

News in Brief

Security

Police go slow

• The local police force in Tacoronte has been refusing to put in extra working hours for seven months.

According to their union representatives the action is in response to the council's refusal to listen to demands for better pay and working conditions. The local mayor has accused the police all along of just being greedy whilst there is growing evidence that crime is increasing in Tacoronte. Indeed another incident took place at one of the town's petrol stations on 14th January.

An individual broke in to the bar at a petrol station in the early hours and emptied one of the slot machines. It's the fourth similar robbery at the petrol station in recent months. Civil Guard officers have been investigating this and other thefts in Tacoronte. Ordinary folk are beginning to suspect that the increase in crime is related in some way to the lack of will within the local police force.

Bus station

Mystery fire

• Shopkeepers still opening their premises in the closed bus station building in Puerto de la Cruz got another fright on 14th January after another fire was declared inside the terminal.

The previous fire, more serious, occurred on New Year's Eve and started all sorts of conspiracy rumours although the disused station is currently thought to be used by drug addicts and destitute people seeking shelter. Nevertheless, whether politically motivated or not, both fires were thought to have been started deliberately and shopkeepers accused the new administration of doing nothing to protect them.

Vehicle theft

Wanna buy a car?

• Towards the end of last year, a resident in La Orotava decided to sell his expensive car and advertised it locally for €25,000.

Another man aged 34 answered the advertisement and arranged to view it. He seemed very interested indeed and asked if he could just try it out. Like any trusting individual the seller said he could drive it round the block. That was the last he saw of his expensive car. The buyer never returned. The Civil Guard caught up with the young pretend purchaser recently and he has been duly charged with theft.

Public health centre

Clinic anniversary

• The new public health centre at Las Dehesas in Puerto de la Cruz opened its doors a year ago.

Like most controversial projects in the town, it has become a resounding success. Figures released by the regional health authority coincide with the general public's perception that the centre has led to more fluid attention to the public and less stress on personnel and the old health centre continues to cater for specialist cases. The new centre receives an average of 750 patients a day and is responsible for the health of nearly 20,000 people. The health centre was built on a plot provided by the town council at a cost of €2.2 million and a further €141,000 was invested in medical and other equipment. Although opponents warned there would be serious logistical problems surrounding the new centre it has greatly alleviated the pressure on the health centre and, with ample car parking facilities, is much easier to use.

LA OROTAVA

Corruption investigation

The national prosecutor appointed to investigate cases of corruption is to study alleged corruption within the town hall in La Orotava as a result of accusations made against the governing mayor, Isaac Valencia.

According to legal sources the anti-corruption prosecutor's office, having studied the documentation presented by IUC-LV, the left-wing and green opposition coalition group in La Orotava, has decided to investigate the matter. This will come as a blow to the council and especially to Valencia, after years of avoiding this kind of more serious investigation, but who have been under suspicion from the ordinary public and opposition parties on a number of occasions. The



alleged corruption reported by IUC-LV concerned a sum of €17 million in extrajudicial agreements between 2003 and 2008. The council insists none of its councillors have

acted outside the law or have appropriated public funds. It also pointed out that many of the extrajudicial financial agreements were voted upon unanimously by all parties.

As the opposition IUC-LV group's spokesman, Fran Baute, said, it will be for the anti-corruption prosecutor to decide whether to take the matter to court or not.

UNDERCOVER AGENT

Spy on trial

In July 2007 people in Puerto de la Cruz were surprised with the news that a local resident, Roberto Flórez García, had been arrested and charged with espionage.

He goes on trial at the end of January in Madrid, charged with spying for the Russians. Flórez is an ex-Civil Guard officer who was then recruited by the CNI, Spain's National Intelligence Centre, for which

he worked between 1991 and 2004. He's believed to have sold sensitive information to the Russians, especially concerning double agents working for Spanish intelligence, whilst destined as attaché to the Spanish embassy in Lima, Peru. Flórez moved to Puerto de la Cruz where he lived with his wife, herself a native of Puerto. It's alleged he owned two apartments in Puerto as well as a garage where he kept boxes of DVDs with



the information he passed on to the Russians. If he is proved guilty of espionage and consequently declared a traitor, Flórez could spend between six and twelve years in prison.

**FLÓREZ
COULD FACE A
LONG PRISON
SENTENCE**

COUNCIL ECONOMIES

Politicians' pay cut

The nationalist-run council in Garachico has agreed to a pay cut and councillors will receive five per cent less in their monthly pay-packet in 2010.

It's regarded as a necessary step in the face of the economic crisis and the local mayor, Ramón Miranda, suggested it might also set

an example to other councils struggling for cash in the north of Tenerife. Although there is no doubt firms and ordinary folk are looking for ways to cut spending he also thought it might show the way to families and ordinary folk in how they should be economising. The five per cent cut in councillor wages amounts to €8,000 and will be used to back up public service



requirements and to provide assistance to people who need help from the Garachico authorities just for their day to day needs. The overall 2010 budget has also been cut by three per cent.

**MIRANDA
HOPES TO SET AN
EXAMPLE**