



The republican power in Minas Gerais and the public education: among the passive revolution, the transformism and the small politic¹

O poder republicano em Minas Gerais e a instrução pública:
entre a revolução passiva, o transformismo e a pequena política

Potencia republicana en Minas Gerais y educación pública:
entre la revolution passiva, transformismo y política pequena

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ABSTRACT

This article is linked to the research focusing on the early years of the Republic in Minas Gerais. The aim of the research was to demonstrate that public education in Minas Gerais was conducted by regional and local oligarchies, keeping it in the narrow confines of his interests. Served as empirical base documents of the Public Mineiro File and specialist studies the history of Brazilian republican education. For the analysis we are guided by the concepts of passive revolution, transformism and small politics of Antonio Gramsci.

Key-words: Public Education, Minas Gerais, Small Policy.

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RESUMO

O presente artigo é resultado de pesquisa com foco nos primeiros anos da República em Minas Gerais. O objetivo da investigação foi demonstrar que a instrução pública em Minas Gerais foi conduzida pelas oligarquias regionais e locais, mantendo-a nos limites estreitos dos seus interesses. Serviram de base empírica documentos do Arquivo Público Mineiro e estudos de especialistas da história da educação republicana brasileira. Para a análise, nos guiamos preferencialmente pelos conceitos de revolução passiva, transformismo e pequena política de Antonio Gramsci.

Palavras-chave: Instrução Pública, Minas Gerais, Pequena Política.

RESUMEN

Este artículo es el resultado de la investigación centrada en los primeros años de la República, en Minas Gerais. El objetivo de la investigación es demostrar que la educación pública en Minas Gerais se llevó a cabo por las oligarquías regionales y locales, manteniéndolo en los estrechos confines de sus intereses. Servieron de base empírica los documentos del Archivo Público Mineiro y especialistas que estudiam la historia de la educación republicana brasileña. Para el análisis preferiblemente guiada por el concepto de revolución pasiva, transformismo y pequeña política de Antonio Gramsci.

Palabras clave: Educación Pública, Minas Gerais, Política Pequeña.

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Introduction

This article is the result of a research related to primary education and the confines of the republican hegemonic project in Minas Gerais among 1892 and 1907. We aim to analyze public education in Minas Gerais and how it links to public interests on a state and city level, common to the oligarchic classes. We used some Gramscian categories, in particular, passive revolution, small politics, and transformism to understand the political movement and its implications in the public education in the early years of the Republic in Minas Gerais.

Document sources from the Arquivo Público Mineiro – APM, dated between 1893 and 1895, were part of the analysis. The transition from Empire to Republic in Brazil was considered a passive one, in other words, there was no participation of the people. Amongst other inferences, we state that the republican hegemonic project, in Minas Gerais, was not consolidated due to several structural and superstructural limitations within its territory, and also due to divergences derived from the different political groups. We concluded that the controlling of public education in Minas Gerais, in the early years of the Republic, was orchestrated by local and regional oligarchies that more prone to execute them for their own interests than to answer to the ideals of the emergent progress.

Preliminary Questions

The introduction of the republican regime in Brazil can be characterized as a political process that fits into what Gramsci (2000, p. 63) called ‘Passive Revolution’, in other words, a process of political and social transition led by dominant groups. Caio Prado Jr. (1986, p. 208), when analyzing the transition from Empire to Republic in Brazil, asserted that “[...] the regime change was nothing but a military coup, with the gathering of just small civilian groups and no participation of the population whatsoever. The people, as one of the founders of the Republic put, watched the coup astounded [...]”.

The republican project proposed, amongst other things, to adjust the country to the capitalist order stemming from the Second Industrial Revolution. However, this capitalist modernization process had elitist and anti-popular solutions, as we can confirm in Coutinho (2003),

[...] ao invés de ser resultado de movimentos populares, ou seja, de um processo dirigido por uma burguesia revolucionária que arrastasse consigo as massas camponesas e os trabalhadores urbanos, a transformação capitalista teve lugar graças ao acordo entre frações das classes economicamente dominantes, com a exclusão das forças populares e a utilização permanente dos aparelhos repressivos e de intervenção econômica do Estado. Neste sentido, todas as opções enfrentadas no Brasil, direta ou indiretamente ligadas à transição para o capitalismo (desde a Independência política ao golpe de 1964, passando pela Proclamação da República e pela Revolução de 1930), encontram uma solução “pelo alto”, ou seja, elitista e antipopular. (COUTINHO, 2003, p. 196).

Gramsci (2000b, p. 209-210), when discussing the Italian unification and the role of Piemonte² in *Risorgimento* (1815 – 1870)³, throughout the 19th century, stated that “the process of passive revolution seems to me exact not only for Italy, but also for other countries that modernized their State through a series of reforms or national wars, without going through the political revolution of the radical-Jacobin type”. While defending the possibility of applying this category of analysis to the Brazilian situation, of transition to the Republican period, Coutinho (2003) draws our attention to two crucial aspects raised by Gramsci:

[...] por um lado, o fortalecimento do Estado em detrimento da sociedade civil, ou, mais concretamente, o predomínio das formas ditatoriais de supremacia em detrimento das formas hegemônicas; e, por outro lado, a prática do transformismo como modalidade de desenvolvimento histórico que implica a exclusão das massas populares. (COUTINHO, 2003, p. 202-203).

The passive and elitist political formations had a central component explained by Gramsci (2000 p. 396), on footnote 72, on *Cadernos do Cárcere*, named transformism: "the transformism mean a method of implementing a program limited by reforms, through cooptation by blocks on the power of member of the oposition". The manifestation of transformism was identified in two moments of Italian history. The first, between 1860 and 1900, which Gramsci named molecular "transformism" [in which] [...] the singular political personalites elaborated by oposition democratic parties incorporated individually to the modern conservative 'political class' [...]". The second moment, after 1990, identified as "[...] transformism of whole radical groups, which go to the moderated field [...]" (GRAMSCI, 2002, p. 86).

Still exploiting the unifying process in Italy with the perspective of the passive revolution, Coutinho notes the existence of

uma diferença fundamental entre o *Risorgimento* e o caso brasileiro; enquanto na Itália um Estado particular, o Piemonte, desempenha o papel decisivo na construção de um novo Estado nacional unitário, o Estado que desempenha no Brasil a função de protagonista das revoluções passivas e já unificado [...]. (COUTINHO, 2003, p. 203-204).

Despite this difference, the author states

que o Estado brasileiro teve historicamente o mesmo papel que Gramsci atribuiu ao Piemonte, ou seja, o de substituir as classes sociais em função de protagonista dos processos de transformação e o de assumir a tarefa de ‘dirigir’ politicamente as próprias classes economicamente dominantes [...]. (COUTINHO, 2003, p. 204).

² North-western Italian region, second in extension and in number of cities, behind Sicily, and fifth in number of inhabitants.

³ *Risorgimento* is the term that expresses the Italian tendency towards European development throughout the eighteenth century. Gramsci will analyze the passage from the general tendency towards effective concretion of this movement that will lead to the Italian unification. The politics of Piedmont will exert a decisive influence on the unification through the emerging liberal ideals, represented by the moderates, in the mode of "renewal" revolution, that is, by incorporating some popular democratic interests, incorporating the Party of Action into a mode of domination and not direction. Thus, Italian unification is called the passive revolution, that is, conducted by moderate and conservative groups.

Another fact that influenced decisively the conduction of the politics during the republican period in Brazil is what in Gramsci (2000b, p. 21) is defined as "small politics". It manifests as an opposition to the big political projects, keeping in the limits of the oligarchic performance and in maintaining its immediate interests.

Considering the aforementioned concepts, we will continue treating the disputes inside the Minas Republican Party, after the Republic proclamation. We aim to demonstrate that the "small politics", the "transformism" and the "elitist" solutions mingled with the conflicts of interest of the regional political forces, inaugurating a sort of "conservative modernization". This period of political turmoil would compromise the deployment and consolidation of Republican order in the Minas Gerais State, particularly the public education. However, we will first briefly describe the paths traversed by republicanism in Minas Gerais until the Foundation of the Minas Republican party-PRM.

The paths of republicanism in Minas Gerais

Republicanism in Brazil was a movement that happened in the late 19th century. "In Minas, the Republican ideal was old, and maybe it was one of the basic points of the Minas Conspiracy⁴ [...]" (SILVEIRA NETO, 1976, p. 212). From 1870, with the Republican Manifesto, in Minas Gerais, many demonstrations of joining the Republican cause were published in newspapers in several regions of the State. Other actions were taken to strengthen this movement: "[...] in 1872 and 73, the first Republican clubs in São José do Rio Preto and Diamantina. Although electorally weak, Republicans had already, in 1885, placed two members in the House." (SILVEIRA NETO, 1976, p. 212).

On June 4 1888, Republicans held a Convention in Ouro Preto, former capital of Minas Gerais State, which was attended by representatives of 47 cities, when the PRM is officially created. In addition, according to Silveira Neto (1976, p. 213), this party attracted more voters in the following year elections, due "[...] in large part, to the weakening of the Conservative and Liberal parties, because of the constant struggles with each other ". We must remember that in the years 1888 and 1889, the country underwent profound changes with the abolition of slavery and the proclamation of the Republic, respectively. However, in Minas Gerais situation, it is important to observe what Resende (1982, p. 55) notes:

O republicanismo em Minas, apesar dos êxitos de 1888-1889, não constituía, ao proclamar-se a República uma força muito considerável, [...] os republicanos no momento da queda do Império contavam de acordo com os resultados eleitorais, somente com 30% do eleitorado, porcentagem na qual se incluíam conservadores, senhores de escravos, que após a Abolição aderiram ao Partido Republicano.

From the excerpt above we can conclude that republicanism in Minas Gerais, besides counting with so called Historic Republicans⁵, after the Abolition and on the eve of the proclamation of the Republic, also featured members that previously comprised the parties

⁴ The Conjuración of Minas, also called Inconfidência Mineira (1889), "[...] was a conspiracy movement to remove Minas (Brazil) from the domain of Portugal in the second half of the eighteenth century. Contrary to popular belief, the conspirators, mature men of the upper strata of society, had a definite program and plan of action to seize power in the captaincy of Minas Gerais.[...]" (GANCHO; TOLEDO, 1991, p. 27).

⁵ In the history of Brazil, historical republicans are called to those who have joined the Republican cause since before the Proclamation of the Republic, such as the signatories of the Republican Manifesto (1870), abolicionistas and members of the Republican Club. The most outstanding leadership of the historical republicans in Minas Gerais was João Pinheiro da Silva (1860-1908).

that supported the Empire, namely the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. It allows us to infer that the unity of the Minas Republican party could be compromised from the outset.

The Minas Republican party: between divisions and reconciliations

Between 1889 and 1891, Minas Gerais went through a period of intense political debates related to the Organization of the State within the new Republican order (CARVALHO, 2010). Among the issues that most had taken space in these debates, the internal disputes of the PRM stood out to know which group would have the legitimate right to conduct this reorganization. The quest for hegemony within the party was manifested in two ways: on the one hand, between the political currents represented by the "old Republicans" and the "Republicans of the eve" on the other, between the fractions of regional classes, that in that context reorganization of the State, aimed to be imposed.

PRM was characterized by heterogeneous forces. Their affiliates, even though representatives of different regional groups, expressed the political and economic interests of the oligarchy. Resende (1982, p. 17), in his study on the structures of Republican Policy in Minas Gerais, between 1889 and 1906, stated that, despite having a composition more liberal at the beginning of its training, "over the period 1889-1906, PRM progressively imposed traditional political behaviors, and legal and paralegals mechanisms that structured the oligarchic domination".

Besides the tensions surrounding the composition of the PRM, another ingredient will generate even more breaks: the appointment of José Cesário de Faria Alvim (1839-1903)⁶ to the Government of the State of Minas Gerais. The Minas politician who had a political career in the former Liberal Party takes the Government in 1889 appointed directly by President Marechal Deodoro da Fonseca (1827-1892). This episode marks the political aggravation between monarchists and Republicans in the debate on the legitimacy of those who would assume the leadership in the reorganization of the State, after the Republic. This debate would involve different political forces within the party, identified as:

[...] “adesistas” ou “novos republicanos”, membros dos extintos partidos monárquicos que aderiram à causa republicana. Em oposição denominavam-se os republicanos de antes de 15 de novembro de “antigos republicanos”. Dentre eles, os radicais procuravam distinguir os “históricos”, ou seja, os que vinham do manifesto de 1870 ou que nasceram politicamente nas fileiras republicanas, recusando-se a aceitar em suas hostes os chamados “republicanos de véspera”. A estes se negava “o desinteresse de puros republicanos” filiando sua profissão de fé a fatores outros que não uma legítima aspiração republicana. Estavam nesse caso, por exemplo, os chamados “indenistas”, conservadores que após a Abolição transferiram-se para as fileiras do Partido Republicano. Sob a capa das origens da profissão de fé republicana iniciou-se em Minas Gerais a disputa em torno da direção da reorganização do Estado em suas novas bases republicanas. (RESENDE, 1982, p. 57).

⁶ José Cesário de Faria Alvim was born in Arraial do Pinheiro, municipality of Mariana, present Pinheiros Altos, district of Piranga (MG), on June 7, 1839. He died in Rio de Janeiro in 1903. (APM, 2016).

Resende (1982) notes that the admission of politicians from the old monarchical parties was not a consensus within the PRM, which would require an effort of its leaders to establish the unity of the party. It seems to us that, at first, the transformism suggested by Gramsci (2000b, p. 396), on accession of conservative political currents, which previously supported the Empire, was not shared by the so-called Historic Republicans.

The Conservatives sought in the PRM an instrument of representativeness of the agrarian oligarchies to demand the State in defense and preservation of political, economic and social structures that benefited themselves. We could classify these issues as "major politics", but in all of the disputes were reduced to "small politics" (GRAMSCI, 2000b, p. 21).

João Pinheiro da Silva (1860-1908)⁷, leader of the first group of the PRM, proposed that "the 'direction' of the Republican organization of the State would be exclusive of the 'old Republicans'; the 'new Republicans' accepted 'collaboration with no preference, without any exclusion [...]", whereas, Cesário Alvim advocated a policy of 'reconciliation', whose base was the Union of royalists and Republicans, without distinction, in Republican politics [...]". Another controversial issue was about municipal administration, "whose faculties were conferred to the State Governors by Federal Decree [...]" (RESENDE, 1982, p. 59). It provoked intense criticism, particularly from the dissolution of the municipal councils, in 1889, which gave way to the Municipal Intendencies. The deployment of this new municipal policies was strategic to the political interests of Cesário Alvim. His goal was to supplant the inconveniences caused by the municipal-level political disputes by submitting the local leadership to the control of the State Government, in case the Municipal Intendencies could be turned into "purely administrative bodies".

A questão das intendências coloca por sua vez a diversa interpretação do princípio federativo que separa cada vez mais os republicanos. Enquanto preconizava o governo a redução dos municípios a entidades puramente administrativas, desenvolvia-se notadamente entre os políticos da Mata⁸, a concepção de que a federação só seria uma realidade com a completa e total autonomia municipal. (RESENDE, 1982, p. 60. *Nota de rodapé inserida por nós*).

This debate was strengthened when the Constituent State Congress was gathered (1890-1891). The "Políticos da Mata", favoured by the economic situation, sought the reorganization of the State within the new Republican order. The "small politics" evidences the struggle between the political forces of Minas Gerais, and also puts on a collision course Federal and State political instances. Municipal interventionism promoted by Cesário Alvim would feed the debate around the federal issues in the State Constituent Assembly.

Opposition to the *Alvinista* government markedly increased from 1889⁹, with the electoral reform promoted by the Provisional Government for the elections for the constituent Assembly. At the same time, the State Government gave continuity to the process of replacing the City Councils by the Municipal Intendencies, which among other tasks organized the

⁷ João Pinheiro da Silva was born in Serro (MG) on December 16, 1860 and died on October 25, 1908, in the city of Belo Horizonte (MG) (APM, 2016).

⁸ The Zona da Mata Mineira is located southeast of the state of Minas Gerais, bordering the states of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo. A prosperous region in the coffee farming business, having strength in the definitions of the directions of the mining policy in that period. Today it has 142 municipalities and 7 micro-regions (Juiz de Fora, Uba, Cataguazes, Viçosa, Muriaé, Manhuaçu and Ponte Nova).

⁹ We refer to the Provisional Government constituted from the proclamation of the Republic, on November 15, 1889 with Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca as its Chief. The Provisional Government lasted until 1891, when Deodoro da Fonseca was elected President of the Republic

electoral listings, indicating the possibility of controlling the elections. In this context, part of the opposition group, mainly the former leaders of the Liberal Party, taking advantage of the dissatisfaction of the Church with the institution of civil marriage, launched a campaign to restore the ‘padroado’¹⁰ Regime, with the support of the bishopric of Minas Gerais.

The rapprochement between these former liberal leaders and the superior members of the Catholic Church of Minas Gerais, alludes to Gramsci (2002b, 244; 254-255), when explaining the private apparatuses of hegemony as components of the civil society. The Church, at this point, enjoyed autonomy in relation to the State. However, the participation of the Church in defending the restoration of the ‘padroado’ Regime seems a paradox, since the Church offered support for Republicans, in the final moments of the Empire, in exchange for their compromise to bring this Regime to an end. Despite this paradox, there were interests that moved the Church to approach this particular group of the opposition, including those related to the field of education. Historically, the denominational schools educated the children of the elite of Minas Gerais and the Church did not want to lose ground to the laic education. It was necessary to follow the transformations brought about by the Republic.

Nesta época, a Igreja Católica é marcada por uma crise modernista, propunha reformas na sociedade sem, contudo, se desviar do capitalismo. Estas reformas tinham como princípio a conservação moral individual (estendendo-se à sociedade), através de um Estado Corporativista que associado à reforma interior se tornasse o agente da harmonia social e da conformação das classes à sua situação. (SILVA; FERREIRA, 2002, p. 491).

It is possible to infer an attempt to establish the moral and intellectual direction, in that political situation. It is important to remember that with the establishment of the Republic and the end of the Patronage Regime, the unity between the State and the Church is broken, while the Church becomes one of the important private devices of hegemony, at a time when the Brazilian civil society still was being formed. Now autonomous in relation to the secular State in place, the Church is besieged by class fractions, which, in an effort to pursuit of the hegemony, recognize its importance as an instrument of ideological legitimacy. Furthermore, the Church becomes:

[...] defensora de uma ‘aristocracia intelectual’, a qual regeria os princípios norteadores da sociedade. Para tal, estabelece um investimento maciço na formação de uma aristocracia cristianizada através de instituições educacionais católicas. A visão católica tinha como política educacional adequá-la ao modelo oligárquico, na medida em que entendia a escola particular o núcleo de

¹⁰ Padroado is the designation of the set of privileges granted by the Holy See to the Kings of Portugal and Spain. They were also extended to the Emperors of Brazil. It was a typically medieval legal instrument that allowed direct domination of the Crown in religious affairs, especially in administrative, legal, and financial matters. However, religious aspects were also affected by such dominance. Fathers, religious and bishops were also officials of the Portuguese Crown in colonial Brazil. This implies, in large part, the fact that religion and religiosity were also matters of state (and vice versa in many cases). The inseparable union between the Catholic Church and the Portuguese and Spanish states marked the colonizing action of these two kingdoms in dispute for the hegemony in world commerce at the beginning of the Modern Times and also the pastoral actions of attracting to the Catholic faith the native peoples of the conquered lands, the struggle against the advance of Protestantism. The end of the patronage regime in Brazil occurred with the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889 [...]. (TOLEDO; RUCKSTADTER; RUCKSTADTER, 2016).

reprodução cultural das classes mais ricas. Na versão ideológica defendida pelos católicos evidenciava-se a proposta de 'homem ideal'. Para eles, a Igreja era constituída pela moral e pela religiosidade, sendo estes os pontos-chaves de sua educação católica. (SILVA; FERREIRA, 2002, p. 491-492).

The religious-political articulation engendered by dissident sectors linked to the former Liberal Party caused the reaction of the government that, at a meeting held in Ouro Preto on June 1890, joined "[...] ex-liberais and conservatives with Republicans Situationists under the banner of the Republican Party [...]" (RESENDE, 1982, p. 62), as the "reconciliation policy" advocated by Cesário Alvim. In addition to the incorporation of important Republican leaders of extinct monarchist parties, the Ouro Preto meeting also resulted in the Foundation of the political center of Ouro Preto. "The creation of the political center of Ouro Preto was a maneuver of Situationism to ensure the accession of ex-monarchists. This political center especially aimed to empty liberal opposition which sought to strengthen the clerical Alliance and to ensure to the Government the Federal Constitution elections [...]" (RESENDE, 1982, p. 62).

The political strategy to undermine the liberal dissent and to consolidate the control of the PRM in the hands of Alvinista situation, with a minimum of consensus, would fit in what Gramsci (2002, p. 286) called "molecular transformism" i.e. the political personalities drawn up by democratic opposition parties incorporate themselves individually to the conservative and moderate political class (...). We have no elements to characterize this phenomenon in "transformism of radical groups that went to the moderate" (p.286) and/or conservative field. According to Coutinho (2003, p. 205) "both types of transformism can be singled out also in the Brazilian history. The 'molecular mode' was certainly the most frequent type, manifested as the incorporation of a few opposition politicians in the power block [...]"

The conciliation policy obtained partial success: on the one hand, it enabled the triumph of the Situationists in the elections to the federal constituent assembly, and the emptying of the alliance between ex-liberals and the Catholic clergy of Minas Gerais; on the other hand, it could not convince other Republicans dissidents, especially those linked to the Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais, which articulated around the elections for the State Constituent.

This class fraction pushed the Situationists in an attempt to repeal the electoral reform promoted by Cesário Alvim, but did not succeed, which led to the worsening of the Republican split in Minas Gerais.

[...] Não conseguindo alterar os dispositivos eleitorais, devido à resistência de Alvim, oficializou-se a dissidência com a convocação de um Congresso Político a realizar-se em Juiz de Fora no dia 25 de dezembro de 1890. Antonio Olinto¹¹, Fernando Lobo¹² e Chagas Lobato¹³ elaboraram o Manifesto com que os dissidentes apresentaram a chapa da oposição às eleições de 25 de janeiro de 1891. No

¹¹ Antonio Olinto (1860-1925) and his coreligionists regain some influence in Minas with the Marshal Floriano Peixoto rise to power in November 1891 and the resignation of Cesário Alvim to the state government in April 1892 (APM, 2016).

¹² Fernando Lobo Leite Pereira (1851-1918). The republican regime was instated on November 15, 1889, and was appointed vice president of Minas Gerais by decree of the provisional government and inaugurated on April 12, 1890 (APM, 2016).

¹³ João das Chagas Lobato, General Deputy for Minas Gerais (1864-1866); Constituent 1891; Federal Deputy for Minas Gerais between 1891-1893 (APM, 2016).

Manifesto, a dissidência critica o processo de formação da chapa eleitoral e o projeto da Constituição no referente à eleição indireta do governador, à existência de um eleitorado especial para eleição do Senado e a ausência de autonomia municipal [...]. A formação de uma chapa republicana dissidente, objetivo do Congresso, intitulada pela imprensa de chapa de Juiz de Fora, tornou impossível mascarar a chapa oficial como do PRM. Perdido o sentido de órgão partidário, logo após o 15 de novembro, para se tornar instrumento da política situacionista, o PRM desapareceu nas lutas em torno da Constituinte Mineira. (RESENDE, 1982, p. 66. *Footnotes were inserted by us*).

We infer that the fragility of the PRM, in those early years of the Republic, is also a fragile reflex of the Brazilian civil society, in process of organization at that time. In this sense, this party ceases to assume the function of a collective agent, to become the instrument of private wills expressed by the representatives of regional oligarchies.

The State Constituent was institutionalized in 1889, meanwhile, the disputes between the class fractions were shown. These disputes were mainly around the autonomy of municipalities, the elections organization, and the change of the capital city. If the debate on federalism gave liberal character to the Republican direction of the constituent assembly, the organization of an electoral law favored the situationist groups, reinforcing the traditional domination structures. Resende (1982, p. 92) points to the contradictions that arise in this context: "[...] the paradox appears to denounce that the liberalism of Minas politicians would proceed up to the point where the structure of traditional domination was not affected[...]".

Resende (1982) pointed that the consequences of the adoption of federalism, manifested as an extensive municipal autonomy, combined with the electoral system, favored the interests of local and regional groups resulting in an oligarchic domination:

Disputas de grupos regionais e/ou políticos marcam o processo político mineiro a partir, principalmente, das leis de organização. Entre 1892-1897, as alianças políticas e o recuo na legislação mostram o encaminhamento do processo político para a formação de um grupo de poder central pela aliança de influências regionais. Até que, finalmente, a conjuntura de 1897-1898 favorece a montagem de uma estrutura de dominação oligárquica, cujo período crítico está compreendido entre os anos de 1898-1906 (RESENDE 1982, p. 93).

During the period described in the excerpt, there was an increase in the conflicts derived from the decentralization process promoted by the State Constitution. It is important to highlight, however, that these conflicts exemplify the practices of "small politics" and of "transformism" as marks of the game of intrigue and the backroom alliances, which marked the politics of Minas Gerais then. One of the effects of regional and local disputes are felt in the public education policies in the context of the municipality, our object in the following analysis.

The "small politics", the municipalities and the public education

Within the State economic policy environment, the oligarchies were organized in the early decades of the Republic, in an attempt to defend their interests. The split in the PRM was reflected in the Organization of the Constituent Congress, convened in 1890. Being the main interest of political currents of the oligarchies of the Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais, the federalism occupied the discussions defending political and administrative decentralization,

and the final result consecrated the interests of these currents, allowing by Law a greater autonomy for municipalities.

Proposals for the reorganization of public education in the State were also submitted in that Congress. The debates around this theme pointed to the lack of consensus on aspects related to the responsibilities of the State. The efforts to transfer the responsibility for the education to the municipalities, in a context of economic crisis, and the resistance of some politicians to approve bigger budgets for the public education, imposed the tone of the discussions, as we observe in Gonçalves (2010).

In our understanding, the reorganization process of public education conducted in Minas Congress in the early years of the Republic exemplifies the practice of "small politics" (GRAMSCI, 2000b) which explains the lack of consensus surrounding this issue. To demonstrate our statement, we once more recur to Gonçalves (2010, p. 153), who showed how the political forces against and in favor of the increase of budgets for public education were manifested in that legislation instance, through the analysis of the "processing of educational legislation in the Legislative Congress of Minas Gerais, in the first decade of the Republic". These "debates and clashes" (GEE, 2010, p. 158) manifested in the Legislative Congress of Minas revealed a concern of legislators with the economic aspect of the process of reorganization of public instruction. Gonçalves (2010) notes in his analysis of the creation of the first law of organization of public education, law No. 41 of 1892 that:

A preocupação econômica teve um lugar importante nas discussões dos deputados, principalmente por haver na proposta de reforma, novidades que demandaram investimentos e gastos públicos. A proposta incluía o aumento dos vencimentos dos professores, a construção de prédios escolares e a criação das escolas primárias superiores, entre outras demandas. O que pude perceber é que o Congresso, tanto na Câmara como no Senado, esteve dividido entre esta questão, estando de um lado os defensores da redução dos gastos públicos e, de outro, os que defendiam a tese de que não deveria haver economia no investimento da instrução pública. [...]. (GONCALVES, 2010, p. 162-163).

In a message directed from Affonso Augusto Moreira Penna¹⁴, then President of the State of Minas Gerais (1847-1909), to the Legislative Congress of Minas, in 1893, we can find some comments that demonstrate how the State sought to administer the public education. Among the messages sent to the Congress that were considered for this research, this shows the first reference regarding the municipalities participation in the reorganization of the public education, qualifying the budget as expenditure.

Apezar de haver o Estado passado para a municipalidade impostos que representam, segundo cálculo da arrecadação do último exercício, quantia aproximada de 4.000 contos¹⁵, todavia as previsões orçamentárias para 1894 elevam a renda a mais de 12.000:000\$000 suficiente para fazer às despesas ordinárias, que

¹⁴ Affonso Augusto Moreira Penna was born on November 30, 1847 in Santa Bárbara-MG ... With the proclamation of the Republic, was elected Constituent Representative in 1890 and President of the province of Minas Gerais in 1892 (APM, 2016).

¹⁵ "Conto" was a monetary unit of Portugal adopted in Brazil in the nineteenth century. One (1) conto corresponded to one million réis, which allowed the purchase of a slave.

aliás, têm crescido sensivelmente em alguns ramos, entre os quais o da instrução pública. (AFFONSO PENA, 1893).

The budget on the values to be transferred to the municipalities, for the year of 1894, as described in excerpt, raises in three times the budget compared to the previous year. According to Gonçalves (2010, pp. 162-163) there were political groups within the Minas Gerais Legislative Congress that saw in the proposed reorganization of public education, presented in Law No. 41, not an investment for the benefit of the collectivity, but an "expendable expense and of dubious urgency".

To qualify the money destined for education as "expense" and not as "investment" some lawmakers demonstrate, in our understanding, the lack of commitment to the public dimension of education. The positive conception of public, according to Cury (2009), can be expressed as:

Público, que etimologicamente deriva de *populus* [...], sendo oposto ao privado. Público tem um sentido próprio que é o que pertence a todos de modo coletivo (ao *populus*) e também o que é comum. Neste último caso, é o que pertence a todos de modo distributivo, isto é, a todos considerados como pessoas singulares, como indivíduos. (CURY, 2009, p. 80-81).

Cury (2009, p. 81) also has the negative definition of the public, with the purpose of establishing "what the public is not". To this end, he states: "[...] He (the public) is not the *arcana imperii*, i.e. it is not the place of secrets, typical desires of tyrants (despots) or dictators in everything contrary to reason and freedom. [...]".

As it has been shown throughout this article, the political forces representing the regional oligarchies of Minas, in the internal scope, scrambled to promote, through the State, actions that met the oligarchical interests, undermining the public character of education. In the light of Gramsci, we can interpret this type of political action, with their practices of backstage collusion in the Minas State Legislative Congress, as manifestation of small politics, "key element" in the process of incorporation of a "conservative modernization".

The school in Minas Gerais, as a private device of hegemony (GRAMSCI, 2002), is not part of the social project, or at least, it did not appear as such, despite the Republican speech being anchored on a civilizing project mediated by education.

State authorities found that the proposals for reorganization of public education sent to the Minas Legislative Congress from Act No. 41, 1892, could not be put into practice due to lack of planning and preparation of teachers, among other obstacles. This led Affonso Augusto Moreira Pena (1847-1909), in a message send to the Minas Legislative Congress in 1894, to rule on this matter.

[...] para a execução da Lei nº 41 expedi os regulamentos ns. 600, de 2 de janeiro, 607 de 27 de fevereiro, 611 de 6 de março, 649 de 19 de setembro e 655, de 17 de outubro, todos do anno passado, já em vias de execução. Não se achando o professorado, em sua maioria, preparado para a execução do programa extenso da lei citada, só depois de alguns annos se poderá tirar illações da

conveniência ou desnecessidade de modificar-se o sistema adotado [...]. (AFFONSO PENNA, 1894).

In the same message, the Minas governor pointed other obstacles, identified by his administration, that prevented the advancement of the reorganization process of public education, including the electoral process in the municipalities, whose results were determining in the appointment of municipal inspectors responsible for the schools supervision, usually linked to the winner(s) of the elections.

[...] A incumbência da fiscalização das cadeiras a auctoridades electivas locais não poderá ser effectuada sinão do anno de 1895 em diante, pois é no fim do corrente anno que terão logar as eleições municipaes e districtaes. Na mensagem que vos dirigi na sessão do anno findo, fiz ponderações que me pareceram acertadas sobre a exigências da instrucção primario no Estado, e quanto coube em minhas attribuições procurei sanar os defeitos reconhecidos. [...]. (AFFONSO PENNA, 1894, p. 11).

Regarding the "recognized problems", the President of the State communicates to the Legislative Congress some actions carried out as the acquisition of textbooks to be distributed to underprivileged children in schools, in addition to "modest furniture for urban schools, which were almost entirely devoid of any school supplies". Based on the framework of economic crisis that manifested itself in that moment, the President tries to justify the investments for the construction of schools: "[...] In sight of the immense lack of basic resources, and while not implementing the Law No. 41, in regard to the authorization to build houses [...], it appears to be of justice to vote some sort of aid for teachers renting these houses [...]" (AFFONSO PENNA, 1894, p. 11).

Throughout the 1890's, the reorganization of public education would be on the agenda of the sessions of the State legislature, accompanied by the call for the participation of municipalities (CARVALHO; CARVALHO, 2010). As stated by Gonçalves (2010), the controversy generated around the Law No. 41 resulted in a series of changes in legislation related to the public education until 1899. Nonetheless, issues related to low budgets, deficiency in the training of teachers, lack of infrastructure suitable for the installation of educational establishments, the low frequency of students, among other problems, were still being insurmountable obstacles, due to the lack of effective planning for the reorganization of public education on the part of the State. These problems would be only partially solved in 1906, with the reform promoted by the Governor João Pinheiro da Silva.

Authors, such as Carvalho and Carvalho (2012) and Gustavo Neto (2012) associated the difficulties of establishing a policy of reorganization of public education at the State level analogously to the federalism, since these were manifested before convening the Constituent Congress. During the period of this Congress, laws that granted extensive autonomy to municipalities were voted. Resende (1982) understands that the municipal question is associated with electoral interests from regional and local oligarchies. In the understanding of this author, the political forces responsible for project approval to the State Constitution were influenced by the Federal Constitution, which favored the federalist character of the new constitution in opposition to Imperial Unitarianism.

Dominados pela doutrina do municipalismo, 'o município está para o Estado assim como o Estado está para a União', os representantes mineiros levaram a extremos a questão da autonomia municipal, situação que teve seu complemento nas leis ordinárias que regulavam a organização municipal e o processo eleitoral. (RESENDE, 1982, p. 114).

The author's assertion that "chaos and anarchy following the practical implementation of legal provisions show very quickly the negative effects of the naive liberalism of some, and the electoral interests of those who wished to use the autonomous municipality as private territory".

The manifestation of Bias Fortes (1847-1917), President-in-office in Minas Gerais State in 1895, agrees to what we have been stating. In his message to the Minas Gerais Congress, his effort to exalt the peaceful and harmonious way that the municipal elections were conducted failed to hide his concern with some events that occurred during that election.

Peace and harmony which governed the municipal elections, as the strong competition of the electorate demonstrate very clearly the ever-growing interest that sees people linking to public business, confirming the truth of the words of Mirabeau, when he said ' the municipality is the basis of the welfare State, the only way possible to make people interested in their Government, and guarantee their rights'. Unfortunately, though things did not occur in the same way when it came to the verification of credentials of members of the municipal boards. In some localities, where the municipal election occurred the tightest, as a result of disagreements between members of political headquarters, the unfortunate fact that there are duplicates of boards [...] (BIAS FORTES, 1895, p. 5).

The process of power verifying was an instrument used by the Situationists to promote the "degola", arbitrary practice to prevent that the oppositionists were sworn in the municipalities after the elections. The candidates belonging to the opposition were not recognized as elected and then they were prevented from taking their office term.

The extension of these conflicts between the local political groups, especially in municipal spaces, was threatening the success of governmental actions aimed at the reorganization of public education in the State of Minas Gerais.

Conclusion

The ideal of the Republic, inspired by the American model, materialized in the Republican Constitution of 1891, but in a very different sense. The United States was a nation that was stimulated by the spirit of capitalist entrepreneurship, a trait that was already delineated with the arrival of the first settlers and by the almost absence of social hierarchies, while in Brazil, the deep hierarchy and social inequalities allowed the establishment of an

extremely authoritarian political regime anchored in patrimonialism, as we can confer in “*The Owners of Power*” from Faoro (1977).

During the Constitutional Congress of 1890-1891, formed during the so-called Provisional Government, discussions related to education gained several approaches. However, the proposals that dealt with issues related to freedom and secularity of teaching as attributes of private and public administration prevailed (CURY, 2001, p. 257).

The transition from Monarchy to Republic brought an atmosphere of euphoria that was reflected in the work of the Constituent Congress. The work related to the school education, however, was carried out within the limits imposed by the oligarchic interests. It means that the climate of renovation in the country, which included the school education and the constituent Assembly, was made in order to contain the modernizing euphoria and limiting itself to the hygienist principles.

The Republican ideal in Brazil established the basis of an educational project to promote consensus, based on the interests of agrarian oligarchies. Contributed to this the conduction process and formulation of "on top" policies, ordered by "small politics" counting with the processes of "transformisms" with a greater emphasis on "molecular".

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