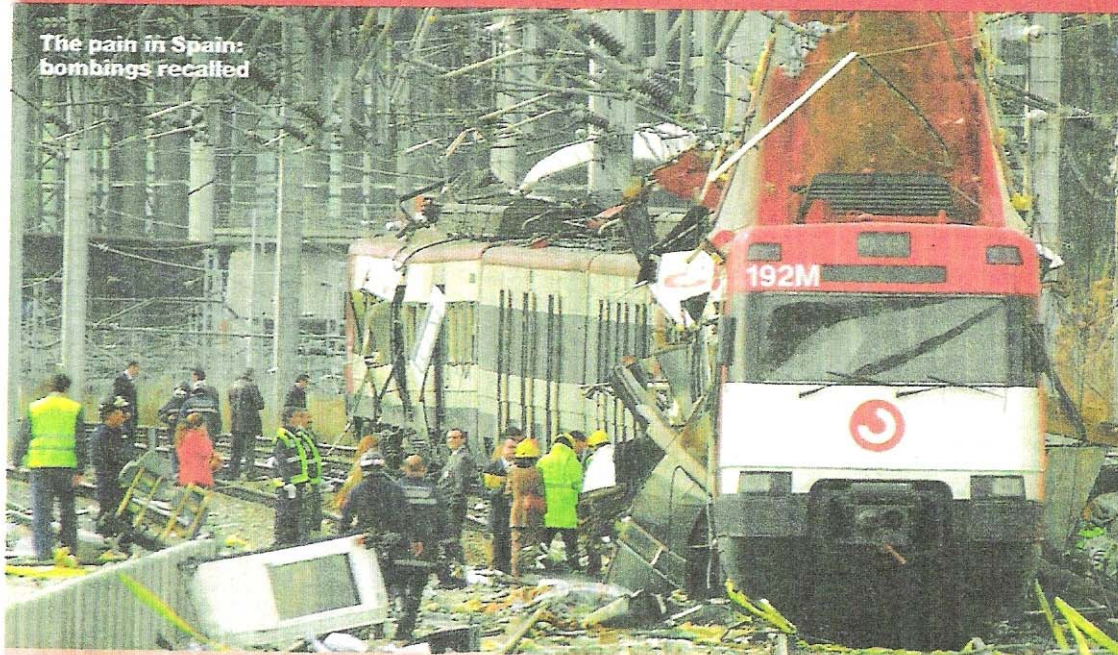


13 November Critics' choice



The pain in Spain: bombings recalled

Pick of the day

The Madrid Connection (BBC4, 10.30pm)

Sarhane was a shy student from a middle-class Tunisian family; Jamal, aka El Chino, fled a murder charge in Morocco and became a BMW-driving drug dealer. All they shared when they met in Madrid in October 2003 was a set of extremist beliefs. Five months later, they were leading figures in the Islamist cell responsible for the train bombings in which 191 people died and 2,050 were wounded.

Pegged to the end of the trial of the cell's surviving members, this documentary rivetingly traces the odd duo's lives and parallel shift

towards jihadist zealotry before they came together and rented the house in which the March 2004 bombings would be plotted. The interviewees are first-rate, with Jamal recalled by his brother and girlfriend, and Sarhane by friends from college and the mosque.

Interwoven with their stories is a third strand, centred on the judges and prosecutors as the trial opens. You can see the aim – a “positive” account of teamwork culminating in justice, offsetting the “negative” narrative of carnage. But these sequences are inevitably less compelling, and sensibly not allowed to steal too much time from the terrorists' biographies.

John Dugdale