Stasis

The new owners of the Olive Mill promptly made everyone redundant. Employment law embodying the rights of workers was something overlooked by the Alquerian government when the Village became a republic. The fact that Loco Paco accidentally burnt the 'fag' packet on which the constitution was written didn't help matters either. No one received compensation, the gates were simply chained shut and a curt notice posted on the crumbling factory wall.

But there was another twist in the tail of Alqueria's olive mill. The investors wanted to asset strip the plant, this was their sole intention from the outset of negotiations. Rodriquez, in his attempt to make the Mill look like a streamlined modern facility had made certain 'arrangements'. Only painting the parts of the building which were visible from the car-park, only filling cracked brickwork that could be seen from the road. Then taking the investors on a tour of the much veneered plant after plying them with liberal quantities of Remitroot Whisky. The pieces of equipment seen by the investors were in fact carefully positioned cardboard cut-outs. The actual plant was dilapidated and ancient. If it had been in slightly better condition it may have qualified as scrap, a commodity not exactly scarce in Alqueria.

The investors soon realised that the combined effects of Remitroot Whisky, cardboard and double back sticky tape had been their undoing. At Rodriquez's insistence the phrase 'as seen' appeared frequently in the contract of sale. Rodriquez offered them one Euro to buy the mill back. He pointed out that under his careful management the place was now a worthless shadow of its former self.

With one Euro for the Mill Rodriquez had made a net profit of one Euro fifty on the overall deal. Rodriquez was ecstatic. It was the first time he had turned a profit on any deal engineered by himself. He promptly set about getting the Mill working again. Making his inferior olive oil in the most inefficient method possible. It was the only

way he knew, but he must be clever after all he had made a profit on his last business transaction.

So Alqueria and its dysfunctional population had safely survived the manoeuvrings of the capitalist asset strippers. More by luck than anything else perhaps but once more Alqueria was in equilibrium.

The Village slept soundly that night sure in the knowledge that normality had been restored. Once more their entire energy and imagination could be directed at the undeclared war of the barrios, which is after all the norm for the Pueblo.