



## O PROCESSO DE FORMAÇÃO SOCIAL URBANA NO RIO DE JANEIRO NA PRIMEIRA REPÚBLICA

The Process Of Urban Social Formation In Rio De Janeiro In The First Republic

### RESUMO

O eixo central que constitui o objeto de estudo nesta pesquisa no âmbito da História Social refere-se às relações e condições de trabalho, onde os trabalhadores são pensados sobre várias dimensões, ou seja, a partir do local de trabalho, das condições de moradia e de vida, bem como das diferentes formas de associação. Observando-se a prevalência quanto à precariedade das condições materiais de trabalho. Foi utilizada como metodologia a pesquisa qualitativa descritiva, por meio de suporte teórico, a partir de revisão de literatura com enfoque analítico. O escopo temporal do estudo é o período da Primeira República, tendo como recorte espacial a cidade do Rio de Janeiro, então Capital Federal..

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVES:** Formação Social; Rio de Janeiro; Primeira República.

**ABSTRACT**

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The central axis that constitutes the object of study in this research within the scope of Social History refers to working relationships and conditions, where workers are thought of in several dimensions, that is, from the workplace, housing conditions and of life, as well as different forms of association. Observing the prevalence of precarious material working conditions. Descriptive qualitative research was used as a methodology, through theoretical support, based on a literature review with an analytical focus. The temporal scope of the study is the period of the First Republic, with the city of Rio de Janeiro, then the Federal Capital, as its spatial focus.

**KEYWORDS:** Social formation; Rio de Janeiro; First Republic

**INTRODUÇÃO**

In order to analyse the structural determinants of the process of social organization of work and urban workers, specifically in the city of Rio de Janeiro, as illustrated in this specific



case by authors such as Chalhoub (2012) and Hardman and Leonardi (1982), an attempt is made to highlight the main aspects congruent with the first period of formation of a group of urban workers and factory workers, from the last years of the 19th century, as found in Gomes (2005). One of the main assertions, in this sense, points to the process of transformation and dynamization of the economy, mainly due to capital from the coffee economy, with the railway network being one of the driving elements of these large centers, as Fausto (2016, p. 31) points out. In this regard, it is important to consider, according to this author, that this group of workers includes a great deal of ethnic, cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, coming from the various origins that make it up.

In this sphere, as workers' issues are central issues at all times in history, it should be noted that History is no longer "a collection of dead, consummate facts, as in the empiricists, or the account of the great deeds of kings, princes, emperors, but the real process of human life" (CIAVATTA, 2019). In this regard, for Michel de Certeau (apud Ferreras and Secreto - 2013), workers are configured in different dimensions of their social life, that is, as a neighbor, resident, student, mother, inhabitant of a given city. There is therefore an interest in investigating the *modus vivendi* of these urban workers in their daily lives, especially outside the factories, emphasizing the issue of broader social life in this context.

### **As determinações estruturais do processo de formação social urbana no Rio de Janeiro na Primeira República**

The initial effort of this research is closely linked to the investigation and analysis of social organization in the capital of Rio de Janeiro, with the consolidation of the Republic in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Chalhoub (2012, p. 80) states, the city of Rio de Janeiro received a large contingent of foreigners in the years immediately before and after abolition, who settled in a city with a large number of blacks and mulattos living their first experiences as free workers. In this sense, according to Chalhoub (2012), the historical process that the city of Rio de Janeiro went through in the First Republic presented a fundamental continuity in relation to colonial and imperial times, "the continuation of the social subordination of Brazilians of color, that is, blacks went from being slaves to free workers, without, however, changing their relative position in the social structure".



Throughout the colonial and imperial periods, the Brazilian authorities tried, almost always without much success, to take on the guardianship of the free poor. It was perhaps a way of putting the strong hand of authority over a population that was not under the yoke of manorial power. This was because the free poor, especially blacks and mestizos, had been growing rapidly since the 18th century (FRAGA FILHO, 1996, p. 91).

From this perspective, in relation to the republican model, according to Carvalho (1987, p. 161), after the initial moment of hope for democratic expansion, it was consolidated on a minimum of electoral participation and on the exclusion of popular involvement in government, thus, "it was consolidated on the victory of the pre-democratic, Darwinist liberal ideology, which reinforced oligarchic power" (CARVALHO, 1987, p. 161). The alternative proposals for organizing power that were defeated were put aside. According to Chalhoub (2012), the emancipation of slaves and immigration policy were the two essential constitutive processes of the capitalist labor market, and consequently of workers, in the context of the city of Rio de Janeiro, then the Federal Capital, between the last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, so that "the Republic proclaimed in 1889 contains within itself, as a fundamental antagonism, the relationship between wage labor and capital" (CHALHOUB, 2012, p. 254).

Thus, the theme addressed in this research coincides with the origins of industrialization and the development of capitalism in the then Federal District, an important city at the time. As observed in the works of Oliveira (2011) and Behring and Boschetti (2016), it should be noted that, until 1912, there was a period of economic expansion, but, in mid-1913, the so-called boom of the Brazilian economy ended, with a deficit in the balance of trade. According to Chalhoub (2012), Brazil's greater integration into the world capitalist economy, following the events of 1888-1889: is proven by the data on the growth of our exports: these grew at a rate of only 10% between the decades of 1871-1880 and 1881-1890, with this growth rising to 31.6% between the penultimate and last decades of the 19th century, and reaching the high figure of 63.7% in the first decade of the 20th century (CHALHOUB, 2012, p. 249).

With regard to this historical condition, it is worth noting that Rio de Janeiro had the largest concentration of workers in the country during the First Republic, being surpassed by the capital of São Paulo after 1920, according to Fausto (2016, p. 33). In view of this, the city of Rio de Janeiro was defined as the spatial focus, which, while respecting its specificities, concentrated a large number of workers, especially in factories in urban centers, in a scenario



of overexploitation of the workforce, strikes and revolts, as pointed out, among others, in the studies by Hardman and Leonardi (1982), where there was an upsurge in forms of social organization both on the streets and in workplaces. Rio de Janeiro as the traditional administrative center and capital of the country, as well as an administrative and commercial city based on slavery, made itself felt in the 1906 census, which showed a population mainly occupied in commerce, transport, administration and domestic service (CARVALHO, 1987, p. 153). From this angle, the city of Rio de Janeiro at the time had a larger population than the limited needs of the industrial and service sectors. This poor population, continually swelled by internal migrants and foreign immigrants, struggled to find work and had to pay low wages that further deteriorated their living conditions (CHALHOUB, 2012, p. 61).

In the particular case of this study, some instances of intervention in the urban space were located as part of the effort to organize and discipline the working classes and, consequently, children in the city of Rio de Janeiro. From this point of view, in order to explain the time frame of the research, the initial milestone is the period after the proclamation of the Republic and the abolition of slavery, in a context of urban modernization, with a large population contingent, greater than the demands of industry and commerce, according to the analysis found in Gomes (2005). This makes it relevant to consider that Brazil's first industrial outbreak, according to Fausto (2016), was the "development of agrarian-based capitalism in the Center-South region" (p. 38). In this vein, as the absolute majority of the population remained concentrated in agricultural activities, "most of the economically and socially dominated sectors were located in the countryside throughout the period of predominance of the agrarian-export pole" (FAUSTO, 2016, p. 39).

Based on this theoretical basis, the beginning of the 20th century was marked by various urban and educational transformations in the city of Rio de Janeiro, which became fundamental, based on actions that took place at the end of the 19th century, such as the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, which, in Abreu's view (2018), "consolidated the need to adapt the strategies of social order and control to a society of free men, women and children, at least theoretically" (p. 290). According to this argument, for Nagle (1976) "urbanism and its concomitant socio-cultural changes will provide new perspectives for thinking about the 'new' Brazil" (p. 25). According to Velloso (1996), the culture of "modernization" began to take effect, marked by "technological innovations such as the





wireless telegraph, the telephone, the cinematograph, photography, the airplane and the automobile" (p. 22), thus reshaping urban space.

These movements led to changes in society, where discussions about work, the redesign of the city and social hygiene became necessary due to the increase in population generated by the immigrants who arrived in Rio de Janeiro and the freed slaves who came to the city in search of work and better living conditions. According to Câmara's analysis (2010), the employment crisis, the lack of adequate living conditions, the industrial outbreak that made it impossible for parents to look after their children after long working hours, the lack of nurseries and schools, as well as other facilities to care for children, were all factors that contributed to the increase in child crime, prostitution, poverty and abandonment within the framework imposed by "progress" and "civilization" (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 70). In the author's words:

Disease, begging, illiteracy, crime, vagrancy, alcoholism and prostitution were seen as scourges that plagued the country's capital and should be treated in the name of social welfare. Represented as sad, sick, squalid, dirty, shabby and hungry, the working classes were a potential risk to the modern, hygienic society that was being established (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 77).

In addition, abandoned children, neglected by the public authorities, made up an undesirable social picture that was not in keeping with a city in the process of modernization, so recreating a new landscape was one of the elites' desires. It should be noted that the Republic in Brazil did not present itself as the regime of freedom and equality, as the regime of popular government, even though Rio de Janeiro was the largest urban center and had the best conditions for providing the "culture of civil liberties", the necessary basis for the growth of political participation (CARVALHO, 1987, p. 161). To this extent, based on the studies of Chalhoub (2012), with the end of slavery, it was necessary for the concept of "work" to gain a positive valuation, articulating itself with the concepts of "order" and "progress" in order to propel the country towards the "new", towards "civilization", that is, towards the constitution of a "bourgeois social order" (CHALHOUB, 2012, p. 48).

After the founding of the republican regime, two lines of interpretation emerged: that of the monarchists and that of the republicans. The monarchist interpretation sees Emperor Pedro II as the victim of the result of a military uprising contrary to the will of the people, the result of the indiscipline of the armed classes who had the support of farmers unhappy with the end of slavery. The interpretation in favor of the Republic, on the other hand, treated the proclamation of the new regime



as an event built by a group of idealists and courageous people who managed to elevate the country to the status of a democracy (CARVALHO, 1987, p. 161).

It is imperative to agree with Velloso (1996) when he states that the city of Rio de Janeiro was one of the main scenarios for urban reforms and the actions of public authorities in terms of urban planning. Paradigms of "civilization" and "progress", based on European and North American references, informed sectors of the ruling classes in the transition from the Empire to the Republic, who sought to build a modern state, far from the "backwardness" then represented by the supposed disorder of the dirty, dark and narrow streets and alleys of colonial cities. According to Velloso (1996), urban life was intense. The public buildings constructed revealed the grandeur of the "civilized" social order that was to be founded.

From the end of the 19th century, there was a proliferation of "new ideas" in the intellectual field of the Empire, so that the tone of social change was set by the defenders of certain conceptions, among them positivism, scientism, evolutionism and republicanism. [...] The word "Republic" would be marked with the sign of the future, of necessary evolution, of "civilization", "progress" and "modernization". It was a discourse that traveled to different spaces and gained great repercussions in the country (TORRES, 2012).

According to Netto (2001), the strike cycle favored debates on hospital care by bringing "discussions on women's and children's work, accidents at work and social protection" to the Chamber of Deputies. In this way, the social question linked to the process of development of the productive forces became a pressing issue at the same time as it became a concern for both workers and the elite. According to the author, the use of the term "social question" around 1830 characterizes the process of European capitalist development and social complexification. It relates to pauperism, in which paradoxically "poverty seemed to accompany abundance", as well as popular insubordination to the terrible conditions of existence to which the working classes were subjected. It is important to emphasize Nagle's (1976) view that

the development of the capitalist mode of production and life during the First Republic caused the social division of labour to accelerate and demanded an ever-increasing level of specialization of functions, which resulted in the emergence of new social layers; the history of the period should be seen as the evolution of the industrial proletariat (NAGLE, 1976, p. 26).

In this context, according to Netto (2001), the "social question" arises during the development of productive forces. Its origin lies in the conflicting relationship between capital and labor and its expressions are circumscribed in history in motion, i.e. it appears at different stages in the space/time of capitalist society, acquiring



different contours depending on the situation. Occurring since the 18th century in England, the first country to industrialize, the social question and its expressions took hold in Europe from the beginning of the 19th century. According to Netto, "poverty grew in direct proportion to the increase in social capacity to produce wealth, as opposed to the lack of resources in the pre-bourgeois period" (NETTO, 2001, p. 42). One observation that emerges from the text is that this "new poverty", or social question, refers to the phenomenon of pauperization and is observed precisely in the working class that was being formed at this time.

It is now necessary to clarify that, when dealing with the social question, Netto (2001) uses quotation marks in order to disassociate it from the "conservative prevarication" that has led to an understanding of the social question from a moralizing perspective that does not express the character of struggle that, in the author's words, would be inherent to the social question. The author defines the social question as "the set of expressions of the inequalities of mature capitalist society" in which there is a progression of the collectivization of social production and the socialization of collective work, while the product of work and production is private, concentrated in the hands of a small portion of society. With regard to the conceptualization of the social question, the author states that there is a recurrent approximation of this issue to social ills, understood as "social problems", which was the view disseminated during the First Republic. Social problems were mainly associated with the "lack of material and intellectual resources that make it possible for individuals to survive on their own".

Given the individualization of the "social problems" arising from poverty, their solutions were also confined to the individual or private sphere (NETTO, 2001). However, the author criticizes the responsibility of individuals from the perspective of "social problems", highlighting that the social question was linked to the "emergence of the working class and its entry into the political arena", and disagrees with the perspective that "social problems" are the responsibility of individuals, as this approach would lead to the loss of the collective dimension of the exemption of "class society from responsibility for the production of social inequalities" (NETTO, 2001). The phenomenon of the social question appeared in Brazil at the end of the 19th century and intensified from the 1920s onwards, with industrialization and the consequent increase in the urbanization process.

We will therefore deal with the social question from the first decades of the 20th century onwards, with a view to the ways of dealing with its expressions. The poverty to which workers were subjected became the agenda of social reformers. According to Viscardi (2011), Brazilian social reforms in this period were based on a duality. Poverty was seen by some as a social phenomenon and by others as natural or moral. This dualism was typical of "a country that was moving towards capitalist modernity, while still maintaining the very rigid conceptions of its slave-owning past, threatened by the rapid process of urbanization, industrialization and modernization" (VISCARDI, 2011, p.195).

From this perspective, however, Brazilian industrialization did not begin with the Proclamation of the Republic. The decline of the monarchy was forged in a period of great expansion of the productive forces, which occurred especially in the last decades of the regime, with an increase in agricultural production based on coffee exports. According to the author, in the mid-19th century, the state began to ally itself with private sectors and international capital, even taking out loans to carry out "modern" undertakings, such as the implementation of





railroads and the telegraph system. The imperial government acted as an "entrepreneur", raising international funds, especially from England, and encouraging the entry of foreign capital into Brazil (PRADO JUNIOR, 2012, p. 145).

According to Prado Junior (2012), although Brazil was fundamentally an agro-exporting country, Brazilian industrialization was already beginning to develop more vigorously at this time. According to the author, the export of coffee placed the country in a good position on the international economic stage and led to the growth of cities and urban centers, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In fact, Nagle (1976) points out that "until a certain moment, there were practically no other alternatives for organizing economic activity, apart from investing more and more in coffee production" (p. 13). The state acted on behalf of international capital, as well as the agrarian oligarchies. Despite the friction between the agrarian, financial and industrial factions arising from the controversial policies of valuing coffee, the prosperity of the coffee sector had a strong influence on Brazil's industrialization process at the beginning of the 20th century (NAGLE, 1976).

Coffee had a dominant position in the Brazilian economy. The coffee economy was formed in the second and third quarters of the 19th century, when it emerged as a new source of wealth for the country. Especially after the installation of the republican regime, coffee was the main commodity which, in foreign trade, provided the largest amount of foreign currency (NAGLE, 1976, p. 13).

In this context, it is worth noting that, according to Viscardi (2011), part of the industry's workforce came from the immigration movements that settled in the agricultural sector, and these same immigrants came to expand consumption needs in the domestic market. In addition, with the First World War in 1914, the limitation on consumer goods that had previously been imported and the consequent difficulty in exporting coffee forced Brazil to encourage domestic production, which was also possible thanks to investments from the coffee market (VISCARDI, 2011). In this respect, Nagle (1976) points out that "from the mid-1910s onwards, industrialization entered another phase of development, generated by the conditions inherent in the development of coffee production" (p. 14). Brazilian industrialization, which had been taking significant steps since the last decade of the imperial period (in this period the number of industries tripled), intensified in the first five years of the first republican period, with the Federal District, corresponding to the city of Rio de Janeiro, having the greatest concentration



of industrial activity. Industry took on a new lease of life and began to "occupy a very important place in the country's economy" (PRADO JUNIOR, 2012).

Between 1915 and 1919, a period during which the First World War was raging, 5,936 new industrial establishments were created, reaching a total of 13,336 in the 1920 census (PRADO JUNIOR, 2012, pp.198-199). The incentive for Brazilian industrialization was linked to the change in the political system, with the Proclamation of the Republic, and a debate was woven into the Constituent Assembly, "defending a process of industrialization" in order to overcome the colonial agrarian character of the Brazilian economy (PRADO JUNIOR, 2012). The Republic was established from the top down, in other words, it was led by the ruling classes who did not intend to make any effective changes to the status quo, but rather to maintain the current social order, giving new luster to the newly-implemented political system, but sustaining the privileges of the oligarchic elite. The very adoption of the federative republican model was designed to maintain the autonomy of local governments. The aim was to modernize the country, which "by its voluntary touch, if not voluntarist, reaches society through a leading group that, by privileging itself, privileges the dominant sectors" (PRADO JUNIOR, 2012).

As has been pointed out, there was no effective break with the political bases that structured the Empire at the time of the Proclamation of the Republic, due to the very maintenance of oligarchic power structures and the clear favoring of agrarian interests by the state.

The construction of the ideology of nationhood "was clearly present in the work of the doctrinaires and politicians who, preaching or anticipating Independence, reflected on the organization of Brazilian society" (PRADO JUNIOR, 2012). According to Viscardi (2011), the first republican constitution, dated February 24, 1891, was liberal in nature, especially due to the individualist notion based on the idea of federalism, non-intervention by the state and decentralization in the early republican days. The liberal ideology of the First Republic was expressed in the organization of the 1891 constitutional charter. Responsibility for health is not made explicit in this document, and there is no detail on competencies for health and assistance policies, since these were not considered to be functions of the Union. However, the state could help the states of the Federation in the event of a public calamity (VISCARDI, 2011). In the midst of speeches, debates and reforms,

... the last decade of the 19th century can be considered a fundamental period in the history of the construction of Brazil as a republican country. It became, par excellence,



a phase of great challenges, in which the disputes between different "projects for the primacy of shaping the new regime" and the material conditions that the country had at that time to make their pretensions effective weighed heavily. It was necessary to legitimize the young Republic, to give meaning and significance to the rupture established in the political field, in which economic, religious, social and cultural factors were also present. To do this, it was necessary to build a new state and draw up the profile that would shape the "new" nation (TORRES, 2012, p. 49).

We can therefore see that the Brazilian state, consolidated on the basis of the federative model, met the wishes of the oligarchic elites "who had control of all levels of power, from central to local" (PRADO JUNIOR, 2012), in other words, decentralization left it up to local governments to make decisions about the policies to be undertaken.

But if, as has been pointed out, public health was not a state function in the First Republic, given its federalist and liberal model, the state's actions were restricted to controlling epidemics and episodic subsidies to health establishments.

According to Netto (2001), in republican Brazil, the expressions of the social question were becoming progressively more acute and demanded that action be taken to achieve the national project.

Poverty, filth and disease were considered incompatible with the Brazilian society that we wanted to shape: civilized and modern, inspired by the European model. Since the 19th century, there had been a concern with "eating habits, clothing, leisure, personal hygiene, housing, the work environment, sexual life". A range of regulations were then created which were associated with the field of medicine and informed a trend that persisted into the following century, namely the concern with hygiene (CAVALCANTE, 1985).

In the early years of the 20th century, the city of Rio de Janeiro, capital of the Republic, suffered from epidemics. For Cavalcante (1985), the city of Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the 20th century was the picture of urban chaos. At that time, there was a high concentration of population, an economic crisis which was compounded by high inflation, low wages and unemployment. For the author, the hygienist proposal guided public health with regard to spatial issues, such as the Urban Reform in the city of Rio de Janeiro. In this sense, the city, a symbol of progress, should be sanitized and reorganized not only in terms of space, but mainly in terms of the standardization of habits and behaviour. According to Cavalcante (1985), "it was necessary to put an end to the notion that Rio was synonymous with yellow fever and unhygienic conditions, and turn it into a true symbol of the new Brazil". Oswaldo Cruz brought



yellow fever under control by implementing sanitary measures that sought out mosquito breeding grounds, a fact that also caused popular reactions.

Based on this dynamic, and taking Cavalcante's (1985) work as a parameter, the concern with epidemics at the beginning of the republican period gave rise to the creation of the General Directorate of Public Health (DGSP) in 1896, which was regulated by Decree No. 2,458 of February 1897. In the Imperial period, the health issue was dealt with by the Superior Council of Public Health, formed from the General Inspectorate of Hygiene and the General Inspectorate of Port Health in 1886. Thus, in 1904, Decree No. 1,151 reorganized the DGSP, expanding its functions in the Federal District. The government was allowed to take action to put hygienic principles into practice. According to the author, the DGSP was responsible for "everything in the Federal District that concerns home hygiene, sanitary policing of homes, places and public places, everything related to general and specific prophylaxis of infectious diseases" (CAVALCANTE, 1985). This decree also authorized the promulgation of the Sanitary Code. Allied to the new Public Health codification, changes to the urban space were one of the main actions in the Federal District.

According to Carvalho (1987), it is necessary to consider a series of questions about the Urban Reform in Rio de Janeiro, popularly known as "Bota-Abaixo", which was initiated in 1903 by the city's mayor, Pereira Passos. This can be raised by verifying, in the light of the aforementioned author, that the hygienist policies implemented in favor of public health acted as a mechanism of stratification and social control. The author also suggests that spatial commodification was materialized in the actions of expropriation and removal of these individuals, who were "resettled" in the suburbs, or who, dissatisfied with the new places where they were sent, began to increasingly occupy the hills in strategic regions of the city. Thus, Carvalho (1987) points out that the urbanization project was allied to repressive health policies. In view of this, the reform

... opened up large avenues, straightened and widened streets and renovated the port. Hundreds of houses were knocked down, leaving residents homeless. In the area of health, Oswaldo Cruz first attacked yellow fever by fighting the mosquitoes that transmitted it, taking advantage of a recent method applied in Cuba. Dozens of officials went around the city disinfecting streets and houses, sealing off buildings and removing the sick. Particularly targeted were the tenements, unhygienic housing estates where a large part of the poor population lived. Many of them were condemned to demolition (CARVALHO, 1987).



Pereira Passos also banned street vendors and demolished several tenements, known at the time as cabeças-de-porco. In 1904, Oswaldo Cruz was in charge of smallpox vaccination, which, due to its compulsory nature and the many political opponents of the government, triggered the Vaccine Revolt in November of the same year (CARVALHO, 1987). It is from this context, then, that we can understand the great social and political mobilization, whose keynote was the inclusion of new issues in the list of discussions that sought to address the problems that affected the lives of the population. Several factors contributed to this. I'll talk about this below.

### **Breve conceituação sobre as condições de vida dos trabalhadores**

In the light of Gomes' (2005) analysis, at the end of the 19th century, during a period in which capitalism was being established in Brazil, with the establishment of free labour and the development of urbanization, in a society that was undertaking its "modernization", the social question became the biggest issue to be discussed, diagnosed and resolved, especially in the main urban centers of the period, such as Rio de Janeiro, and was therefore one of the most important political problems of the time. As Fraga Filho (1996) observes, Rio de Janeiro was the largest city in the Empire, but "it was a wealth built at the cost of the impoverishment of the majority of the population" (p. 15). In a period in which, for the author, the economy was not very flexible to the incorporation of free labor into the labor market, as also occurred in other slave societies, there was a constantly growing population (FRAGA FILHO, 1996, p. 15). As a result, the free man became a true "displaced person", a situation that reverberated into the republican regime. In the author's view, slave Society

... was characterized by the permanent dilapidation of its working population. The increasing flow of slaves and the need to maximize profits fed a system that was highly destructive of the enslaved black population. [...] Slave society did not offer enough space to productively absorb the majority of poor free people. This situation was aggravated by economic crises, which reduced the supply of jobs (FRAGA FILHO, 1996, pp. 78 and 95).

According to Soares (2019, p. 470), in the post-abolition period, freedom did not represent the right to work in practice, because, for the author, this new system would also have the organization of work under the market regime. In this respect, Mello e Souza (1986 apud Fraga Filho, 1996) is right to observe that "extreme fluidity, instability, uncertain and random





work were the most striking features of this social stratum" (p. 90). The cities were now crowded with freed slaves, freedmen, poor whites and, in addition to this, there was a mass of immigrants - free workers - coming mainly from Europe to replace the slave labor. According to Fraga Filho (1996), "frequent economic crises throughout the 19th century threw many people onto the streets in search of work" (p. 98). The need for shelter in the cities resulted in a variety of dwellings, which were in turmoil in order to provide for the survival of these citizens. Populated streets were filled with overcrowded dwellings, such as tenements and inns, as an illustration.

It is true that the foreign population was originally hired to work in rural farming; however, with the crisis in agriculture, a large part of this contingent moved to the cities, attracted not only by the new opportunities, but also by the professional specializations they brought from their countries of origin (SCHWARCZ, 2012, p. 43).

Regarding the republican period, Sevcenko (1998, p. 8) states that "never before have so many people been involved so completely and so quickly in a dramatic process of transformation of their daily habits, their convictions, their modes of perception and even their instinctive reflexes". With the yearning for the promises of a more prosperous future for Brazil, whose emphasis revolved around the "civilization" of society, the elites - the Military, Coffee Growers, Politicians, together with Scientists, Doctors, Engineers, Architects, Administrators, among others - pointed the way towards the progress that was outlined in the industrialization and modernization of the country. In this same respect, among the most incisive changes in this period, Carvalho (1987) highlights the quantitative changes:

The first was demographic. The capital's population changed in terms of number of inhabitants, ethnic composition and occupational structure. Abolition threw the rest of the slave workforce into the free labor market and increased the number of underemployed and unemployed (p. 16).

Social segregation was imposed through various measures in the urban project. Not only through demolitions, resulting in the eviction of the poor, but also through higher rents, higher taxes, the restriction of means of work - such as the ban on street vendors - or means of subsistence through planting or raising animals. These issues were directly linked to the neediest families, who were unable to restructure themselves in suburban housing. The very widening of the streets and avenues, carried out in such a way as to extinguish the alleys and



lanes that were taken over by the "dangerous" masses, was a measure that contained intentions that went beyond sanitary concerns (SEVCENKO, 2010). This is what Gazeta de Notícias published about the city in September 1899:

This city of Rio de Janeiro is in need of a major overhaul. It needs to be turned inside out, scraped clean, washed with strong bleaches, in order to achieve the desideratum of being a decent city, inside and out. The Mayor has devoted the best of his efforts to the high and important problem of sanitation in Rio de Janeiro. [...] If, however, the physical sanitation of Rio is an indisputable necessity, there is another sanitation that imposes itself on the duties of the respective authorities... We are referring to the moral cleanliness of certain alleys and streets. [...] It pains me to see the best streets of the Capital infested by women of joyful life, who do not at least have the discretion to hide their misery, but instead make a show of the gangrene of their existence (Saneamento da cidade. Gazeta de Notícias, Rio de Janeiro, p.1, 09/09/1899)

In this "disorder" that so threatened the plans of the modern elite, the disadvantaged classes, excluded from social planning, gained the image of the "dangerous class", the vicious class - which became synonyms for the word "poor" (CHALHOUB, 1996). Masses of citizens who often didn't have steady jobs, and therefore wouldn't be good workers, would live in idleness and vices, and thus would only cause problems. On this point, Fraga Filho (1996) asserts that these attitudes "covered behaviors considered threatening to social stability" (p. 89). There was a notion that violence had increased and was due to the freedom given to this population, and "not by chance, the predominant conception was that the mixture of new cultures, values and customs brought imbalance, helplessness and lack of control" (SCHWARCZ, 2012, p. 36). In this regard, Rago (1985) demonstrates the living conditions of this poor population, emphasizing the proletariat, factory workers, and how this condition of poverty was seen as a "threat", becoming an irrefutable reason for more forceful measures to be put in place to "moralize" the population and "purify" the city in order to overcome this "undesirable condition", that is, the elements linked to poverty and its immediate consequences.

According to Viscardi (2011), the poor in urban areas, whether they were workers, organized or not, or even the "masses of vagrants", constituted a "dangerous class", worthy of police intervention. When analyzing crime news between 1880 and 1910 published in the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo, Viscardi (2011) noticed a link between the "poor classes" and the "dangerous classes", a discourse that was disseminated with the aim of "transforming society, idealizing new subjects" who would fit into the societal project under construction (VISCARDI, 2011). The author deals not only with the city of São Paulo, which was among the most populous and urbanized in the country, but also with the Federal District. The phenomenon of disqualifying the poor occurred in both places. According to Viscardi (2011),



an idle poor person was a suspect in itself, simply because of their condition of poverty. The effort to stigmatize the "dangerous classes" for their state of poverty was coupled with the ethnic composition of the population as another factor justifying the cause of their backwardness. Accelerated urban growth, meanwhile,

... combined with the precariousness that characterized the daily life of the poorest population, it came to be seen as a "social danger", against which the republican authorities undertook a broad policy of intervention. The fight against idleness, vagrancy, poverty and begging became a recurring topic of discussion, unfolding into measures to control the population and the spaces in which it circulated (TORRES, 2012, p. 41).

According to Carvalho (1987), the city of Rio de Janeiro, as the capital of the Republic, had a high population density, especially in the central regions. In 1890, it was the most populous city in the country, with more than 520,000 inhabitants, a figure that would more than double in the 1920s. According to Cavalcante (1985), the great mass of urban workers were cramped in unhealthy tenements and the city's structure was not suitable for the civilizing plans of the republican elite, who were inspired by the European civilizing model. For the author, since not only communicable diseases but also behavioral diseases plagued the big cities, it is worth noting that sometimes behavior considered inappropriate was treated as psychiatric. Sexual promiscuity, alcohol use, vagrancy and other behaviors became part of the hygiene agenda and were treated as pathologies that could be medically treated like any other disease. Tuberculosis, smallpox, malaria, syphilis, leprosy, bubonic plague and all sorts of contagious diseases spread throughout the city, which now also began to receive more and more immigrants (CAVALCANTE, 1985). The countryside was also plagued by endemic diseases.

The sanitation doctor Miguel Pereira, in a speech in 1916, referring to the country's sanitation situation in continental terms, said at the time that "Brazil is still an immense hospital" (DIAS, 2007). In 1918, the country was victimized by the Spanish flu pandemic. In addition to the epidemics and endemic diseases that were spreading across the country, the exacerbated poverty, unemployment and degeneration, in the sense of immorality, worried the intellectual elite. Seen as an obstacle to the development of a nation that wanted to be "civilized", extreme poverty became the target of criticism from prominent members of the various classes of intellectuals, including those in the medical field. This situation is, as pointed out, compatible with the hygienist projects that were implemented in the capital (DIAS, 2007). In view of this situation, according to the author, dialogical intellectual spaces also increased, as well as the discussions about the "social problems" that afflicted the nascent Republic. The



discussions revolved around state intervention in the lives of the population. The Brazilian liberal state, by its very genesis, limited its role in the field of health to catastrophic situations, such as epidemics, and "the supervision of professional practice, consumer goods and medicines" (SEVCENKO, 2010).

It is worth noting that the city of Rio de Janeiro was experiencing political unrest, in a context where the expressions of the social question were intensifying. It should be remembered that poverty, as an expression of the social question in Brazil during the First Republic, was seen as a "police matter" and dealt with by the repressive apparatus of the state. Likewise, in the first decades of the 20th century, the social question took on importance in the debate between Republican politicians and intellectuals, so that the solution to social problems had to go through reformist proposals, in line with the debate that was already taking place in Europe on alternatives to combat poverty, with the government's interest in rationalizing welfare actions. As a result, the social question became central to the debates of workers' organizations and the Brazilian intellectual and political elite.

With regard to the actions of the urban bourgeoisie that was being formed in the country, Gomes (2005) points out that there was no theoretical coherence in relation to liberalism, and that it was guided by a vision of total "pragmatism". According to this author, there were few measures related to labor protection and assistance from the beginning of the republican period, such as the issue of child labor and benefits for civil servants, for example. However, Gomes (2005) points out that these first initiatives, which were explicitly concerned with health and morality, were aimed at state employees, and therefore did not affect private sector workers, and thus did not fall within the field of the formation of a social right.

In this line of thinking, the bourgeoisie legitimizes itself by failing to enforce the rights obtained by workers. This makes evident the difference between the guarantee of rights in law and their effective implementation (BEHRING and BOSCHETTI, 2016). There was therefore an unhealthy state of adult and child labor in factory environments, with common accidents and violent control of minors, as illustrated in the quote below from the newspaper *A Voz do Trabalhador*, in 1908.

Go to the industrial centers, and you'll see how children between the ages of 6 and 12 work in factories at jobs that are beyond their strength, and who, often inexperienced due to their age, easily get caught up in the machinery; in others, afraid of the scourge of the foremen if they don't show service, these little workers find themselves having to clean the machines while they're in motion, which results in them getting torn apart in the gears (*A Voz do Trabalhador* newspaper, 01/07/1908).



As you can see, cases related to unhealthy factory environments were often reported in the form of complaints in the workers' press. An example of this is the quote below from the *Correio Operário* newspaper in 1910.

Against the spirit of the law, all this is practiced with impunity. Let's go to all those factories and workshops out there with no air, no light, veritable cemeteries of the forgotten proletariat, poor children forced to work from 6 in the morning until 6 in the evening. Perversity without a name! To make a bigger mockery of this same law, they allow the greedy and wealthy masters of cigarette factories, match factories and other harmful materials to occupy the majority of children of both sexes (*Correio Operário* newspaper, 01/09/1910).

Based on Fausto (2016), it can be seen that workers were generally looking for ways to achieve freedom and were therefore opposed to any form of coercion and domination, given that Gomes (2005) believes that in the First Republic in Brazil, state action took the form of a private and elitist "police state". In this direction, according to Hardman and Leonardi (1982), the forms of mobilization characterized by the direct action of the subaltern workers stand out, through popular movements that reinvented the values coming from international organizations, according to their particular experiences. It is worth noting that this period was marked by mobilizations of the factory proletariat, considering here the broader group of urban workers, whose origin of these demonstrations was the worsening of the material conditions of existence, considering, in this regard, in particular, the debates of Fausto (2016).

During the first decades of the 20th century, the changes in Brazil's economic and social structure were felt in the strengthening of social movements. In the face of this process, research into how workers reacted to and resisted this system of domination and social control gained relevance, through new narratives that did not erase these subjects as protagonists of history. In view of this, it is important to consider that the situation of repression, exhausting work and dispossession that the working class goes through is an inescapable point for analyzing the social movements of our time because, according to Oliveira (2011), it is the most notable and visible mark of our social misery. With this, the author sheds light on the fact that the whole issue of development has been seen as

... from the angle of external relations, the problem has thus become an opposition between nations, overlooking the fact that, rather than an opposition between nations, development or growth is a problem that concerns the opposition between internal social classes (OLIVEIRA, 2011, p. 33).





In this field of study, as all knowledge and interpretation of reality are related to a socially determined perspective, there is a prevalence of the process of precariousness of the material conditions of the working class, which leads to the alienation of these same workers, in which only the struggle at certain historical moments allowed this process to be mitigated due to legal regulations and conquests of rights by the working class. In this way, according to Fausto (2016), it is important to consider in studies on the history of the working class, that it is a constituent part of a broader history, considering in this study, aspects concerning "the material conditions of existence and the collective mentality, which takes shape in an ideology, in behaviors and attitudes" (FAUSTO, 2016, p. 24).

## CONCLUSÃO

According to Gondra (2003), the assertion that the final years of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century were marked by the establishment and consolidation of the free labour market to replace slavery, the process of industrialization and the restructuring of the state under the republican system of government is unassailable. Against this backdrop, it can be understood that among the particularities of the social question in Brazil is the fact that it is closely related to the development of productive forces and "the generalization of free labour in a society in which slavery leaves deep marks" (VISCARDI, 2011). The social question is therefore a polysemic term, whose emphasis falls on concrete and plural individuals.

In general terms, it should be emphasized that workers have always been in search of improvements for their lives and their families, so that, according to Ciavatta (2019), "the fundamental historical fact is human existence in providing for all their needs" (p. 13). From this perspective, as the growing participation of workers in industrial society was a process that took place in different ways in the regions of the world that industrialized, the social life of urban workers is complex and non-linear, changing and being changed over time.

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