



THE WANDERERS OF THE CITY AND THE CIVILIZING MISSION IN THE FIRST REPUBLIC

Os Errantes Da Cidade E A Missão Civilizadora Na Primeira República

RESUMO

O ponto de partida do estudo tem como marco temporal os momentos marcados pelo advento no Brasil do período republicano, em que as mudanças políticas e sociais, instituíram um terreno fértil para a propagação da defesa de que, para materializar uma sociedade promissora, a proteção à infância era essencial. A fim de delimitar o recorte espaço-temporal da pesquisa, importa destacar que se tenciona perscrutar e esboçar as relações imanentes à educação civilizatória e ao higienismo infantil, enquanto categorias de análise, destacando-se a história da infância e da criança no Brasil. Com isso, ganham centralidade no presente estudo as ações e políticas voltadas para a infância no Brasil republicano. Foi utilizada como metodologia a pesquisa qualitativa descritiva, por meio da investigação de dados documentais e bibliográficos. Para elucidar essas questões, buscou-se referencial teórico mediante material bibliográfico atinente a essa temática.

Adriano Rosa da Silva

Master in Social History from the Fluminense Federal University (UFF). Master's student in Education at the University of Lisbon (ULisboa). Degree in Pedagogy from the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). MBA in School Management from the University of São Paulo (USP).

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Infância; Assistência à Infância; Primeira República

**ABSTRACT**

Corresponding author:*Adriano Rosa da Silva***adriano.uff@hotmail.com*

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The starting point of the study has as its time frame the moments marked by the advent of the republican period in Brazil, in which political and social changes established fertile ground for the propagation of the defense that, to materialize a promising society, child protection was essential. In order to delimit the space-time scope of the research, it is important to highlight that the intention is to examine and outline the relationships inherent to civilizing education and child hygiene, as categories of analysis, highlighting the history of childhood and children in Brazil. As a result, actions and policies aimed at children in republican Brazil gain centrality in this study. Descriptive qualitative research was used as a methodology, through the investigation of documentary and bibliographic data. To elucidate these questions, a theoretical reference was sought using bibliographic material related to this theme.

KEYWORDS: Childhood; Child Care; First Republic



INTRODUCTION

The situation in which the Republic was established in Brazil was very troubled, and it was a time of hope for liberation. It was a climate that demanded control on the part of the government, since the contradictions that were present at the beginning of the Republic were evident. One of them pointed to the opportunity to make the civilization project a reality. In the words of Rizzini (2011, p. 203) "it would finally take the course of a cultured nation, civilized", the other presented the population in general as "indolent", possessing "physical and moral weakness", "ignorant" and "promiscuous". From this angle, minors were accused of being idle and criminals, and work was the solution, starting with childhood.

It is therefore important to consider that Brazil has a long history of child exploitation. Thus, in Rizzini's (2018) view, poor children worked for their owners, in the case of the enslaved children of the Colony and the Empire, for the 'capitalists' at the beginning of industrialization, as happened with orphaned, abandoned or destitute children from the end of the 19th century, for large landowners as "boias-frias", in domestic craft or agricultural production units, in family homes, and on the streets, to support themselves and their families (RIZZINI, 2018, p. 371). In the light of Câmara's contributions (2010, p. 51), another aspect of the precarious conditions and brutalities to which poor children were exposed referred to the punishments they were subjected to in service activities for people or families who hired them, in exchange for small wages or simply food .¹

Along these lines, between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th, intellectuals, politicians and religious and lay leaders stood out. Concerned about the situation of a growing number of "destitute" people, they mobilized resources to support the

¹ Many industrial establishments made use of the child labor force, including in more complex activities such as operating machines on production lines, usually for very low wages. The entry of poor children into the labor market fulfilled one of the great desires of the business community, which, by reducing production costs, increased its profits. The preventive tone of work was activated, since, according to them, it was an antidote to the evils of idleness and vice. Although this moralizing view of work as an antidote to the dangers of vice and idleness for poor and unoccupied children who were wandering the streets was shared by journalists, doctors and sanitarians, it can be said that they did not fail to criticize the violence, exploitation and risk of accidents that children were exposed to in these workplaces (MARQUES, 2003, pp. 58-59).



victims of pauperism. Notably, the background to this context is that childhood came to be perceived as a social problem and the model of assistance characteristic of the First Republic linked its protection and attention to the prevention and consequent outcome of social ills. This is in line with the idea that the concept of childhood is constructed circumstantially, resulting from social practices. Thus, it was actually the material conditions of existence that produced illness, poverty and other issues, requiring more effective public policies committed to overcoming these conditions.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach, based on documentary and bibliographic analysis. The primary sources used were the periodicals of the time, such as *O Paiz*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *O Globo* and *O Imparcial*, which reflected and helped construct social representations about poor children. In addition, specialized academic literature was used on the history of childhood, public policies, hygiene and social assistance in republican Brazil. The analysis was guided by categories such as childhood, civilization, hygiene, welfare and journalistic discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE PROBLEM OF CHILDHOOD IN BRAZIL IN THE FIRST REPUBLIC

In Western society, childhood, as a specific social segment, became the object of scientific concern and study in the last decades of the 19th century. It was also during this period that the first childcare services emerged in Brazil, based on scientific proposals and initial movements in favor of public policies aimed at children. According to Rocha (2003), the spaces designed to welcome and care for orphaned and abandoned boys and girls underwent ideological changes, especially in Brazil, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, when care practices were incorporated into the discourse and actions of hygienists, causing the character of mercy to fade (ROCHA, 2003).

These philanthropic institutions, which at first had a welfare nature, also began to take on the mission of educating their inmates, offering, in the case of girls, rudimentary



knowledge of first letters, manual practices and domestic apprenticeships. This strategy served to keep many children off the streets who were beginning to cause trouble and make a bad impression on the residents of urban centers, especially the main Brazilian cities, which were in the process of being formed (ABREU and MARTINEZ, 1997).

In this sense, according to Câmara (2010), it is worth mentioning that caring for poor children through charity was one of the main places of social assistance from the colonial period to the Republic. Being an institution closely linked to the Catholic Church through the lay representation of the Brotherhood of Mercy, it is not possible to dissociate its intervention in the lives of poor children from a charitable-religious action. The Santas Casas de Misericórdia are the oldest places in Brazil for assisting the poor. Inspired by the 14 Works of Mercy, the Santas Casas were supposed to provide assistance to widows, prisoners, the indigent, the sick and orphans under the sign of Faith and Charity.

This assistance to the poor was based on the principles of Christian charity, because according to Rizzini (2011), a charitable attitude of piety and compassion towards the poor was seen as a primary condition for the "salvation of the soul". Contributing through alms and donations was therefore an obligation of the individual. Childcare consisted of charitable actions, such as the creation of orphanages and the actions of private individuals who took pity on children abandoned on the streets, as Marcílio (2006) points out, preventing them from perishing from hunger or cold.

According to this author, children were not a privileged group to whom adults looked. Their fragile physical condition meant that they were at the mercy of good fortune or the bad luck of being born into an environment that would allow them to grow. They were born into a society with high infant mortality rates and no technical means to prevent this, as mentioned earlier. It was left to the adults to pray that the children would survive or, if they died prematurely, that they would at least be baptized (MARCÍLIO, 2006).

At the beginning of the 20th century, Brazil's major capitals were experiencing industrial growth and a population explosion. Industrial workers lived in precarious places, called tenements or workers' villages, located close to the industries, where people lived as a result of low wages. The working hours were exhausting and were also experienced by children, as child labor was common (RIZZINI, 2018). For Soares (2019), child labor was nothing new in the years following the proclamation of the Republic, "poor children have always worked, in



the Colony and in the Empire, slave children and even free ones were always employed by their owners, parents, guardians, master craftsmen and even the State in its institutions" (p. 473).

According to Soares (2019), the novelty is that in the first decade of the 20th century, complaints of exploitation of this labor force erupted, "mainly from newspapers with small or large circulations, from some politicians and even from children who went to the police to file complaints" (p. 474). Thus, police reports, complaints of violence and requests for a change of guardianship in the years following the abolition of slavery indicate a movement of reaction by underage workers seeking legal protection (SOARES, 2019, p. 477).

Case to be investigated [...] death of a boy buried without a certificate - police sloppiness. An employee of Professor João Antunes Alves, in Guaratiba, was 14-year-old Francisco Manoel da Rocha, son of Josepha Alves Mirandella, who also lived there. Francisco had been living at his employer's house for some time, where he took care of household chores for a small monthly fee, with which he helped his mother. On the 9th of this month, Josepha was quietly at home, when her son appeared almost unable to speak, articulating his words with great difficulty and pouring blood from his ears and nasal cavities, with his face swollen and congested [...] Josepha, in view of this, began to gather information, and then learned that her son had been the victim of a beating given to him by his employer, who then threw him out the door [...] All this happened more quickly than expected....] We know all this more quickly from the delegate of the 26th district, who until now has been unaware, or if he does know, in order not to bother, has not tried to make precise inquiries, thus agreeing, with his silence, to the impunity, perhaps of a repellent crime (O Paiz, 18/01/1908).

In these terms, this is a field of study that points to the materiality of social relations by investigating, among other things, the multiple relationships between children, their daily lives and the worlds of work. That said, Barbosa (2007) points out that, since the 1910s, newspapers have started to publish sensationalist stories reporting the horrors of everyday life, through headlines, pages, chronicles, illustrations and photographs, making the reader able to integrate and identify with the world narrated by the report, Rio de Janeiro at that time, became "constructed of existing places and perfectly identifiable characters" (2007, p.49).

Faced with this process, it is necessary to remember that the reports allowed their readers to get closer to the people who were active in society. As they were presented, the characters in the reports became the protagonists of the stories and constructed the social history of Rio de Janeiro.²

² As for the characters in the reports, it is worth noting that the streets were spaces of circulation and survival for the working classes, made up of self-employed, semi-salaried and salaried workers. They were marked by the heterogeneity of their regulars, mostly rural emigrants and foreign immigrants who gave them a hybrid character, typical of a large city center. Selling newspapers, lottery tickets or sweets on the streets, carrying loads at fairs, shining boots on street corners, serving as helpers in the shops, delivering parcels or working long hours in factories, entertainment venues and circuses, without



The child was admitted to the Santa Casa when she was taken there by the dentist Angelo de Castro Alves. She worked in the house of the surgeon, who shortly afterwards moved to Rio de Janeiro, at 33 Rua Umbelina. At the dentist's house, she worked for eight months, doing domestic chores. She did everyone's laundry, cleaned and looked after the children. When she fell ill and was diagnosed with pneumonia, she was taken to the Central Post and for three days had been eating coffee and milk given to her by the household staff (A Noite, 21/11/1925).

According to Câmara (2010, p.79), the cases reported in the newspapers reflected the fears of the changes that were taking place in the city, tinged with fear of crime, intolerance of disorder and indignation at the criminal abandonment of children.³ For this author, order and disorder were revealed as aspects of a city that was corrupt, insecure and degenerate, but was reinvigorated by the modernization and civilization initiatives formulated by the public authorities.⁴ According to Câmara (2010, p.63), "the immaculate view of childhood was contrasted with another view of childhood as perverted, helpless, vicious, immoral and abandoned". In this way, abandoned, exploited and mostly victims of mistreatment, children traced an itinerary of successive exclusions. A childhood described by the newspapers as shabby, dirty, unkempt, with aggressive behavior, dissonant in relation to the values that established a city that, by enshrining the image of order and progress, compulsively denied its opposite (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 52).

The action taken by the juvenile court judge, Dr. Mello Mattos, against the soulless and unscrupulous individuals who use children in the begging industry, is one that deserves the highest praise. One of the most annoying spectacles in Rio is the fact that on every street corner you'll find a child with his hand out, begging for public charity. Women who are used to this way of life have eight or even ten little children at their service. And there isn't a carioca who doesn't know that beggar woman in Rua Gonçalves Dias, who always has a month-old brat on her arm - a brat who, when he reaches a year old, is soon replaced by another. [...] The juvenile court must act rigorously against these exploiters. And the penalties must be severe, so that such scenes, which are a lamentable testimony to our cultural traditions, disappear from Rio (O Imparcial, 10/02/1925).

guarantees, security and in exchange for tiny wages or, in some cases, food and a roof over their heads, children were often victims of violence, punishment, mutilation and grooming (ARAUJO, 1995, p. 162).

³ At the beginning of the 20th century, social issues were inserted into a repressive universe; investments to expand the radius of social control were implemented on the urban context and its street characters, seen from the perspective of what was criminalized. The new order demanded the conformation of the worker and the parameters for their classification polarized social representations about work, professions and the set of social relations in which they were inserted (OLIVEIRA, 2000, p. 1-2).

⁴ In its social tangle, the city was a fertile ground for alternative practices of solidarity and socialization, establishing a dangerous geography of contact between its inhabitants. The activities carried out by itinerant workers, day laborers and vendors were highly dangerous to their physical and moral integrity, due to the possibility of social contamination. (DA MATA, 1991, p. 64).



In view of the above, for Câmara (2010, p. 52), childhood came to be conceived and described as dangerous or in danger, in the discourses that constructed and asserted certain representations about its social role.⁵ Thus, according to Faria Filho (1999, p. 33), the periodicals in circulation highlighted situations involving children "disinherited by fortune", particularly those who were abandoned⁶. For this author, the press played a fundamental role in the production of certain representations of childhood, as well as in the socialization of "terror", as aspects from which practices were justified in favour of a civilizing project for the country⁷. Journalists were active collaborators in denouncing the mistreatment and dangers that children faced as a result of their parents' exposure to immorality, indicative of a mentality of public intervention in the private sphere of families, recognizing the issue of children as something public, as a public problem.

[...] Whereas article 111 of the Minors' Code states that female minors under the age of 18 may not give public performances in theaters or any other public amusement houses; and whereas article 29 of the Regulations for Public Amusement Houses states that in entertainment companies, whether or not they are for children, including equestrian, acrobatic and prestidigitation companies, minors under the age of 16 may not be admitted. [...] Considering that, according to art. 115 n. 1 of the Children's Code and art. 29 § 2 of the Regulation of Public Entertainment Houses, the entrepreneurs or those responsible for the shows shall present to the supervisory authority authorization, in due form, from the parents or legal representatives of the minors, for them to take part in the performances. (Jornal do Commercio, 09/06/1931).

In this sense, for Câmara (2010, p. 66), the meanings of childhood are configured as marks "of their belonging in the world"⁸. Concerns about the high number of children on the

⁵ The street appeared to be the main agent of contamination for the poor, particularly helpless children, in a city that was living with the problems arising from its accelerated urbanization process. Unhealthy conditions, a high infant mortality rate, various and decimating epidemics, the growing impoverishment of a significant number of the population who were unable to enter the formal labor market, were all aspects that justified the compulsory implementation of projects to reform the city and intervene in its population (ALVIM E VALLARES, 1988, p. 4).

⁶ The moral and material abandonment in which children found themselves, as well as the growth of exploitation carried out in different ways in factories, underemployment, prostitution, begging and within the family itself, made up a nefarious and saddening scenario that pushed children to compulsively enter the world of delinquency and vice. (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 40).

⁷ Confronting the desirable image of the modern city with the "horror" represented by the "gang of unoccupied people" who made up the scenario that formed this generation of men and women of tomorrow, Octávio Werneck, like many journalists of his generation, tried to describe the misery that, stamped on the city's scenery, denigrated the idea of progress, constituting an obstacle to civilization. (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 76).

⁸ The multiplicity of adjectives used to characterize underprivileged children, which circulated in the various newspapers in the country's capital, should be seen as an element that contributed to the composition and socialization of the senses and meanings attributed to them. What happened was the construction of specific identities for poor children, in a broad process of demarcating the boundaries between normal and abnormal, between happy and unhappy (FERNANDES, 2000, p. 67).



streets and the precarious conditions in which many lived in their homes ended up associating the impoverishment and poverty of parents with a natural destiny for their children, namely poverty, delinquency and vagrancy.⁹ By resorting to the stigmatization of deviant, marginal and abandoned children, they sought to confirm the normality of others, but also to conceive the multiple differentiations of the established labels (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 68).

It is worth noting that, according to journalists, doctors, jurists and educators, the state should create mechanisms to care for and control poor children, between correcting them and not letting them go astray (ROCHA, 2003). The proposal for poor children was to develop their virtues, avoid the vices inherited from their parents or those acquired from their social group and, with them, "build the future of the nation"¹⁰. To control deviant children by creating government institutions that would act on them from an educational perspective, instead of only intervening in the punitive sphere. To this end, a medical-legal-welfare apparatus had to be created that "sought to prevent the physical and moral degeneration of the child, 'produce' the citizen for work, protect the minor from vices, recover the vicious and reprimand the criminal" (ROCHA, 2003).

CIVILIZE, MORALIZE AND MODERNIZE: THE ISSUE OF CHILDHOOD ON THE AGENDA

Rizzini (2011) describes and analyzes the understanding of children, at the beginning of the Republican period, as a moldable being, as a paradox of the "danger of being", in which they represented a danger to society and another "danger to themselves", establishing, according to the author, objectives for specific functions. According to the author, these functions were prevention (keeping an eye on children, preventing their degradation, which would contribute to the degeneration of society), education (educating the poor, molding them into the habit of work and training them to observe the rules of "good living"), rehabilitation

⁹ Particularly from the second half of the 19th century onwards, what was understood as vagrancy among minors was also related to boys and girls engaged in trades considered unworthy. These were lottery ticket sellers and blind drivers whose links with gambling and begging brought them closer to the status of vagrants. For these adolescents, vagrancy was a way of rebelling against the impositions of the adult world. This rebellion was expressed in their contempt for work, their preference for the street over the home and their taste for alcoholic drinks (FRAGA FILHO, 1996, p. 117).

¹⁰ The "construction of Brazil" and "Brazilians", associated with the dissemination of education, is part of a long process, marked by tensions and conflicts, which cannot be summed up in a single "nation project", or even "education". Not least because [...] this issue involved different "educational forces" in different spaces and times (TORRES, 2012, p. 65).



(re-educating or rehabilitating the "minor", perceived as "vicious" through work and instruction, removing him from the clutches of crime and making him useful to society) and repression (containing the "minor delinquent", preventing him from causing further damage and aiming at his rehabilitation, through work)¹¹

It is important to note that, since the Proclamation of the Republic, children have been considered to be the "fundamental basis for building the nation" (ABREU and MARTINEZ, 1997, p. 26). Dias (2007) points out that these ideas were the result of the influences of social values coming from Europe as well as the scientific knowledge produced there. In the field of science, for this author, Brazilian professionals had a strong French and Germanic influence, examples for the realization of the yearnings for social transformation and the development of a "modern" society. A reference that would make it possible to break with colonial traits, a rural past marked by slavery, producing a kind of "social hygiene"¹² and allowing the constitution of a civilized society (DIAS, 2007).

Thus, in order to civilize the country, hygienists knew that it wasn't enough to eradicate mortality. To become a "modern" nation, it was necessary to go beyond the health of bodies and start investing in the formation of a new, healthier, more normalized mentality (KUHLMANN JÚNIOR, 2001). Thus, the sanitization of childhood, which initially involved sanitary hygiene, gradually opened up a new path: "the sanitization of minds, through hygienic education" (ROCHA, 2003). Based on the author's reflections, it is interesting to note that medicine, in broadening its scope of action, branched out into many specialties and made mental hygiene the access route to the formation of a healthy man. In fact, for hygienists, the creation of healthy habits in the population necessarily involved the education of children. With this in

¹¹ From the time of slavery, the younger generations of freedmen and freedwomen were not offered much in the way of advancement. Especially for black boys, slavery continued to impose subservient and menial roles on them. In the tents of the masters of trades, for example, they were subjected to strict discipline, corporal punishment and tiring tasks. In the face of this, the wanderings and street antics that also emerged in the republican regime appeared as a mixture of disdain, indifference, protest and resistance to an adult world with limited horizons (FRAGA FILHO, 1996, p. 116).

¹² In light of the concept of "social hygiene", discussed by another theorist, it is worth noting that hygienists believed that the environment would dominate individuals. According to Gondra (2000), after a while, as their scientific studies deepened, they realized, however, that just taking care of hygiene by changing the environment, customs and habits, as well as organizing cities, controlling diseases and reformulating the entire political and cultural context was not enough to bring about progress. Something that was independent of hygiene had to be taken care of: genetics, hereditary seed, in short, eugenics. Hygienists sought to whiten the race by associating the white man with a healthy, sexually strong and morally regulated body. Black people, on the other hand, were associated with a lack of social control, an impoverished intellect and a disintegrated moral, physical and mental constitution (GONDRA, 2000).



mind, the first decades of the 20th century witnessed the idealization of apparatuses that promised to protect and promote childhood, with a view to making Brazil a great nation .¹³

From this perspective, Araújo (2013, p. 82) points out that journalistic discourse is a producer of ideas, which makes it essential to "problematize how much autonomy it needs to become as much a formulator as a propagator, after all, without 'autonomy' it would be a mere reproducer of itself or of other discourses" (p.82). According to Câmara (2010, 42), the newspapers attested to the evils identified with the problem of childhood¹⁴, among them: "the neglect of families, the lack of school institutions to assist them, their conditions of survival and, fundamentally, the absence of public policies on the part of the state" (p. 42). As the following fragments show:

The criminal abandonment in which we see these poor little children of both sexes on the streets of Rio, consigned to the miseries of begging and the dangers of vagrancy, without the hands of pity or protection being extended to them to pull them out of this school of vice and crime in which they unconsciously live (Rio Jornal, 02/10/1924).

Those who visit the inns, the rooming houses - humble houses, without air or light, those who take the trouble to wander through the *baiúcas* of the favela, "Nova Portugal", the hill of Santo Antonio, the humblest streets of Saúde, Praia Formosa, Catumbi, Rio Cumprido, the suburbs of Central do Brasil and Leopoldina, you will better understand the thoughts of those who see miserable children, without support, looking for solidity or educating their spirits in the vice that surrounds them, day after day without the slightest appreciation from the competent authorities (Jornal do Brasil, 31/01/1925).

Along these lines, according to the author, in the successive articles published in the newspapers of the time, it is possible to detect an emphasis on the abandonment of children and the risks this represented "for social peace and for the development of the country" (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 39). Looking after children meant ensuring their protection and care through a program aimed at implementing measures in the name of public morality, as pointed out by Câmara (2010, p. 39). The following excerpt is relevant in this regard:

The occupations of minors on the streets give them bad habits and lead them to perdition. It is a proven fact that the streets of large cities are schools of immorality and greenhouses of corruption for minors, who in them contract an aversion to work and moral discipline, learn to drink, gamble, speak in abject language, beg, steal, and

¹³ Glimpsed by intellectuals as a panacea for the country's progress and civilization, education was seen as a magic formula capable of helping to overcome social problems related to poor, delinquent, abandoned, criminalized and illiterate children. Industrial and urban growth, as well as the wave of migrants arriving in urban centers, especially the country's capital, were presented as preponderant factors in the worsening of these problems (CÂMARA, 2010, pp. 127-128).

¹⁴ Occurrences involving children populated the imagination of the time, reinforcing the idea that it was necessary to crack down on bad examples and exploitation, expressed by the *alms* industry and the *caftism* to which these children were exposed and subordinated. (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 41).



practice other crimes and vices; and they are paths of degradation for girls, who are exposed to the greatest attacks and are dragged into prostitution. A minor who spends a large part of the day on the street, left to his own devices and under the influence of other young people, corrupt or criminal, is necessarily and irremediably a candidate for delinquency. All street professions are dangerous for minors; some work quickly, others more slowly, but none are without their drawbacks. Newspaper vendors are the typical profession for minors on the street [...] In some advanced countries, minors can only sell newspapers and work on the streets after the age of 18, in others after the age of 16 or 14. Let's adopt the latter age, bearing in mind that our children develop precociously, and that this is the age set by the assistance and protection law for the end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence (O Globo, 28/01/1926).

In view of the above, conceiving of the press as a social practice and one of the privileged spaces for the production of memories, the articles drew attention to the urgent need to clean up the streets, highlighting education as a possibility of tackling the problems of helpless children, based on the idea of building a people through the association between doctors and educators.

Frequenting the streets is truly one of the most common and powerful causes of corruption among minors; for this reason, in almost all countries that are concerned with the moral assistance of children and adolescents, they are forbidden to engage in occupations that are practiced on public roads, such as shoeshine, selling newspapers, sweets, lottery tickets, etc. And in the draft law that I had the honor of drafting on behalf of the late Minister Alfredo Pinto, it includes an article to this effect; but in the legislative authorization granted to the government to regulate the assistance and protection of minors, that article was eliminated, which prevented its provisions from appearing in the regulations in force. So, in view of the law, the execution of which is entrusted to me, I cannot adopt the measures that you so reasonably advise (O Paiz, 31/01/1925).

In this context, by portraying the helplessness faced by contingents of the child population, "Rio's newspapers highlighted the urgent need to embody public policies to care for children" (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 40). Often, the articles published, in addition to showing an inhuman scenario of the situation of illness, hunger, exploitation and mistreatment to which poor children were exposed, presented "possible links between the problems experienced daily in the city and the inequalities produced by the thirst for progress and civilization" (CÂMARA, 2010, p. 40). In the eyes of the press of the time, this highlighted the need for measures involving public authorities and private initiative in the field of assistance

The care and protection of minors involves infinite and complex aspects that require constant and difficult supervision. The competent authorities are not always aware of what is going on. Fortunately, however, whenever the magistrate who runs this service is informed, immediate action is taken. The public should therefore help the juvenile court judge by making him aware of the shameful acts of exploitation which, unfortunately, still occur in many places and will continue to occur until the education of the masses reaches the necessary level of perfection (Jornal do Brasil, 01/06/1927).



In this sense, as Câmara (2010, p. 42) points out, the periodicals highlighted the discomfort caused by the presence of children of various age groups who, although of school age, "were abandoned morally and materially on the public roads" (p. 42). In this regard, Alvim and Valladares (1988, p. 4) point out that, faced with exploitation, illness, poverty and despair, which sometimes led them to death, alcoholism, madness and suicide, these children organized resistance, which was shown in the ways in which they circumvented the adversities of everyday life.

There is nothing more dreadful than this environment in which there are eighteen-year-olds and three-year-olds, one-year-old yellow boys and pubescent girls subject to all kinds of passivity. These kids don't seem to think and have never been ashamed of themselves, moulded for the crime of tomorrow, for prostitution on a large scale (RIO, 1995, p. 131).

In this social context, it is possible to see that the correlations between poverty, minority and abandonment were part of the discursive universe at the beginning of the 20th century¹⁵, as revealed by the massive reports presented by chroniclers and journalists about the situation of helplessness and illiteracy faced by poor children in the country's capital, according to Câmara (2010, p. 42). It is also important to note that the criticism of these material conditions imposed on workers in Brazil has been well problematized by authors such as Ferreras and Secreto (2013), who broadly investigate social movements and social policies in Brazil and other Latin American countries, using the *modus vivendi* of workers as a theoretical category. Thus, with regard to the material aspects of these people's living conditions, despite the process of beautification and remodeling implemented in the capital-city, it is worth noting the following view from a periodical of the time:

We have become accustomed to seeing the streets full of weeds, the beaches cluttered with all kinds of debris, the gutters filthy, the walls falling down and full of obscene inscriptions, the shacks in ruin, animals of all kinds breeding in the middle of the city, the manure serving as a vehicle for the flies and mosquitoes that torment us with endless horror (O Fluminense, 10/01/1904).

¹⁵ It's worth mentioning that in the early years of the First Republic, the problem of destitute children was a recurring theme, not just in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The politician and journalist Quintino Bocaiúva (1836-1912), while president of the state of Rio de Janeiro (1900-1903), stated that the mass of the population should not remain plunged into the darkness of ignorance. Since the most superficial and inattentive observer is struck by the considerable number of vagrant children, abandoned from paternal solicitude, by poverty, by unawareness of their duty, or by relaxation, from early childhood, to the vices proper to adults and the defects inherent in the absence of any education. Thus, Quintino Bocaiúva addressed the Chamber of Deputies in order to mobilize other politicians to address the problem of illiteracy of the vast majority of the population, as well as the problem of abandoned children (BOCAIÚVA, In: Relatório do Presidente da Província do Rio de Janeiro do ano de 1902).



On the other hand, according to Behring and Boschetti (2016), one fact worth highlighting is the significant changes in production processes. One of these changes is that it gave workers greater collective power, and they began to demand collective bargaining agreements (2016, p. 68). Assistance to poor children began to emphasize the need to intervene in this segment in order to elevate Brazil to the status of civilization. As for the social system of charity, according to Marcílio (1998)¹⁶, from the colonial period until the mid-19th century, the charity phase was in force,

... the main hallmark of welfare in this phase is the feeling of human fraternity, with a paternalistic content and no pretension to social change. Religiously inspired, they favor charity and beneficence. Their actions are characterized by immediacy, with the richest and most powerful seeking to alleviate the suffering of the most disadvantaged, through alms or good deeds. The wealthy thus hope to receive the salvation of their souls, a future paradise and, here on earth, the recognition of society and the status of benefactors. Ideologically, they try to maintain the situation and preserve order, propagating conformist behavior (MARCÍLIO, 1988, p. 134).

Childhood became more valued and was the target of specific care through control. The main goal of this "control" of the body was to obtain a protected and sanitized childhood so that society could be defended, thinking of the child as the "adult of tomorrow", as an efficient social apparatus, that is, a citizen who would contribute to the advancement of their nation with their progressive and healthy practices (KUHLMANN JR, 2001).

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, the aim was to highlight a change in the way children were cared for, from religious institutions to public authorities, outlining the need to organize childcare policies in the First Republic, investigating the role of the state in relation to these social policies, in a period of broad reformist desire. It is the result of a social context historically constructed by the culture and experience of those who define the place of being a child, focusing on what opportunities children are given to live this experience.

¹⁶ The history of care for destitute children is divided into three phases: the Charitable, which began with Christianity during the Roman Empire and lasted until the mid-18th century. The second phase, which we are focusing on in this study, is called Scientific Philanthropy and covers the period from the 18th century to the mid-20th century. The last phase is that of the Welfare State, which ended in the 1990s with the enactment of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (MARCÍLIO, 1998).



Within this framework of analysis, support for poor children as a charitable-religious attribution underwent gradual transformations, especially in terms of where this type of assistance was provided¹⁷. In this way, changes in representations of the poor, including children and young people, had already been taking place since the middle of the 19th century. Secularization and hygiene transformed those excluded into dangerous subjects, an obstacle to modernization. With this research referring to just a sketch of ideas, I returned to this period in order to investigate the roots behind the reformist discourses regarding the construction of a new society, that is, a "modern" and "civilized" Brazil, conceiving of children as the "future of the nation".

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¹⁷ The result of the actions of philanthropy and charity was that, over the centuries, hospitals, asylums, orphanages, etc. were built. For its part, charity is limited to the sphere of action: that of Christianity, while philanthropy has a limiting factor: the action of the state. The existence of a welfare state ends up restricting the actions of voluntary and philanthropic institutions (ROSS, 1974, p. 783).



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