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EDITORS' NOTE

The fire, the death and the hope

When we were finalizing the details of this issue of the journal to send to the press, atrocious images shook Brazil and a good part of the world: in a matter of a few hours a terrifying fire consumed the best part of the bicentennial National Museum. A colleague from another Latin American country wrote to me saying that it seemed like the fire of the Library of Alexandria.

It really was a disaster on that scale, especially for historians of science, but also for anthropologists, linguists, social scientists, historians and other researchers who worked with their unique collections. It was also an unthinkable tragedy for professors, technicians and students whose professional life was associated with the invaluable Museum. It was indeed a disastrous event that will mark the cultural history of Brazil and the whole of Latin America and that will be recorded as an unforgettable disgrace for world culture.

In the days that followed arose a mixture of sadness, rebellion, rejection and justifiable voices of protest regarding the persistent neglect of the federal authorities that allowed this tragedy foretold to occur. There have also been mobilizations – supported decisively by Fiocruz – against the dismantling of cultural and educational organizations, as well as an incipient public perception that acknowledges the abandonment and disdain for the history of their country as one of the main indicators of backwardness.

From *História, Ciências, Saúde - Manguinhos* we will support the transformation of that perception in our conviction regarding the urgent need to allocate significant financial resources for science and culture. Our loyalty to the ashes of the precious documents, objects, animals, mummies and walls of the Museum is not to sit by and watch the emergency in which almost all the museums, archives and public universities of Brazil find themselves. We need a consensus in developing countries, such as Brazil and a good part of Latin America, that there will be no development without comprehensive and sufficient investments in their own science and culture (Ramacciotti, 2017, Silva, Cueto, 2016).

Whatever the case, for many of us it will be difficult to accept all that was lost in the fire. It may well be that neither time will comfort us or placate our anger. Despite the pain, we have an obligation to think about short- and long-term solutions. Thinking about the immediate future, we pledge the support of this journal to the efforts of researchers from Brazil and around the world to gather documents and images that belonged to the archive of the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro. Many of them keep scanned, photocopied or handwritten documents or records as well as dissertations and publications that used those materials as a mine of information. This initiative will be coordinated in Casa de Oswaldo Cruz/Fiocruz in conjunction with the National Museum. Those interested in participating can contact museunacionalresgate@gmail.com

Another tragic event that occurred before this journal went to press, and that makes us think again of death as a disaster, but also as an obligation to rebuild our professional lives after a misfortune, has been the death of Jean Gayon, one of the most outstanding historians and philosophers of science. For this reason, the guest editor's letter is dedicated to Gayon, professor at the University of Paris 1 and author of numerous notable books and articles on the history of biology. The author of the letter is Gustavo Caponi, who knew the French master well. It should be stressed that, in 2017, Professor Gayon was in Rio de Janeiro for the 25th International Congress on the History of Science and Technology, organized by the Brazilian Society of the History of Science and by the History of Science and Technology Division, an international academic organization of which Gayon was a member. He held various management positions in said organization from which he made important contributions to the professional and academic development of the history of science.

It is difficult to know how, being so soon after this misfortune, we have the hope as well as the certainty to ensure that the investigation of the history of science related to the information of what the Museum was and contained will reemerge. Likewise, to evoke and reconstruct something that we admire and enjoy, but that we lost, will allow us all to be better people and professionals.

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