



A history of challenges and overcoming

This book pays fair tribute to those who have undertaken to prevent the collapse of water supply in several regions of the State of São Paulo, especially in the Metropolitan Region, during the exceptional drought that lasted 27 months (from December 2013 to February 2016). For almost half of that period, SABESP was under the competent direction of President Dilma Pena; in the other half, from January 2015, under my direction. It is an exciting text with expressive images that record a period marked by the dedication and competence of a number of heroes who the author prefers not to name, possibly not to commit lapses. I pay tribute to all of them in the person of director Paulo Massato, who skillfully commanded what could be called as "metropolitan operation."

The "crossing of the desert," as we used to call this troubled passage in the history of São Paulo, shows that we Brazilians, such as other people who have faced wars and natural disasters, are also capable of overcoming vicissitudes, once there is organization, perseverance, dedication and knowledge. These pages portray extremely challenging moments whose overcoming was possible due to the positive combination of actions, starting with the fierce mobilization of SABESP's professionals, who did not spared efforts to execute, in record time, a large number of emergency works that increased water supply, operational flexibility of the production systems and mitigated pipeline losses. The contribution of the population, who quickly understood the seriousness of the situation and started to save water, was another fundamental aspect to avoid the worst.

When I took over the presidency of SABESP, the water stock in the various reservoirs, including the technical reserves, was less than 5%. With the prospect of impending collapse, one must work intensely, hoping for the best and being prepared for the worst. That is what we did. In addition to reducing pressure on the networks and carrying out emergency works, we tried to put together an emergency plan that would maintain the supply of large hospitals, penitentiaries and hemodialysis centers if the worst were to happen.

The "battle" was fought both on the work fronts and in the offices, where there were numerous skirmishes with some members of control bodies interested in finding guilty parties for a Nature event that, with the data available until then, was revealed of very low probability (0.004, equivalent to a recurrence time of 250 years). There were lots of "prophets of the apocalypse," hoping for the worst, to make terrible days for São Paulo society, with disproportionate journalistic coverage compared to more balanced and technically prepared voices. In this environment, keeping calm and focusing on the public interest was essential. To this end, the frequent meetings with Governor Geraldo Alckmin were a great help. Alckmin, together with Secretary Benedito Braga, spared no effort to help and guide SABESP in the difficult crossing.

Looking at the crisis through a rearview mirror, as it is now seen, does not mean removing the risk of water scarcity from the agenda of priorities. On the contrary, we are committed to completing the essential works to ensure normal supply if such an unfavorable hydrological condition will occur in the future. The crisis has taught us a lot. This text fulfills the essential role of perpetuating valuable lessons to SABESP, scholars and managers of water resources and the population. A crisis provides an opportunity for improvement that cannot be missed. Good reading!

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