

# RETIREMENT SCHOOL: THE BIRTH OF FEMALE PRISON IN BRAZIL

*ESCOLA DA REFORMA: O NASCIMENTO DO CÁRCERE FEMININO NO BRASIL*

Débora Soares Karpowicz 

Centro Universitário Uniasselvi

[deborakarpowicz@gmail.com](mailto:deborakarpowicz@gmail.com)

**Conflito de interesses:** nada a declarar. **Financiamento:** nada a declarar.

Histórico:

**Submissão | Received:** 26/09/2021

**Aprovação | Accepted:** 22/12/2021

**Publicação | Published:** 18/12/2022

## ABSTRACT

---

The objective of this work will be to present the birth of the female prison in Brazil through the case study of the Escola da Reforma, in order to verify the conditions that contributed to the emergence of the Escola de Reforma as a prison model administered by the congregation of nuns of Bom Pastor. Therefore, the sources that support this research were multiple. The methodology used was document analysis through qualitative research of content and discourse analysis. The work will analyze the birth of the female prison from its moral oppressors – Church, State and Society – who sought to draw a behavior profile for women in that context in an attempt to exclude deviant behavior from society. It is concluded that since the birth of the first women's prison in Brazil, State, society and church have been agents who have shaped behaviors in order to determine roles for women, dressed up with the idea of doing good through “resocialization and preservation of morals”.

**Keywords:** Escola de reforma, History of female prisons, Penitenciária Feminina Madre Pelletier, History, Culture

## RESUMO

---

O objetivo deste trabalho será apresentar o nascimento da prisão feminina no Brasil através do estudo de caso da Escola de Reforma, de modo a verificar as condicionantes que contribuíram para o surgimento desta instituição enquanto modelo prisional administrado pela congregação de freiras do Bom Pastor. Para tanto, as fontes que respaldam esta pesquisa foram múltiplas. A metodologia utilizada foi a análise documental através da pesquisa qualitativa de análise de conteúdo e discurso. O trabalho irá analisar o nascimento da prisão feminina a partir dos seus opressores morais – igreja, estado e sociedade –, que buscaram traçar um perfil de comportamento para as mulheres daquele contexto na tentativa de excluir da sociedade os comportamentos desviantes. Conclui-se que desde o nascimento da primeira prisão feminina no Brasil, estado, sociedade e igreja foram agentes que moldaram comportamentos no intuito de determinar papéis às mulheres, travestidos com a ideia de fazer o bem através da “ressocialização e preservação da moral”.

**Palavras-chave:** Escola de Reforma, História das prisões femininas, Penitenciária Feminina Madre Pelletier, História, Cultura

## 1. Introduction

The Escola de Reforma (School of Reform), the beginnings of the Madre Pelletier Feminine Penitentiary, was founded in Porto Alegre, in the State of Rio Grande do Sul by the Sisters of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd D'Angers, in the 1930s. of the first contract between the Congregation of the Good Shepherd D'Angers and the Government of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, on June 13, 1936. The document signed between the State and the Congregation established that the Sisters of the Good Shepherd administer the School of Reform and the Shelter for Minors in the State. At first, there was no possibility of administering both fronts, with the Government's priority being the administration of the Escola de Reforma, which welcomed women prisoners in the correctional facility in the city of Porto Alegre.

In Brazil, the Congregação Bom Pastor managed the main women's prisons for most of the 20th century, with the Women's Penitentiary Madre Pelletier, in Porto Alegre, the first and the longest in its administration in Brazil. In this sense, understanding the importance of the congregation for studies on women's prisons and observing the long period of permanence and the peculiarity of the

administration, this article listed as its objective the historicization of the birth of women's prisons in Brazil, through the case study of the first phase of this institution, called the Reformation School.

The article will focus on the first phase of the Women's Penitentiary Mother Pelletier, known at the time as the Escola de Reforma. The time frame will be from 1936 to 1939 in the city of Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil. The objective is, in this way, to understand the historical process and the reasons that involved the administrative articulations between the state government (RS/Brazil) and the Congregação Bom Pastor D' Angers in the construction of the first female prison in Brazil.

The long experience of a women's penitentiary run in a peculiar way: by an institution constituted by Sisters of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd D'Angers is a highlight of this theme. This congregation of nuns, established in France in the 19th century, founded and managed this prison space for 45 years. Furthermore, they were responsible for the administration of works aimed at the re-socialization of girls and women in vulnerable situations, including prisoners or in the process of trial on all continents.

## 2. Methodological Aspects

The research methodology was developed in a mixed way, through the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the primary documents, that is, first the narratives found were separated by categories, and then analyzed the discourse contained in the documents. Data

collection was carried out in several private archives of the Congregação Bom Pastor D'Angers, such as the archives of Porto Alegre, Caxias do Sul, São Paulo, Lisbon and Angers, finding, in addition to primary sources, a rare bibliography dealing with the coming of nuns to

Brazil. The objectives were analyzed descriptively and analytically, seeking to draw a parallel with the existing bibliography and theories about prisons. The technical procedures used were documental and bibliographic analysis and case study through primary sources and reports extracted during the interaction and research together with the Bom Pastor nuns. The main primary sources used were: Book of Chapters, a handwritten document that narrates the institution's routine, and the contract signed between the Congregation and the state government.

The records of the administration of the Instituto Bom Pastor began on December 13, 1936, when the Casa was founded. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd of Porto Alegre followed the general standards of the congregation and the register of the new house was written year after year in the Book of Chapters, a handwritten document that narrates the routine of the Institution since its foundation, in the year 1936 until the year of 1977, when a new phase in the institution began (Chapter Book nº 43).

These documents recorded moments highlighted as important for the Sisters, entitled: Visits by superiors; Licenses for blessings and exhibitions; Permits to touch linens; Departure and arrival of Sisters at the house; License to celebrate Masses, important moments in Catholic life such as the death and election of Popes, Circular Letters from Angers (France) and Rome; Mothers' Elections; Appointment of superiors. In general ecclesiastical moments were recorded. This first book brought from the first Founding Act to the last writing in 1977, when visible changes in the institution began to consolidate. Here, we tried to group the analysis by themes,

observing the context in which the institution was inserted, as well as its transformations.

About the Escola de Reforma do Bom Pastor, 29 Records were recorded, with one worth mentioning, which historicized the first regular visit made by the Mother Provincial. From this document it was possible to understand the initial objective of this institution and to whom the services should be provided. Concurrent with the analysis of the Records, the contract signed between the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the Congregation Nossa Senhora do Bom Pastor d'Angers was examined, seeking, in addition to comparing both perspectives, to verify compliance with the contractual clauses.

Thus, the analysis of these sources allowed us to understand how the Sisters of the Good Shepherd managed this prison space and what characteristics involved the house's routine. Therefore, the work was divided into the following parts. First, it will be shown how, historically, the Reformation School emerged, what was the context at the time and what led the State Government of Rio Grande do Sul to seek the provision of services by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Second, we will analyze the School of Reform under the administration of the Good Shepherd and, finally, we will analyze the contractual enclosures, as well as the regulation of this first prison space. The objective was to understand, through the narrative of the documents, the objectives signed between the government of the State of RS and the Sisters of the Congregação Bom Pastor. As final considerations, it was observed that since the birth of the first women's prison in Brazil, State, society and church have sought to shape behavior in order to determine roles for women, dressed up with the idea of doing good through "resocialization and preservation of morals.

### 3. Reform School: birth of female prison

The first female prisons in Brazil emerged from the 1930s onwards, with the reorganization of State policies and changes in the Penal Code. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd D'Angers played a key role in helping state governments in this prison reorganization. In a report sent to the Minister of Justice and Interior Affairs on November 21, 1941, the Congregation advertises its works with poor girls, disgraced women and prisoners, as per document:

*The main mission of this institute of charity (...) is to dedicate itself to the regeneration of young women and girls led astray from the path of honor and virtue, and secondly, to the protection of poor girls, preserved from evil. The Congregation of the Good Shepherd also accepts the direction of penitentiaries or women's and minors' offices handed over by the respective governments, as in Europe, the United States, in the Republics of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay (Acervo Bom Pastor, 1941, p.1).*

The State, in search of public policies that could take care of the excluded population, transferred to the religious institutions the role that was its responsibility. All those who were not useful for the new structure: the elderly, abandoned children and the sick, found some protection in religious congregations (Maria José NUNES, 1986, p. 198). Because they needed their services, the State encouraged them with funds and donations and also encouraged their "ladies", society ladies, often former students of schools run by nuns, to contribute to donation campaigns and to

participate in the works of charities directed by the Sisters.

Therefore, the importance of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd d'Angers in this reorganization of State policies was highlighted, especially in the restructuring of prisons in Brazil that took place from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1940s, with the change in penal law .

In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the work of the Congregação do Bom Pastor began in the city of Pelotas, in the interior of the state. Through the Association of Ladies of Charity, in the person of Mrs. Trápaga, secretary of the association, knowing the work of the Sisters, she went to Rio de Janeiro to request that a House of the Good Shepherd be founded in her city.

Correspondence between the Sisters and the society lady were exchanged until 1928, when Sister Maria de São Francisco Xavier Nova made the first visit to the city in order to verify the conditions for the foundation of the Institution. At the end of the same year, the Provincial of Rio de Janeiro sent six Sisters to Pelotas with the task of founding the Good Shepherd. On January 14, 1929, the Provisional House, belonging to the Ladies of Charity, was inaugurated. The place became small for the desired work, motivating the start of the Asylum construction campaign. Even with the help of the community, the provincial and the diocese, it was only in 1945 that the construction of the new house began, which was officially inaugurated in 1948 (Campos, 1981, p. 138). The house of the Good Shepherd in Pelotas served as a support base – throughout the entire period of the Sisters' administration – for the house in Porto Alegre.

In analyzing the Records of the Book of Chapters, a constant circulation between the nuns was observed between the two institutions. There are continuous relocations among the Sisters, sometimes coming from Pelotas, sometimes going to Pelotas, for various reasons: to help around the house, for spiritual retreat, for health treatment, among other purposes.

The historical context in which the arrival of the Bom Pastor nuns in the state of Rio Grande do Sul was inserted was one of changes and political instability. The PRR (Partido Republicano Rio-Grandense) set the tone for state policy. Júlio de Castilhos (1891-1898) and soon after his successor, Borges de Medeiros (1898-1908 / 1913-1928), bequeathed to the State a centralizing and authoritarian government policy, which, based on positivist ideology, defended a capitalist project aiming at economic modernization and expansion of the political base, carried out through alliances with the middle class and with groups in the colonization region (Kühn, 2004, p. 111).

According to historian Margareth Bakos, the Castilhist ideology is an administrative project that should provide means of access to culture, a fact verified in the policy of founding municipal night schools for poor children, since 1900. Also, according to the author, the municipality of Porto Alegre, unable to create schools in a number proportional to the needs of the population, resorted to the expedient of helping existing private institutions, giving a cash subsidy and exemption from payment of fees and taxes for them to educate students of recognized poverty or who, due to lack of resources, could not pay to receive instruction (akos, 1996, p. 26).

This political and administrative strategy – of economic subsidy to private schools –, was expanded to other sectors, because, still in the 1920s, through Count Mendes de Almeida, the

first negotiations with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd were initiated so that assume the inmates of the State. However, the historical turmoil did not allow this work to be carried out, and it was then incumbent upon new characters to carry out this work. This troubled period was characterized by the world economic crisis, which reverberated in the State economy, especially in the livestock sector, culminating in the 1923 Revolution (Kühn, 2004, p.120), greatly delaying the negotiations between the State and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

Only after the political turmoil in the central and state governments had subsided – after the 1930 Revolution and the Constitutionalist Revolution (1932) (Kühn, 2004, p. 125). –, the contract was signed between the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and the government of the State of Rio Grande do Sul. Negotiations were resumed through Dr. Dionísio Marques, juvenile judge from Rio Grande do Sul, who was visiting Rio Grande do Sul de Janeiro, to the School of Prevention and Reform administered by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, learned about the work of recovering minors. He brought the idea to Porto Alegre and presented it to the then Governor General Flores da Cunha, who accepted the request, asking him to negotiate with the nuns the foundation of an institution in the city of Porto Alegre (Campos, 1981, p. 151-3).

Below is a letter from the Juvenile Judge of Porto Alegre to Mother Novoa, in Rio de Janeiro, requesting that the Sisters take over the Children's Shelter:

*Authorized by the Secretary of the Interior of this State, I come to ask you for information on the conditions under which a contract can be made with the Government of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, so that the Sisters of this worthy Order manage the Women's Section of the "Shelter of Minors",*



*created recently in Porto Alegre by the Juvenile Court (Campos, 1981, p. 153-4).*

However, in contact with the Sisters of Pelotas, he learned that the nuns were also in charge of women's prisons, thus changing the initial plan. A new contact was made by the Juvenile Judge, reiterating the request and including a possible incarcerated section. He also asked the Sisters to be on guard so that they could terminate the contract as soon as possible:

As I have already notified you in a previous letter, the State budget has provided for a budget for 12 Sisters of the Good Shepherd to take over the women's section of the Abrigo de Menores, awaiting the return of Mr. General Flores da Cunha to resolve the choice of competitors the adaptation of the building where the Children's Shelter and incarcerated section will function. The Government will serve the incarcerated section for another sum not yet specified. Other news I don't have to give you. In the situation of delays and uncertainties common in the current period, in public administration, I have not addressed the sisters more often, because it is not my nature to have

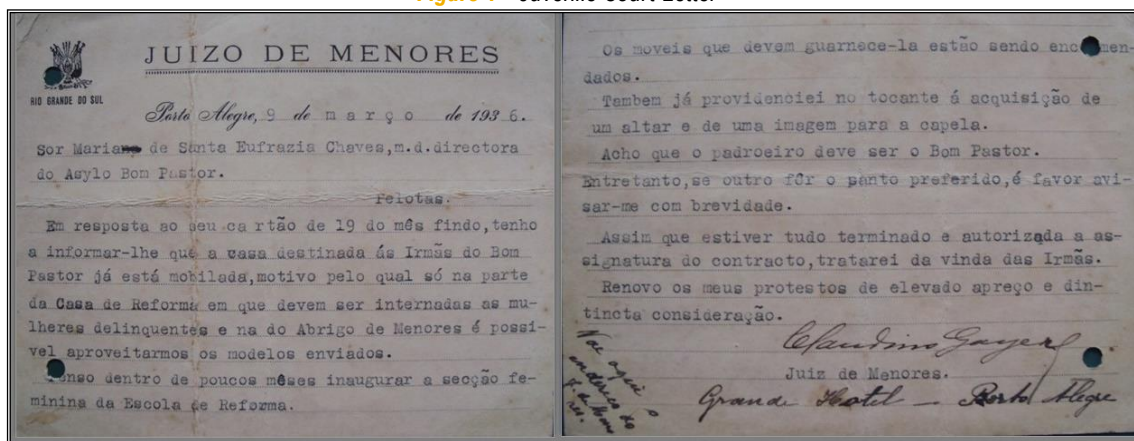
things in the air, but positive things. The sisters must, however, be on notice to make the contract in the middle of this year, which I think will be when I can do it, if things go normally. I will be alert to notify them, opportunely, with convenient advance notice (Margarida CAMPOS, 1981, p.154).

The agreement was signed between Bom Pastor and the State of Rio Grande do Sul for the Sisters to assume the administration of the Prison for Women in the State. According to the words of the State Governor in an assertive meeting with the religious:

*The imprisonment of women, in a most miserable state, is a sword that cuts across my throat. It is, therefore, with full and complete satisfaction that I welcome the "Good Shepherd", to transform it into a true school of reform, regeneration and moral education (Campos, 1981, p. 154, emphasis added).*

Below, an image of one of the documents exchanged between the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and the Juvenile Court:

Figure 1 - Juvenile Court Letter



Source: Letter addressed to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd – March 9, 1936 (Acervo Bom Pastor São Paulo)

In the process of signing a contract with the State government, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd sent a new letter reiterating their

acceptance of the proposal to found the house in Porto Alegre. In this handwritten document they reaffirmed the government's request and

the Congregation's acceptance to administer a patronage that was to be founded in the capital. They also clarified as to the main mission of this Congregation: “to protect and shelter girls and young women in need of moral support, in order to preserve or regenerate them and finally convert them from perdition.” In this document, Mother Provincial made a point of clarifying the purposes and conditions for accepting the direction of the patronage, according to the document:

*1st - The main purpose of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd is the **regeneration or conversion of young women and girls who have deviated from the paths of virtue.** 2nd - In a division completely separated from the – regeneranda – we accept innocent, helpless girls, to educate them Christically, to preserve them from vice – the preserved ones. 3rd - The sisters will have complete freedom to comply with their rules and customs. 4th - According to their closure rule, the sisters cannot leave the Monastery or Asylo without absolute necessity and with the permission of the Major Superiors. 5th - There will be a capella and chaplain to attend the functions, according to the rules, the religious institutions and the ayladas, etc. 6th - The nuns will occupy rooms completely separate from the asylums. 7th - The patronage will be responsible for the expenses of the Sisters' travels. 8th - In case of illness of the sisters, the patronage will take care of the doctor, treatment and burial of the same ones that the community can support. 9th - The sisters will never be able to take charge of the work of the – crèche – as this is completely alien to the*

*institute. 10th - The sisters will have full freedom in the internal direction of the asylum and asylum. 11th - The patronage must undertake to adapt the house to the uses of the Sisters, as not only the community but the sections are entirely separate from each other, including the cafeteria, work room, community room, dormitory, infirmaries, changing rooms and even the capella, not so the kitchen and pantries that are common. 12th - In small difficulties or doubts that may arise, we count on the good will and discretion of the Ladies of Charity association to plan them mutually understanding, for the success of this work so interesting to all of us who only seek the glory of glory of God and the salvation of souls. 13th - It will be necessary at least 6 sisters to start the work of patronage. 14th - The sisters' quarters, although separate from the asylums, will be, however, in the same building, in accordance with the rule (Private correspondence, letter on proposal for the foundation of Porto Alegre, S/D).*

Negotiations concluded and authorized by the Diocese of Rio Grande do Sul, on June 13, 1936, the first contract was signed between the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and the state of Rio Grande do Sul. For a small house in Bairro Menino Deus, now known as the Escola de Reforma, women incarcerated in the correctional home were transferred. In this place they stayed for 14 years. Below is an excerpt of the documentation dealing with the signing of the first contract between the government of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, for the inauguration of the first women's prison house:



*On December 13, 1936, eight Sisters, designated founders of the great work of assistance to the inmates of the Penitentiary System in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, arrived in Porto Alegre, from the Provincial House of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, in Rio de Janeiro. [...] Once the possibilities of carrying out an apostolic work in this city were agreed, the Provincial Supervisor delegated three Sisters who came to Porto Alegre for direct contact with the local authorities and, on **June 13, 1936**, the first contract signed was signed. between the Congregation and the state of Rio Grande do Sul<sup>1</sup>.*

The establishment of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd in the city of Porto Alegre, with the objective of welcoming the state's

prisoners, became a historical landmark in terms of the reorganization of prisons in Brazil. As we have seen, in the beginning of the 20th century, the Brazilian State, still in the process of restructuring, delegated to religious congregations, through countless incentives, functions that would fall under the competence of this federative entity.

The initiative of the state of Rio Grande do Sul to assign the administration of the incarceration of women to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd was a pioneering fact, since the current penal law did not yet determine the separation by gender in prison institutions. This predecessor model of female prison was remodeled several times according to the historical context and served as a reference for several Brazilian states such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, which adopted the same system.

## 4. School of Reform under the administration of the Good Shepherd

### 4.1 The School of Reform under the administration of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd: the responsibility of the sisters

The signing of the first contract between the Sisters of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd d'Angers and the state of Rio Grande do Sul allowed mapping the first uses of this institution, as well as providing an opportunity to visualize the rights and duties of both

contractors and, finally, it provided the understanding of the attributions that this institution had. The nuns were responsible, according to clause I, of:

*of Internal administration – order, cleanliness and economy – of the female sections of the Reform School and Children's Shelter referred to in Decree No. 5367, of July 1, 1933. b) all internal surveillance and education work domestic and professional*

<sup>1</sup> Case nº 7261200906 of 1990, referring to the listing and restoration of the Bom Pastor chapel. Available from IPHAE RS. Regarding the foundation date of the first female prison institution in Brazil, Bruna Angotti provides other data: "In 1937, the Criminal Women's Reformatory was created in the city of Porto Alegre,

which later became known as the Feminine Institute of Social Rehabilitation, **the first Brazilian prison institution specifically dedicated to the imprisonment of women.**" In: Bruna ANDRADE, 2011, p. 193.

*instruction of the internees, as well as the preparation of food, clothing and nursing care. c) religious and professional primary education. d) the direction of the establishment's general kitchen (Reform School and Children's Shelter). e) the creation of domestic animals and the cultivation of vegetable gardens and orchards. f) the conservation, in its possession, of the keys of the establishments in which the aforementioned sections must operate. g) the admission and dismissal of internal employees of the same sections, vegetable gardens and orchards. h) to receive goods and more consumables, check their quality and quantity, keep them until they have application and report any shortages. i) to promptly manifest, in view of the requests initialed by the director, the requests for goods and other objects, arranging, together with the suppliers, for the expedited delivery of the orders, in compliance with the contracts. j) to ship the small purchases for consumption in the kitchens. k) to request, in writing, from the director the acquisition of material and services, with due opportunity. l) to organize, in duplicate, a monthly map for loading, unloading and valuing*

*foodstuffs, sending them to the director, by the fifth of the following month. m) to be in charge of the general collection of the sections under his direction and to keep everything well stored. n) to book the books necessary for the proper writing of the warehouse, in the part referring to the sections under his charge (Contract of the detention house, 1936).*

In the first contractual determination, two uses of the same institution were agreed. The first, for “delinquent women”, and the second, for orphaned girls sent by the Juvenile Court. From the analysis of the Book of Chapters, it was found that until 1950 only the first use was made of the house, a fact that was directly related to the physical space provided by the Sisters.

In the first year of foundation, the house received, on July 29, 1937, the regular visit of the Mother Provincial, Sr. Maria de San Francisco de Assis Xavier Novôa, recorded in the first Chapter Act of Chapters Book nº 43. regular and served to inspect the progress of the house in accordance with the contractual clauses. Even though the contract was not mentioned in the Records, it was possible to deduce this information from the writing model and the order reported throughout all analyzed Records. Below, image of the first regular visit.

**Figure 2 - First Regular Visit (1937)**



**Source:** Photo of Madres do Bom Pastor together with authorities of the State of RS (Photo album Private collection Bom Pastor São Paulo)

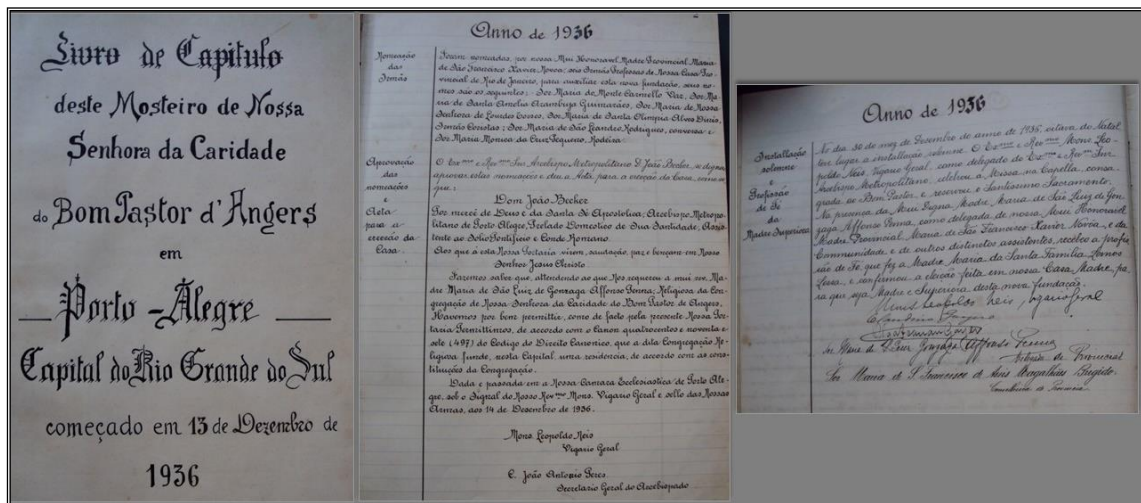
From the image one can see the fusion between the public world, represented by the government authorities and their respective wives, and the religious world, which turned to charity, represented by the Good Shepherd nuns. In context, both complement each other: now the Sisters fulfilling the duty that would be the responsibility of the State, under the veil of charity and religious obligation; now the State failed to fulfill its role directly, and passed on the religious who exercised it in accordance with social dictates and with the support of the government and the Church. This first document left important data on the development of work at the new institution.

The Records were divided into four parts. The registration began with a little history, from the initial negotiations with the State Government to the execution and signing of the contract. In

the second part, ecclesiastical moments were pointed out, conditions in the chapel to say Mass, authorization from the Archbishop for the celebration of liturgical moments and appointment of chaplain to perform liturgical functions with the Sisters. In the third part, the Mother Provincial narrated the arrival of the first convicts and the changes in the prisoners' posture in relation to the state they were in. In the last part, the material conditions of the building, furniture, clothing and food were described.

The State Government was highly praised for not letting the Institution lack anything (Chapter Book nº 43, p. 5-6). Below are images of the first Installation Records of the house. The rest of the documentation in this book follows the same writing pattern.

Figure 3 - Chapter Book



Source: Record nº1 – Approval of appointments; Creation of the House; Solemn Installation and Profession of Faith (Bom Pastor private collection in São Paulo)

Here, it is worth highlighting the narrative about the arrival of the first convicts, coming from the correctional house in Porto Alegre, according to a document, who arrived at the Bom Pastor between March 4 and 10, 1937:

*With the special grace granted to our Institute, we can obtain from these dear souls a certain change, after many struggles, because of the freedom they enjoyed for evil in the old prison, and complete religious ignorance. In view of the sweet treatment and good nutrition, they gradually became docile, esteeming the nuns sown to direct them, and today it is a real comfort to see them completely changed. They love the institution, becoming industrious, attending the Holy Sacrament of Confession and Communion. In the few months of the existence of this work of regeneration, one of them abjured Protestantism, another received holy baptism and 2 made their first communion (Chapter Book No. 43, p. 5).*

As described, the prey quickly adapted and soon got used to the “new home” routine. In

the first records, the religious character was seen as a highlight, when they highlighted the participation of women in the Holy Sacraments. About the sacraments, emphasized in this context, Corbin talks about the belief that the Catholic Church instilled in the faithful, stating that these religious dictates manifested the sacredness of the human body, and that resurrection was also promised, therefore, it was necessary to dominate the body, let go get rid of it and, above all, free it from sins, gluttony, lust, in short, purify it. Hence the importance, according to the precepts of Catholicism, of Baptism, Confirmation and even more of the Anointing of the Sick (Alain CORBIN, 2008, p. 59-60).

Image 4 reveals a historical record of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd with a group of prisoners. From the collation of data, both imagery and written documentation, it was possible to infer that this was the first group of prisoners of the Reform School, because when checking the sequence placed in the album, this image is among the first, and images appear in the sequence dated 1944. Another indication that points to being the first group of prisoners are the nuns who accompany them, Sisters Francisco Xavier and Santa Familia



Lemos Lessa, were the sisters who signed the first contract with the State Government.

*Figure 4 - Group of Prisoners with Founding Sisters*



**Source:** Photo of Madres do Bom Pastor a group of prisoners (Photo album Bom Pastor São Paulo private collection)

The image depicts the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, seated, in the foreground, around, women in simple clothes, almost uniformed, indicating that they are probably the prisoners. On the left, two women in different clothes: the first, representing the society ladies, who contributed a lot to the foundation of this resocialization space, and the second, dressed in black, probably a service provider. The presence of children is also observed, due to the simplicity of the clothes and the position they are in the photos, they are probably the daughters of the inmates. With this image, it can be seen that at the beginning of this institution, mothers had contact with their children, even if this determination was not included in the contract. The Sisters' policy was to transform this space into a great Home for the Good Shepherd.

The Records, mentioning the structure of the house, informed that everything was managed

by only six Sisters, the house being financially maintained by the State Government, which, in addition to subsidizing the institution, provided the Sisters with a budget of 400\$000 for private expenses (Book of Chapter 43, p. 5-6). The determination as to the payment to the Sisters is made in the Contractual Clause II which states: "to gratify, monthly, each religious, with 50\$000, and the chaplain with 400\$000 (g)." Clause III determines that "the number of religious will be from eight to twelve and may be increased according to the need for services and the budget." (Detention house contract, 1936, p. 2). At this first moment, the number of Sisters is below the one stipulated in the contract.

The number of nuns assigned to manage and organize the house is directly associated with the number of interns and with the relationship of order and discipline determined within the institution. In the first report sent to the head of



state, referred to as Dr. Director of the "DPA." , the Sisters of the Congregation gave a brief history of the first two years of the house of the Good Shepherd. To justify the work they performed and the care given to the inmates, they argued that at Asylo Bom Pastor these women would have shelter and could cultivate their dormant intelligence: "Here they will be able, through penance, to purify their lacerated hearts, managing to rehabilitate themselves in the face of God and Society" (Manuscript, Decrees: Denomination of the penitentiary – Public utility, p. 1-3.).

They also referred, in this document, to the school instruction that these women received at home, they reported that most inmates were illiterate, needing, therefore, daily primary instructions that consisted of teaching Portuguese, arithmetic, writing practice in addition to learning to cut and sewing and handicrafts: "The prisoners are engaged in needlework and sewing, the product being delivered to each one for their own expenses" (Manuscript, Decrees: Denomination of the penitentiary – Public utility, p. 1-3.).

The occupation of time, as well as the discipline imposed through work, permeated the Institution throughout the administration carried out by the Congregation. Since the first Internal Regulation, the work has had a primordial space. Chapter IV, art. 6 of this document is dedicated to the regulation of work, which already in the first line says: "You must be qualified to earn a living honestly, work is beautiful. It is not only about acquiring resources, but also about avoiding many evils and vices." (Bylaws, p. 4.). This statement is followed by the justification for why all women should work within the institution:

*"Idleness is the mother of all vices"... It is necessary to work even when work is humble and costly, even when it requires*

*patience, attention, effort, perseverance and courage... Do not be discouraged, go to the end, whatever to cost. Work ennobles, ensures a life of more comfort and even a certain degree of independence. Since the work has an educational character, all of them should be used in household chores, in workshops, laundry, sewing, agricultural and manual work, in general. Those qualified for manual work can be used in vegetable gardens, gardens, orchards, etc. The application of the work will serve as a basis for improving the procedural situation (Internal Regulation, p. 4-5).*

From the partial analysis of this document, it is already possible to infer that the non-compliance with contractual clause III, which determined the number of religious in the institution, did not constitute a serious problem, since the manual and maintenance tasks of the institution, a large part they were executed by the inmates themselves and this determination was of strong appeal as it directly implied the possible relaxation of the penalty, as stated in the Internal Regulation.

It is worth highlighting the purpose of the Internal Regulation regarding work and the routine determined by the house, described in art. 6th and 8th concerning the work:

*Art. 6: 1 – perform the determined tasks, and not do each one what and how you want; 2 – execute them carefully and with the greatest possible whim; 3 – do not leave work during regular hours, except with proper authorization; 4 – not to use material from the different jobs, except for the purpose for which it was determined; 5 – do not lose or*

*hand over tools and work objects; 6 – inmates may only request transfer of service, upon proven need and convenience.*

*Art. 8: The regulation prescribes the following time: 6:00 – wake up, readjust the saddle; 6:30 – optional assistance to Holy Mass; 7:15 – coffee, various jobs, doctor, dentist, etc; 11:00 – training lecture; 11:30 – lunch; 12:00 – recess; 12:54 – supplementary class and various assignments; 14:00 – bath; 17:30 – reading and third; 18:00 – dinner; 18:30 – recess; 19:00 – night prayer, lost and found notices, etc; 20:45 – silence (Bylaws, p. 4-5).*

Routine was strict and free time was minimal, following the popular saying that “an empty head is the devil's workshop”, the management by the few Sisters was done through a lot of rigidity, work and discipline. The rigidity dictated by this regulation followed the logic described by Foucault that “time penetrates the body, and with it all the minute controls of power” is the principle of non-idleness (Foucault, 2010, p. 146).

Only 6 (six) Sisters managed the entire women's wing of the old house of correction, which according to the report: “Since the beginning of this reformatory, 1937 to date, 85 prisoners were admitted. As of December 31, 26 prey had been collected. In the forensic hospital there were 5 inmates under observation.” (Manuscript, Decrees: Denomination of Penitentiary – Public Utility, p. 3.).

The small number of sisters who managed the entire confinement space was justified by the disciplinary rigor and meticulous management of idle time and by the work performed by the inmates themselves, according to the internal

regulations where the importance of time is pointed out:

*knowing that time is the currency with which eternity is bought, I need to make the most of it (...) I need to live it with dignity: to think that God wants – that I use it in a way that deserves His approval and achieves an eternity glorious and happy. Thus, I must constructively consider the time I will spend here and comply with the regulations (Bylaws, p. 5).*

The discipline established by rigid schedules, instituted by the monastic communities, had as its premise: “establish censorship, force certain occupations, regulate repetition cycles.” As analyzed by Foucault, “for centuries, religious orders were masters of disciplines, they were specialists of the time, great technicians of rhythm and regular activities.” This disciplinary rigor aimed to increase the body's fitness, in terms of workforce, while also increasing the relationship of subjection and obedience (Foucault, 2010, p. 144; 134).

The docility of the body through the strict discipline of time imposed by the nuns, according to Foucault, allowed a meticulous control of the body's operations, imposing a relationship of docility-utility. This general form of domination, of useful discipline, of docility, during the 17th and 18th centuries, became formulas of domination used by various institutions, such as: convents, armies, workshops, factories. It is the birth of an art of the human body that aims to form a relationship that, in the same mechanism, makes the body both obedient and useful. It is a calculated manipulation of its elements, it is a “political anatomy” that is still a “mechanics of power”, which dictates how to effectively control the other's body with certain techniques. Such discipline, still according to Foucault,

manufactures submissive bodies, docile bodies (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 132-133)..

## 4.2 Contractual clauses: State obligations and general provisions

As for the contractual tasks assigned to the State, these were recorded in clause II of items “a” to “h”. The first determination, of paramount importance for this analysis, said that it was incumbent upon the State to provide the Sisters of the Congregation with “own and furnished building, for their residence and the collection, in separate sections, of delinquent and abandoned women of all ages who were under 18 years (A).” (Detention house contract, 1936, p. 1).

*a) to provide the nuns of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd d'Angers with their own furnished building for their residence and for the collection, in separate sections, of delinquent women of all ages and abandoned women under the age of 18; b) to pay for food for nuns, delinquents and abandoned women; c) to maintain trusted employees of the nuns, for commissions, cultivation of vegetable gardens, orchards and for other necessary tasks; d) to provide a doctor, dentist, medicine, dental material, light, and, in the event of the death of a religious or inpatient, what is necessary for their burial; e) maintain a guard at the establishment; f) to build a chapel, furnish it conveniently, and maintain a chaplain appointed by the competent ecclesiastical authority, to celebrate daily the holy sacrifice of the Mass and fulfill all religious ceremonies*

*pertaining to the Congregation; g) to gratify each religious, monthly, with 50\$000, and the chaplain, with 400\$000; h) to establish in regulation the disciplinary regime of the School of Reform and the Shelter for Minors (Contract of the detention house, 1936, p. 2).*

The determination was clear, it was the duty of the State to provide a proper and suitable place for the work of the Sisters. It should be noted that very soon the Sisters began to complain that the location provided by the State was not suitable for the work carried out by them. This fact is proved by the non-compliance with point “h” which determined: “to establish in regulation the disciplinary regime of the School of Reform and of the Shelter for Minors”. As mentioned above, until the 1950s, only one section was administered by the Sisters, that referring to State prisoners. The shelter for minors only took effect at the new address.

The other contractual clauses took account of general provisions such as the determination of the number of nuns to provide service to the house, which, as seen in the Records, did not attend to the contracted party. The other provisions regulated themes on which in-depth analysis is not needed. The final description of the contract according to the original source follows:

*III) the number of religious will be from eight to twelve and may be increased according to the needs of the service and the budget budgeted; IV) delinquent women and abandoned minors may only be admitted to the establishment and removed from it, upon written order of the juvenile judge, transmitted directly or through the director; V) the objects and*

*correspondence of the inmates can only be delivered to the recipients, after the “visa” of the religious superior; VI) only visits from relatives and those determined by the Juvenile Judge will be allowed; VII) the days of visits by relatives will be designated by the religious superior; VIII) whether on visits from relatives or on those determined by the judge, the internees will be accompanied, to the parlor, by a nun; IX) The internees who are in a state of pregnancy will be removed to another place, where they must remain until necessary and will not be able to keep their children in their company, in the establishment, delinquents or abandoned victims of insanity or contagious disease will also be removed. ; X) Expenses will be made from the funds allocated to the School for Reform and Shelter for Minors (budget law for the current year, title III, table nº 2, female section) (Contract of the detention facility, 1936, p. 2-3 ).*

These records of the institution allowed us to know the initial moments of the house, from the negotiations to the foundation and arrival of the first prisoners, coming from the correctional house in Porto Alegre. The first years of the administration of the Sisters at the School of Reform were one of consolidation of work, adaptation to the contractual clauses, as well as seeking recognition from the community and State authorities.

The Mother Superior, founder and consolidator of the first Prison Institution in Brazil was

Mother Maria de Santa Familia Lemos Lessa (Chapter Book nº 43, p. 2). She remained in this role until 1946, when she was designated by the Mother Provincial as First Mother Superior of the second correctional house in Brazil, the Women's Prison of the State of São Paulo, as stated in the Records:

*On September 1, our most dignified Mother Mary of St. Lemos Lessa Family left this dear house to take part in the Provincial Chapter, to be held this month, in our Provincial House, in obedience to our Most Honorable Mother General , who appointed her Superior of our second house in the State of São Paulo, the Women's Prison. For ten years this dear Mother ruled this house (...). She was the founder of our house in Porto Alegre, having struggled with many difficulties at the beginning of the foundation (...) (Chapter Book nº 43, p. 36, emphasis added).*

With this record, it was possible to verify the importance of the Instituto Bom Pastor in Porto Alegre, the first institution administered by the sisters, whose function also included women prisoners, or as the Sisters called them, prisoners of the State. With the departure of Mother Superior, in the 1946s, the character of a “school” was also observed, that is, of a model or formation of Mothers who later provided services in new houses. As a Reform School, the Institution remained until the signing of the second contract, on April 18, 1939.

## 5. Final Considerations

Thus, the analysis of this material allowed us to historicize the birth of the first female prison in Brazil, the Escola de Reforma. Space for the re-socialization of girls and women in situations of deprivation of liberty. The role of the State, society and the church was perceived in the sense of together, supplying the need to maintain and/or manufacture submissive bodies, docile bodies that are useful to society and do not affront morality and good customs.

As noted, based on the analysis of the documentation of the first phase of the institution – Escola de Reforma – the two years of the contract between the State and the Bom Pastor D'Angers Congregation consisted of accommodation of the nuns in the new space and of transference from the first prey to the new institution. In this first contract, the reception of orphaned girls and women in the House of Correction was foreseen, but it was

observed that this clause was not complied with. With regard to the services provided, the importance of religion in the daily life of the house, as well as the organization and delimitation of the spaces occupied by them, was perceived in these first two years. The Escola de Reforma was a first essay, the beginning of what would become the model of female prison in Brazil.

This prison, the result of its historical context, in the 1930s, reflects the dictates and values of society at the time. Today, new objectives are had with the female incarceration, however, it is still possible to see the historical permanence of the docilization of bodies, now no longer through the religious discourse, but through the “law”, the “strength” instruments proper to the a state that spares no effort in keeping those who are outside the so-called norms/legal rules.



- Andrade, B. (2011). *Entre as leis da Ciência, do Estado, e de Deus: surgimento dos presídios femininos no Brasil*. Dissertação. Pós-Graduação em Antropologia Social, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo.
- Bakos, M. (1996). *Porto Alegre e seus eternos intendent*. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS.
- Campos, M. (1981). *A Congregação do Bom Pastor na Província Sul do Brasil: Pinceladas Históricas*. São Paulo: Editora da Congregação.
- Corbin, A. (2008). A influência da Religião. In: *História do Corpo: Da Revolução à Grande Guerra*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Franco, S. (2016). A Casa de Correção. *Zero Hora: Caderno Zero Hora doc*. Porto Alegre, sábado/domingo, 2 3 de julho de 2016, Ano 53, Nº 18.506, p. 23.
- Foucault, M. (2010). *Vigiar e Punir*. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes.
- Kühn, F. (2004). *Breve História do Rio Grande do Sul*. 2. Ed. Porto Alegre: Leitura XXI.
- Nunes, M. & José F. R. (1986). Prática político-religiosa das Congregações no Brasil: uma abordagem histórico-social. In: AZZI, Riolando; BEOZZO, José Oscar (organizadores). *Os religiosos no Brasil: Enfoques históricos*. São Paulo: Paulinas.
- Silva, M. (1997). *Do império da lei às grades da cidade*. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS.
- Susepe – Superintendência dos Serviços Penitenciários. (2020). *Presídio Feminino Madre Pelletier* [Internet] . Disponível em: <[http://www.susepe.rs.gov.br/conteudo.php?cod\\_menu=203&cod\\_conteudo=3829](http://www.susepe.rs.gov.br/conteudo.php?cod_menu=203&cod_conteudo=3829)> Acesso em 02 de dez. 2020.
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J. H., & Kackson, D. D. (2000). *Pragmática da comunicação humana* (11a ed.). São Paulo: Cultrix.

### Fontes Primárias

- Carta sobre proposta da fundação de Porto Alegre. S/D. Acervo Bom Pastor. Armário D. Caixa 100 – Porto Alegre – RS. 100.21 – *Correspondência particular*.
- Contrato da Casa de Detenção em Porto Alegre. 13 de jun. de 1936. Acervo Bom Pastor. Armário D. Caixa 100 – Porto Alegre. 100.19 – *Contratos anteriores a 1969*, p. 1.
- Jornal Correio do Povo*. Decreto altera nome das casas prisionais no RS. Disponível em:  
<<http://www.correiodopovo.com.br/Noticias/Policia/2017/01/607765/Decreto-altera-nome-de-casas-prisionais-no-RS>>. Acesso em 17 de nov. de 2020.
- Livro do Capítulo. Acervo Bom Pastor. Armário F. 43. *Livro do Capítulo*. Porto Alegre – RS, p. 1-123.
- Manuscrito. Acervo Bom Pastor. Armário D. 100 – Porto Alegre - RS. 100.10 – *Decretos: Denominação da penitenciária – Utilidade Pública*, p. 1-3.
- Manuscrito. Acervo Bom Pastor. Armário D. 100 – Porto Alegre - RS. 100.10 – *Decretos: Denominação da penitenciária – Utilidade Pública*, p. 3.
- Relatório do Asilo Bom Pastor do Rio de Janeiro expedido para o Ministro da Justiça e Negócios Interiores. *Acervo Bom Pastor*. Rio de Janeiro, 21 de novembro de 1941, p. 1.
- Regulamento Interno. Acervo Bom Pastor. Armário D. 100 – Porto Alegre - RS. 100.05 – *Regulamento Interno*, p. 4.