

## ROOTS OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN AMAZONAS: CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT AND SPREAD OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION



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### ABSTRACT

The article deals with the historical roots of social assistance in Amazonas, focusing on the period from 1930 to 1940, highlighting the performance of André Vidal de Araújo, a pioneer in the state organization of assistance policies in the region. Through an approach based on Historical-Dialectical Materialism, in addition to a bibliographic and documentary review, the objective of this article is to analyze the process of institutionalization of social assistance in the state, considering the historical, social and political determinants that influenced its structuring.

**Keywords:** Social assistance, Amazonas, Social issue, André Vidal de Araújo.

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## INTRODUCTION

Addressing the historical roots of the process of organization and, later, of institutionalization of social assistance in Amazonas is of great academic and professional relevance. When talking about the state of Amazonas, located in the North Region, we are also bringing light to the history of social assistance policy in Brazil.

Our study delimitation is from 1930 to 1940, a period evidenced as a preambular with regard to care practices, at the national and regional levels. We have as an object of analysis the initial weave of the social assistance policy in Amazonas, also highlighting the prominent actions of André Vidal de Araújo, considered in our study as one of the main protagonists in this process, because, in a visionary way, he created in the 1940s an action plan for a state organization of social assistance in the Amazonian territory.

André Araújo was the first Juvenile Judge in Manaus, a Brazilian social thinker and materializer of large local assistance projects. His writings and actions were the first seeds sown on Amazonian soil that significantly outlined the formulation and implementation of local public policies, especially in the social area.

Our research is based on Historical and Dialectical Materialism, as it allows us to reflect on the socio-historical and political determinants of the phenomena, which enables the identification of the contradictions of that scenario, considering the centrality of the social issue<sup>3</sup> that permeated the reality of the time and greatly influenced the structuring of social assistance in Amazonas. Data collection and analysis were carried out through a mixed approach, associating qualitative and quantitative forms. We also resorted to bibliographic and documentary research to illuminate the theoretical-methodological path.

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<sup>3</sup> Iamamoto (2001) highlights the social issue as an intrinsic and singular element of capitalist relations. According to the author, in the context of the process of capitalist accumulation, the unequal relationship between capital and labor results in the exploitation of the working class and the deepening of social inequalities, which are expressed in multiple forms, such as hunger, unemployment, lack of access to health, education, housing, and precarious working conditions. Faced with the dynamics of super-exploitation they experienced, workers began to occupy the political space, intensifying struggles for the consolidation of social and political rights. These achievements pressured the state to recognize workers as a class, leading to the formulation of social policies as a necessary mediation.

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In the 1940s, Amazonas became the subject of some actions of the federal government, whose objective was to integrate the Amazon into the national economy as a whole. However, this period did not bring considerable changes for a large part of the regional population. The period was marked by the intensification of the migratory movement of inland populations to the capital in search of better living conditions, accentuating the worsening of the refractions of the social issue, which forced the State to present strategies to combat this socioeconomic situation (Scherer, 2016).

At this time, as in the Brazilian national scenario, the actions of assistance to the impoverished population of Amazonas were carried out especially by religious groups in an isolated and voluntary way, as there was no institutionalized assistance policy of the public power. It should be noted that, to a large extent, these charitable actions were in line with the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church and with the papal encyclicals (Torres, 2002). Montenegro (1986) points out that André Vidal de Araújo, an assiduous militant of the activities of the Catholic Church, when exercising the function of Guardianship Judge of Minors, developed a series of investigations and records that served as the basis for the creation of several assistance institutes in the city of Manaus. We highlight that, in this process, André Araújo created in 1940 the School of Social Work of Manaus, made official in 1941, aimed at training human resources for the materialization of social assistance.

Our intention is to succinctly present the historical paths taken in this process so that in the State of Amazonas a structured and orderly apparatus for social assistance was created, having as founder and organizer the then Juvenile Judge André Vidal de Araújo. It is important to point out that this debate transcends the state of Amazonas, since it sheds light on the development of Social Work in Brazil, as this profession was considered a *sine qua non* condition for the validity of a social assistance policy in the state. In this context, the Manaus School of Social Work was created, the first in the state and the seventh in Brazil.

Furthermore, the logic of the article goes through the discussion of the particularities of the process of capitalist development in the Amazonian reality, the emergence of expressions of the social question, the flourishing of social assistance in Amazonas and the conception of social assistance that guided its structuring.

## **CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT IN AMAZONAS AND THE EMERGENCE OF EXPRESSIONS OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION**

Capitalist development – whether in the world, in Brazil, in the Amazon or in the state of Amazonas – excels and has always excelled in the accumulation of capital, with the creation and re-edition of strategies to intensify this accumulation. In a country of dependent capitalism, such as Brazil, it is necessary to consider this condition of dependence in order to understand the position that Brazil and, consequently, the Amazon occupies on the world stage. For Fernandes (1975), this configuration called dependent capitalism presupposes the institutionalized accumulation of capital, benefiting the internal power structures that are in line with the hegemonic capitalist nations. Its concept differs from factual conceptions, such as those of "underdevelopment", characterized as backwardness or its overcoming through economic growth. It is a concept that portrays capitalism in a certain phase of its development, in the monopoly period, therefore, it has a structural and historical character (Limoeiro-Cardoso, 1995).

It is under this logic that we seek to situate the State of Amazonas, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as the impacts of the capitalist system in the region, characterizing the moments of prosperity and especially of decline arising from the economic period of rubber in Amazonas, as it allows us to understand the links of that conjuncture and the expressions of the social issue that emerged in it. One of capital's various strategies for its continuity refers to geoeconomic expansion and spatial reorganization for its agglutination (Harvey, 2009).

In this sense, it is worth noting that the Amazon has particularities regarding the expressions of the social issue arising from the specificities of its geographical space, involving social dynamics that are permeated by ethnic-racial, environmental, gender issues, among others. Ianni (1989, p. 148) points out that the social question manifests diversified economic, political and cultural aspects. "Here, blacks can be present, there, Indians. Not forgetting that it is often the other. The demands, protests and revolts are not limited to the economic and political spheres, and may imply cultural aspects."

In Amazonas, capitalist development has not only caused damage to the physical environment, but also the destruction of its ancestral culture, that is, its way of life, its historical and cultural heritage. Historically, this population has lived and lives constantly threatened by major projects and strategies. In this sense, the expressions of the social question "begin to be observed from the expropriation, the rural exodus, the exacerbation of poverty and misery in

contrast to the abundance of natural resources (minerals, water, forests and biodiversity)" [...]" (Barbosa; Sá, 2009, p. 74).

In the colonial period, the State of Amazonas had an economy based on agriculture and spice extraction, in addition to the export of skins and hides; Without modern techniques, manual labor was preponderant. In the context of the Brazilian Empire, from the political-administrative independence, and the implantation in 1850 of the Province of Amazonas, recognized as the Province of the North, the region remained ordered by the logic of extraction of its natural resources, obeying an economic plan. "The geopolitical considerations of the Imperial State in the treatment of the new Province are expressed in the constant concern with the occupation and defense of that territory, the object of strong international greed" (Ferreira, 2007, p. 47).

As we know, the prehistory of the capitalist system in the Amazon occurred at the expense of the process of indigenous slavery, which remained during the economic period of rubber. In this period, the intense emigration of Northeasterners stands out, triggered by the situation of misery that the region faced between the 1870s and 1880s, stimulated by the search for better living conditions, in addition to the official advertisements and incentives carried out by the government. "It is these modalities of extraction of surplus labor that mark this era and enabled the ruling elite to live its golden years" (Scherer, 2016, p. 29).

This model of societal organization, based on the logic of subordination of the region to regional, national and international dominant groups, fostered profits for the other parts of the country, promoting the destruction of its territory and the concentration of wealth for the great elite. The economy resulting from the extraction and export of rubber largely determined the configuration of Amazonas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, generating a marked local socioeconomic transformation, which oscillated between a period of wealth and another of pauperism, especially for the mass of workers.

The resources and revenues resulting from this economy were not limited only to the regional level, they were directed to sustain national and international demands. The rubber economic system was already part of a world project of capitalist expansion; the use of this raw material was already allied to the scientific and technological development of the great nations (Silva, 2000). The state of Amazonas was one of the spaces for the manufacture of rubber; however, the central countries were the main regulators of production and its profits. These economic relations were achieved through the strengthening of alliances between the interests of the world market and the privileges of the local and national bourgeoisie.

At this juncture, numerous projects aimed at urban interventions were implemented, with the aim of building and instilling a new image and social configuration of the city. The state power subsidized a large beautification plan, consisting of public service facilities, including electricity, water, sewage network, telephone system, tram lines, among others. Pinto (2008, p. 206) points out that the city had modern urban services, "[...] its beautiful buildings and palaces, its movie theaters, newspapers, automobiles, ocean liners, offices, the hectic rhythm of its activities, became the spearhead of "modern culture" in the middle of the tropical forest".

Among the strategies to beautify the city and show off the wealth of the period, we highlight the project to build the Amazonas Theater in the capital of Manaus, in 1881. One of the most imposing works of the period, it symbolized progress and modernity "Its construction was more an act of ostentation of wealth and alleged civility than a necessity claimed by the local artistic life" (Mesquita, 2006, p. 206).

This period, recognized as the "belle époque", was functional to the great elites, as it was convenient to the interests of this class. Undoubtedly, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Manaus experienced a strong process of modernization, in line with the concepts of progress and civilization of the time. As we have already mentioned, the intense investments and transformations in Manaus were articulated with the economic demands of capitalism that aimed at the accumulation of profits mainly in the international market. According to Loureiro (2008), the state apparatus confiscated 25% of production; the rest was consumed voraciously by foreign nations.

This period of economic growth and modernization of Manaus excluded the poor population, the workers themselves, among them, the indigenous people, national and foreign immigrants. The reforms were aimed at extractivists, merchants, and dominant groups who should continue to invest in the city, increasing state revenues and deepening socioeconomic disparities. This period of ascendancy at the economic, social, and cultural levels was experienced under the extraction and exploitation of the labor of thousands of workers, mainly rubber tappers. The social wealth produced was based on the backs of these workers (Dias, 2019, p. 45).

Therefore, this scenario of development and progress that Manaus reproduced was concomitantly accompanied by a picture of deep misery, which began to generate concern and discomfort to the public power and the local elite. As poverty was a threat to the urban



order, the state developed a policy of preservation and defense of public order, that is, "a policy of pressure, exclusion, and domination" (Dias, 2019, p. 96).

However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the mid-1910s, the region began to experience the period known as the "rubber crisis". After the usurpation of rubber tree seeds from its Amazonian habitat and with the creation of rubber plantations in Asian countries with better quality and low cost, the Amazon region lost its hegemony in rubber extraction. As Weinstein (2002, p. 263) points out: "Sleeping beauty was briefly awakened by the kiss of foreign capital, only to go back to sleep as soon as the prince found another more beautiful and lucrative place to make his investments."

The crisis of the rubber economy strongly affected the social structure and urban services of the city of Manaus and, consequently, of the entire state. Numerous services, including those of the Municipal Superintendence, such as cleaning the city, sanitizing urban space and maintaining public health, suffered significant budget cuts (Neves, 2008). One of the main consequences was the departure of foreign capital, leading the state to experience a period of strong economic decay, impoverishment and abandonment, asserting social inequalities. Contrary to what happened in the large national capitals, where the industrialization process was beginning, in Amazonas there was a movement of economic deceleration, resulting from the crisis of rubber extractivism.

We show that authors, such as Scherer (2016), Torres (2002), Costa (1995) and Montenegro (1986), point out that, in the period marked by the 1930s and 1940s, Manaus was configured as a city of contrasts: one side of the city boasted luxurious architecture, the other attested to a picture of misery. It was in the face of this socioeconomic conjuncture, of numerous social inequalities, that the state of Amazonas and, in particular, the city of Manaus became a reason for concern and reflection on the part of the state power and social thinkers.

We highlight the intellectual André Vidal de Araújo, who dedicated himself to studying the social problems that affected the city. In an effort to understand his local reality and find solutions to alarming social problems, he wrote several works in order to demonstrate the need for a social assistance program for Amazonas. Montenegro (1986, p. 51) points out:

At the beginning of the century, Manaus suffered intensely from the problems resulting from the first rubber cycle. However, no statistical surveys were carried out to assess the scale of the problem. The first to propose that the social problem of Manaus be quantitatively studied was André Vidal de Araújo, Juvenile Judge, in the 40s.

Faced with the reality of economic instability, rural exodus, population growth, exploitation of workers, abandoned minors, among others, André Araújo carried out several studies investigating these problems, their origins and forms of intervention. His socioeconomic analyses served as the basis for his proposal to the government of a project for the organization of social assistance and social service in Amazonas and, consequently, the creation of several social institutions.

## **THE DAWN OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AS A RESPONSE TO THE SOCIAL QUESTION IN AMAZONAS**

In Amazonas, the flourishing of social assistance as a state program and consequently a form of responses to the refractions of the social question came predominantly from the contributions and actions of André Araújo. For the intellectual, social assistance would materialize through services and institutions of social support and protection. Therefore, it was up to the State to generate an assistance apparatus and promote social balance, through assistance, education, justice, health. In this logic, assistance became necessary to face the expressions of the social question, thus emerging as a functional response to the demands that the public power needed to manage.

It was at this juncture of soil preparation and sowing of the first social assistance policies for the region, that the first School of Social Work in Manaus was born on November 16, 1940; its official foundation took place on January 15, 1941, and it is considered the 7th School of Social Work created on Brazilian soil (Andrade, et al., 2023). According to Montenegro (1986, p. 3), "The foundation of the Manaus School of Social Work, in 1941, was a historic milestone for the Social Service of the State of Amazonas".

The conjuncture of the creation of the School of Social Work of Manaus was permeated by a bulge of social contradictions arising from the decline of the rubber economic period and the socioeconomic transformations of this period that aggravated several social problems. The accumulation of capital generated modernization and urbanization in Manaus and, as a result, deepened social inequality between classes. It was necessary to find ways to coordinate and mitigate the conflicts and tensions between capitalists and workers.

The emergence of social work in our region was directly interconnected with the process of organizing social assistance. The public power played a decisive role in the foundation and institutionalization of social work; the creation of social service came from



the demands of society and the interests of the Church, but it is above all a demand of the state itself. "It was, therefore, from the Power of the State and to serve it, that Social Work originated in Amazonas" (Montenegro, 1986, p. 66).

For André Araújo, in the light of neo-Thomist inspirations, Social Work was configured as a set of efforts aimed at the adjustment of individuals to conditions of dignified life, with the social worker being the indispensable agent of this service.

All social service is based on the dignity of the human person. But this is limited to social work, based on the principle that everyone should help, that others help themselves. Social work is not paternalism. It is not giving; but it is to make others help each other by themselves, by the work of education, of raising man by the technician specialized in social work (Araújo, 2003, p. 350).

Therefore, it was essential that the social service professional had extensive knowledge regarding man and society. "Thus, it is a specialized preparation with specialized studies. Social assistance, it should be clear, is essentially a profession of personality" (Araújo, 1967, p. 272). André Araújo asserted that social actions could only be materialized by social services through social assistance. "Social work is an activity that aims to supply, remedy and prevent, by technical means and its own methods, disability and individual or social group maladjustments" (Araújo, 2003, p. 445), an interpretation that denotes the presence of Franco-Belgian, North American and hygienist influences, which marked the profession in the country in this period.

In view of the author's notes, it is possible to identify that he considers the professional exercise of social worker a priesthood, a voluntary surrender to the common good, and that spiritual formation, as well as integrity of character, creative capacity and resignation are fundamental to exercise it. "This profession requires its own character, maturity of age. It is a vocation like that of the true teacher, the true priest, the perfect judge. This profession aims at the true good of man (Araújo, 1967, p. 270).

In this sense, for André Araújo, the School of Social Work would be the appropriate place for training professionals to correctly operationalize social assistance. For him, "Whoever is the bearer of social welfare needs to be equipped with knowledge. To be good, to attract sympathy, to know how to make social diagnoses of each case that presents itself" (Araújo, 1940c, p. 9). According to the intellectual, social assistance should be dedicated to supporting, alleviating human suffering, miseries and misfortunes.

It is a service done in favor of the destitute classes. And its function is so intimate with that of the modern state, that even it is confused with itself. It is human

solidarity itself, overflowing with Christian charity, and made on a scientific basis, for the work of social balance and improvement of the general conditions of life, in the fight against misery, disease, delinquency, abandonment (Araújo, 1940c, p. 6).

However, this influence can be seen as a limitation by restricting social assistance to a predominantly welfare and conciliatory role, without proposing structural transformations. This perspective, common at the time, reinforced one in which the populations served were seen more as passive recipients of help than as active subjects in the struggle for rights. Recognizing this dimension is necessary for a more critical and contextualized analysis of André Araújo's role.

The inauguration of the School was a milestone for Manaus. Its recognition by the state government took place on June 1, 1945 and by the federal government on May 7, 1957, 16 years after its official foundation. (Montenegro, 1986; Andrade, et. al., 2023)

For twenty-seven years, the Manaus School of Social Work was maintained and managed by André Araújo and his family, recognized as the greatest figure in assistance to the helpless in the Amazon. The School was declared to be a private institution specialized in the preparation and training of technicians in social work (Andrade, et. al., 2023). The School of Social Work of Manaus had a Social Work workshop, a space that aimed to serve the external public through pedagogical activities that were carried out by its own students. The workshop was managed by a social worker and was assisted by a team of "Social Visitors" (Araújo, 1940).

According to André Araújo, the School of Social Work of Manaus aimed to provide its students with: prior knowledge of social problems; special working technique; high understanding of the need for coordination of efforts. Promoting to its students a general and solid training in social work, offering theoretical and practical knowledge regarding man, society and its social problems. In this way, the students were prepared with an effective technique and with special methods of action.

Preparation by school will give the individual the sense, the sense of social assistance in its most intricate problems. It will facilitate the knowledge of family crises, it will stimulate a spirit of sympathy among the men to whom we will approach better. We will more easily diagnose misery in food, housing, hygiene, clothing, education, culture, professional instruction, family life, medical care, entertainment (Araújo, 1940c, p. 9).

The intellectual argued that it was of paramount importance that social workers be qualified to work in their area of experience. Therefore, they needed to have knowledge about local problems. It did not recommend the departure of students and professionals to

other parts of the country, given the professional training focused on the particularities of the Amazon. The author considered it fundamental "[...] understand that those who have not experienced our social problems will not be able, with real understanding and depth, to face with precision the treatment of the social phenomena of maladjustment" (Araújo, 1967, p. 282).

Certainly, we can say that the School of Social Work of Manaus was strategically designed to give materiality to social assistance. It is important to point out that, for André Araújo, the profession of social work could not be effective without objective and well-defined criteria and parameters. The social work technician would not be a simple executor of actions, but a subject who reflected and interacted with the social environment, so André Araújo was dedicated to providing a broad education, with theoretical and practical learning spaces and mainly articulated with the Amazonian reality.

André Araújo, based on his observations and studies, understood that in order to meet the social needs of the poor population in a comprehensive and effective way, it was necessary to collaborate with several institutions, articulated with each other, to face social challenges and promote a certain well-being of the population in that context.

Despite his reformist vision and the effort to structure social assistance, it is evident that André Araújo's thought was also influenced by hygienist and eugenic ideals widely disseminated in his historical context. This perspective, although it sought to promote social welfare, often carried exclusionary and paternalistic conceptions, treating vulnerable populations as objects of control and normalization. This criticism does not nullify Araújo's contributions, but highlights the need to situate his work within the ideological contradictions of his time, pointing out how these influences impacted the formulation and execution of his care proposals.

Based on this conception, the intellectual created the project for the organization of social assistance and social service in Amazonas, presented to the Federal Interventor Álvaro Maia, in 1941. According to the intellectual, social organizations should be distributed according to the seven maladjustments instituted in the project and systematized by the author. They were: Health Maladjustment; Culture Maladjustment; Amparo's maladjustment: childhood and old age; Maladjustment of the Senses: blindness, "deaf-mutes"; Maladjustment of the Spirit: "alienated and retarded"; Maladjustment of the Condition: pauperism and misery; Misfit of Conduct: crime and delinquency (Araújo, 1941).

For André Araújo (1941), maladjustments should be the object of intervention by social assistance, which would materialize from the actions of the State and also from private organizations, given the limitations of action by the public power. The author presents in the plan a wide network of institutions and services for mutual collaboration between public and private entities, in order not to entail an excessive burden of expenses on the State budget. "The Amazonian environment is already demanding its defense for a salutary law that organizes its social service, within the most modern molds of welfare law and in the most economical way possible" (Araújo, 1941, p. 12).

## **THE EXPANDED CONCEPTION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN ANDRÉ VIDAL DE ARAÚJO**

In the Amazonian context, in order to carry out research on the political trajectory of social assistance or to rescue the history and memory of the social work profession, it is impossible not to discuss the pioneering spirit and achievements of André Araújo in the social field, as the results of many of his projects reverberate in contemporaneity.

The analysis of the conjuncture carried out by the intellectual and his vast human formation were fundamental pillars for the structuring of the social assistance project in Amazonas. André Araújo warned: [...] Brazilian leaders have the thorny task of guiding a social reform capable of integrating our people into the realities of their true destiny" (Araújo, 1941, p. 5).

André Araújo's perspective reflected a reformist logic that dialogues directly with the positivist sociological strand and the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, currents with which Araújo had a declared affinity. This reformist perspective sought to offer functional answers to the social problems of the time, focusing on actions of adjustment and integration of the most vulnerable populations into the current social order, without, however, questioning the structural bases of the capitalist system. Araújo's propositions stand out for his attempt to organize a social assistance policy that would articulate the State and private institutions in a collaborative network, prioritizing technical and administrative interventions aimed at alleviating social maladjustments. In this sense, his project did not aim to subvert the social order, but to maintain it through the integration of individuals and groups into the prevailing economic and political model.

According to André Araújo, the state of social misery in modern times accelerated, a moral annihilation occurred. This state needed to be modified, it was necessary to fight its

roots, because these social ills infested society and generated maladjustments. Thus, "[to] avoid total collapse, only a perfect organization of social service" (Araújo, 1941, p. 11).

The above-mentioned action plan was presented to the Federal Interventor on August 19, 1941, in a work called "Organization of Assistance and Social Service of Amazonas – Project of ANDRÉ VIDAL DE ARAÚJO, Juvenile Judge". In November of the same year, the project was approved and sanctioned in Decree-Law No. 706 of November 6, 1941, creating the Social Assistance Service of the State of Amazonas. According to Araújo (1941, p. 3), the project presented the bases and foundations to support "the advisors of social work, to advise the realization of a social reform that will definitively avoid the maladjustments that plague the Brazilian family". The intellectual asserted that the project "[...] will guide all social assistance and protection in Amazonas, organizing programs for this purpose and harmonizing the social action of the State" (Araújo, 1941, p. 21).

The organization of social assistance in Amazonas needed to take into account the specific needs of the local population, including issues of health, education, justice, housing, culture, protection of children, the elderly, among others. André Araújo, in his productions, expressed the need to investigate the expressions of the social question within the regional particularities of Amazonas. "The organization of social services in the State of Amazonas, aiming at better care for the people of the plains, must be characterized by the direction that the services take" (Araújo, 1941, p. 4).

The intellectual asserted that the project "[...] will guide all social assistance and protection in Amazonas, organizing programs for this purpose and harmonizing the social action of the State" (Araújo, 1941, p. 21). We can infer, according to the analysis of the action plan systematized by André Araújo, that the construction of this document was much more than a response to a demand from the state government formalized to the thinker. The systematization of the project is the result of continuous and broad work of investigation, records and observations, composed of a vast theoretical and methodological framework supported by the intellectual.

The structuring of the plan is the result of someone who was socially engaged, who understood the need to confront what he called "social evils". The action plan for assistance structured by André Araújo becomes fundamental for us to glimpse and scrutinize the historical roots of the social assistance policy in the state of Amazonas and the actions that

were undertaken in the subsequent period, aiming to continue the initiatives from the public power.

Certainly, such initiatives aimed at consolidating and institutionalizing the action plan for assistance in Amazonas did not propose to change the class structure. However, they were fundamental for that period, constituting the first seeds to be fertilized for the implementation of social policies that would reduce the expressions of the social issue in the State.

We noticed that André Araújo, despite not directly pointing out in his texts, understood social assistance as a right of workers. "It is true that the current social question is 'the set of misfortunes and miseries, from which the working class suffers and the study of the appropriate means to remedy it' (Araújo, 1946, p. 26). The author considered that it was the responsibility of the State to serve the population through a broad and organized system of services, in a universal and systematic way. His thought pointed out that social assistance was a necessary instrument for the population to access services and actions of a social nature. Consequently, the author denoted social assistance as a social right.

According to André Araújo (2003), social assistance and service needed to be correctly equipped in a state dynamic to meet the demands and needs of the population, based on a structure of services in the areas of education, public health, medical assistance, social security, health, culture, education, legal assistance, economic assistance, thus forming an indispensable field of action for those pressed by social miseries.

It should be noted that the conception of social assistance as a right will only be validated from the 1988 Constitution, even in the face of numerous contradictions. "By defining, constitutionally, at the level of a social right, Social Assistance somehow inscribes the issues of the popular segments within the State" (Sposati, 2012, p. 33). From the recognition of social needs, the State became responsible for organizing and meeting them.

The proposal defended by André Araújo and materialized in the field of assistance significantly fostered the organization of social policies in Amazonas. However, this path was full of detours and unevenness. There is a temporal and conjuncture space between what was written in his book in 1941 "Organization of Assistance and Social Service of Amazonas", between the approved decree-law (n° 706 of November 6, 1941), which created the Social Assistance Service in the State of Amazonas, and the subsequent years. We infer that this intellectual shared humanist ideals and, therefore, believed in the need to



ensure rights to workers so that they could live in conditions compatible with the dignity of the human person, as proposed by neo-Thomist principles and the social doctrine of the church.

Based on his analysis of social ills, the reading of the conjuncture and his studies, André Araújo outlines for Amazonas a logic of interconnected and integrated policies, which we can conceptualize in modern times as intersectoriality (Pereira, 2014), that is, the articulation of different policies and services to better meet social needs.

His investigations, analyses and proposals for action were based on the perspective that social assistance involved a wide network of services aimed at different groups of the population with their many demands, both in the capital and in the interior of the state. In Amazonas, this context fertilized the ground in which the profession of social work consequently flourished, which is an indispensable instrument for the effectiveness of services.

When comparing the action plan systematized by the author in 1941 with the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), established in 2004, taking into account its levels of complexity (basic, medium and high complexity care), several of the services outlined by André Araújo would not be specific to the field of social assistance. In the 1940s, the intellectual grouped institutions and services that would currently be administered by other policies, such as health, education, culture, justice, housing. His proposal was not limited to specific areas, but encompassed the numerous social demands of the time.

Even though he uses the term social assistance in his works, when we carry out a contemporary reading, the perspective of social protection or social support, which involves several groups of services, is notorious (Pereira, 2016). Undoubtedly, the analysis of the plan indicates that André Araújo worked with a conception of social assistance that transcended the contemporary logic, provided for in the 1988 Constitution, organizing the field of social assistance to think about a social protection policy that involved a network of services and institutions.

From the ratification in a decree-law of the project created by the intellectual in the 1940s, the systematization of a social assistance structure occurred at the regional level, outlining an integrated government policy. André Araújo recognized and asserted that palliative measures would not be enough to face the problem of misery. The author, even permeated by religious issues, proposed the operationalization of social assistance as a public policy, not as a benevolence.

We dare to declare that, if the public authorities of that period and of the following decades had made a commitment to implement the action plan outlined by André Araújo, we would have a comprehensive and significant social protection system in Amazonas. It was not simply proposed to create a secretariat or a specific institution, but a broad social protection system. However, as verified in other studies, this system was not effective and, over the years, the social assistance policy was and continues to be appropriated by the different governments as a strategy for controlling the population.

Certainly, the protagonism of André Araújo in the institutionalization of social assistance in the State of Amazonas is of great importance and relevance. He not only idealized a project in the abstract field, but consolidated his actions, sparing no effort to do so. He captained and mobilized people, involved his family in institutions, raised donations, and was recognized as a true beggar: "The Judge of this Court is a true beggar, who does not limit himself to asking for used furniture, but lives at the doors of private asylums in order to obtain hospitalizations" (Amazonas, 1944 *apud* Estradas, 2024).

According to André Araújo (1967), the implementation of Social Work and the effectiveness of social assistance in the region would only be possible from the knowledge of the social reality, obtained through investigations, researches, called "social surveys", in order to know the social environment in a scientific and systematic way to then promote reforms. His broad reading of the context did not intend to change the class system, but proposed state interventions, calling on the state to assume its role as a provider of social assistance for vulnerable populations. We show again that André Araújo was a precursor of social policies in Amazonas, a man ahead of his time, a high humanist. His thoughts and actions have surpassed his historical time.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article sought to analyze the historical roots of social assistance in Amazonas, highlighting the central role of André Vidal de Araújo in the formulation and implementation of Social Assistance in the state of Amazonas, specifically in the context of the 1930s and 1940s. From a historical and dialectical perspective, it was possible to identify how his proposals dialogued with the social and political demands of the time, situating social assistance as a functional response to the refractions of the social question in the Amazonian context.

Based on André Araújo's actions, we can consider that social assistance could not be limited only to an act of charity, but rather as a structured and integrated policy, based on a technical and institutional model. His effort to articulate different spheres – public, private and religious – and his proposal to create a collaborative network of institutions show his comprehensive and strategic vision. However, at the same time, this approach was deeply rooted in the hygienist and eugenic values of the time, as well as in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, which, while offering advances in the organization of care, also reflected the limitations of a project that did not question the structural bases of social inequalities.

The creation of the Manaus School of Social Work, in 1941, stood out as a milestone in the history of social assistance in Amazonas and Brazil. By establishing a space dedicated to the training of trained professionals, André Araújo paved the way for the development of social work in Amazonas, connecting it to the cultural, social and economic specificities of the Amazon.

However, the study also revealed the contradictions inherent in André Araújo's project. Despite his efforts to implement integrated social assistance, his proposals were aligned with a reformist logic that sought to mitigate the most visible effects of social inequality, without addressing its structural causes. This approach, typical of the historical context, served to consolidate social control and preserve the current order, relegating social assistance to a role of mitigation, rather than social transformation.

The critical analysis of André Araújo's thought and actions, in the light of Marx's social theory, allows us to identify both the limitations and the merits of his work. On the one hand, he was a pioneer in systematizing social assistance and proposing an intersectoral articulation to face the social challenges of the time. On the other hand, his vision was conditioned by an ideological context that restricted social assistance to an instrument for maintaining order, reflecting the contradictions of dependent capitalism in Brazil and the Amazon.

In addition, the research showed how the particularities of the Amazonian context – such as the rubber cycle, the exploitation of natural resources and the inequalities generated by the extractivist logic – shaped the expressions of the social question and, consequently, the institutional responses to face them. André Araújo's performance, while representing an advance for the period, was also a reflection of the limitations imposed by an exclusionary economic and political model.

The considerations presented here do not propose to detract from André Araújo's contributions, but rather to situate them in their proper historical and sociological context. His legacy, although permeated by contradictions, offers important lessons about the challenges and possibilities of social assistance as a public policy. The study of the historical roots of this policy in Amazonas is fundamental to understand the advances and contemporary challenges, highlighting the need for social assistance that transcends welfare practices and affirms itself as an effective social right.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that this work contributes to the debate on the institutionalization of social assistance in Brazil and to the reflection on the role of intellectuals such as André Araújo in the construction of social policies in specific contexts. His trajectory, although marked by ideological and practical limitations, is an example of how social demands can shape institutional proposals and how these proposals, in turn, reflect the contradictions of his time. Thus, the study of the origins of social assistance in Amazonas invites us to look critically at the present. These final reflections, therefore, conclude this article not as a definitive conclusion, but as a provocation for new studies and debates on the history, challenges and possibilities of social assistance in other Brazilian states.

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