The Barricades of Alqueria

The Olive Mill riot and siege lasted the best part of a weekend. Shattered windows, blackened walls and burning outbuildings, in fact all the requisites for a really successful riot festooned the Calle Mirador. To say a riot is successful would be a contradiction anywhere else apart from Alqueria. The people of Alqueria have honed and fashioned the riot to make it almost an art form. It is as well practised as a fire-drill but a lot more enjoyable with no shortage of participants. Those who are too old or timid to join-in, watch from upstairs windows offering advice and encouragement.

The cobblestones which make up the Calle Generalissimo have three sets of numbers etched on their undersides. The first set is their position in the barricade, this is to aid rapid deployment. The second, the distance which should be achieved when the stone is hurled at an angle of forty-five degrees by an average male between the ages of twenty-five and forty. The third, its position back in the street so things can get back to normal quickly and the next piece of civil unrest planned.

The only person not involved in this lethal pastime is Loco Paco. In a world of his own he continued to walk the streets talking to his imaginary five-foot rodent. He could be seen emerging from the smoke of battle, an inane grin from ear to ear and oblivious of the surrounding destruction. Paco's distinctive walk made him easily recognisable and guaranteed his safety. When he brought the weight down on his front foot, his body seemed to rise into the air. It gave the impression that he was trying to hold down a bunch of helium filled balloons.

The Bomberos, on such occasions use discretion, this being the better part of valour, and valour being in rather short supply. With Rodriquez’s olive mill burning the question of whether to attend or not was settled with the toss of a coin. However with manual dexterity being in a short a supply as valour the coin was dropped and landed in an old pair of Sudoroso Joe's fire socks. Another coin, to see who would retrieve the first was tossed and duly dropped. This process continued until the fire had burnt

itself out. It is only because Alqueria is built largely of stone that the village has lasted so long.

With civil unrest being such a popular pastime it is sometimes difficult to determine when one riot finishes and another begins. Regarding this particular insurrection, the reason was either the sacking of several Hill People from the olive mill or because it was the one hundred and sixty-fifth day after Epiphany.