to be companies in the hands of men.

So there is the powerful alpha male that is at the center of that universe.

I used to joke when I was there that it was similar to the Vatican, you know, because it was very close, very insular and mostly dominated by men.

I think that's something, you know, I have only lived in the US for four years, but something that really caught my attention is that the influence of the dream of the American family on how the society is organized and that kind of aspiration towards the Kellogg's family, where everything is perfect, normally comes at the cost of one of the two persons in the couple that is dedicated to the family way.

The other one goes to work.

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And that, for example, if I compare it to how things are organized in Spain or in Belgium or some parts of the UK, that is much more, is shared more equally, that to me is one of the big issues that we have pending on equality. We have equality before the law, equality more or less in the workplace, though more advances are needed.

But the big piece that is missing is equality at home and that percolates everywhere.

Thank you so much.

Thank you.

Take care. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Let's go from the general to the specific.

I thought it was fascinating, her characterization of the different forms of sexism you encounter in Spain, in the UK, in the US, they're all there.

They may take different forms, but they are still very much present.

Yeah, absolutely fascinating.

And look, I think in so many ways, right, this whole story is just the perfect parable for the problems of sexism and, you know, to use a word that is quite fashionable now, but, you know, I think has some real meaning here, the sort of patriarchy, right?

Which is that you have a situation in which one man, one guy, despite the fact that all of these forces are willed against him, despite the fact that, as you know, John, no great football expert, but I think if the phrase lost the dressing room, had any salience, any situation in history, it must be this one because he quite literally has all of the women players have said they won't play for him while he's in charge of the Spanish F.A.

And his reaction to that is, I'm not bothered.

Yeah, I literally don't care.

Screw you.

Does not matter.

There was even a suggestion that they could be forced to play somehow.

Now, this is deeply unpleasant for all sorts of reasons.

And obviously, and I wonder, frankly, if it were the men's side, would he be gone already?

Totally possible.

I think it's quite credible and plausible to imagine that he would be.

And it's just like, you know, at some point, you just have to recognize when, frankly, you've just lost any consent and legitimacy.

And yet he still won't do so.

Well, when I saw on Saturday that the Spanish F.A. were considering suing the footballer, Jenny Hermoso.

Oh, unbelievable.

And I just thought, you have taken absolute total bloody leave of your senses.

What on earth are you thinking?

The idea that this woman could be sued when she's been the victim of this guy

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parading himself and kissing her on the lips when she, if he never said, I've looked, I screwed up.

I've really, really apologetic.

That shouldn't have never have happened.

It was unforgivable behavior.

You know, people might.

Before, if it was a moment, I just took leave of my senses.

Okay.

But then we're trying to blame her for it.

I just thought, wow, this is quite something.

And they are making a bad situation worse with every step that they take.

And, you know, this is still being considered by FIFA, by the Spanish F.A.

Who knows where it will end?

Right.

We're going to be back in a moment to talk about Yulez Sadiq Khan and this scheme, which has come to dominate the politics really of this summer.

And the fact that despite the fact that Kerstarma wanted Khan to scrap it, it is still going ahead.

This is the news agents.

Welcome back.

So one of the kind of themes or one of the political themes of the summer, certainly since the Uxbridge by-election, which Labour unexpectedly lost, has been this controversy about Yulez and more widely, I suppose, across the country about the prospect of these green measures increasingly coming in over the next few years and decade.

This isn't a net zero thing, of course.

It's about air pollution and about charging heavily polluting cars, which have already been charging in London,

expanding to the out of London boroughs, very unpopular in out of London.

Obviously, what happened after the Uxbridge by-election, which was Kerstarma and the Labour leadership came out, I think to our surprise, generally straight away to basically say, Khan had to rethink this.

They were getting spooked.

All of Kerstarma's strategy has very much been to see all the political landmines ahead of him and try and detonate them before he hits them.

And he could see that this is going to be a problem.

But actually, there was a bit of talk about that, but it's coming in today anyway.

Yeah, there have been some changes around the scrappage scheme and this and the other that Khan has secured.

But fundamentally, the scheme is coming in today.

The U.S. zone now consumes, now takes up the whole of Greater London.

I'm sure you've seen on the news how the scheme works and the £12.50 a day and who's going to be affected and who's not.

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That's not our purpose to go there,
because that will have been covered on any news bulletin or any newspaper article you see.
We were interested, though, in aspects of political leadership,
where you see Kerstarma, as Lewis was saying, kind of in retreat on a lot of things
or blowing things up that might potentially be a problem come a general election.
And Siddiq Khan, forging ahead and not taking much notice
of what Kerstarma has said to him.
And so perhaps potentially two very different views of political leadership.
And we should say this has actually been quite a big thing in the capital today
in the sense that there have been protests across
out of London, in particular in Siddiq Khan's old constituency and home of Tooting
and all of these cameras that are being installed to monitor and surveil
cars that potentially might not be compliant.
Quite a few of them being attacked, being vandalised,
just as the scheme has been expanded.
Well, we are joined now by the Mayor of London, Siddiq Khan.
And I guess, Siddiq Khan, the first question is,
do you think that these protests and the protesters are representative?
I speak to and listen to you to appreciate Londoners all the time.
There are Londoners who've got genuine concern about the expansion of ULA's.
I'm not for a second going to pretend there aren't genuine concerns
that some Londoners have.
The vast majority of Londoners want me to tackle air pollution,
want me to implement policies that reduces air pollution
and are supportive of the ultra low emission zone.
But I appreciate there are a vocal minority who aren't supportive.
My job as the mayor is to do what I think is right based on the evidence,
the evidence in relation to the consequences of air pollution,
the evidence in relation to the most effective policy
anywhere to reduce air pollution.
But at the same time, listen to those with genuine concerns and respond.
And that's why, look, in January, I announced the biggest
scrappage scheme this country's ever seen,
without a penny of support from the government
who have supported cleaner zones around the country,
targeted on low income families, on those who are disabled,
on micro businesses employing less than 10 people.
I then expanded that scheme because I was listening.
And once I was confident that people who needed the most help had help,
those families in London who received child benefit,
more than 800,000 families receiving child benefit.
And then when I was confident that those who need help the most have help
because I've been listening.

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I'm sure if you say to people, would you like cleaning air in London?
They're going to say, oh, yeah, I'd love to clean air in London.
It's like when people say, do you want more money spent on the health service?
People say, oh, yeah, I'd love more money spent on the health service.
When you ask people, are you happy for your taxes to go up?
They tend to say not so much.
So I wonder in this case, whether you think there is a clear majority of Londoners in the outer boroughs who may have cars that are older and therefore a subject to that £12.50 a day are as enthusiastic as you say the majority are.
Yes, a really important challenge you put to me.
Let me respond to the evidence of our city.
So around half the households in our city don't own a car.
Around half the households, when you look at the poorest Londoners, those with the lowest income, more than 70% don't own a car.
And when you're also thrown to the mix, John, that those least likely to own a car suffer the worst consequences.
The issue of air pollution is an issue of social injustice.
But also when you throw into the mix, it's black Asian minority ethnic Londoners least likely to own a car who suffer the worst consequences.
For me, this is an issue of fighting social injustice and racial injustice, as well as, you know, the climate emergency as well.
Can I play you a clip of Emily Thornbury, as you well know, Shadow Attorney General and kind of Labour Grandee.
We spoke to her just after the Uxbridge by-election for her reaction and what this should mean for Ulez.
Let's ask the obvious question.
Does Ulez, the ultra low emission zone, does it need to be rethought?
Well, we're calling on Sadiq to to kind of consider the results and to think about about Ulez and about how it's being put in place and so on.
That sounds like a yes.
Well, no, I mean, listen, if you're a good politician, you need to listen and learn from the public, right?
And it was very much a kind of debate going on in in Uxbridge.
And I think there is a cost of living crisis.
It is very difficult for people on low incomes who rely on their cars.
And if their cars are elderly to be able to just get rid of it and buy a newer one.
Particularly since there is a scrappage scheme, but it's not as generous as it could be.
The government wants, we all want, air quality in London to be much better.
The mayor is under an obligation to improve air quality.
Transport is one of the biggest producers of pollution in London.
So he's trying to deal with it.

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Let me try one more time.

I'm trying to answer your question in a thoughtful and complete way and the way that you're allowed to in podcasts.

And we're very happy for you to do that.

So I just wonder whether you're saying that his policy has cost you the by-election?

I think probably.

So Zinni, you can't buy the Emily Thornberry definition of what is a good politician.

A politician is someone who listens to the public.

You haven't done so. You're not a very good politician.

To give Emily credit, it's important that I give Emily credit.

Her interview with John was done before we expanded the scheme.

So every family in London who receives child benefit receives support.

More than 800,000 families in London, in and out of London.

More than 560,000 families.

Again, to give Emily credit, important that I do.

And according to your definition of Emily's definition of what a good politician is, QED.

So the Labour Party now, the Central Labour Party, the Shadow Cabinet, Keir Starmer, they're supportive of you, Les, now because of the changes you've made.

No, what I'm saying is that actually what's right for London, it may not be right for Luton.

What's right for Burmese may not be right for Burnley.

I'm quite clear in relation to the evidence I've seen

in relation to the consequences of air pollution

and the consequences of the Ultralomission Zone in central London.

I refuse to stand idly by when I've just spent some of my morning

with a paediatrician who treats pregnant women

who suffer the consequences of air pollution and their newborn babies.

I've spent some of the morning with a doctor who has a clinic

that supports those with respiratory issues.

And I've spent some of the morning with Rosamund Adu Kisi Debra,

whose poor child lost her life in 2013 as a direct link with air pollution.

But so in the aftermath of the Uxbridge by-election,

the Labour Party called on you to change your position.

Now, is it the case that you've done enough to satisfy them?

Or actually, are you in a position now where you say to them,

I don't really care about your position, I've done this anyway?

No, it's not the case.

I think the word you put into Emily's interview was the word reflect.

I've been reflecting on this policy since when I first won the Mayoralty in 2016.

It was this government that passed the Air Quality Directive.

It was this government that gave support to other cities around our country with clean air zones from Birmingham to Bristol and Bath.

The only city not to get support with their clean air zone is London.

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What I'm unwilling to do is to delay a water down a policy that I know is going to be effective, but I have been listening and reflecting by ensuring even more Londoners receive support. And over the last week alone, over the last week alone, more than 15,000 people have applied for support. We've managed to scrap more than 14,000 vehicles. More than 13 million people have gone to the vehicle-compliant checker. All that is evidence of me listening and reflecting. I just wonder how you view political leadership, because in some ways there's a very easy contrast to be drawn between new and Kirstama. And some will say this is good and some will say this is bad. But Sadiq Khan, he forges ahead, even though there are protests, even though the leadership of the Labour Party say, well, please, maybe we could slow this down. And you've got Kirstama, who seems to be jessoning a lot of positions that maybe Labour activists like, because his focus is on the next general election. And even this weekend, we heard Rachel Reeve saying there won't be a wealth tax, which was headline news. And so from the Labour Party leadership, we're hearing what they're not going to do. And from you, we are hearing what you are going to do. And I wonder what the political cost-benefit analysis of that is. Well, I fully support the steps K is taking to make sure we get out of the habit of losing elections, whether it's 2010, 2015. But might you be contributing to it? And not at all, because I'm quite clear what I've shown over the last seven years is the difference Labour in power can make. Record number of council homes in our city, the largest since 1970, the largest number of completions of housing since 1930s. We've invested in youth clubs and youth workers. We've shown the difference we can make in relation to public health, a reduction of almost 50% in central London in toxicity. It's really important, though, at the same time to say this, and what's right for London is not right for Luton. Devolution means the opposite of a one-size-fits-all approach. But Keir Starmer is absolutely right to focus laser-like on addressing those parts of the country who've lost confidence in Labour. And he's going to reassure them and address the legitimate concerns they have, as indeed, as Rachel. Look, can I just put this bluntly? Is Keir Starmer pissed off with Sadiq Khan? That's a question for Keir. We spoke recently and it didn't seem to use your language pissed off.

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But do you think he's fed up with you?
Do you think he's irritated by having been unable to get you to change your mind on this?
I've got to be honest, the only irritation Keir shows with me
is when I go on about Liverpool, because I support a team in red
that's going to do better than his team in red.
Just finally, there's always all this speculation.
Obviously, there is as well as a general election next year.
There's the mayoral election next year.
There's a lot of speculation about Jeremy Corbyn standing potentially.
The Conservatives have moved the election to a first-past-the-post electoral system.
Would your message to him be,
don't stand because if you do, the Tories will win?
The only reason the government changed the mayoral voting to first-past-the-post
was to try and win back London.
And, you know, in every election since 2000, the Tories have either come first or second.
But look, being the mayor of London is, in my view, the best job in politics.
Last time I stood, there were 20 candidates running to be the mayor of London,
including Count Binface.
And so, listen, I'm not surprised that a lot of people want to run to be the mayor of London.
I'll have to wait and see if Jeremy Corbyn does run.
I'm quite clear I'm focused on delivering for our city.
And there's that kind of a re-election based upon my record,
but also my vision for this city going forward,
hopefully working with a government that's supportive,
a Labour government led by Keir Starmer,
rather than a government that's been anti-London for the last seven years.
Sidiq, thank you so much. Thanks, Sidiq.
Cheers, guys. Take care. Stay well.
Well, we heard it, didn't we?
Sidiq Khan is very polished about these things.
His answers in terms of the scheme itself are very, very well rehearsed.
But I think the most interesting thing about that is,
him basically saying, when you asked if Keir Starmer pissed off with you,
he didn't say no. No, he didn't.
He didn't say no. He said, well, you'd have to ask Keir Starmer.
Look, it's very clear that there is tension between Starmer's office and the mayor's office.
As Khan himself said, that's maybe not a bad thing
when we interviewed Andy Burnham on the show.
He basically said the same thing.
If you have devolution, it's absolutely inevitable
there's going to be a clash between the centre and the periphery
for want of a better expression.
But it is clear, nonetheless,

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that there is not a happy relationship right now
between the mayor's office and Starmer.
And Keir Starmer is rightly concerned about the state of public opinion
and he's looking at certain constituencies,
where he probably doesn't want to be a part of the public opinion.
And he's looking at certain constituencies,
where he probably thought before the expansion of Eulez,
well, we've got a pretty reasonable chance in those constituencies
come the general election and now thinking,
Christ, if we've got this unpopular scheme in place
and people being charged £12.50 a day, etc, etc, etc,
then those seats are going to become very much more difficult for us to win.
But it is an interesting microcosm as well, isn't it,
of the potential challenge for Starmer to come,
which is that it is all right.
You can detonate those political minds
when they're ahead of you in opposition, you can do that.
You can get the barnacles off the boat as Linton Crosby,
the Tory strategy is famously said.
Once you're in government, that's much harder,
because you actually have to take decisions.
And in a sense, Kahn is in government.
He has got central government requirements to deal with
in terms of air quality.
He's also making a decision.
This is his landmark policy as mayor and he's been brave.
And again, it's kind of our job in the media.
We obviously needle constantly and we say,
well, this isn't popular, this isn't popular.
I mean, actually, you know what?
It's actually in some ways, I think refreshing to have
politicians say, well, maybe it isn't popular,
but it's the right thing to do.
I think it's the right thing to do.
And ultimately he'll be judged at the ballot box,
whether he wants to do it or not.
And my own personal view is, quite frankly, John,
he's not being harsh enough.
I'm so anti-car that I would ban them all from, you know.
Cities, honestly, cities would be so much better
without cars, so much better.
Cars ruin cities.
They destroy them.

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Okay, that's too far.
And that's ridiculous, Lewis Goodall.
And I tell you the thing that gets me,
where I think I have a certain sympathy.
I don't have a problem with wanting to clean the air,
but I do think that if you are a car driver
and you park on a double yellow line,
there is gonna be a camera on a lamppost,
which is going to deliver you a 50 pound fine.
There are kind of suddenly no-go areas in streets
that are suddenly blocked off and you drive into them
and you get a fixed penalty notice for doing so.
You've now got cameras everywhere.
And I think this sense of Britain
as a surveillance society,
when you've got cameras that are designed to stop crime
and lawlessness on the streets, happy days.
I've got no problem with that.
But when it is just used,
and it feels like it's being used as a driver of revenue
for local councils, for public authorities,
for the police even,
and it's not really about road safety
and it's not really about whatever it seems to be,
then I think that the motorist has every reason to feel,
oh, come on.
I agree with that.
I agree with the surveillance point,
but I also think,
I actually think one of the biggest fictions
of our politics, British politics,
is this idea that there is some sort of war
against the motorist
as if the motorist is some sort of persecuted minority.
Just to tell you who is the persecuted minority
never hear from, the humble pedestrian.
The humble pedestrian, right?
The humble pedestrian.
There's nothing for pedestrians, right?
We have to stand there.
I love walking around cities, right?
We have to stand there, breathing all these fumes,
endlessly waiting for these bloody roads

[Transcript] The News Agents / It started out with a kiss, how did it end up like this? The Spanish sexism row.

to like finally cross over.
Have you not noticed the cycle paths everywhere?
The train network that's kind of got a lot better.
I mean, I think the public...
Oh, the trains, they're great, aren't they?
Well, I think the public transport
is brilliant in London, actually.
Well, in London, it's not too bad,
but in the rest of the country, it's a problem.
But seriously, I mean,
this war against the motorist fiction,
fuel duty has not gone up since 2010.
If it had gone up approximate to what it had gone up before,
we'd have an extra 40 billion pounds for public services.
Train fares would be lower.
I think we will look back and see the fact that, you know,
we used to have cars going through cities,
polluting the streets.
We'll look back on it as we do,
like when Battersea Power Station or the Tate Modern
were massive coal fire stations.
I think, what?
They used to do that.
And I bet if you think, John,
of your favorite cities in the world,
I bet none of them are the ones with massive highways
or freeways or motorways running through them.
They're places like Amsterdam or wherever it happens to be,
which are so pedestrianized,
you can walk through them.
Venice, exactly.
Venice, yeah, boats, they're fine.
But, you know, the point is,
as soon as you take the cars away in a city,
the cities are liberated.
Pedestrians come back.
You get little markets.
It's wonderful.
Whereas what is not wonderful is like, you know,
near where I live on the Streatham High Road,
just like you think, oh, this is nice.
Yeah, there's four like rows of cars
just going past endlessly.

[Transcript] The News Agents / It started out with a kiss, how did it end up like this? The Spanish sexism row.

Cars are bullies, right?

Cars are bullies, that's the truth.

Well, I think you just, again, way over the top.

No.

When I was living in DC, I was living in Washington,
you didn't have these cameras everywhere
that were stopping you.

There was a camera on New York Avenue
and there was a camera on Pennsylvania Avenue
that was there for speeding.

I mean, you kind of know where it was and you slow down.

But by and large, people were much more law-abiding.

Air quality wasn't too bad,

but you just didn't feel that your every move in a car
was being captured on camera.

And at any second, you're going to get slapped
with a fine that you thought, oh, God, now another one.

Go out and walk.

Go out and walk.

No one's going to want to see you again.

Have you ever been to Washington in July and August?

You need air conditioning wherever you go.

Right, you're going to give me a lift home?

Yeah, of course.

You're going to pay for it though.

Good, okay, fine.

This is The News Agents.

Right, John, we've had a message.

Oh.

We've had an email from Bev Jackson Brown.

Anyone?

Just the one.

It's the first email we've had.

First email we've had.

We're very lonely here at News Agents HQ.

Bev Jackson Brown and Darling Hubby Doug.

Right.

And they've said, hello, news agents.

Your first broadcast was on my birthday last year.

It was a great present.

It's got us through this year of our discontent.

Thank you.

You started broadcasting when I was recovering from a major operation.

[Transcript] The News Agents / It started out with a kiss, how did it end up like this? The Spanish sexism row.

So the 30 minutes spent listening to you was accompanied by my Darling Hubby giving me a foot rub.

Gosh.

Here we go.

A foot rub.

Steady, steady, steady.

We don't want a parental advisory on this episode.

Well, that's usually as a result of your language.

A foot rub to aid my recovery and calm me down when things, political, got too much for my patience and temper.

As I got better, the foot rub stopped, but we didn't stop listening.

Thank you for all the information, entertainment, the thought-provoking issues, and I so, so hope you'll be covering a much-needed election.

Happy birthday to us all.

So that's sharing our birthday, which, of course, is tomorrow.

Yeah, we are one tomorrow.

And if you've got any questions you'd like to ask, we'd love to hear from you.

So do get in touch.

Yeah, we've never done it before, but we thought,

given it is our birthday tomorrow, we would open the floor to you.

And if you have any questions about politics or anything we've covered recently or anything we should cover, definitely no more football, please, then we want to hear from you.

So send your questions or your voice notes to newsagents.global.com.

But get them in before tomorrow morning, because we need to choose.

And we will be back tomorrow with a birthday cake, I hope, and a little candle on it.

Actually, do you think health and safety will allow us to have a lit candle in the studio?

As long as it's not an ultra-processed food, which as we learned yesterday, very bad for you.

So you're going to need to bake it yourself, John.

We'll see you tomorrow. Bye-bye.

This has been a Global Player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.