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FROM PALLIATIVE TO PERMANENT: THE HISTORY OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AS A RIGHT IN BRAZIL

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Abstract: This study analyzes the evolution of social welfare policy in Brazil, highlighting the transition from a charitable to a rights-based approach. The influence of industrial development policies, state strategies and legislative reforms, culminating in the adoption of the LOAS in 1993 and integration into the social security system, are explored. Emphasis is placed on the reconfiguration of the relationship between the State and citizens, marking social welfare not as charity but as an essential right for the promotion of social justice and the strengthening of democracy.

Keywords: Social Welfare; Social Policies; Social Rights.

INTRODUCTION

The development of social welfare policy in Brazil throughout the 20th century underwent a profound transformation, marked by a transition from a charitable and emergency-based approach to a rights-based approach. This evolution reflects significant changes in the conceptions of State, society and social rights, influenced by specific historical contexts and complex political-economic dynamics. This paper seeks to analyze the trajectory of Brazilian social welfare, highlighting the influence of industrial development policies, state strategies of social control, and legislative reforms that culminated in the institutionalization of welfare as an inalienable right, under the aegis of the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the subsequent Organic Law of Social Welfare (LOAS) of 1993.

Historically, social assistance in Brazil has been characterized by a strong connotation of charity and palliative action, often linked to political and clientelist interests that reinforced existing power structures. The creation of the Brazilian Assistance Legion (LBA) during the *New State* (dictatorial period) is an emblematic example of how assistance was used as a tool

of social control, with the collaboration of industrial and political elites to maintain a status quo favorable to the dominant classes.

However, the post-war period and the subsequent period marked a turning point, where the impact of developmentalist policies and the influence of international models such as the Beveridge Plan began to redefine the role of the State and social policies.

The analysis proposed in this study follows the historical and critical narrative offered by scholars such as Yamamoto, Carvalho, Sposati, Yazbek, among others, who document the intensification of state intervention in the economy and social fabric during and after the 1939 crisis, and how this paved the way for a new configuration of social policies. This context was crucial for the gradual transformation of social assistance from a paternalistic practice to a rights-oriented public policy, culminating in the adoption of the LOAS and the integration of social assistance into the Brazilian social security system, which also includes health and pensions.

This study is therefore dedicated to exploring how the evolution of social assistance in Brazil not only reflects economic and political transformations, but also how these changes contributed to the reconfiguration of relations between the State and citizens, marking the transition from a vision of assistance as charity to a conception of assistance as a guaranteed right, fundamental for the strengthening of democracy and the promotion of social justice.

DEVELOPMENT

The analysis of the economic and social dynamics that shaped capitalist development in Brazil during the 20th century is fundamental to understanding the structural changes that impacted Brazilian society on several levels. In this context, Marilda and Raul contribute significantly with a critical approach that examines the period following one of the most critical moments in world economic history. The following quote, taken from their work, illuminates the transformations that occurred in Brazil after the height of the crisis in 1939, highlighting the resumption of economic growth and the social and political implications of these changes. The expansion of industrial production, driven by both internal factors and external demand, and the increase in the exploitation of the labor force under the aegis of a State that intensified its intervention, are key aspects highlighted by the authors to understand this historical period.

They point to a time when the Brazilian economy underwent a profound transformation, marked by the deepening of capitalism, which brought with it significant consequences for the social and political structure of the country:

The period of social history that covers these situations is marked by important transformations at the economic, social and political levels. After the period of crisis that peaked in 1939, there was an intense resumption of capitalist deepening both in the scope of the expansion of industrial production – stimulated by the growth of external orders and the need to replace previously imported goods – and in other productive activities carried out internally and agro-export. (...) This expansion of industrial production will be accompanied by an intensification of the rate of exploitation of the Labor Force. It will be a period in which industrial profits reach extremely high levels, guaranteed

by the coercive action of the State, which intensifies its intervention in the labor market (Iamamoto and Carvalho, 2020, p. 257).

The State plays a crucial role in promoting capital accumulation, acting in a way that counteracts the natural processes that could lead to a real increase in wages. This is achieved both through coercive actions and through the persistent inflation that characterizes the period in question. Under the influence of the industrial elite, the State intensifies its presence in the labor market through two main strategies. The first strategy aims to limit the already scarce possibilities for workers' unions to make demands. The second strategy involves imposing restrictions on the fulfillment of certain rights provided for in labor legislation, together with the enactment of exceptional laws that seek to interfere in the natural dynamics of supply and demand in the labor market (Iamamoto, Carvalho, 2020).

This way, the State subsidizes the acceleration of accumulation, opposing legal measures to the natural mechanisms of the labor market. The apparently paradoxical fact is that, in a period of great industrial expansion in which employment reaches an extremely high level compared to previous periods, the real wages of urban workers have declined sharply, to the same extent that their working conditions have worsened, increasing the pace and intensity of exploitation (Iamamoto, Carvalho, 2020, p. 259).

In this context of difficulties faced by the proletariat and the urban petite bourgeoisie, which threaten the dictatorship's support base among the popular sectors, an attempt by the State to mask this adverse situation can be observed. To this end, a propaganda campaign is launched that aims to garner the population's support for the so-called "war effort", presenting it as a collective undertaking of the nation, without any specific group being overburdened. It was under this

justification of the country's involvement in the war conflict that the first welfare action at a national level began, materialized by the creation of the Brazilian Assistance Legion - LBA (Iamamoto, Carvalho, 2020).

The first mention of Social Services in Brazilian federal legislation occurred in the 1934 Constitution, which required the State to protect those in need and allocated 19% of tax revenues to maternity and childhood. Specific legislation was introduced in 1938, with Decree-Law number: 525, establishing the structure of Social Services as a public service and creating the National Council of Social Services (CNSS) to act as an advisory body. However, the practical implementation of this decree-law was limited, and the CNSS was characterized more by its activities of manipulating funds for political clientelism than by effective actions. In 1943, Decree-Law number: 5,697 reiterated the principles of Social Services organization, without introducing significant changes. Despite attempts at reorganization, the CNSS did not establish itself as an entity of influence in the development of Social Services, a function that was, in practice, assumed by the Brazilian Assistance Legion.

Established at a historical moment of intense social and political transformations, marked by the Second World War and its consequences in the national territory, the LBA emerged from "an initiative by private individuals soon taken over and financed by the government, also counting on the sponsorship of large employer corporations (National Confederation of Industry and Commercial Association of Brazil) and the support of society ladies" (Iamamoto, Carvalho, 2020, p. 265).

This organization not only symbolizes a joint effort between the government and civil society, but also reflects the complex power dynamics that permeate social and political

relations. The LBA can be understood as a milestone in the trajectory of social assistance in the country, highlighting the intersection between welfare action and existing structures of domination, as well as the way in which social assistance practices can reinforce or challenge social hierarchies:

The first major social welfare institution was the Brazilian Assistance Legion, recognized as a body in collaboration with the State in 1942. This body, statutorily, ensures its presidency to the First Ladies of the Republic. It represents the symbiosis between private and public initiatives, the presence of the dominant class as a civil power and the benefit/charity x beneficiary/beggar relationship, conforming the basic relationship between the State and subordinate classes (Sposati et al, 2003, p. 45-46).

In the history of social welfare policy in Brazil, the creation and operation of the Brazilian Assistance Legion (LBA) represent a fundamental chapter, especially from the perspective of the power dynamics and social structures that shape the provision of social services in the country. Inserted in a historical context where the first lady's rule exerted significant influence on Brazilian political culture, the LBA introduced a model of social welfare management that distinguished itself by focusing specifically on one segment of the population: the "poor". A critical analysis of this approach, which combines the clientelist distribution of goods with welfare-based actions, allows for a deep reflection on the political and social implications of such practices. Following this understanding, I use Renato's quote to highlight other important elements in this debate:

Rooting the first lady's stance in the country's political culture, the LBA inaugurates a management model for helping that characterizes it not by its sectoral political action, but rather by the definition of a target audience: the "poor". In other words, we

are referring to the current understanding that all public or private action aimed at serving the so-called “vulnerable” must be understood as part of the scope of the “social assistance policy”. The distribution of unrestricted material goods (that is, of any nature) in a clientelistic and welfare-based manner marks the entity’s action and confirms its capillarity throughout the national territory. Despite all the criticisms made of the assistance management model practiced by the LBA, the definition of social assistance by its audience and not by its offerings still remains in the context of the disputes that take place around it, both in the spaces of formulation, management and social control and in academic circles (Santos Paula, 2022, p. 97).

The observation of an organization between private initiative and the State, guided by the same interest, demonstrates the correlation of forces existing in society, and points to the error of the conception of the practice of Social Service, limited to itself, not considering the conflicting interests between the State and Subordinate Classes. In this sense, Social Assistance is seen as an emergency action, of a charitable and benevolent nature, developed voluntarily, without the presence of a perspective of overcoming the situations posed by the contradictions of the development of late industrialization, and begins to be rejected by the category.

Social assistance activities are called social emergency aid activities, that is, those providing material or financial assistance to populations with acute subsistence problems, generally carried out by volunteers or social assistants. Such activities are now relegated to the hands of social service professionals, both due to their palliative and clientelistic nature, and due to the limitations, that brought about the affirmation of the social worker as a professional within the institutional framework (Sposati et al, 2003, p. 46-47).

This way, a new intervention model begins to be postulated by the category, and social promotion absorbs the practice and theory of social workers, “crediting the same expectations of social development and the implementation of the welfare state. Scientism and technical sophistication permeate and design these activities.” (SPOSATI et al, 2003). Corroborating this analysis, Rosa points out that:

To contain the exacerbation of contradictions generated in this new socio-political context, intervention in the manifestations of the social issue requires more efficient practices than dispersive benevolent initiatives. It is necessary that assistance be the support of an action aimed at integrating the poor populations and workers into the economic-ideological dictates of the bourgeoisie, which is now consolidating its status as the dominant class in Brazil (Trindade, 2021, p. 9).

In the post-World War II context, the social and economic reconstruction of countries both at the center and on the periphery of capitalism was profoundly influenced by broad social reform proposals, among which the Beveridge Plan stands out. This plan not only aimed to establish a comprehensive social security system, but also reflected a broader understanding of the role of the state and social institutions in managing the political and economic order. Marilda and Raul shed light on this process, highlighting the rise of welfare policies as a response to an international strategy of capitalism in the post-war period, influenced by the particular context of the disintegration of the Estado Nov in Brazil and the search for a new model of political domination:

Within the more global conception that guides the Beveridge Plan and the attempt to implement it in a generalized manner following the end of the global conflict in central and peripheral capitalist countries, the role of social and welfare institutions as an instrument of domination and political

framing is reaffirmed and has increasing importance, a hallmark of the new “social spirit of capitalism”. If this conception represents the guiding line that orients the social actions and practices developed from these institutions in general, the specific circumstances that preside over their emergence highlight the immediate political aspects. From this perspective, one can more clearly discern the resurgence of welfare policies that have their origins in an international strategy of post-war capitalism, internally nuanced by the specific circumstances of the disintegration of *New State* (dictatorial period), with the articulation of a new model of political domination. A model also of hegemony that requires an integrative project as a mechanism for reproducing domination. The construction of this model within a dynamic national and international context constantly points to critical points that must be addressed, and where one of the options will be the reinforcement of welfare as a political instrument (Iamamoto, Carvalho, 2020, p. 262).

The establishment of the military regime in Brazil in 1964 marked an era of profound restructuring in the role of the state and in social and economic management strategies. One such strategy involved the adoption of a technocratic state model, which was characterized by the centralization of decision-making power in the hands of technicians and bureaucrats who supposedly had objective knowledge of the population's needs.

This approach, strongly influenced by ideals of planning and efficiency derived from technocratic principles, promised modernization and development, but it also brought with it, significant implications for social relations and the distribution of power.

In the context of this technocratic state, planning was used not only as a tool for economic management, but also as a mechanism for social consensus. By positioning the technician as a mediator

between the state and the subordinate classes, the military regime sought to legitimize its authority and its policies, presenting them as neutral and necessary benefits that met the needs of the population even before these were fully recognized by society itself. This method of administration aimed to neutralize discontent and resistance, while reinforcing the dependence of the subordinate classes on the state apparatus.

However, this premise of anticipating needs by technocracy not only depoliticized social demands, but also transformed beneficiaries into passive objects within the process of social development itself. Instead of actively participating in defining their needs and interests, the subordinate classes were relegated to the role of recipients of top-down decisions, often disconnected from the realities and concrete needs of these populations. In this context, Sposati points out:

The post-64 technocratic state, using planning as a technique for social consensus and the technician as the expert on the needs and interests of the subordinate classes, makes them passive objects of the benefits that are illusorily offered to them in anticipation of their needs (Sposati et al, 2003, p. 49).

This period is marked by the strong influence of conservatism in this field, especially when interconnected with the techno-bureaucratic policies that manage the economy and social relations. These policies, often clothed in technical rationality and scientific basis, claim to serve the collective and promote the common good, but in practice they end up serving the specific interests of the ruling classes.

This situation is particularly evident in authoritarian contexts, such as that of this period, where the ruling classes implement modernization policies that, despite being apparently progressive and inclusive, aim

at the social and political control of the subordinate classes. These policies not only structure economic and social interactions in a way that reinforces the existing order, but also co-opt Social Services as an instrument for this purpose, under the pretense of neutrality.

Trindade points out the alignment of Social Services within the authoritarian regime and its policies. In doing so, he highlights the complexity and challenges faced by professionals in the field in the exercise of their functions, pressured between the demands of social justice and the requirements of political compliance, as we see below:

Conservatism remains very present in the ideological universe in which Social Services operate, especially with regard to the characteristics of the techno-bureaucratic policy of managing the economy and social relations. These policies are based on technical reason and scientific knowledge, both supposedly placed 'at the service of all' and aimed at serving the 'common good'. Hence the harmony between the integrative purposes of the modernizing proposals and the need for social and political control of the subaltern classes, placed by the ruling classes of the dictatorship (Trindade, 2021, p. 15).

This authoritarian context created a challenging environment for professionals in various fields, including Social Services, who sought to promote a more critical perspective aligned with the needs of the lower classes. The modernizing policies imposed by the dictatorial regime prioritized economic development over human rights and social justice, creating a scenario of great limitations for critical and emancipatory professional action.

However, with the process of political opening that began in the late 1970s and intensified in the 1980s, new opportunities began to emerge for professionals in Social Work and other areas to reevaluate their practices and align their professional purposes with a more critical view of Brazilian reality.

This period of political transition was crucial for the redefinition of professional bases, enabling the revision of theoretical and practical formulations that had been dominant until then.

In this context of transformation and search for new professional paradigms, Trindade highlights the evolution in the thinking and practices of Social Service professionals, pointing to the need for an approach that not only understands, but also actively acts on the tensions and disparities of Brazilian society:

The dictatorial situation of the 1970s had created numerous political difficulties for this professional perspective to take off, so only with political openness is it possible for these professional purposes to emerge. Of course, this is not a majority trend in the professional category, as most professionals continue to work in institutions and companies, under the aegis of modernizing guidelines. What is factual is the existence of a stronger movement for professional renewal, whose premises call into question the entire professional basis built up until then, both in theoretical formulations and in practice, within the institutions. Little by little, significant portions of the professional category recognize the need to resort to knowledge that reveals the contradictions of social reality, which enables a professional stance more focused on the interests of the subordinate sectors of society, in tune with the expansion of the trade union movement and popular organizations (Trindade, 2021, p. 17-18).

With the process of democratic opening, the intensification of demands and the beginning of the process of drafting the so-called "Citizen Constitution", new horizons and possibilities were opened for Social Welfare, which would have a new political dimension, seeking to distance itself from the deep-rooted idea of social action, based on charity and benevolence. Social Welfare gained the status of public policy with the enactment of the Federal Constitution of

1988, being included in the tripod of Social Security, alongside Social Security and Health.

However, the development of social policies in Brazil has been marked by moments of intense struggle and mobilization, especially in response to government decisions that threaten the implementation of essential regulatory frameworks. One such critical moment occurred in the early 1990s, during the presidency of Fernando Collor de Mello, whose neoliberal policies directly impacted the social advances provided for in the 1988 Constitution. The presidential veto of the Organic Law of Social Assistance (LOAS) in 1990, for example, represented a significant turning point for the category of social workers in Brazil, catalyzing a movement of resistance and discussion around constitutional regulations and the need for a more robust and ethically oriented social assistance policy.

In this sense, the struggle to define and implement a social welfare policy aligned with the ethical values that represent Brazilian society continues to be a challenge. As Sposati (2013) points out, the need for deeper reflection on these principles is crucial to ensure that the political directions of these policies are truly beneficial to all segments of the population. In his words:

In fact, it was only when Collor vetoed the Organic Law of Social Assistance in 1990 that the category of social workers mobilized to debate and construct a proposal to regulate the 1988 Constitution regarding social assistance. But there was undoubtedly little accumulation. It was difficult to advance proposals beyond guidelines that would indicate the ethical values of this policy. In this sense, the constitutional definition of social security is the great ethical-evaluative anchor in social assistance and must, in fact, be debated more as a great guide to assess the political direction of this policy (Sposati, 2013, p. 35-36).

The enactment of the Organic Law of Social Assistance (LOAS) in 1993 represented a crucial milestone in Brazilian social policy, introducing significant changes in the way social assistance is conceived and implemented in the country. Before the LOAS, social assistance was seen only as a benevolent support, not as a guaranteed right. This paradigm began to change with the 1988 Constitution, which restructured social security by including social assistance as one of its essential components, along with health and social security.

The LOAS deepened these changes by establishing social assistance not only as a state policy, but also as a right of citizenship, accessible to all regardless of prior contributions to the social security system. This non-contributory aspect breaks with previous models that linked social benefits to direct contributions, expanding the scope of assistance to include those who are on the margins of the formal labor market and, therefore, of traditional social security protections.

In this context, Renato and Aldaiza articulate the importance of this legislation, highlighting how LOAS reconfigures social assistance in terms of the rights and duties of the State towards its citizens. They highlight:

LOAS innovates by affirming that Social Assistance is a non-contributory right (independently of contributions to Social Security and beyond market interests), and as a State policy it becomes a space for defending and addressing the interests and social needs of the most impoverished segments of society, also configuring itself as a fundamental strategy in the fight against poverty, discrimination and the economic, cultural and political subordination experienced by a large part of the Brazilian population (Santos Paula; Yazbek, 2013, p. 42).

LOAS, therefore, reconfigures social assistance into an instrument of social transformation, emphasizing its role in tackling inequalities and building a more just and inclusive society.

It is important to note that the enactment of the LOAS did not result in a substantial change in the implementation of public social assistance policy immediately. In fact, we went through several stages until the ideas established in the law were put into practice and implemented. For the sake of historical reference, the LBA coexisted with the LOAS until it was extinguished in 1995 by Provisional Measure No. 183, of January 1, 1995, by then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso – FHC. With this first measure, FHC changed the structure of the federal government and, in addition to extinguishing the LBA, also extinguished the Brazilian Center for Children and Adolescents – CBIA and the Ministry of Social Welfare, to which both were administratively linked, creating the Ministry of Social Security and Assistance in their place.

In this context, FHC issues Decree 1,366 of January 12, 1995, which creates the Comunidade Solidária Program, which had areas of intervention in food, nutrition, job and income generation, defense of rights, social promotion, among others, as a formula to respond to the expressions of the social issue without the State's protagonism, transferring the responsibility for the execution of actions to the third sector.

The Comunidade Solidária Program proposed a social assistance approach based on partnership between government and civil society, solidarity, decentralization, and integrated convergence of actions. However, this initiative was marked by significant criticism, mainly due to the process of de-accounting the State for its essential functions, problematically transferring these

responsibilities to the third sector. The articulation promoted by the Program with non-governmental organizations and other third sector entities was a way for the State to avoid its direct obligations in social assistance. This model resulted in precarious management and execution of services, where the entities involved often faced a lack of resources and continuous support, compromising the quality and sustainability of social interventions.

Just as we suffered from the slowness between the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the sanctioning of the LOAS in 1993, 5 years later, we also took time to develop the first National Social Assistance Policy – PNAS, which was finally approved by the National Social Assistance Council only in 1998, 5 years after the LOAS. Regarding this slowness, Couto, Yazbek and Raichelis point out:

The explanations for this slow pace are found in the fact that its implementation process will occur in an adverse and paradoxical situation, in which the profound incompatibility between structural adjustments of the economy and social investments by the State is evident. This incompatibility is legitimized by the discourse and sociability engendered within the scope of neoliberal ideology, which, while recognizing the moral duty to help the poor, does not recognize their rights. For, on the one hand, constitutional advances point to the recognition of rights and allow the issue of poverty and social inequality to be brought to the public sphere, constitutionally transforming this social policy into a field for the exercise of political participation; on the other hand, the insertion of the Brazilian State in the contradictory dynamics and impact of neoliberal economic policies sets in motion processes of disarticulation, dismantling and retraction of rights and investments in the social field (Couto; Yazbek; Raichelis, 2014, p. 57).

In this context, the approval of PNAS-1998, although representing a normative milestone for the Social Assistance Policy, is insufficient to direct the implementation of Social Assistance as a right of the people and a responsibility of the State, since the flagship for addressing the expressions of the social issue was the then Solidarity Community Program, as already highlighted. In this regard, Couto, Yazbek and Raichelis highlight:

The first National Social Assistance Policy was only approved in 1998, five years after the regulation of the Loas, and even then, it was insufficient and confronted by the parallelism of the Solidarity Community Program established by Provisional Measure No. 813, on 1/1/1995, on the same day that President Fernando Henrique Cardoso took office for his first term (Couto; Yazbek; Raichelis, 2014, p. 58).

In this sense, it is important to understand that this is not an isolated fact, and is therefore a dispute over the political direction of the State, given that this is a period of consolidation of neoliberal logic in Brazil. Regarding this, we will continue with another excerpt from Couto, Yazbek and Raichelis:

In the 1990s, the sum of workers' losses, which would shape a new profile for the Brazilian social issue, particularly through the vulnerability of labor, confronted the erosion of the system of social guarantees and protections and the emergence of modern and focused philanthropic practices that distort rights, depoliticize social conflicts and dismantle the universality of public social policies. It is important to note that these actions emerged in the country in a context of profound societal transformations, which interfered both in the social issue, which assumed new configurations, and in the Social Policies aimed at addressing it. At the root of these changes was the question about the compatibility (or not) between rights, social policies and the relations established between the State, society and the market in the new frameworks of capitalist

accumulation (Couto; Yazbek; Raichelis, 2014, p. 59-60).

The evolution of social welfare policy in Brazil has been a process of continuous reformulation and improvement, aiming to adapt to the emerging needs of the population and to the principles of equity and social justice. This trajectory reached a significant milestone at the beginning of the 21st century, with the consolidation of the Unified Social Welfare System (SUAS), which represented a profound transformation in the way welfare services are organized and delivered throughout the national territory. SUAS emerged not only as a new operational model, but also as a new philosophy of action, based on coordination and cohesion between the different levels of government and civil society.

The implementation of SUAS was preceded by intense debates and deliberations that culminated in the IV National Conference on Social Assistance, held in Brasília in December 2003. This conference was crucial in defining the contours and guidelines of what would become the current National Social Assistance Policy. One year after this conference, in October 2004, the National Council for Social Assistance (CNAS) officially approved the policy, marking a new chapter in the country's social assistance. This regulatory framework not only redefines the management and implementation of social assistance, but also reinforces Brazil's commitment to assistance as a right of all citizens, regardless of their economic conditions.

The SUAS structure is designed to ensure an integrated and uniform approach to social assistance, establishing an organic system that articulates responsibilities and actions in a cohesive manner. This system is not restricted to public administration alone, but extends to partnerships with civil society organizations, ensuring a broad and effective network of services, benefits and social actions.

In this context of reformulation and advancement of public policies, Santos Paulo (2022) highlights the significant role of the National Social Assistance Policy and SUAS, elucidating its impact and structure:

Only in October 2004, in compliance with the resolutions of the 4th National Assistance Conference, held in Brasília in December 2003, did the CNAS – National Council for Social Assistance approve, after a broad collective debate, the current National Social Assistance Policy, which presents the (re)design of this policy, with a view to implementing the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), which is aimed at coordinating the responsibilities, links and hierarchies of the system of social assistance services, benefits and actions, whether permanent or occasional, throughout the national territory, executed and provided by legal entities under public law under the criteria of universality and action in a hierarchical network and in conjunction with civil society. The SUAS introduces a concept of an organic system, in which the coordinating of the three spheres of government is a fundamental element. SUAS is made up of a set of services, programs, projects and benefits within the scope of social assistance provided directly– or through agreements or other legal instruments with non-profit organizations– by federal, state and municipal public bodies and institutions of direct and indirect administration and foundations maintained by the public authorities (Santos Paulo, 2022, p. 99).

The approval of the National Social Assistance Policy (PNAS) in October 2004 by the National Social Assistance Council (CNAS) marked a significant moment in the history of social assistance in Brazil. This approval came in response to the deliberations of the IV National Assistance Conference, held in Brasília in December 2003, and inaugurated a new phase in the organization and implementation of social assistance in the country, with the introduction of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS).

The SUAS represented a paradigmatic change in the way social assistance was conceived and operated, proposing an organic system that emphasizes the articulation between the three spheres of government — federal, state and municipal — as a fundamental element. This system aims to guarantee national coverage of responsibilities, links and hierarchies in the system of services, benefits and social assistance actions, both permanent and occasional. The implementation of the SUAS seeks to promote universal access and hierarchical network action, in addition to encouraging articulation with civil society for the execution of its activities.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of social welfare policy in Brazil from a palliative and charitable approach to a guaranteed social right is a process that encapsulates the maturation of democracy and public policy in the country. This study examines the evolution of these policies throughout the 20th century, highlighting the historical turning points that shaped contemporary social welfare in Brazil.

Against the backdrop of industrial development and economic crises, we can see how the State, influenced by both internal pressures and international models such as the *Beveridge Plan*, began to redefine the role of social policies. Legislative changes, especially the enactment of the 1988 Constitution and the LOAS in 1993, were fundamental to institutionalizing social assistance as an inalienable right, marking the transition from a welfare-based vision, often used as a tool for social control, to a conception of assistance based on rights and integrated into the social security system.

The trajectory of the Brazilian Assistance Legion (LBA) exemplifies the instrumentalization of social assistance as a means of maintaining power structures,

until its reconfiguration in the post-1988 Constitution era. The implementation of the LOAS and the subsequent creation of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) in 2004 represented a significant redefinition of the role of the State and society in the management of social policies, with a renewed focus on universality and the guarantee of rights.

It is concluded that social assistance, previously characterized by its emergency and charitable nature, has evolved into a central function in the framework of Brazilian public policies, aiming not only to mitigate conditions of vulnerability, but also to promote social inclusion and equity. This transformation

reflects an important advance in terms of recognizing social rights as fundamental components for the development of a more just and equitable society.

The understanding that social assistance is a right, and not just temporary support, reinforces the need for ongoing and structured policies that can effectively respond to the needs of the population. In this sense, the challenge for the future continues to be to guarantee the effective implementation of these policies, ensuring that the legal and institutional framework translates into concrete practices that promote social justice and the inclusion of all Brazilian citizens.

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