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Opinion – I am Science: Bolsonaro in the JN and the battle on the networks over the MEC

As expected, social networks were in an uproar during Jair Bolsonaro's interview with Jornal Nacional, this past Monday. SoU_Ciência specifically analyzed the tweets and memes related to the interview when the topic addressed was Education: MEC, the appointment and change of ministers and the removal and arrest of Milton Ribeiro due to the corruption scheme.

For those who did not watch the interview on Globo, it is worth noting that among the ministers Bolsonaro is proud of in his government, and who were mentioned by him, there was no mention of any occupant of the Education or Health portfolios. And not a few went through these ministries: 5 in Education and 4 in Health. In other words, in the current government, a scenario of instability and incompetence has emerged in two areas that are more than fundamental for the country and for us citizens, especially in the context we live in with a pandemic associated with multiple crises.

In the interview with Jornal Nacional, when she touched on the subject, Renata Vasconcellos asked: "Education is a very important issue for the future of Brazil. , at your request. How difficult is it to choose a good Minister of Education?". To which Bolsonaro replied: "Often, after the person arrives, we see that they are not good at it".

Renata Vasconcellos insisted, after listing the profile of the chosen and dismissed ministers – one fell for scandal, another fled Brazil after insulting the Supreme, another made up his curriculum and the last fell for corruption: "What are the criteria for choosing a Minister of such a vital area for the country's future?" insisted the anchor. The answer once again sounded in a regretful tone, resorting again to the favorite metaphor of marriage: "People reveal themselves when they arrive… like a wedding many times, but it happens…".

Asked about the corruption case, Bolsonaro said that the Minister was removed and that he "began to investigate the case with CGU (Corregedoria Geral da União)" – however, he did not comment that the CGU itself closed the case for lack of evidence and this only was reopened and the investigation deepened after a Folha de S.Paulo report based on a complaint by mayors. Bonner returned to the "MEC scandal", to which Bolsonaro angrily replied: "Where's the money pipeline leaking there? Where's the money?". Bonner reacted: "I don't know", to which Bolsonaro immediately replied: "And are you accusing me? [se não sabe onde está o dinheiro]".

The mapping below, from one of the most used social networks in real time at that time, allows us to affirm that the motto in defense of Bolsonaro will be to insist on this key.

The most replicated tweets among Bolsonaristas (in red in the graph) only repeat the slogans: "Where's the duct?", "Where's the money?", "Bonner doesn't know." That is, they do not go beyond the candidate's own speeches. What follows, in general, the hashtag #globolixo. It is interesting to note that the Bolsonarista reaction at that time of the interview was concentrated in only two profiles, with high replication capacity (they reached 51% of retweets in defense of the president). There are no living or analytical positions. While in the opposition reaction, in green, there are multiple voices, forming a network with greater organicity, but which reached only 39% of critical reaction. Another 10% interacted little with the other two communities (in gray in the graph).

The two Bolsonarista influencers who acted on the topic at this time and dominated the reaction were Bernardo Küster and the Brazil Fight profile. Küster is an olavista and denialist youtuber with almost 1 million followers, who presents himself as director of the digital newspaper "Brasil sem medo", self-titled "the largest conservative newspaper in Brazil". Küster had his hiring announced by Jovem Pan, which later retreated and stated that he would not be able to be called by the network "even as a guest, in any program". The Pandemic CPI recommended the indictment of Küster for fake news and incitement to crime. The second most retweeted account was @Brazilfight from the profile "FamíliaDreitaBrasil", which presents itself as: "Brazilians and patriots, bringing together those who want to fight the leftist narrative" and has 320 thousand followers on twitter. The profile was created shortly after Bolsonaro took office in 2019, like others, as artillery in the culture war, as the English name "Brasil Fight" reveals, of the Brazilian family fighting the left.

In the network of opposition to Bolsonaro, in green, the most replicated messages reiterated the MEC scandal in a government that claims to be without corruption, the attack and disregard for Education, the repetition of lies, etc. The main tweets are diluted among twelve profiles: "Jairmearrependi", which appeared to show posts from regretted Bolsonaro voters; Senator Randolfe Rodrigues (Rede-AP); federal deputy Glauber Braga (PSOL-RJ); from the black left collective "Breaking the Taboo"; the "Political axis" channel, coordinated by a political scientist from UnB; Mateus Gomes, black candidate for state deputy by PSOL-RS and master in history by UFRGS; the journalist and researcher at FGV Thomas Traumann; the black activist Zé Gotinha; journalists Ricardo Noblat, André Shalders and Andreia Sadi; and Folha de S. Paulo with a tweet "Remember the MEC scandal cited by Bonner".

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The opposition’s sharing pattern was more collective, fragmented and with many more nodes in the network, demonstrating greater organicity and naturalness. The pro-Bolsonaro sharing pattern is massive, not very plural and more automated (by bots or disciplined profiles for that). These characteristics show two different ways of using the network and different relay tactics, which perhaps reflect the different way of seeing and exercising the policy and opinion of each pole.

On Instagram, the meme war on the topic of education during the JN interview was initially won by Anitta against Bolsonaro. She released the “glue” written on the president’s hand during the interview (real), but digitally altered, with the phrase “defend corrupt in the MEC” and which reached more than 200 thousand likes. The next day, however, the singer deleted the post and was praised by Bolsonaro, showing that the battle on the networks will be intense and once again important for the formation of waves of excitement in the bubbles in shock on this digital battlefront.

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