

**THE ROCK ART OF THE GUADIANA, THE
ALQUEVA DAM, AND THE UISPP
“INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION”: A PERSONAL
CLARIFICATION**

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The following document copied verbatim from the following
web site:http://www.ipa.min-cultura.pt/news/noticias/DecGuad/Ultimos_acontecimentos_Setembro_2001/The_Guadiana_Rock_Art_A_personal_clarification_by_Joao_Zilhao

In the last few months, the Alqueva dam and the Guadiana valley rock art have been the subject of some international interest. A report has been published in the Summer 2001 issue of the newsletter of the European Association of Archaeologists, an Internet petition was started, motions have been submitted to the governing bodies of at least one international organization. This activity follows on a spur of national media interest, which lasted between mid-April and mid-May 2001, following the announcement of new rock art ensembles in that valley. The latest in this string of events is the decision to send an “International Commission” to the Alqueva taken by the Permanent Council of the UISPP (Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et

Protohistoriques), in their September 7 meeting, held in the aftermath of the Liège 2001 conference of the Union.

The people behind all this activity have tried to present the situation as a “second Côa affair”. There are indeed many commonalities between the two, but there are also many differences. So, before I comment on the basic Alqueva facts and on the significance of the UISPP’s Commission, let me stress the first, and paramount, difference with the Côa. In 1994-95, opposition to the construction of the Foz Côa dam was unanimously voiced by the community of Portuguese archaeologists, as individuals, as members of academia, or through their professional associations. An international campaign developed in parallel to support this national movement. The current Alqueva controversy was started at the national level by environmentalist groups trying to use archaeological finds to boost their opposition to the Alqueva dam. They almost immediately dropped the argument, as soon as they realized that such a use was illegitimate and in fact counterproductive.

A very small number of Portuguese archaeologists picked up where they left off. No one questions their right to have an opinion, to spread it, and to try to win support for it. But the rest of the world should know that such an opinion has found no support among Portuguese professionals: the Alqueva campaign has not been supported by the body which represents University archaeologists, the CIUARQ (Inter-

University Commission for Archaeology); it has not been supported by neither of the two professional associations that exist in Portugal, the AAP (Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses) and the APA (Associação Profissional de Arqueólogos); it has not been supported by the Portuguese section of ICOMOS; it has not been supported by the IPA (Instituto Português de Arqueologia), the agency of the Ministry of Culture that supervises all archaeological activity in Portugal; and it has not been supported by the CNART (National Rock Art Research Center), the department of the IPA set up in the wake of the Côa affair to carry out the inventory, study and recording of the country’s rock art.

Today, September 19, I looked up the Alqueva Internet petition page <http://www.petitiononline.com/Alqueva/petition.html>. Several months after it was launched, only 1409 persons had signed it. A small minority identify themselves as Portuguese, and among those signatures I could only recognize a handful that belong to individual archaeologists. I also recognized the names of the under age children of some of them.

A bit of history and context

The notice published in the newsletter of the EAA is signed by Mila Simões de Abreu, in her capacity as representative of IFRAO (International Federation of Rock Art Organizations) in Portugal. Together with other documents from the same

source that were made widely available internationally, it features my name, in full. I quote: "As the current President of the IPA, Prof. Dr. João Zilhão, was severely critical of a similar situation during the fight to save the Côa rock art area, IFRAO urges him to show his total opposition to the destruction of the Guadiana rock art area". Given that those behind the Alqueva campaign have so clearly enhanced the personal aspect of the current controversy, I have no choice but to deal with that aspect as well, and I will.

Because the memory of men is short-lived, it is perhaps worthy of mention that the Alqueva Internet petition was started by Robert Bednarik, an Australian rock art amateur who for many years posed as a "rock-art dating expert". In 1995, he managed to be hired by EDP, the company building the Foz Côa dam, after having written a letter to EDP's Management Board, dated March 24, 1995, where he infamously stated that, if the Côa valley engravings were proved to be of post-Paleolithic age, as he thought, the interest of the site would be greatly diminished and construction of the dam could continue without further ado. In his own words: "if the art were to be shown post-Paleolithic, its importance would diminish dramatically and the controversy concerning its preservation would be largely resolved". When, in July 1995, fulfilling his own prophecy, he wrote a report to EDP proclaiming that his research had proven that the Côa valley art was indeed recent, he also

asked EDP "to exercise the tact and compassion of giving these scholars [the Portuguese archaeologists who had been arguing that most of the Côa valley art was of Paleolithic age] the opportunity of distancing themselves from their previous pronouncements".

The nature of these statements should be sufficient to make it clear that Robert Bednarik's activity has nothing to do with any kind of "unselfish" desire to preserve the world's rock art. In fact, had it been left up to him, the Foz Côa dam would have been built and what is today a World Heritage site would have been lost forever under more than 120 meters of water and silt.

A huge pile of scientific arguments, published in several peer-reviewed journals, has since demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt the Paleolithic age of the Côa rock art. This research was led by myself: at first, throughout 1995, as a University of Lisbon archaeologist; subsequently, in 1996-97, as director of the PAVC (Côa Valley Archaeological Park). Ever since his "dating" was exposed, Robert Bednarik and his Portuguese friends, Mila Simões de Abreu among them, have pursued a relentless campaign of slander and insult against myself and my colleagues in the PAVC and the CNART. In a string of papers published in the "AURA Bulletin", "Rock Art Research", "Tracce", and others, they have gone to the extent of accusing us of "professional vandalism" and of "destroying the scientific

evidence that would prove us wrong". These accusations were based on the fact that, in order to record the numerous fine line engravings that represent the large majority of the Côa valley rock art, we had partly removed some of the lichen covering a few of the Côa panels. Reading those papers and interpreting his actions throughout the Côa controversy, I formed the opinion that Bednarik's behaviour was incompatible with proper scientific debate, and I therefore made the decision that I would never reply to his numerous and repetitive attacks. I maintained that decision when I learned about the Alqueva Internet petition, and I am maintaining it.

I hope the above suffices to explain why, in the text below, I will not respond to the contents of the petition. My only purpose in beginning this message with the historical introduction above is to make it clear that there is indeed a strong personal content in the current controversy. Colleagues should try to make their own minds on the substance of the matter, not on the basis of the personal politics involved. But the controversy cannot be fully understood if full knowledge of its different components is not made available. And, even if the Alqueva is not simply a "second Côa", what is happening today in the Guadiana cannot be seen in isolation from what happened six years ago in the Côa, if nothing else because at least some of the persons involved are the same. In fact, in May 1997, after setting up the PAVC, I was appointed

director of the newly created IPA. I still hold that position and, therefore, I am the person ultimately responsible in Portugal, at the technical level, for the management of the situation at Alqueva.

I assume full responsibility for the work being carried out at Alqueva, and I assume it with the background of having led the scientific campaign to save the Côa valley rock art, of having led the team that studied and recorded it, of having directed the creation of the Côa Valley Archaeological Park, and of having prepared the nomination of the Côa valley rock art to the World Heritage list. It is also perhaps worthy of notice here that Portugal itself is the only country in the world that ever stopped a dam to preserve a major rock art site, even if that was made at the cost to the Portuguese taxpayer of 125 million US dollars, that is, of 12.5 US dollars per inhabitant. For comparison, that cost is the equivalent, in the United States, of spending something like 3.5 billion US dollars to preserve an archaeological site, or, in France, of spending some 5000 million francs for the same purpose. To my knowledge, nothing even remotely approaching this scale was ever done by any other country. So, these are the credentials, in terms of commitment to preserve rock art, of the country where the Alqueva dam is located.

Above, I mentioned the Portuguese associates of Robert Bednarik in the slander campaign against the Côa Valley Archaeological Park. They are also involved in the

current Alqueva campaign. Besides Mila Simões de Abreu, who authors the notice published in the newsletter of the European Association of Archaeologists, there is also Luiz Oosterbeek, who teaches at the Tomar Polytechnic School. Where this colleague is concerned, all those who wish to form an independent opinion on this issue should also be aware of the following facts. In November 1995, once a newly elected government decided to stop the Foz Côa dam, the Portuguese Minister of Culture appointed a three-person Commission to design and prepare a new, separate, administration for archaeology, subsequently to become the IPA, which I currently direct. Luiz Oosterbeek was a member of this Commission. In September 1996, the Minister disbanded the Commission, among other reasons because of his involvement in the hostile activities of Robert Bednarik against the recently inaugurated Côa Valley Archaeological Park.

In the framework of the very intense political activity that accompanied the campaign to stop the Foz Côa dam and to set up a new administration, differences of opinion among colleagues arose, battles were fought, won, and lost. This is all natural and healthy, and part of the democratic process. But there can be no democracy when those whose action (a vote, a signature) is asked for are not fully informed. Only in possession of all the facts can we make up our own minds on the different factors that influence the positions of the political actors, which are always a complex combination of

social and personal beliefs and interests. I have no intention of suggesting that Abreu and Oosterbeek's activities are motivated by anything else than a genuine desire to expose what they see as the wrongdoings of Portuguese authorities in the Alqueva. But colleagues around the world who wish to form an opinion should also be aware that, besides issues of fact and differences of opinion, there is also a personal factor in all of this, at the national as well as at the international level.

The substance of the matter

Construction of the Alqueva dam, which will create the largest reservoir in Europe, was hotly debated in Portugal for decades. Its supporters argued that it could provide the water supply needed to boost irrigation agriculture and promote the economic development of the region. Its opponents argued that the poor soils of the region could not sustain irrigation and that the cost of the water would make the whole scheme economically impractical. More recently, the argument changed somewhat. Opponents argued that the products of irrigation agriculture in the European Union were in surplus and that, given the Union's agricultural policy, the investment made no sense. On the other side, it was argued that the warming climate was bringing desertification to interior southern Portugal and that a major water reservoir was a

strategic need given the growing urban demand for water supply.

Preparatory construction work began in the late 1970s, but the project was stalled soon after because of the major economic difficulties undergone by Portugal in the early 1980s. A decision to continue was made by the Portuguese government a decade later, in the early 1990s. A company called EDIA was set up to build the dam. As part of the process, new environmental impact assessment studies were carried out, and the corresponding mitigation measures were discussed and approved.

Where archaeology is concerned, the need to carry out a systematic survey of the area was recognized early on. Already in 1980, a special resolution passed by the Portuguese government ordered the creation of a Commission for that purpose. This work continued, albeit with low intensity, underfunded and understaffed, throughout the decade of interruption in construction work. In 1996, EDIA set up a department to organize the archaeological salvage of the area to be inundated. The first task of this department was that of preparing a frame of reference and specific mitigation measures. This several hundred-page document was largely publicized and discussed. Although it was recognized that several weaknesses existed, a consensus was reached in the profession that this was a valuable and sound basis on which to organize the salvage process.

In 1997, EDIA and IPA signed a joint declaration setting the rules for the final stage of the mitigation process. EDIA would be responsible for selecting and hiring the different teams needed to carry out the salvage work, whereas IPA, as a regulatory authority, would accompany the process in order to make sure that the mitigation plan was applied as agreed. A total of 5 million US dollars, 2% of the project's budget, was set aside for the archaeological salvage operation, which began in 1998. More than one hundred archaeologists, from both private companies and the Universities, have been involved and, as a result, our knowledge of the area's archaeology has been significantly enriched: 222 sites of all periods had been tested or excavated by April 2001.

It was expected from the beginning that new sites would be discovered as soon as fieldwork began. The contracts signed by EDIA with the different teams included a component of further survey and, in fact, for some periods, the major sites that were to be excavated were only found after 1998. Such is the case, in particular, of what is arguably the most important archaeological find made in the Alqueva area: the Epipaleolithic camp site of Barca do Xarês de Baixo, an extremely well preserved ensemble of hearths extending over more than 1000 sq. meters, at a depth below surface which in places can be of up to 4 meters. A string of Iron Age settlement sites that radically changed our knowledge of the period was also found and partially excavated.

As is always the case in such situations, the salvage operation does not have the aim of completely excavating or completely recording every single piece of archaeological heritage that exists in the area. The size of the reservoir (25,000 hectares) makes it clear that such an aim would be totally unrealistic. It is a prior assumption of any salvage operation of this kind that many sites will not be found and will be inundated without having been identified, and it is also clear that most sites will be excavated only partially. The purpose of the salvage operation is to obtain as much information as possible from a sample of the archaeological record preserved in the area.

Several locations with rock art were identified early on, but none was situated below the future water level. As survey and excavation work progressed, new finds were made. In November 2000, the Spanish authorities reported that a rock art site existed in Spanish territory, in a section of the Guadiana valley located at the tail of the reservoir which, therefore, would be inundated under shallow waters once the reservoir was filled. EDIA immediately negotiated with the Badajoz Museum the beginning of the recording work, which effectively started in January 2001, and resulted in the identification of a few hundred panels with Neolithic and later anthropomorphic and abstract motifs (434 as of July 2001). A few panels also include fine-line zoomorphic engravings in Paleolithic style: the number of such figures identified as of

today, September 19, 2001, after several months of research, is eight.

In mid-April 2001, more rock art finds were made in the same area, but this time in Portuguese territory. These finds, and all the information related to them (maps, descriptions, photos), were made public, including web site posting [http://www.ipa.mincultura.pt/news/noticias/DecGuad/First %20news](http://www.ipa.mincultura.pt/news/noticias/DecGuad/First%20news)), on the same day they were reported to the IPA: April 26, 2001. CNART, with EDIA support, immediately responded to the situation. A team of 20 archaeologists and technicians was sent to the field to record these new sites, which they did between mid-May and mid-August 2001: 75 km of the margins of the Guadiana and tributaries were systematically combed, and 200 panels with the same range of Neolithic anthropomorphic and abstract motifs were recorded. The Spanish team continues to work, and the Portuguese team will go back to the sites in October to carry out nocturnal photography, which cannot be done in the summer because of mosquitoes.

Among the different categories of archaeological sites that will be affected, rock art is but one. Unlike the others, however, it can be safely assessed that most, if not all of it, will be recorded. Unlike the others, this rock art will also suffer very little, if anything, with the submersion. Although this basic fact tends to be omitted in the statements that have been made by those behind the Alqueva campaign, the vast

majority of the rock art of concern here is located in the river bed or in the floodplain, that is, it has been regularly under water, in the Winter, or variably covered by river sands and gravel, in the Summer, for several millennia. A significant portion of the work carried out over the last few months consists precisely in taking advantage of the dry season to remove the river-bottom sands from under which outcropping boulders are visible, in order to find out whether they are decorated, and record them if that's the case. The fact that this art is still here today to be the subject of this debate is sufficient evidence that it will not be seriously affected by a period of submersion under shallow waters (at most one hundred years) once the Alqueva reservoir is filled.

In this case, therefore, the loss involved in the inundation is mainly a loss of visibility. Since many other rock art sites of the same period and of the same kind exist both in Portugal and in other European countries, we will not be deprived of something unique, as would have been the case if the Foz Côa dam had been built. In this situation, the IPA, as well as the community of Portuguese archaeologists, believes that exhaustive recording and publication, and the display of contextualized replicas in a Museum dedicated to the archaeological heritage of the inundated area, is appropriate and sufficient mitigation. This is recognized even by those behind the last international Alqueva events. The motion submitted to the Liège conference, for instance, does

not ask for construction of the dam to be stopped (which would in any case be impossible, given that the dam is already built). Environmentalist groups in Portugal are not asking that either: their demand is that the reservoir be filled up to elevation 139, instead of elevation 152, which is irrelevant in terms of the rock art concerned, all of it located below elevation 139.

I fully acknowledge the possibility that the diagnosis of the situation made by Portuguese archaeologists and the Portuguese government could be wrong. However, throughout the whole process, Portuguese law, European Union directives, and the Malta convention, were strictly enforced. This is another difference with the Côa, where part of the problem lay in the fact that several recommendations of the environmental impact assessment had not been followed, and in the fact that initial discovery of the rock art sites was kept secret for two years. In the Côa case, therefore, there were errors, and it was only fair that Portugal paid for those errors, as it did. That is not the case in the Alqueva, but in the Alqueva too there is an issue of costs. So, those of you in other countries who believe that the Alqueva should not be built, or that filling up the reservoir should be delayed, should not stop short of that issue. Signing a petition is not enough. If, in spite of our opinion, you firmly believe otherwise, you must also address your own governments and ask them to be ready to pay for the bill.

The UISPP Commission

In the Liège 2001 UISPP conference (September 2-7), a motion was submitted, and approved, by the participants in the session on rock art that took place in Room R on September 3. Nowhere was it advertised that the political situation at Alqueva was going to be discussed there, and the session ran in parallel with many others, as is usually the case in large conferences, so that only one side could present its arguments to the participants in that session. I learned that such a motion had been passed on September 5, not from anyone in the UISPP but from a journalist. On the night of September 4, I had already been able to discuss the Alqueva with the President of the UISPP, Pierre Bonenfant, in the presence of Marc Groenen, a colleague from the University of Brussels. I made myself available, as a member of the Permanent Council and director of the IPA, to provide the UISPP with a report on the situation, if asked to.

Instead of following the normal procedure of asking for such a report before making any decision, the Permanent Council of the UISPP instead decided, on September 7, to endorse the motion and, also, to send an "International Commission" to the Alqueva. I know of the text of the motion from a Portuguese journalist. The UISPP never provided a copy, even though I formally asked Jean Bourgeois, the secretary-general of the Union, to be given one, which I did in my capacity as director of the IPA and member of the

Permanent Council, through a September 10 e-mail message and a September 11 fax. In his reply to me, through a fax message sent September 13, Jean Bourgeois said that the text approved by the Permanent Council was the same as that passed in Room R, with some modifications, but he didn't provide the final text. I can only use, therefore, the text provided by the journalist, which is as follows: "Having been informed by the Europeart network of the discovery of more than 600 rocks in the Guadiana valley, in an area that will be inundated by the reservoir of the Alqueva dam, the UISPP thinks that everything should be done in order to exhaustively record and protect the engravings and in order to make sure that their systematic study is undertaken before the reservoir is eventually filled.

"UISPP believes that the rock art ensemble of the Guadiana, given the number of rocks and their chronological and stylistical diversity, is of world value, and opens new perspectives for the understanding of the anthropisation of the territory.

"UISPP thinks that all necessary means must be made available to the teams at work in the Guadiana. In particular, UISPP considers that a solid coordination of the scientific work on both sides of the frontier, with a global definition of recording methods, is fundamental to warrant future interpretation and publication.

“UISPP makes its resources and competences available to help the teams in the field. In particular, UISPP accepts the invitation of the Europeart network for an International Commission to travel to the Guadiana.”

Apart from the irresponsible presumption that the value of a site can be decided upon by the vote of a small group of people attending a conference session, most of this text, in itself, is totally innocuous, and one can hardly understand what purpose it serves, unless one believes that not enough time and not enough means have been made available by the Portuguese government, or that no coordination exists between the Portuguese and Spanish teams. However, no evidence is provided in the motion that such is the case. The colleagues directing the rock art studies in the Alqueva are António Martinho Baptista, in Portugal, and Hipolito Collado, in Spain. They have never complained about lack of time, lack of means, or lack of coordination. On the contrary, they have declared several times that they would be able to complete the recording work well in advance of inundation, that EDIA had provided them with all the means they required, and they are helping each other in the process.

It is clear, therefore, that the only concrete and practical aspect of the motion is the decision to send an “International Commission”. On what authority, and with what mission, however, is not clarified. Once I learned, through the September 8 issue of the Portuguese weekly

newspaper *EXPRESSO*, that this Commission existed, I formally asked Jean Bourgeois, through the e-mail message and fax mentioned above, to confirm or correct the information given by *EXPRESSO*, not only concerning the text of the motion, but also regarding the composition of the Commission, its mandate, and the dates of its arrival. I got no reply to these specific points, but I did get the statement that the UISPP “believes that it is its duty, wherever that seems to be necessary, to intervene in order to make sure that the archaeological heritage is protected or that enough time is given for its study”. When confronted with them, Jean Bourgeois did not deny either that three other statements regarding the Commission which appeared in *EXPRESSO* were exact. Such statements are the following:

1. That the Conference decided “to send an International Commission of Experts in Prehistory to the Alqueva, with the purpose of finding about the ongoing state of the study of the Guadiana rock art and emphasize that the Portuguese authorities provide enough time for the study to be completed”.
2. That “the visit intends to represent a warranted evaluation of the quality and importance of the rock art heritage, which will be formalized in documents to be sent to the Portuguese and Spanish governments and UNESCO” (statement

attributed to Marcel Otte, secretary-general of the Liège conference).

3. That the Commission members are Jean Bourgeois, Marcel Otte and Muiris O'Sullivan and their visit is scheduled for September 19-22.

It is clear, therefore, that the UISPP is "intervening", and that the Commission has an inspective nature. Given that this is its mandate, it becomes relevant to discuss the process through which it came into being. Here are the facts:

1. The UISPP decided that its intervention was necessary in a given country, without first conferring with the colleagues from that country who were members of the Permanent Council at the time of the decision. I have since resigned, but I was a member of the Council then, and I was present in the Liège conference. Apparently, however, no one in the directive bodies of the UISPP thought that it was a good idea to discuss the topic with me before deciding anything, in spite of the fact that I had alerted the UISPP President himself to the need for following proper procedure.

2. The UISPP decided that its intervention was necessary in a given country, without first asking that country's archaeological authorities for information on the matters relating to the intervention. This is in spite of the fact that the

person most responsible for that country's archaeology was a member of the Permanent Council, and that he had already made himself available to provide any information the UISPP might require.

3. The UISPP decided to send an inspective commission to a given country, without first asking that country's professional associations and administrative authorities whether they agreed that such an inspection was necessary or welcome.

4. The UISPP decided that such a commission would visit archaeological sites in the country without first asking the colleagues in charge of research at those sites whether they agreed to the visit and authorized it.

5. The UISPP decided on the dates upon which the inspection would take place without first conferring with the colleagues and institutions concerned whether they would be available in those dates in case the commission decided that it needed to consult with them.

6. The UISPP decided to send a commission to inspect on a rock art situation, but the commission itself is composed of colleagues with no known experience in rock art studies and from countries where rock art is virtually non-existent.

I must also note that the UISPP apparently does not know the meaning of the word "invitation". An individual or an institution can only be invited to Portugal if some Portuguese person or Portuguese institution with jurisdiction asks them to come. In this context, a "network" of whatever nature and composition does not qualify as a host. The "International Commission" may travel freely in Portugal, as stipulated by the Schengen agreements, but it will not be able to state that it was invited.

I will stop here. I believe this is sufficient to define the extremely dangerous precedents that are being set. I can only explain the behaviour of the UISPP under the assumption that its directive bodies believe that they have some kind of God-given right to go around the world spreading the Gospel of what they think is the right thing to do. Personally, on the merits of the Alqueva situation alone, I would have ignored the UISPP Commission, given that its scientific credentials are nil. But the precedent should worry us all, and I feel that it is my duty to explain to all those concerned by the Alqueva or the activities of the UISPP why such "International Commissions" should not be tolerated. Watch out, you could be next.

CONCLUSION

This turn of events is very unfortunate for two other reasons. First, at the national level, because it only serves to create

confusion, and boost a rejection of archaeology by the media and the public — "those folks who never know what exactly it is they want and are always fighting each other anyway". The first elements of such a rejection are already there, and this only serves to undermine the authority of the IPA and other heritage agencies to implement the kinds of procedures dictated by the Malta convention with regard to rescue archaeology. Second, at the international level, because archaeological heritage is not properly looked after in most parts of the world (just to give an example, Belgium, the country of origin of two of the members of the UISPP Commission, is probably the only country in Europe that lacks proper and specific legislation for the protection of archaeological heritage), and because conflicts such as those created by the situation in the Côa valley in 1994-95 may arise again, in Portugal or elsewhere. That is bound to happen, and international action by the profession is bound to be necessary again. These kinds of "International Commissions" only serve to undermine the potential success of such future initiatives.

Portugal is a very open country, where archaeologists from different nationalities have always been welcome and where many research projects are conducted by foreigners with no restrictions whatsoever. At our invitation, or at their request, many colleagues from different countries have already visited the Alqueva, or worked there. The year 2000

Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, held in Lisbon, offered participants the opportunity of a pre-Conference excursion to the Alqueva, so that the work carried out there could be presented and discussed. All colleagues who wish to come and see with their own eyes what is being done will be welcome. But we will not accept "inspections" by "Commissions" that lack any legitimacy and that are constituted on the basis of a shocking ignorance of the basic rules of courtesy, not to mention those of professional ethics.

To conclude, I hope I have been able to clarify my point of view concerning the situation at Alqueva, the reasons why I find the behaviour of the UISPP in this affair unacceptable, and the reasons why I resigned from its Permanent Council. I also hope I was able to convince you of the differences between this situation and that of 1994-95 in the Côa valley, although, in some aspects, those who claim that the Alqueva is a second Côa do have a point. But, as a great nineteenth century social scientist put it, when history repeats itself, the first time it's a tragedy, the second time it's a comedy.