The Submersible

Alqueria's frontier was again under threat. The Spanish authorities were once more making nuisances of themselves at the border crossings. They had been instructed to make life as difficult as possible for the people of Alqueria. It was all to do with the latest Alquerian rise in the wholesale price of Remitroot or perhaps they had just got into the habit after their Gibraltar experiences. However Alqueria still needed to get its precious Remitroot products to the outside world and into the market place.

The solution was obvious, well obvious to the befuddled folk of Alqueria. They would build a submarine to transport Remitroot down the Río Verde and to the open sea. Construction didn't present too much of a problem, two of iron septic tanks welded together formed the hull. An old washing-machine motor driven via the inverted power of a couple of tractor batteries turned a makeshift propeller. The periscope consisted of a webcam fitted into the rear of a rather convincing imitation Tufted Duck. This meant the duck travelled backwards and its rear end emitted the glow from a red flashing LED but it didn't seem to raise any awkward questions. The Río Verde was home to some strange creatures.

Breathing, which isn't an optional extra was the next problem. The removal of Alfonso Álvarez from the crew, he virtually lived on chicken vindaloo made the task somewhat easier. A snorkel arrangement was finally contrived, it resembled the smoke stack of Stephenson's Rocket but fulfilled its function fairly well.

The main problem was that of ballast. The Río Verde is a complex, polluted, slime rich watercourse containing many organisms not known to man. Many of its organisms are so foul that man has no wish to become acquainted with them at all. Its viscosity is greater than that of the thickest motor oil and the stench could turn the stomach of a Port Said sanitary inspector. To keep the craft submerged large concrete blocks had to be suspended from the hull. The blocks were purloined from the town hall in a neighbouring village which spectacularly collapsed two days later.

The theory was to release the blocks as the craft entered the Mediterranean. The water would be less buoyant and the craft would float gently to the surface. This was the theory, what happened in practice was another matter however.

When the concrete blocks were released the submarine shot up through the water like a ballistic missile and then some three metres into the air. A passing giant squid of the male gender took it to be a frisky female and acted accordingly. We will never know the full trauma of this encounter only that the crew never ate calamari again. Manuela alone was unscathed and seemed to enjoy the experience she immediately volunteered for the next trip.