## Of ball-bearings and exotic fruit

Not all conflict in Alqueria is based on barrio rivalry. Take the case of Cartera Frederico, the bank manager and Dr Cortarduras the Newcomer's GP. Both belonging to the Newcomer's barrio, they haven't been on speaking terms for almost three decades.

It all started some thirty years ago when the good doctor was treating Rodriquez's wife for a case of Goooin's disease. This malady usually only affects ripening root vegetables, although there are obvious similarities. Dr Cortarduras had mentioned an investment opportunity, the Little Ball, Big Ball, Bigger Ball-Bearing factory of San Sebastián.

At about this time Cartera Frederico had newly arrived in Alqueria and was keen to ingratiate himself with the olive mill owner, Rodriquez. Frederico's career had not been spectacular, in fact he had been promoted sideways and sent to the most obscure sub-branch in Spain, Alqueria. It was hoped that here his incompetence would not be noticed and even if it was Alqueria was of little consequence. Cartera Frederico suggested an alternative stock that of the Icelandic Pomegranate and Calabashtree Plantation. Rodriquez went with the bank managers advice after all it was his territory.

If you can cast your mind back to 1985 you may recall two events of international importance which profoundly effected Rodriquez's shareholdings. First was the infestation of Waffenstuffen's Weevil which killed off all exotic fruit production in and close to the Arctic circle. Second, the issue of ten wheeled rocket propelled roller-skates to all front line NATO troops causing an unprecedented demand for ball bearings of all sizes.

Rodriquez lost thousands. He moved his account to another bank and only dealt with Cartera Frederico when it involved other people's money. Frederico blamed the

Doctor personally for the Waffenstuffen's Weevil infestation even suggesting that the medical man had bred the insects himself. He did however withdraw his comments following the threat of legal action.

If they ever found themselves in the Bar La Golondrina at the same time the bank manager would say in an overly loud voice, “I have private medical treatment in Spain, I don't trust these Alquerian butchers” or some similar rhetoric. Dr Cortarduras for his part had been spiking Frederico's Remitroot Wine with a strong laxative for years. A condition which has cost the unsuspecting bank manager a small fortune to have treated privately in Almería. Which also explains why Frederico's condition has defied all attempts of a cure and has made the front page of several medical journals.

The depth of Alquerian discord and malcontent is certainly deep. No one is spared apart perhaps from Loco Paco, befriended by his imaginary pets, he is a threat to no one.