

## HOUSE AS IDEOLOGY IN THE AFFORDABLE HOUSES PROGRAMME OF THE ESTADO NOVO [1]

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### Abstract

*In April 1933 a new constitution was adopted in Portugal, establishing the Estado Novo (New State) regime, following the military dictatorship imposed in 1926. In September of the same year, a set of decrees was published, setting the foundations of the corporative state. One of those decrees determined the criteria to be adopted in the construction of Affordable Houses by the central government or with its support. That was the start of a housing programme that lasted until the end of the regime in 1974 and that was based on the single-family house.*

*Although it was in tune with similar laws from the Primeira República (First Republic, established in 1910), the choice for the single-family house reveals a conscious choice and an ideological statement by the regime. Several representatives were sent throughout Europe, even to “communist Russia”, to study housing programmes, and the small house was selected as a symbol of a Portuguese way of life, inspired in a mythical rural setting and in an obsession with a past that never existed outside of the nationalist imaginary.*

*The house represented in that Programme an ideal family and an ideal individual; it represented, in fact, the ultimate goal of the regime: setting an apolitical community, without further aspirations and comfortable with its place in society. In the first years of the Estado Novo, the architectural design of the affordable house is charged with the ideology of the state. This paper will focus on an analysis of the first years of the Affordable Houses Programme, revealing how the House and housing design were key factors in the creation of a state image, in a State that wished to be simultaneously New and conservative.*

**Keywords:** Housing Programmes, Single-Family House, Nationalism, Estado Novo

In 1933 the dictatorial regime imposed in Portugal after the coup of May 1926 [2] lost its military status. The government, since 1932 headed by Oliveira Salazar [3], wrote the new constitution, which was published in April 1933, and in the following months prepared a set of legislative orders that became the fundamental decrees of the new corporative state, the Estado Novo (New State). The drafts of those decrees were published in the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, to allow for the several social forces to react and propose changes to the legislation before it became official [4]. One of those decrees established the principles of the construction of affordable houses by corporative or public institutions, with the support of the State. The Affordable Houses Programme was, from the start of the Estado Novo

(New State), seen by the government as a central initiative in the framing of a new social order. Salazar himself had highlighted the main purposes of the Programme in March 1933, in a speech about the economical principles of the new constitution, placing family and private property in the centre of a new social order. For Salazar, the individual house, the family's own house, was the only solution for "life's intimacy" [5]. Even before the decrees were finalised, a speech by the newly vested Undersecretary for Corporations and Social Welfare, Pedro Teotónio Pereira [6], listed the housing issue as one of the priorities of the government: "as much as possibilities allow it, it will be sought to fill with sun, air and light the home of those who work" [7]. Housing had already been a concern for the previous regime, which had launched a similar programme in 1918, and the Estado Novo used that legislation as reference for the development of its own housing programme. For the Estado Novo there was, however, a need to make its power be noticeable in the new communities to be created.

The set of decrees that became official in September 23 1933 is no coincidence, as they all relate to the organization of work forces within the new corporative logic [8]. The Affordable Houses decree established a complex bureaucratic network of institutions that would be responsible for the programme. The promoter would be the government itself, with the support of or supporting initiatives by city councils or corporative institutions (such as the Guilds or Unions), and for each group of houses the cost was to be divided in half by the government and the respective institution. The projects were designed by a section (SCE [9]) - of the national entity in charge of public buildings and monuments, DGEMN [10]; the financial management was centred in a fund (FCE [11]) created at and managed by the public bank; and the houses were distributed by a section (RCE [12]) of the institute created also in 1933 to regulate work relations (INTP [13]). The SCE reported to the Ministry of Public Works and Communications, which had to approve every project, and the FCE and RCE reported to the Undersecretary for Corporations and Welfare. It is interesting that, through this organization, several national powers – the administrative, the economical and the *de facto* legislative power, the

cabinet of Salazar – influenced the development of the Affordable Houses Programme. What could be seen as an overlapping set of responsibilities was, in fact, a steep bureaucratic pyramid that was headed by Oliveira Salazar, who had a say in almost every aspect of the programme's organisation.

The decree created two types of houses, A and B, to be distributed according to the income of each family, and each type had three versions, with varying sizes according to the number of children in each household. Although the decree established a minimum number of 25 houses and a maximum of 100 per neighbourhood, those limits were never taken into account in the development of the programme. The Affordable Houses decree is, as many laws created by the Estado Novo, as important for what is said as for what is implied.

### **Ownership and Behaviour**

By focusing the Affordable Houses programme on a principle of resolvable property, in which a monthly rent included the payment of the house instalments and life and fire insurance, the regime was placing in writing some of its fundamental principles. The term "resolvable" is self-explanatory: the property is permitted by the state under some conditions that, if not strictly followed, could imply the loss of that property, and in several cases it did. This notion of pending threat was an instrument to which the Portuguese regime resorted not only on the Affordable Houses programme, and can be seen as an example of the management of "preventive violence" [14].

Simultaneously, the decree required the institution of a "homestead" principle ("casal de família"), using a law from 1920 [15] aimed mainly at protecting farmers' properties. This law determined that the family house could not be used as pawn to pay eventual debts, and suggested a concern for the stability of the family, seen by the regime as the basis of society. When the Affordable Houses decree's draft was published in *Diário de*

*Notícias*, a priority was readily announced: “the first experience to be carried out under this decree intends mostly, as it would be logical to suppose, to favour the working class, not just devoid of comfort, but of normal living conditions” [16]. However, the decree does not mention this goal and when the selection criteria are listed, the salary comes in 5<sup>th</sup> place. The priorities are the stability of the applicants’ jobs and their moral and professional behaviour and the monthly rents established were too high for most of the working class. The target seems to be an educated middle class, of higher income, that the regime had to keep satisfied.

When the bureaucratic network that was to be responsible for the Affordable Houses Programme was set, it was time to create the house that fitted the programme and the beliefs of the regime. This implied the selection of an image for the programme, which had to be a reflection of how the regime saw itself.

### **Study Missions and National Solution**

From very early on the dictatorial regime developed a practice of sending emissaries, - mainly architects and engineers - to different parts of Europe in missions to study the different solutions used in the design of public buildings. It is curious that the selection of the destinations was not, in most cases, related neither to the proximity between political regimes nor to similar conditions in which the buildings were created. It is, instead, a very wide selection of locations. For example, Porfirio Pardal Monteiro (1897-1957) visited Spain, France, Belgium, Holland and Italy to study current developments in maritime station design, as he was developing the projects for the stations of Alcântara and Conde d’Óbidos in Lisbon, and Guilherme Rebelo de Andrade (1891-1969) visited Spain, France, Belgium and Holland to study the design of theatres and museums. It must be stressed that Pardal Monteiro, a key figure in the construction of a state image in the Estado Novo, had visited Russia in 1932 as the Portuguese correspondent of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* and would visit Italy in 1937, with Duarte Pacheco [17], to see the new university buildings in Rome [18].

In August 1934, José Araújo Correia, administrator of the public bank, CGDP, was commissioned to visit Germany, Austria and Hungary, to study methods currently in use in affordable housing. Although at the time those countries were under authoritarian rule, both Germany and Austria had until very recently socialist regimes, and in both cases housing had been a subject of large investments. Arriving only close to one year after those regimes had been deposed, Araújo Correia had nothing to see but the results of socialist housing policies. In December of that same year, the assistant director of the SCE, Francisco Almeida Garrett, was in Italy for nearly a month to visit affordable housing examples – in this case, the products of a stabilized authoritarian regime with close proximities to the Estado Novo.

The fact that Araújo Correia was selected as a representative of the regime for the subject of affordable housing must be highlighted, even if the reasons for that selection are not clear. He had been a Minister for Commerce and Communications in the military dictatorship's cabinet of Vicente de Freitas in 1928, the first to include Salazar as Minister for Finances and Duarte Pacheco as Minister for National Instruction, and from 1929 to 1964 he was an administrator of CGDP, in charge of the analysis of the state's yearly finances for more than two decades. He is considered one of the pioneers of industrialist beliefs within the regime [19] and proposed in 1935 a law to improve the education of rural populations. That proposal, in which Daniel Melo has noted the confusion between "popular culture", the expression that titled it, and "rural culture" [20], and his role in the first steps of the Affordable Houses Programme, are symbols of the contradictory views inside the regime that, as we will see, will eventually force a transformation within the state that will be reflected in the Programme.

The timid initiatives of the industrialist faction of the regime were not able to unsettle the strength of a traditionalist belief in a rural mythology as the basis of society. This belief took over most of the regime's propaganda in the thirties and was a central factor in the delays that kept the Portuguese society, and particularly its industrial sector, mostly stagnant during that decade.

What must be stressed is that, when preparing and developing the Affordable Houses programme, the Portuguese regime had knowledge of the latest developments in housing and was certainly aware of the debates it had stirred across Europe in the previous decade. The choice for the single-family house was informed and a reflection of the regime's core beliefs; Jacome de Castro [21], head of the SCE, said it best in a 1935 lecture, stating that it seemed "complicated, that a machine, as some want it so strongly to be, could satisfy such demands" [22] as those of an Affordable House.



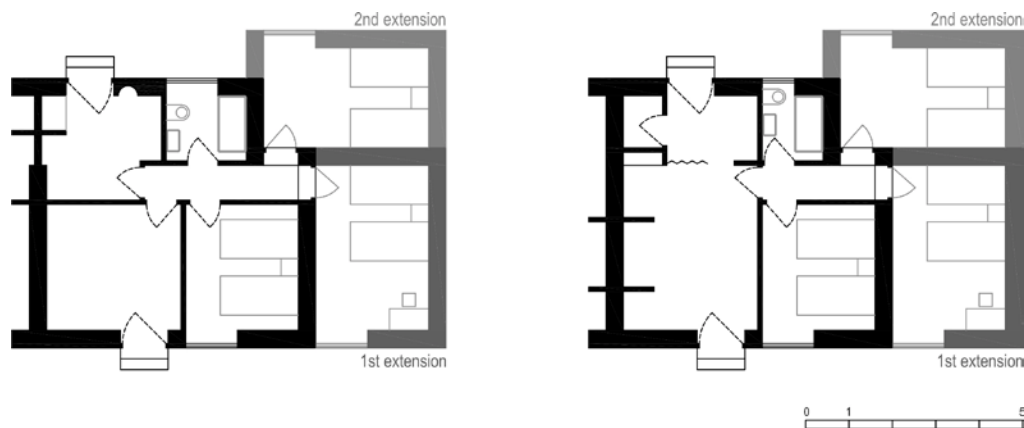
**Figure 1.** Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Condominhas, Porto, by Raul Lino and Joaquim Madureira, 1934-36. The archetypes of the small Portuguese house and of the rural village are the basis to the neighbourhood design. (source: Sistema de Informação do Património Arquitectónico)

That rural mythology is reflected in the choice for the independent house with a kitchen garden that was the core of the Affordable Houses Programme. The most conservative wing of the regime's nationalism resorted to the model of the rural village, the small house and the small yard where the family could grow its own food. The independent house, or at least the semi-detached house, was a metaphor for the priority of family

over community and of private over public. The House had to be inevitably Portuguese, even if there was not a consensus on what that meant.

### **The First Affordable Houses**

In 1934 Jácome de Castro proposed to Duarte Pacheco, Minister for Public Works and Communications since 1932, the name of Raul Lino [23], stating specifically that Lino was considered an expert in the subject of the Portuguese House. This was, naturally, not a casual choice. Lino was seen as an intellectual, educated abroad in romantic Germany, and his commissions by the state at the time included the refurbishment of national palaces, one of the first investments of the Portuguese dictatorship in the forging of a nationalist “self-respect”. Before, in 1932, Duarte Pacheco had asked Porfírio Pardal Monteiro to develop a type of House to serve as model for the government’s initiative. A letter from Pardal Monteiro to Duarte Pacheco reveals that study’s goal, proving the principles of the programme were established long before the decree was published: “a kind of cheap dwelling, independent home, susceptible even of, through conditions to be established, become the tenant’s own property” [24]. Pardal Monteiro had been the regime’s choice to establish an official image of the State, and by 1934 he had already completed the designs for the Instituto Nacional de Estatística (National Institute for Statistics) and the Instituto Superior Técnico (National Technical Institute, a public college mainly focused on engineering). When it was time to create an image for the Affordable Houses programme, the modernist practice of Pardal Monteiro was perhaps not what the regime was hoping for, and it was Lino’s work, or at least a superficial reading of it, that matched the regime’s vision.



**Figure 2.** Affordable Houses “City Type” and “Rural Type” developed by Raul Lino in 1934.

Lino developed an expandable house, able to be enlarged if the family needs demanded so. The basic model included one large family room, a small area for preparing meals, one room and a full bathroom. This model was repeated in the first neighbourhoods through all the continental territory, either in Vila Viçosa or Bragança; it had, however, small variations according to its location. Lino developed a “city type” and a “rural type”, and the difference was in the size of the family room, which in the rural type was slightly bigger and had a large fireplace. Following a similar logic, the neighbourhood of Olhão was the only one where there was not a pitched roof but a terrace, not only mimicking the traditional building techniques of the Portuguese South but also adapting to a mass construction plan a pragmatic use of the only way the locals knew how to build.

When presenting the Affordable Houses Programme in lectures across Brazil, Lino quoted Salazar and his speech of 1933 that we’ve mentioned before. The “individualist character” of the Portuguese people was, to Lino as to the regime, enough to decline collective housing.

When Lino describes the process of designing the Affordable House, he notes the steps taken to allow, as much as possible, for the standardization of construction elements in order to reduce construction costs. Simultaneously, he notes the studies developed to reduce the areas to a comfortable minimum. These studies are perfectly in line with the



development of modern housing in the previous decade, even if Lino himself would not acknowledge it. When describing the exterior – where the probable work of Lino is more noticeable – he states that “everything possible was done to deceive from the indispensable standardization”, as the worker arriving home “should certainly cherish not seeing around him industrial aspects that remind him of the mechanical processes and taylorism he must be sick of” [25]. So, the Affordable House resorts to the archetypes – the pitched roof, the little porch and the small window.



**Figure 3.** Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Braga, Joaquim Madureira, 1935-39. The model developed by Raul Lino was repeated in neighbourhoods across the country until the end of 1930s. (source: Sistema de Informação do Património Arquitectónico)

Even with those archetypes, the Affordable House design has certainly more elements of modernity in it than the programme’s developers would be able to publicize. It isn’t clear if the plan is the result of Raul Lino’s work or the product the first study by Pardal Monteiro. The latter is apparently more likely, but nonetheless this it is a design that works around an ideology to create a balanced plan, and the study of minimum spaces and the planning of future expansions are inevitably paralleled to debate on

*Existenzminimum* [26]. This constant contradiction is perhaps more noticeable in the Affordable Houses Programme than in much of the architecture sponsored by the state.

### **Stagnation and Sufferance**

As we've seen, if the first intention of the programme was to build houses for those who couldn't afford one, that intention was swiftly bended as the Affordable Houses decree itself prioritised job stability and moral behaviour.

In 1934, when the programme was barely starting, an architectural competition was prepared, but not launched, to create a large neighbourhood of 1050 houses in a part of Lisbon that corresponds roughly to the area that was, more than a decade later, subject to Faria da Costa's plan of Alvalade. The competition brief [27] is a statement on the regime's view of the Affordable House as an instrument, and particularly of the reflection of ideology in architectural practice.

The brief states the importance of the backyard as a kitchen garden to "stop the waste of free time from work in places of pernicious activities for intellectual life"; not that intellect was something to be developed, as the "new inhabitant [would] be saved from the effort of thinking where the domestic activities will take place". The way of life would be imposed to the inhabitant, stressing the educational role of the house. That educational role had, inevitably, a social charge. We've stated that the difference between the rural type and the urban type was related to the way to use the main room, that is, the way the family lives. This implied clearly a stagnation of a way of life: to each its place in society, and each should accept the sufferance his or hers place in society demanded.

There is a constant contradiction in the development of the Programme that is no stranger to the contradiction in the distribution of the houses; one must wonder if the full bathroom and the large family room implied, as advertised, the educational role of the house for the less educated classes - supposedly the target of the programme - or if they existed, instead,

because the growing middle class would not accept less than those “luxuries”, as those who criticised the programme called them.

It is clear, however, that for at least a sector of the state responsible for the Programme’s development, the educational and moral factors were fundamental elements of the design of the Affordable Houses. The regime feels the need to create the post of Neighbourhood Controller (“Fiscal”), to serve as a representative of the regime inside the community to control the behaviour of the other inhabitants. The Affordable Houses neighbourhoods would be simultaneously apolitical, as discussing politics was forbidden, and symbols of the regime and of the regime’s beliefs. The social role of the Programme was developed and clearly advertised.

### **Commemoration and Transformation**

One of the links between the Affordable Houses programme and the regime’s view of it as an ideological instrument and propaganda feature is its presence in moments of commemoration. The inaugurations of newly built neighbourhoods were used as celebrations of the regime’s work and, particularly in the first decade, presented stages in which prominent figures of the regime could expose their beliefs in speeches to be featured in official publications and in major newspapers.



**Figure 4.** The Affordable Houses Neighbourhood of Belém behind the Monastery of Jeronimos, Lisbon, in 1938-39. Construction works for the Portuguese World Exhibition of 1940 are visible on the bottom right (source: Biblioteca de Arte, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian).

Also interesting is the effort made to conclude neighbourhoods in time to stage those inaugurations in celebratory dates. The 1934 Lisbon competition brief stated that the large neighbourhood was to be inaugurated on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1936, the tenth anniversary of the “national revolution”; and, in 1938, a large plan was launched by the government to prepare the celebrations of the regime’s mythical year, 1940 [28], and again the importance of the Affordable Houses Programme is noted. In the same year of 1938 a decree by Duarte Pacheco forbade the construction of single-floor houses, basically eliminating the model developed by Raul Lino. That model represented poverty, it was now believed, and the Affordable Houses Programme had to stand for dignity and quality of life. Again, it is unclear if this was meant as a moral factor or as a way to make the programme more attractive for families of higher income. What is clear is

that in the end of the thirties a second stage of the Programme is launched which announced a transformation, as neighbourhoods were expanded with two-floor houses (the B type house had practically not been used until then), new neighbourhoods were planned, and new types of Affordable Houses were designed.

When the Programme entered its second decade, the world was different, and the regime was forced to adapt. The allies' victory in the Second World War was likely, and as the Portuguese government realised its inevitability the Affordable Houses Programme itself was transformed. In 1943 the decree 33.278 [29] ordered the construction of 4000 new Affordable Houses and established two new types of houses, C and D, of larger areas and for families with bigger income. It could not be a coincidence that this decree is published at the height of the difficulties caused by the rationing brought by the "economy of war".

The investment in Affordable Houses in that moment and the transformations in the Programme proved simultaneously that not only it was distancing itself more and more from the small salaries of the working class, but also that the new middle class was going to be a harder class to tame than was initially supposed. The modernising forces within the regime – which had representatives, as we've seen, with connections to the development of the Affordable Houses Programme – took control of the economical options of the regime and moved it towards a long due industrialization. The world was different, the society's demands were different and, by 1943, Nationalism was no longer enough.

[1] This paper is based in a PhD Thesis under development on the Affordable Houses Programme of the Estado Novo. In this text we will not consider the neighbourhoods that were started by the First Republic and inaugurated by the Estado Novo under that Programme. For more information on those neighbourhoods and their appropriation for propaganda purposes, see FERREIRA, Maria Júlia (1994), "O Bairro Social do Arco do Cego: uma aldeia dentro da cidade de Lisboa", in *Análise Social*,

vol. XXXIX (127), pp. 697-709 and TIAGO, Maria da Conceição (1997), *O Bairro Social da Ajuda-Boa Hora: Um projecto da República Nova e uma realização do Estado Novo 1918-1935*, Master Thesis in Contemporary Social History, Instituto Superior do Trabalho e da Empresa.

[2] See MATTOSO, José (1994), *História de Portugal – Vol. VII – O Estado Novo (1926-1974)*.

[3] António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) was Minister for Finances (1926, 1928-40) and President of the Ministers' Council from 1932 to 1968.

[4] *Diário de Notícias*, no. 24.249-24.254, August 5-10 1933.

[5] SALAZAR, António de Oliveira (1961), "Conceitos Económicos da Nova Constituição", in *Discursos*, Vol. I.

[6] Pedro Teotónio Pereira (1902-1972) was Undersecretary for Corporations and Social Welfare (1933-36), Minister for Commerce and Industry (1936-37) and Minister for the Presidency (1958-61), and was the Portuguese Ambassador in Madrid, London and Washington. He is considered one of the main developers of the corporative organization of the Estado Novo.

[7] PEREIRA, Pedro Teotónio (1937), "Corporações e Previdência Social: Primeiros Aspectos", in *A Batalha do Futuro: Organização Corporativa*, Lisboa: Livraria Clássica Editora, p. 62.

[8] Decrees 23.048, 23.049, 23.050, 23.051 and 23.052, *Diário do Governo*, Série I, no. 217/33. The decrees 23.048 to 23.052 establish, respectively, the general laws of work –*Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional* –, the guilds of employers – *Grémios* –, the Unions of Workers – *Sindicatos Nacionais* –, the organization of rural and agricultural workers – *Casas do Povo* – and a programme to build houses for public employees or unionised workers – *Casas Económicas*, or as we will call them, Affordable Houses.

[9] Secção das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Section).

[10] Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais (General Directorate for National Buildings and Monuments).

[11] Fundo das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Fund).

[12] Repartição das Casas Económicas (Affordable Houses Department).

[13] Instituto Nacional do Trabalho e da Previdência (National Institute for Work and Welfare).

[14] On the notion of preventive violence, and also on corporatism as an instrument of social control, see ROSAS, Fernando (2012), *Salazar e o Poder: A Arte de Saber Durar*, Lisboa: Tinta da China.

[15] Decree 7.033, in *Diário do Governo*, I Série, no. 298, October 16 1920, pp. 1356-1358.

[16] *Diário de Notícias*, no. 24.248, August 5 1933, p.6.

[17] Duarte Pacheco (1900-1943) was Minister for National Instruction (1928) and Minister for Public Works and Communications (1928-36 and 1938-43) and Mayor of Lisbon (1938-43).

[18] See MONTEIRO, João Pardal (2012), *Para o Projecto Global - Nove Décadas de Obra: Arte, Design e Técnica na Arquitectura do atelier Pardal Monteiro*, PhD Dissertation on Design, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade Técnica de Lisboa.

[19] MATTOSO, José, op. cit., p.265-266.

[20] MELO, Daniel (2001), *Salazarismo e Cultura Popular (1933-1958)*, Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.

[21] Fernando Galvão Jácome de Castro (1892-1964) was a Civil Engineer, chief engineer of the SCE and member of the Public Works General Council of DGEMN.

[22] CASTRO, Eng. Jácome (1936), "Bairros Económicos", January 26 1935, in *Problemas de Urbanização: Conferências Realizadas no Salão Nobre dos Paços do Concelho*, Lisboa: Câmara Municipal.

[23] On Raul Lino (1879-1974), see ALMEIDA, Pedro Vieira de (1970), "Raul Lino, Arquitecto Moderno", in *Raul Lino: Exposição Retrospectiva da Sua Obra*, Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

[24] MONTEIRO, Porfírio Pardal (1932), "Carta a Duarte Pacheco sobre Casas Económicas", in MONTEIRO, João Pardal, op. cit., vol.2, pp. 28-30.

[25] RAMOS, Rui Jorge Garcia, ROCHA, Marta, 2011, Reconstituição da conferência «Casas Económicas» proferida por Raul Lino no Instituto de Engenharia de S. Paulo, Brasil, em Junho de 1935, Arquivo Marta Rocha [documento digital].

[26] See COLLINS, Christine, SWENARTON, Mark (2008), "CIAM, Teige and the *Existenzminimum*" in SWENARTON, Mark, *Building the New Jerusalem*, Watford: IHS BRE Press, pp. 85-93.

[27] Realização de Concurso para o Anteprojecto de um Bairro de Casas Económicas do tipo de Cidade Jardim, a construir em Lisboa pela Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Crédito e Previdência, Arquivo Oliveira Salazar – Torre do Tombo, PT/TT/AOS/D-G/2/1/8.

[28] 1940 marked the anniversary of the crowing of the first King of Portugal, Afonso Henriques (1140) and of the independence from Spanish rule (1640).

[29] Decree 33.278, in *Diário do Govêrno*, Série I, no. 256, November 24 1943, pp. 823-827.

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