

THE CONSTRUCTION OF GUILHOFREI DAM THROUGH THE REGIONAL PRESS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the importance of the construction of the Guilhofrei dam in the north of Portugal, but known as the Ermal dam, to praise the government and as an inscription of political propaganda. This view is provided by the local press, which strongly supported the government, giving great prominence to their works. This study is unique because the matter described here is found in Historical Archives.

KEYWORDS

Dams; New Deal; Interventionism; Public Works; Regional Press;

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the construction of the Guilhofrei dam, or Ermal, in the district of Braga, northern Portugal, and aims to analyze the use of this work as a mechanism for political propaganda through the regional press.

The construction of dams had an interventionist policy that followed the interventionist and inflationary policies adopted by other European countries inspired by the New Deal of the USA. These inflationary measures consisted of "public expenditure, mainly investment, to stimulate economic activity" (Nunes & Valério, 2004: 134). After 1926, "a movement in favor of hydraulics in its agricultural and electrical fields was felt in our country. Engineer Ezequiel de Campos (1874-1965), former minister in the office of Dr. José Domingues dos Santos, was a defender of hydroelectric works as a means of revitalizing Portuguese agriculture" (SERRÃO J. V., 1997: 525).

Between 1930 and 1945 a program of public works was launched by the Portuguese government, aiming to occupy the unemployed. Large constructions such as public buildings, roads, railways, restoration of monuments and construction of large enterprises such as dams, correspond to a grandiose period of the Regime, as well as a brilliant period of construction and architecture in Portugal, which ended up having a profound impact in the twentieth century.

"In the economic-social domain, too, the constitutional project of the Government and the doctrine that inspires it deviate from the abstentionist paradigm of the liberal state. According to Salazar, it can not aim at a balanced and strong state without the coordination and development of the economy national policy, which would have to form part of the political organization. In these terms, general guarantees concerning major works and improvements should be included in the constitutional framework, such as communications, sources of motor power, transport and supply of electricity, whose plans the State is responsible for establishing and carrying out" (Rosas, Estado Novo: Economia, 1992: 102/103)

This view is provided by the various articles in portuguese regional newspapers, such as the newspaper Correio do Minho, a newspaper sympathetic to the regime and situationist. "The

situationist press is one that sustains frankly the propaganda of the principles of the Estado Novo, defender of the situation capable of making with propaganda and enthusiasm the propaganda of nationalist and corporate ideas" (Barros, 2005: 271). "If we are faced with a press that is not very significant, we can add the strong possibility that it will exert its influence in a tendentially circumscribed space. The action of these newspapers seems to be exercised at a municipal level (...)" (Barros, 2005: 268).

It can be stated that the regional press presents itself as an important source for the study of the works carried out by the Estado Novo.

2. ECONOMIC POLICIES

It was only after 1931 that the impact of the world crisis, which was motivated by the American crash, which was called the Great Depression, was noted. Although Portugal was at the time a closed economy abroad, it ended up suffering the effects of this rampant inflation, which had provoked a severe crisis worldwide. After the crisis that occurred, it became essential to stimulate the economy, absorbing unemployment and supplying orders to the national industries. Salazar created a policy of public works, based on the solidity of the Treasury and financial stabilization.

"In short, the enemy was unemployment, and the weapon used to fight it was public works. If the overall purpose of the New Deal was to bring about relief, recovery, and reform, the public works programs were understood to focus on these first two tasks. According to these initial versions of the story, then, thanks to federally funded public works the nation was moving again, Money was being pumped into the economy, and people were going back to work" (Smith, 2006:8).

In fact, "there was a need to advance the industrial park of the country, and there were projects in this direction since the end of World War I, which would only be regained in a sensible way with the 1935 economic reconstruction plan and with the effort towards hydroelectric facilities" (Castro, 1983: 645).

The public works policy in Portugal consisted in the construction of several essential infrastructures, such as: port, road, housing, school, hospital, among other areas. The economic policies applied by Estado Novo focused on the application of self-sustaining growth, following the evolution of the world economy, that is, they had as their "main objective to make Portugal enter the era of modern economic growth" (Serrão & Marques, 1992: 306).

In 1935, the Law of Economic Reconstitution was approved by dictatorial government of Salazar.. This law consisted of a vast economic plan, worth \$6.5 billion, which lasted until 1950 and had as its main objective "to promote the construction of infrastructures and the creation (...) of industrial sectors considered strategic to the economic National (Lains & Freire: 384)".

In addition to retaking the initial design of the Fontism (stage of launching major public works for the country's development) of the nineteenth century, it had other objectives such as to combat the damage caused by the Great Depression of 1929, such as unemployment. The weight of the international conjuncture is present in the national situation, where the regime follows the same steps of interventionist policies followed in the USA with the New Deal as in Great-Britain.

"In the 1930s, Presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to provide America with a New Deal, a government-sponsored socioeconomic initiative that, among its most publicity prominent programs, heralded using dams to their fullest productive capacity for present and future generations" (Billington & Jackson, 2006: 4).

3. PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Salazar, who held the position of Minister of Finance in 1928, immediately corrected the budgetary imbalances arising from the Military Dictatorship. Through a strong control in the accounts of all ministries, from 1930 onwards expenditure has decreased and revenue has increased. However, between 1935 and 1940, expenditure increased slightly due to the burden of the numerous investments in public works carried out under the Economic Reconstitution Law, formalized in 1935.

4. THE GUILHOFREI DAM

The Guilhofrei or Ermal dam was one of the first to be built in the district of Braga, in the municipality of Vieira do Minho. It was inaugurated in 1939 by the Electro-Hydraulics Company of Portugal and preceded the construction of the Caniçada and Salamonde hydroelectric dams, also located in Vieira do Minho, and inaugurated as the most important hydraulic engineering work of the Ave Hydrographic Basin. In the 1950s. It is a dam of construction in gravity, built in masonry and concrete, reaching a height of 49 meters. Its reservoir has the capacity to store up to 21.2 million cubic meters of water.

5. THE GUILHOFREI DAM THROUGH THE REGIONAL PRESS

In this work we tried to establish a direct relationship with the sources. Therefore, the research was conducted only in the regional press, using the newspaper *Correio do Minho*. This daily newspaper was a local newspaper and was highly linked to the Regime, which makes it possible to perceive the importance of the public works carried out by Estado Novo in the district of Braga.

Undoubtedly, the news has propaganda purposes in order to enhance the Regime. The period chosen for the accomplishment of this work focused on the selection of the following chronological beacons: 1930 and 1941. Since the 1930s construction work began, in 1938 the dam was inaugurated and until 1941 there were works abroad for improvements. Between 1930 and 1936 the director of the newspaper was Álvaro Pipa. From 1936 to 1941, the date on which the articles were analyzed, the Director was Manuel Araújo.

During the consultation of the articles in the various editions of the newspaper, it is evident that the news predominates that give account of the appropriations or contributions of the Estado Novo to the municipalities and of inaugurations of several works. The perspective of the authors of the news is linked to a vision of improvement of the regime through the investments made in this region.

An example of this is Figure 1, which is a photographic article that shows several ongoing works of port restoration and dam construction being built in the district of Braga. This article is presented on a full page and refers to the compliment of the work carried out by the Estado Novo.

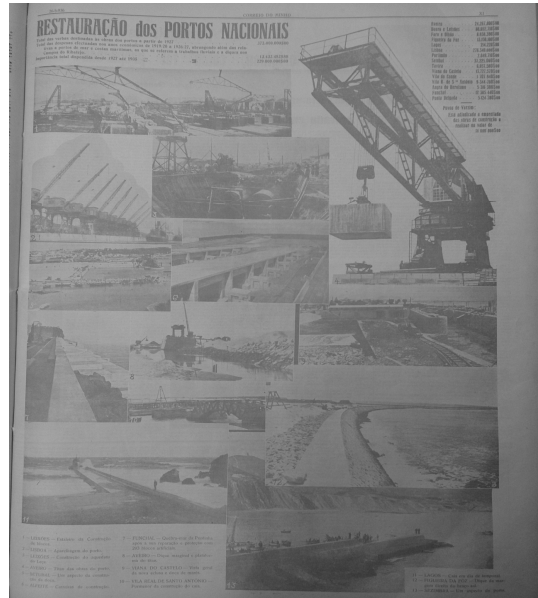


Figure 1 - Restoration of ports and construction of dams (Year X, 1936, 26 de May, nr. 3025, page 11).

Since Estado Novo began the public works program at the national level, the municipality of Vieira do Minho, in the Braga district, received several state subsidies to build the Guilhofrei dam. The dam is located in the river basin of the river Ave.

In figure 2, the article has the following title: «In Ermal: restoration and replacement of communications interrupted by the Guilhofrei dam». This news says that several roads and paths will be built and recovered that were destroyed by the construction of the dam.

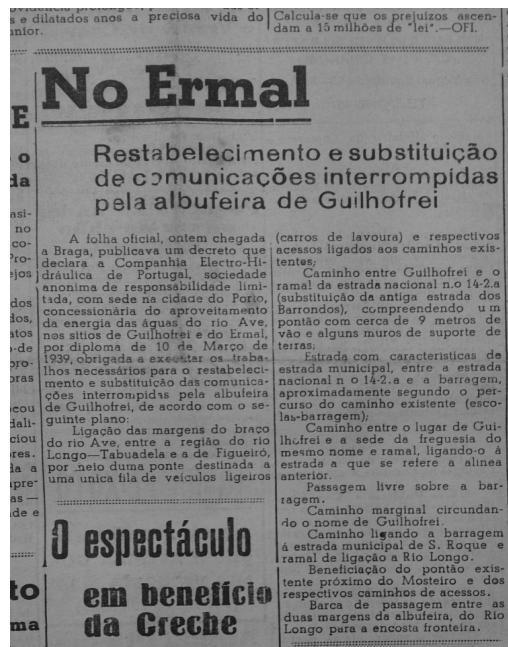


Figure 2 – In Ermal (Year XV, 1941, 4 de May, nr. 4541, page 1 (cover);

Figure 3 shows "that the works of the Ermal are in a fast pace and the great works of the Ermal continue. The house where the turbines will be set (Central) is very advanced and by September next must be completed. The channel is all complete. Only in the tunnel that continues to widen and to be paved, many people are employed. The machinery is already all over, only the sheet is missing to make the conductive tubing of the water.

On Sundays, groups of hikers pass by and admire with enthusiasm such a great and complete work, given the perfect degree of service performed there" (Correio do Minho, 1941: 1).

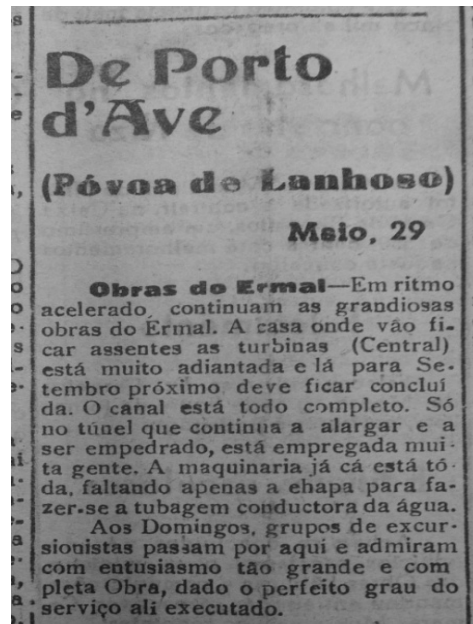


Figure 3 – Works of Ermal (Year XVIII, 1944, 30 May, nr. 5482, page 3);

It can be concluded that this article is pure propaganda to the Estado Novo, as guarantor of development of this region.

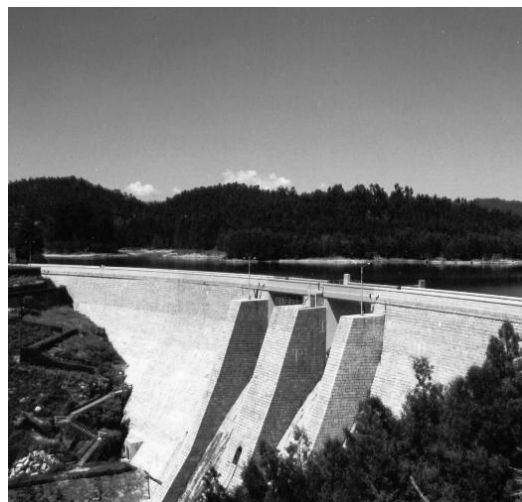


Figure 4 – Guilhofrei Dam or Ermal Dam (<https://www.cm-vminho.pt/97>)

Figure 5 presents the title of an article that highlights the great work and is entitled "the work of the Estado Novo: the electrification of the country as the basis of the fomentation and reorganization of industries".



Figure 5 – Electrification of country (Year XVIII, 1944, 21 June, nr. 5500, page 1 (cover);

The continuation of the previous news presents a sub-title «the work of the Estado Novo» (figure 6), referring to the new sources of energy and their distribution.



Figure 6 – The work of Estado Novo (Year XVIII, 1944, 21 June, nr. 5500, page 2 (cover);

6. CONCLUSION

Public works are characterized as an excellent instrument of political propaganda and glorification of the regime through articles in the regional press. The policy of public works quickly became one of the symbols of the administration of the regime, hence it could be said that this program had an ideological question.

It can be affirmed that the public works policy of the Regime had a triple objective: the development of the country in an integrated and territorial way, the creation of a national market and to express the image of Salazar's political power. In short, this policy of infrastructures adopted by the Estado Novo was only "possible thanks to the success of the policy of monetary and monetary stabilization". Without a doubt, the public works program was a success for the state.

In most of the articles on the construction of the dam, terms like "great work" are used and all point out that it is a work carried out by the Estado Novo. The various articles show that the construction of the dam allowed the economic development of the region, the decline of unemployment, the creation of new structures associated with the work, among others. In sum, motives are pointed out in the newspaper articles that dignify the regime's decision to build the dam.

In addition, articles in the regional press provide us with other information such as the budgets of the works, the people involved and, above all, the measures taken by the central authorities in the face of local and regional authorities.

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