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Opinion – Sou Ciência: Science to fight fascism

By Michael

For those who still had doubts that we were living in a coup context, the already historic day of 01/08/23 fully proved what was already being warned, based on countless pieces of evidence. And the new government was surprised by the failure or coup of the very State “Intelligence” groups that should have warned and taken action – and this needs to be quickly reversed. Universities have a lot to collaborate in the fight against coup d’état and in the reconstruction of this pro-democracy intelligence, on several levels, as we will propose in this article.

There is no doubt that the authoritarian, militia, military, mafioso and fascist movements in Brazil today are not fleeting or small, they are here to stay and they are not playing around. What could just be a war of narratives is, first and foremost, a total war – which is fought in an insidious way in Brazil, behind the scenes and in the streets, without rest and without retreat, in a hybrid and combined way.

On the other hand, it is the first time that a Democratic State of Law in Brazil leads to the arrest, in significant numbers, of right-wing militants and soldiers (in the Integralist uprising of 1937, the dictator, Getúlio, fought back). We are facing a historic event and its consequences. And we cannot lose command of the situation and the national unity that was temporarily formed in the face of the rejection of the events of 1/8.

So let’s get to our point. Adopting the self-explanatory title of Márcia Tiburi’s 2020 book (more current than ever) “How to defeat turbo techno male nazi-fascism” – or whatever name you want to give to the evil that we must overcome – a complement is in order: what the role of universities and science in this battle? We, at SoU_Ciência, propose 4 initial tasks, some already in progress and all to be strengthened and organized:

1) To studysearch and understand the rise of the new extreme right in Brazil, its fascist traits, its international connections with the global movement and with the structural underbelly of our local history of predation and violence. Studies on authoritarianism in Brazil, from colonial slave rule, to integralism and dictatorships in the 20th century, are already classic and relatively well-studied themes, but the new-extreme-right brings challenges at various levels, methodological, data access and the researchers’ own safety and integrity. At least since 2013 there has been a mobilization in universities to study Brazilian proto-fascism, as a social movement, as coup factions and groups, with field research, many publications, some forums and congresses, and nascent research centers, now forming collaboration networks and creating greater organicity, including internationally, since this is a remarkable global phenomenon in the last decade. It is necessary to give visibility and support in promoting research to strengthen and expand these groups and bring their results more widely to public knowledge.

2) Therefore, the second point is precisely collaborate to broaden the public debate on the topic, together with the media, social movements, youth, bringing information, showing what it is, who they are, what they have done and where the action of these groups can take us, presenting recent cases of the global reactionary wave or the history of different fascisms in the world. For this, as we have already insisted on other occasions (for example, as has happened with the Covid-19 pandemic), universities and researchers need to go even further outside their walls to dialogue with society, in a clear and agile way, and work in collaboration with journalism, audiovisual, network communicators and influencers, education at all levels, movements, organizations and institutions that are at the forefront in the defense of democracy. We need to create impact and access to reliable and attractive information to the general public, historically and scientifically based, to face the avalanche of lies and denialist revisionisms.

3) Review curricula and teaching material that the years of the Bolsonaro government may have put into practice, propagated completely distorted, ideological and empirically unfounded visions. And this with the involvement of school communities at all levels of education, including the new civil-military schools and the former military schools, which are public, and tell a fantastic story of Brazil and the military’s own actions. In addition, it is urgent to listen to the population about the reform of secondary education and its revision, since it significantly reduced fundamental contents, training in the area of ??humanities and for citizenship to focus on a training path aimed at a narrow professionalization that aims at an entrance subalternized in the market, leaving citizen education for democracy in the background. This even involves the formation of values ??for democratic coexistence, acceptance of difference, tolerance, the way to build consensus,

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solidarity and cooperation – and it is not the restriction of coexistence in a “traditional Brazilian family” model that will do this, “at home”, as the extreme right preaches.

4) Formulation and execution of clear public policies, where universities will collaborate with intelligence to defeat coup and neo-fascist agents and organizations in Brazil, its cells, ideologues, financiers and criminal organizations. Only a coordinated action with government, inter-ministerial and legislative power can actually create actions to change the anti-democratic environment. January 8 made it clear that the State intelligence system is contaminated and was co-opted by coup forces. It is necessary to recompose these teams, which is not an easy task, as they are umbilically linked to authoritarian and/or military forces. For this reason, universities must form a structural support network, with their Observatories and Research Centers that study neo-Nazi groups and militias; police and military forces; propagators of hate and fake news on social networks; corruption schemes, money laundering and currency evasion; environmental predation and land grabbing; crimes against social and indigenous movements; and the funders of it all.

A call from the current government and State institutions, involving several Ministries, can create a network of collaboration in intelligence, research and construction of evidence for a more agile and grounded performance of the Federal Public Ministry, the Federal Police and investigation bodies, in addition to the construction of preventive, formative and combative public policies for the long term. Let’s go together and together, let’s go hard. Our universities and science occupying their strategic place not only for the production of knowledge, for the solution of the country’s problems, but also for the reconstruction of democratic values ??and for the appreciation of life.

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