

An Institute of Advanced Studies: How so?

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“AN INSTITUTE of Advanced Studies: How so?” asked ironically Professor Florestan Fernandes, who had been exiled by the military regime, upon his return to campus and during his first visit to the University Council to deliver a lecture on the waywardness of democracy in our country, at the invitation of the then newly-created Institute of Advanced Studies - IAS (*Instituto de Estudos Avançados* - IEA). I replied, smiling, that it was for masters like him to have a forum open to critical thinking at the very core of the University of São Paulo (USP) ...

Well, the election of physicist José Goldemberg as dean of USP in 1986 had become, from the outset, a happening in the history of Brazilian university. After years of mediocrity and sedation of critical thinking at the highest ranking level of the institution, dehydrated under the long cast shadow of the civilian-military regime of 1964, one witnessed by decisive pressure from the community a broad debate among candidates and their plans for the future of the university, especially those engaged in the serious problems of that society.

A certain idea of an IAS had already been mooted before the Goldemberg administration, fostered by colleagues from the association of professors of the University of São Paulo (ADUSP) - Jeremias Rocha Barros, Amelinha and Ernesto Hamburger, and Pavan among others - and by eminent researchers like Erney Camargo, who frequented similar Institutes abroad. The new dean, who had run against Dalmo Dallari, Jacques Marcovitch, Antonio Ferri and others, soon kicked off a series of large projects. The creation of an IAS was one of the first projects to be implemented. Skillfully, he succeeded in having the proposal passed by the University Council, virtually without consulting it (“if I take it to voting, we might lose,” he told me), while other colleagues legitimized the project in an ADUSP meeting, under the leadership of the late physicist and humanist Rocha Barros.

Also a candidate to the presidency of the university on the initiative of community members, particularly employees and students, I had advocated in my program the *direct election* for the highest university office, a *reform* to abolish departments, the creation of a Center for Third World Studies, of an Institute of Advanced Studies and the opening of USP to the contemporary world. I soon realized that my chances of winning were minimal, and so I decided to support the nomination of Dalmo Dallari, Caio Dantas and Goldemberg. The physicist,

then elected, took the last three proposals of my program and invited me to coordinate the process that would lead to the implementation of these two new centers and to the establishment of the International Cooperation Committee (CCInt), which counted on the active participation of Celso Lafer, Milton Santos, and Ruy Leme among others). The Center for Third World Studies also had a good start and counted on names such as Milton Santos, Antonio Candido, Amayo-Zevallos, William Saad Hossne (a physician, former scientific director of FAPESP and former dean of the Federal University of São Carlos, elected by the community), Cremilda Medina, Darcy Ribeiro and others; we organized at the University Council a impacting colloquium with three different groups of specialists in African studies from USP that involved eminent African writers and journalists, especially from Portuguese-speaking countries. We consolidated our findings in a “Charter of São Paulo” published on a poster with Amílcar Cabral (“*Cultura, fator de libertação? Não. Libertação, fator de cultura*” (Culture, a freedom factor? No. Freedom a culture factor). We established bridges with militants “from the other side”, but due to limited community support, our project failed: USP never saw itself as third worldly.

Now, the idea of an IAS was soon “bought in”. The dean appointed a multidisciplinary committee formed by literature professor and writer Alfredo Bosi, physician Alberto Carvalho da Silva (one of the creators of FAPESP), economist Paul Singer, physicists Moysés Nussensveig and Roberto Leal Lobo, physiologist Gehrard Malnic, and myself as coordinator, and the young and active historian Edgard Luís de Barros as academic secretary. I asked the dean: “But why me to chair this committee” (soon turned into the Board of Directors, with some additions)?”. Professor Goldemberg replied *cum granum salis* that “at the time, the country and the university were in greater need of historians than of physicists” ... I accepted, with fear but enthusiasm, that which would be my most important intellectual, professional and political-existential challenge. And I learned a lot.

To get to the names of the first Council dozens of colleagues from various fields of knowledge were approached, in a process in which we broadened our discussions on the vocation and direction of the new Institute, on the initial invitations to be made to national and foreign experts, on our academic-administrative organization, activities, publications, and so on. Since many departments at USP were closed in themselves, bureaucratized, “devoid” of ideas, many colleagues-researchers, marginalized in them and by them but full of creative will, flocked to the new Institute owing to its proclaimed debureaucratizing character and transdisciplinary vocation. They promptly participated, suggested ways, confronted positions of spirits and lines of research, with no concern for jobs, bonuses or immediate benefits. The news was that many highly competent colleagues *did not* feel excluded from the “hard core” of the IAS, i.e., its Board of Directors, as it had been made clear that we would all have a voice in its di-

rection: we even got as far as establishing, after a large meeting with about 50 professors, at the modest headquarters of the IAS in the building of the former administration, a kind of “invisible senate”, i.e., an informal collegiate body whose members would always have their views discussed and generally implemented by the Board.

We created therefore a new model without chairs, departments, students, library and the requirements of “titlecracy”, but with plenty of consultation and connections with some departments and libraries and laboratories existing at USP. Ultimately a *collective* project, so to speak. At the suggestion of Rocha Barros, who, incidentally, was not a member of the Board but was very much present and “influential”, we had only an Encyclopaedia Britannica and some dictionaries in our headquarters, plus tables and a small cabinet; board members, visiting researchers and members were invited to provide drinks for memorable and dense “happy hour” discussions...

To achieve such a model, we studied various bylaws, statutes and customs of other research centers such as the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the Collège de France, the Casa de las Américas in Cuba, the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin, the Wilson Center (with which we would hold a memorable congress at USP, Resocialising Economics, in coordination with the historian Richard Morse), the College of Mexico and the École des Hautes Études in Paris. That is, from each of these experiences we took something to collectively build our own experience, thereby succeeding in carving in the very heart of USP, at Praça Central do Relógio, a center of high-level reflection and research at the mercy of its participants, *all researchers or writers with a multidisciplinary posture and experience*. The only condition was not to bring to our IAS the evils of its departments and schools. As warned the jurist-historian Raymundo Faoro when invited to officially open the Institute with a dense conference (“Is there is a political thought in Brazil?”, published in the first issue of the ADVANCED STUDIES journal, our activities in the room of the University Council, hosted by Antonio Candido: “To succeed, the Institute must avoid boring people. But be careful, because you invite someone who is not boring to participate, but they can always bring someone who is boring that spoils the mood ...”).

With these precautions, the project was working, finding its way forward, relying on an extremely open and dynamic administration and on supporters from all walks of life in search of an honest and non-intoxicated *university* experience, but also with internal allies such as Erney Camargo, the IDB coordinator for USP, or external supporters such as the discrete José Mindlin, with the Vitae Foundation. Our Board also had among its members, by force of statute, representatives of the so-called civil society, some of them extremely industrious and with a critical mind like Geraldo F. Forbes and Fernando Leça.

In addition to interdisciplinary study groups on key topics or areas of knowledge, the Conferences of the Month (then well paid for, it should be said,

recorded and published in the journal) indicated the standard we wanted to establish on campus. Colloquia and other initiatives also gave life to the Institute. Some were memorable, from the first months, such as the visits of the economist and diplomat John Kenneth Galbraith, who talked about the arms race; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, with his speech on postmodern science (which led to the production of an important book on the subject at the IEA), the late historians Manuel Moreno Fraginals, from Cuba - when we didn't have diplomatic relations with that country yet - and Warren Dean, a path-breaker in the field of historiography of the environment. With larger audiences, the lectures of Jürgen Habermas and Paulo Aufran mobilized the USP of those days. Special mention should also be made of several other notable historians such as Marc Ferro, Michel Vovelle, Warren Dean, Carlo Ginzburg, Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill and Kenneth Maxwell. Richard Morse, a promoter of ideas, stayed with for a few months as a visiting researcher. In the IAS, we had discussions with writers like José Saramago (before he won the Nobel Prize) and the Angolan Luandino Vieira, who asked us about the existence of a Portuguese-African-Brazilian culture, in addition to the many professors, intellectuals and scientists from various fields and critics who left their traces, thoughts and production at the institution, from Marlyse Meyer and Leyla Perrone-Moysés to Dalmo de Abreu Dallari, Alberto da Costa e Silva, Francisco Iglesias, Eduardo Portella, Anibal Quijano, Florestan Fernandes, Eunice Durham, Celso Lafer, Michel Debrun, Ecléa Bosi, Octavio Ianni, Miguel Reale Jr., Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, Goldemberg (who was more than just the dean), Koellreuter and Olivier Toni, Leonor Alvim, Ana and António Pedro Vicente, Ruth Cardoso, Sábado Magaldi, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Joaquim Falcão, Fernando Novais, Tundisi, Joseph Love, Thomas Skidmore, and Nestor Goulart Reis; the (then) younger Gabriel Cohn, José Eduardo Faria, Renato Janine Ribeiro, Brasília Sallum Junior; and the late Eduardo Kugelmas and Bento Prado Junior ... a list almost impossible to be fully covered among so many prestigious collaborators who joined us in this truly collective endeavor!

Impressive, for example, was the quality of the work of José Paulo Paes, brought to the Institute by the hands of Bosi, especially his translation of the American poet William Carlos Williams, which was published with great success. Prominent actors in high national and international politics were also present, such as the then Senator and intellectual Giorgio Napolitano, current president of Italy (hosted by journalist Mino Carta), and Senator Severo Gomes, who was very active in the pursuit of his “national project”, and former presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula da Silva.

Journalists and diplomats – such as Rubens Barbosa and Paulo Nogueira Batista and occasionally Italo Zappa - began to frequent and act at the IAS, expanding the meaning of ... University. It is worth noting that some retired USP professors chose the favorable environment, the “climate” of this House to

develop activities compatible with their academic skills and maturity, as was the case of professors Ruy Coelho and Alberto Carvalho da Silva, and is the case of the very active professor Aziz Ab'Saber.

Some personalities visited or acted decisively at the Institute, such as the historian Jacob Gorender, or journalist Marco Antonio Rocha, who greatly helped to give impetus to our ADVANCED STUDIES journal, masterfully conducted by Alfredo Bosi. The success of the journal, today a leading national and international academic publication, relied on the collaboration of many, but it is mostly to the cautious and watchful professor Bosi and his team that we owe the high standard achieved.

Also worth mentioning is the presence and role of the IAS in the creation of other culture and research centers, such as the Latin American Memorial (at the request of Darcy Ribeiro and Antonio Candido), the Centro de Estudios Brasileños at the University of Salamanca (with the decisive participation of the historian José Manuel Santos Perez and of the then dean Ignacio Berdugo), the Jaime Cortesão Chair (which after intense activities was transferred to the School of Philosophy at USP).

Anyway, it is very difficult to list the many and varied interventions of so many professors, researchers, writers, scientists, besides dean Goldemberg himself (as well as the two deans who succeeded him, Jacques Marcovitch and Roberto Leal Lobo) and of an exceptional team of employees and collaborators. It should, however, be noted - a rare case in Brazilian universities - that almost all our wishes and dreams, the wishes and dreams of those who participated in the foundation, have come true as a result of the work of successive directors, boards and a critical and attentive staff. And of course, of the participants of the research groups. That is, a unit that cultivates in a multidisciplinary and committed way the values of an institution devoted to the construction of a modern democracy in this country has been established in the very heart of the University of São Paulo. A true democracy, which is not yet the one we currently have, but that will certainly come.

At full age, we can already celebrate the promise of the current dean, Professor João Grandino Rodas, to resume, very soon, the construction of the new, more appropriate and permanent headquarters of the IAS in its own building on the campus of our USP. The Institute, USP and Brazilian society more than deserve it!

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