The Democratic Process

Of the seven hundred and eighty-five souls that comprise the population of Alqueria one hundred and fifty-seven are below eighteen and therefore not eligible to vote. Nor are they eligible to run for President. The remaining six hundred and twenty-eight are however and they did. Every person over the age of eighteen registered as a candidate for the post of President. This included the bedridden, the indifferent and the illiterate. Those who couldn't normally string three words together eloquently and accurately completed the necessary documentation. The agoraphobic and infirm managed to negotiate the streets and byways of Alqueria to appear before the Electoral Qualifying Committee.

Campaigning took on a surrealism understood only in Alqueria. Regiments of would-be politicians mounted on soap, fruit and Remitroot boxes promoted xenophobic, ill considered and totally impractical policies. The British Conservative Party looked on in envy. The prospective candidates engaged in a strange game. Stacking boxes upon boxes they tried to stand head and shoulders above their rivals. Collapses occurred frequently with untidy heaps of writhing would-be politicians becoming a frequent sight in the Pueblo. The sound of massed political doctrines being propounded resonated through the streets of Alqueria.

The ballot paper resembled the cast list from the Soviet version of 'War and Peace'. The parties represented, ranged from the ridiculous to the plain daft. One candidate stood on the 'free roller-skates for over eighties' ticket while another wanted 'Abyssinian Goat Shirling' legalised.

On election day the turn out was one-hundred percent, the sight of so many exercising their constitutional right to elect a head-of-state, a privilege not afforded in some western democracies was uplifting. No-one could fail to be stirred by the sight, not shaken perhaps but certainly stirred. Counting was quick and predictable. One vote for each candidate apart from Loco Paco. Paco became so confused by the catalogue

of names on the ballot paper he put his cross by the printers name. Inky Pedro the printer, lived happily in Madrid unaware of the fickle ballot paper of fate. He was naturally surprised when the letter dropped on his mat naming him as joint President of Alqueria. He changed his name, donned dark glasses and hid in the roof space peering through the slates like a cornered lynx.

Loco Paco became the only constituent in the village with six hundred and twenty-seven people to represent him. A two party system tends towards democracy while any more can see a candidate elected even though the majority of votes are for others. The Alquerian result became much debated, held by radical idealists as a model for the future but by everyone else as ruddy ridiculous.

Perhaps Alqueria's electoral process needs some tinkering?