The University of Porto in the path of European Science: innovations, exchanges and resistances during World War II

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Abstract
A worldwide reconfiguration of Science was boosted by II World War. In spite of its neutrality, Portugal has been involved in the advances and obstacles of the creation and transmission of knowledge. This essay takes the University of Porto as a case study and showcases the diversity of paths and efforts deployed towards the assertion of corporate identity and internationalization process: academic exchanges, conferences and events, research units, scientific publishing, etc. All these elements are within a political and ideological framework that defines the Portuguese dictatorial regime, which has created some resistances for innovation of the University and Science in mid-20th century.

Keywords: Estado Novo (1933-1974); University of Porto; History of science; History of education; Educational & science policies.

World War II (1939-1945) represented in the chapter of science a moment of great development of knowledge and technologies, in between the paradox of inhumanity and destructive chaos. As in other previous and current conflicts, the need to ensure greater effectiveness in the military operation, put new challenges to scientists and researchers from several countries, who responded with new theories of knowledge and innovations: nuclear fission, radar, computer, penicillin, the atomic bomb, etc. All this potential was encouraged
by major Nations at war, throughout setting up and funding of research programs, seeking superiority to defend their territory and society against the enemy…

However, due to the war’s global dimension, the international networks of Science ceased to feel the constraints imposed and were forced to make various reconfigurations for its continuity. Universities, institutes and laboratories sought to tackle a whole new context and international order: escape from eminent personalities, review of financial budgets, political coercion on its activities or restriction to personal and institutional exchanges abroad. Once again in a Europe stage of major clashes, for better or for worse, belligerence would interfere in academic and scientific ways.

The Estado Novo\footnote{The Estado Novo or New State was a authoritarian regime that presented itself as the 2nd Republic, inspired by some fascist ideals and that promoted typical values within the range of conservative, nationalist, corporatist and authoritarian ideologies. Despite being anti-liberal, the soviet threat after II World War allowed a certain diplomatic benevolence from the Western Block, irrevocably lost by its refuse to recognize the independence of the overseas colonies that led to the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974).} in Portugal (1933-1974), despite having declared its position of neutrality, was able in different areas to handle this diplomatic position in favor of the national cause. The friendly political and scientific relationships with the Axis and Allies forces, forged into an ambiguity of a non-intervention defined by António de Oliveira Salazar\footnote{António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), former professor of the Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra, was invited to Finance minister in 1928 and started a long-term political career. Thanks to his controlling of public debt and economic development, he assumed a increasing power inside government that was consolidated with the Constitution of 1933, that gave birth to the Estado Novo. Till 1968, Salazar served as prime minister and was the major figure on regulate and deciding the guidelines of Portuguese politics, always aiming to keep peace, social order and conservative values.}, could contribute to new directions of a scientific modernization as many Portuguese believed. The focus on a new emphasis on the phenomenon of internationalization of national Science and University, narrowing the Iberian peripheral isolation, might fight its cultural and technological backwardness and a closer approximation to international standards.

If we were not dealing with an autocratic regime, in which the political and ideological reasons assumed a decisive weight in many such claims of academic and scientific communities. The complex system of management of Portuguese Science between many departments subordinate to the central Government – Ministério da Educação Nacional, Junta Nacional de Educação, Instituto para a Alta Cultura and universities – established some barriers to scientific research and cultural relations by deciding evaluation and financing for individual and institutional projects. College professors and scientists were submitted to official surveillance, while applying for their integration and recognition in global programs and research networks, protecting the Estado Novo against the dangers of democratic and communist principles.