



# Brazil in the Era of Fascism: The “New State” of Getúlio Vargas

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## THE AUTHORITARIAN ‘REVERSE WAVE’ OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD IN LATIN AMERICA

In his review of the *Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (2009), edited by Richard Bosworth, Roger Griffin stressed that it was ironic that the task was given to an historian that “has in the past often expressed his irritation with those concerned with ‘the history of fascism’ (or rather ‘comparative fascist studies’) (...) In some respects, then, asking Bosworth to be the *Duce* of OUP’s ambitious project is like asking a vegan restaurateur to head a team of cooks preparing a medieval banquet where spits rotate slowly, laden with basted pigs and lambs”.<sup>1</sup> In fact, and contrary to Bosworth, as Roger Griffin demonstrates in his masterful *The Nature of Fascism* (1996), Mussolini Dictatorship provided powerful institutional and political inspiration for other regimes of the “Era of Fascism”. Mussolini’s type of leadership, institutions and operating methods already encapsulated the dominant models of the twentieth-century dictatorship at least in three domains: personalised leadership, the single or dominant party, and the ‘technico-consultative’ political institutions, based on

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corporatism.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter in homage to Roger Griffin, I develop these features looking at the case of Getúlio Vargas' Brazil.<sup>3</sup>

Latin America participated in what has been called the first wave of democratisation, and in the subsequent 'reverse wave' that by 1942 had significantly reduced the number of democratic regimes in the world.<sup>4</sup> Regardless of the political regime classification adopted or the different periodisation, by the early 1930s—and especially during the Great Depression—there was 'a surge of reactionary regimes (that) reduced the proportion of competitive systems to a low of 19% in 1943'.<sup>5</sup> Between 1930 and 1934, there were 13 successful coups, followed by a further seven in the last years of the decade.<sup>6</sup> During this time, an impressive spectrum of authoritarian regimes was established, some of which were very unstable and poorly institutionalised, while others were more consolidated. The "New State" of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil is a paradigmatic case.

As has been noted several times, from both a comparative and transnational perspective, the authoritarian 'reverse wave' of the interwar period was a process that was 'contaminated by mutual emulations that are affirmed in their national development (but which are) part of the same historical cycle'.<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, we analyse the processes of institutional reform in 1930s Brazil paying particular attention to how domestic political actors rely on the 'heuristics of availability' in order to pursue similar authoritarian changes while looking at institutional models of fascism and corporatism for their own countries.<sup>8</sup>

### VARGAS'S 'NEW STATE'

The New State established in Brazil by Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945) is the most important case of the institutionalisation of corporatism in an authoritarian setting in Latin America. While corporatist representation was outlined in the 1937 Constitution, social corporatism had a durable legacy and Vargas's dictatorship represented a much more powerful break with political liberalism than was the case with other contemporary regimes in Latin America. On the other hand, in Brazil, the diffusion of corporatism was more developed in conservative and fascist political circles and movements and as a proposed reform of political representation within a liberal framework. In fact, from the beginning of the 1930s, several important steps towards the institutionalisation of social corporatism had been taken, and the representation of interests institutionalised

in the 1934 constitutional assembly and later consolidated with the New State in 1937.

The 1930 Revolution opened the crisis of the old republic’s oligarchic liberalism in Brazil and launched a complex political process marked by a great deal of political instability prior to the 1937 coup.<sup>9</sup> Mobilising junior officers, the so-called *tenentes*, some high-ranking officials, favouring a more centralised and efficient state by dismantling the clientelistic political structures of the old republic and its regional political parties, the political forces that came to power with Getúlio Vargas in November 1930 were more heterogeneous than was the case with other similar processes in Latin America. Nevertheless, one of the main promises of the provisional government was to call elections to a constitutional assembly. Getúlio Vargas was already a well-established politician during the old republic, before he became the main civilian leader of the 1930 Revolution: he had been governor of Rio Grande do Sul, a deputy, a minister, and was a presidential candidate in 1930 election, standing against the nominated candidate of President Washington Luis.<sup>10</sup> If we can trace his ideological origins, the most important influence was probably the authoritarian positivism of Julio de Castilhos, the all-powerful governor of his native state, Rio Grande do Sul, in the turn of the century.<sup>11</sup> With its vague authoritarian and anti-oligarchic party programme, after taking power Vargas’s provisional government was in no rush to establish a new constitutional order and instead almost immediately set about strengthening central power through the appointment of trusted *interventores* in each of the states. However, the Constitutionalist Revolt of 1932, an insurrection led by the State of São Paulo that demanded the restoration of the 1898 Liberal Constitution and which was defeated by Vargas, caused him to call a constitutional assembly to approve a new Constitution in 1934.

With an army strengthened by the conflict, he accepted the elections but had strong reservations about the new Constitution that limited his power and restricted his mandate to just one term. From 1934 to 1937, a number of crises were marked by political polarisation and tensions that suggested either the reestablishment of the liberal order or a strengthening of authoritarianism with the growing importance of two extra-parliamentary radical political movements: the fascists of AIB and the communist-supported National Liberation Alliance (ANL—Aliança Nacional Libertadora).

Following an attempted putsch led by ANL in November 1935, Vargas declared a state of siege and ‘war on communism’, reinforcing his alliance with the military leadership and civilian conservative forces, including the Catholic Church. The repressive apparatus was dramatically extended, with the banning, arrest, and purge of left-wing activists. When, after several extensions of the state of emergency, the majority in Congress called for it to end and, faced with his inability to stand for re-election in 1938 and after some hesitations, Vargas and his associates decided to act. Inventing a fake communist conspiracy, the ‘Cohen Plan’, and with the support of the head of the army, Vargas decreed the New State dictatorship on November 10, 1937.

Corporatism peaked with the New State, but its ideological and institutional presence had been a part of the official political discourse since 1930. At the start of 1931, Vargas was clear when he declared that one of his goals was to ‘destroy the political oligarchs and to establish representation by class rather than through the old system of individual representation that was flawed as an expression of the popular will’.<sup>12</sup> The adoption of corporatism was, therefore, a trademark of the 1930 Revolution that immediately shaped both the elections to the constitutional assembly and the 1934 Constitution.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the 1930s, corporatism—which was associated with authoritarianism, centralism, and nationalism—was assumed by several different emerging political forces, ranging from fascists to social Catholics and ‘passing through several *tenentista* and *Getulista* factions’. The political discourse in favour of technical governments was also very powerful during this period.

Around 40 deputies to the 1933 constitutional assembly represented professional interests, and debates between the different options for corporatist representation were intense. With the 1934 Constitution, corporatist representation became a fact at both federal and the regional levels. The cleavage between the liberals and corporatists, and within this latter group, was clear. The most polarising aspect of the debate concerned the powers of the corporatist institutions (about whether they were to be consultative or deliberative) and whether representation would be through technical councils or in parliament. This latter option was chosen, with Vargas’s support, for the constitutional assembly, against the proposals that were supported by business groups in the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP—Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo).<sup>14</sup> Integral corporatist representation of the type proposed by the AIB was always a minority view. While discussing

the option for a bicameral parliament, the 1934 Constitution established a mixed parliament, with the same number of professional and direct elected representatives of the previous constitutional assembly.

Social corporatism was implemented with the establishment of the Ministry of Labour, Industry, and Commerce (MTIC—Ministério do Trabalho, Indústria e Comércio) in 1930, which was also known as the ‘ministry of revolution’.<sup>15</sup> The eminent corporatist intellectual Oliveira Viana was appointed legal adviser to the MTIC in 1932. Decree 19.700 of March 1931 gradually replaced independent trade unions with state-controlled syndicates. At the same time, several measures, including the eight-hour day, paid holidays, and many other benefits, were progressively introduced. The 1934 Constitution restored some trade union independence; however, with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1935, they were once more subjected to the state’s corporatist intervention, later fully institutionalised.

AIB was perhaps the most important fascist movement in Latin America and like its European counterparts made corporatism part of its political identity and plans for its future integral state.<sup>16</sup> Founded in 1932 by Plínio Salgado, a politician and Catholic and modernist intellectual, its main leaders included Miguel Reale and Gustavo Barroso. AIB quickly grew into a national organisation and adopted the militia structure typical of fascist parties. Integral corporatism was supported by many of the movement’s founders, including Olbiano de Melo and others, even before they joined the AIB.<sup>17</sup>

AIB’s charismatic leader was influenced more by the Portuguese Integralism of António Sardinha (Integralismo Lusitano) and by Charles Maurras than he was by the Italian Fascism. Nevertheless, the AIB’s leadership was well aware of European versions of corporatism and its theorists, especially as promoted in Italy and Portugal.<sup>18</sup> Miguel Reale, the AIB’s national secretary for doctrine, was influenced more by Italian Fascism, even though he was less enthusiastic with its organic totality.<sup>19</sup> The same could be said of Plínio Salgado, although this element of AIB’s political programme was developed largely by Reale, who was the AIB’s most structured corporatist ideologue. Reale’s model was for a political representation project with the corporations the official bodies in which members of the different professions would be represented. Each corporation would elect its representative to a national corporatist chamber, which, with the Senate to which members of ‘non-economic’ (i.e. social

and cultural) corporations would be sent, would form the bicameral National Congress.<sup>20</sup>

Corporatism was an integral part of the AIB's identity and of the association its leaders and followers made with European fascism. Plínio called for a basic form of corporatism that was created through the organisation of professions from the municipal to the national level and which rejected state corporatism.<sup>21</sup> Some years later, the integralist leader said he wanted to place himself in the centre, midway between Reale's fascism and Jeová Mota's leftist social corporatism.<sup>22</sup>

When Getúlio Vargas led the 1937 coup, he was supported by the AIB, while Francisco Campos—the minister closest to fascism—was an apparent intermediary; however, the AIB very quickly realised the new regime was not going to give them the political space and integration they desired. Although all other parties were banned, while the AIB was allowed to continue as a think tank, tensions with the government increased, leading—as in many other cases—to it also being banned and some of its leaders, including Plínio Salgado, exiled, even as many others joined the new regime. Following the AIB's attack on the Guanabara Palace in May 1938, they were persecuted by the New State.

Two intellectual politicians and close associates of Vargas, Francisco Campos and Oliveira Viana, played decisive roles in the institutionalisation of corporatism during the 1930s. While he never held political office, we could add to the list Manoilescu's Brazilian translator, Azevedo Amaral.<sup>23</sup> These three were always present when referring to the relationship between authoritarian intellectuals and Vargas's New State.<sup>24</sup> Their influences were different, however. Campos was undoubtedly Vargas's main ideologist in the late 1930s, as well as serving as minister for education and justice. He wrote the 1937 Constitution and many of Vargas's main proclamations during the early days of the New State. Oliveira Viana had occupied a senior role within the Ministry of Labour since 1932 and was one of the main authors of the corporatist labour legislation. Azevedo Amaral remained an important publicist and author who was associated with the regime's propaganda apparatus, although he never held formal political office.<sup>25</sup>

Francisco Campos was perhaps the New State's most articulate ideological creator, since it was he who designed the new regime's institutions in the 1937 Constitution, that brought an end to the state of emergency that had existed since 1935.<sup>26</sup> Like Vargas, Campos was more attuned to authoritarian positivism and less influenced in his youth by European

Catholic and reactionary traditionalism.<sup>27</sup> Author of a large selection of political theory and law works, Campos began his political career in traditional parties, and following the 1930 Revolution became a fellow traveller with Getúlio Vargas, while at the same time moving towards an elitist anti-parliamentary position. Later, he became the main ideologue of the establishment of a personalised dictatorship endowed with propaganda tools and mass organisations.<sup>28</sup> Soon after the 1930 coup, he and Gustavo Capanema organised the government-supported fascist-style militia, the October Legion. He served as minister of education and health in 1931 and in 1937 was appointed minister of justice. Campos was the principal author of Vargas's coup proclamation and stood in the background directing the dictator's authoritarian discourse throughout the regime's early years as the New State was being institutionalised, although many of its principals never got off the paper.<sup>29</sup>

Campos was a great legitimiser of an authoritarian state as the only alternative to the 'anachronism' of liberal democratic institutions in a mass society. He wrote:

The masses are fascinated by charismatic personalities. This is what is at the heart of political integration. The larger and more active the masses, the more political integration becomes possible only through the dictatorship of a personal will. Dictatorship is the political regime of the masses. The only natural expression of the will of the masses is the plebiscite: that is to say, of acclamation and appeal before choice.<sup>30</sup>

Campos was also a supporter of social and political corporatism as the main antidote to communism: as justice minister in 1940, he stated that 'Corporatism kills communism, just as capitalism generates communism'.<sup>31</sup> As other intellectual politicians of the interwar period, Campos used alternative concepts of democracy to legitimise the regime, but even as he tried to situate his authoritarian projects midway between liberal and totalitarian experiences, Campos stood closer to the latter than to the former. The 'exaltation of the leader, the break with democratic institutions and the dialogue with intellectuals who inspired fascism is very clear', to the extent that even supporters of the New State noticed.<sup>32</sup> As Vargas's secretary was to write: 'Let's acknowledge that the accusation [of fascism] was not a lie'.<sup>33</sup> It was probably this association with fascism that led Vargas to not reappointing Campos in the government when the international winds changed direction in 1942.

Oliveira Viana, one of Brazil's leading intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century, served as legal adviser to the MTIC from 1932 to 1940.<sup>34</sup> No examination of Brazilian authoritarianism or corporatism can avoid Oliveira Viana, as he was the leading figure in the project of instrumental authoritarianism—that is, presenting an authoritarian regime as the means of overcoming the dilemmas of Brazil's modernisation.<sup>35</sup> Viana's modernising approach was less present in other Latin American corporatists: in fact, he 'perceived himself, and was perceived by others, to be a modern, scientific thinker – not a nostalgic reactionary'.<sup>36</sup>

Oliveira Viana's corporatist project was the central element to legitimise the transformation of the state and to be the main bulwark for the social peace that would get the country moving from top to bottom.<sup>37</sup> His 'authoritarian democracy [was] a democracy with authority, and not liberty, as its essential principle' and that it also should not have such political institutions as a single party.<sup>38</sup> 'A sovereign president, who exerts his power in the name of the nation, and is subordinate to and dependent upon it alone', ought to be enough, since parties were the vehicles of the oligarchy: 'the New State is not a single-party regime: it is a single-president regime'.<sup>39</sup> Aware that Vargas had banned parties—even though they continued to exist at the municipal level—Viana thought it was 'necessary to abolish their component parts', and that there was only one way to achieve this—through the corporatisation of municipal representation with the establishment of 'obligatory professional representation in the establishment of municipal councils'.<sup>40</sup>

To emphasise the instrumental and transitory nature of his authoritarianism, Viana differentiated his project from the Italian Fascist model, stressing the technico-judicial nature of his approach and restating both Manóiesco and the New Deal jurists, but all the while maintaining the authoritarian model.<sup>41</sup> In fact, while his legislative contribution was largely restricted to social corporatism, as far as Viana was concerned, 'the corporatist project and the strengthening of the presidential system of government were the two touchstones of the new authoritarian democracy'.<sup>42</sup> A president, we must not forget, that Viana wanted to be elected by a corporatist electoral college of political, administrative, professional, and cultural institutions. While as a consultant to the Labour Ministry, he was not the only author of the legislation shaping Brazilian social corporatism, he was its backbone and the leading Brazilian exponent of the 'corporatist utopia of the good society'.<sup>43</sup>



During the 1930s, the Brazilian Catholic Church redoubled its struggle against communism. Ever since the 1930 Revolution, the Church had followed and moved closer to Getúlio Vargas in an apparent ‘re-encounter with the state’.<sup>44</sup> Catholic corporatism also followed this dynamic, both in the Church’s independent activities and through its collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, with which Catholic experts had been involved since 1931 in drawing up corporatist legislation. The press and intellectuals surrounding Catholic Action highlighted European models such as Salazar’s New State.<sup>45</sup> Under the leadership of Cardinal Sebastião Leme, who was archbishop of Rio de Janeiro from 1930 to 1942, the programme to ‘re-Christianize society’ was developed as the reapproximation of the Church and state continued during the 1930s. The Constitution of 1934 re-established religious education in public schools, provided public financial support for Catholic organisations, and secured a convergence between Catholic social corporatism and the projects being promoted by Vargas.

The cardinal was considerably sympathetic to the fascist AIB, an organisation in which many Catholic laymen, and even priests, held senior political offices. In a confidential statement issued in September 1937, Cardinal Leme stated ‘that it [Integralism] presently constitutes one of the social forces best organised to defend God, nation and family against atheistic communism’ and that its programme of social reforms ‘closely follows the whole orientation of Catholic doctrine’.<sup>46</sup> Leme came out in support of the 1937 Coup, the leaders of which he said ‘Providence has entrusted the destiny of Brazil’.<sup>47</sup> He also spoke in favour of its agreements with the New State, silencing voices that disagreed with the state corporatism of Getúlio Vargas, which shared a similar dynamic with other authoritarian experiments of the time.

The Constitution of 1937, which was written by the minister of justice, Francisco Campos, was directly inspired by the Polish Constitution introduced by Pilsudski in 1935, and which gave the president extensive powers and legislative authority.<sup>48</sup> Legislative power was formally exercised by a parliament elected by an electoral college largely consisting of members of the council of municipalities and the federal council that replaced the Senate, consisting of representatives of the states and ten presidential nominees.

The National Economy Council (CEN—Conselho da Economia Nacional) collaborated with parliament. CEN was a consultative chamber, consisting of five sections (Industry and Crafts, Agriculture, Commerce,

Transport, and Credit) and made up of representatives of several branches of national production, that was designed to promote the corporatist organisation of the national economy. As a law professor and supporter of Vargas wrote in 1937, in a clear reference to the Portuguese New State Constitution of 1933, ‘The CEN will be our Corporate Chamber’.<sup>49</sup> Its members were elected by their respective associations, with ‘equal representation for employees and employers’.<sup>50</sup> All legislation affecting the national economy had to be submitted to it for review, which also gave it some legislative authority. Its members were chosen by an electoral college made up of unions and employers organisations. The President of the Republic was also elected by corporatist bodies (local authorities, CEN, chamber of deputies, federal council).

There were extensive principles in the Constitution concerning the corporatist foundations of national production that ensured the economy of national labour would be organised in a corporation.<sup>51</sup> Like other authoritarian constitutions and labour codes of the 1930s, the inspiration of Italian Labour Charter was evident, with Article 135 of the new Constitution reproducing, almost word for word, Articles 7 and 9 of the Italian charter.<sup>52</sup> For Getúlio’s secretary and most observers at the time, the most obvious aspect of its fascist inspiration was the ‘chapter on economic organization based on corporatism’.<sup>53</sup> In the New State Constitution, the break with liberalism was much clearer than in other dictatorships of the fascist era.

Although it wasn’t put to a plebiscite or implemented, the 1937 charter was the ideal-type regime reflected in the propaganda.<sup>54</sup> In his speeches, Vargas often spoke about the legitimacy of the new Constitution as the foundation of the New State that had replaced political democracy with economic democracy.<sup>55</sup>

The new Information and Propaganda Department (DIP—Departamento de Informação e Propaganda) that was established in 1939 and which reported directly to the President of the Republic coordinated the creation of Vargas’s image as well as the regime’s censorship and cultural policy. DIP, which was responsible for the systemisation of an ideal type of state and society relations in the New State, had functions very similar to those of its European peers, ranging from Italian Fascism to Salazar’s SPN (Secretariado para a Propaganda Nacional). Just like them, DIP published dozens of texts in which corporatism was presented as the official model for the new regime, both at the elite and at the mass level.<sup>56</sup>

The word chief also began to be used to define Vargas’s leadership, especially during the 1 May celebrations, when Vargas was associated with the new official unions and workers in general.<sup>57</sup> New nationalist civic ceremonies, such as the hour of independence and the youth parade, were used to involve youth in the new regime, despite the failure to create the national youth organisation Francisco Campos had proposed in 1938.<sup>58</sup> These events, along with the other symbols of proximity to European fascism, did not begin to disappear until after Brazil entered World War II on the side of the Allies.<sup>59</sup>

The New State did not create a single or dominant party. Following the AIB putsch of 1938, several New State strategists, including Francisco Campos and his private secretary Luis Vergara, advised Vargas to create a single party, which Vargas then sought to do. A series of meetings were held to discuss creating a regime-supporting party that would be formed around the powerful *interventores* in each of the states. It even had a name: National Civic Legion (LCN—Legião Cívica Nacional). However, there was also opposition to this proposal from among various members of regional elites, and Vargas feared any new party could create a focus for tensions that could weaken his hold on power.

In many official New State documents, the term ‘political’ was often replaced by ‘administration’, praising ‘technicians as a counterpoint to politics, which was described as the dirty side of private interests’.<sup>60</sup> In fact, bureaucratic-administrative centralisation was a trait of the dictatorship, and throughout the New State’s eight-year duration, Vargas provided continuity both to the restructuring of the Brazilian state from a more interventionist perspective and for economic nationalism. Several important steps were also taken to promote political and administrative centralisation under the authoritarian command of the National Chief.

One month after the coup, and with the support of the majority of governors, and despite resistance and compromise, *interventores* became the main actors in the political centralisation of state leaderships.<sup>61</sup> *Interventores* had executive and legislative powers at the regional level that transformed them into political coordinators who could ‘interlink New State oligarchies, ministers and the President of the Republic’.<sup>62</sup> From April 1939, these *interventores* were made responsible to the administrative departments that replaced elected state assemblies and were granted the power to approve budgets and issue decree laws. The members of these bodies were nominated by the president. Needless to say, the party elites, while weakened, survived and ‘negotiated’ within these new

structures at the regional level, in a process of partial continuity and renewal.<sup>63</sup>

Another important feature of the New State administration was the multiplication and overlapping of different bureaucratic-administrative bodies that allowed the intervention of the federal government. Some of these had been created during the 1930s, such as the technical councils, institutes, and other federal agencies that became important instruments of economic planning, coordination, and regulation.<sup>64</sup> In the absence of a single party and a corporatist or authoritarian parliament, these New State governing bodies replaced the traditional representation channels to become the focus for lobbying and the exertion of political pressure. As a contemporary academic observer remarked, Brazil under Vargas became 'Technically, a (non-party) full-fledged dictatorship'.<sup>65</sup> As Vargas proclaimed in the 1938 May Day celebration,

I came to establish harmony and tranquillity between employees and their employers [...] However, harmony and tranquillity between employees and employers is not enough. The collaboration of all in the spontaneous effort and common labours are required for the good of this harmony.<sup>66</sup>

The new regime crowned the victory of social corporatism in an authoritarian setting, and on May 1, 1943, after nearly a decade of social legislation, the Consolidated Labour Laws (CLT), which finally systematised and applied labour legislation in Brazil, were introduced.

In 1939, the trade unions became subordinate to the state, losing their organisational independence. In 1940, Vargas established the minimum wage and in 1941, the labour courts.<sup>67</sup> Union funds were tightly controlled and the *imposto sindical* (the compulsory union tax) was created, the intention of which was to provide health and welfare benefits for union members. Union leaders were vetted by the political police. As in some other corporatist dictatorships, any kind of national confederation of labour was banned. Unions were organised in industry-wide syndicates which had a monopoly of representation within a tripartite system of conciliation and arbitration that was largely modelled on Italian Fascist legislation. State protection came under almost total union control, which was opposed by many employers.<sup>68</sup> Social Catholic organisations feared this statist social corporatism while promoting a more pluralist and societal approach. Industrialists reacted to this statist approach as well,

although with Vargas being partially successful with their integration into the new structures of social peace.<sup>69</sup>

One student of the Brazilian labour movement noted that the fascist label ‘fails to capture the intellectual and legal origins of the social and labour legislation that preceded 1937’.<sup>70</sup> While the clearly authoritarian and Catholic hand of Oliveira Viana drafted much of the labour legislation, other contributors had also been present since the early 1930s. In fact, Vianna stood alongside integralists, traditionalist Catholics, and ‘a widening array of lawyers [who were] drawn into the elaboration, re-elaboration and administration of social and labour legislation’.<sup>71</sup> This was the case of many of the labour codes introduced by authoritarian regimes in Europe and Latin America as well. As the ABC of political analysis notes, similar structures may have very different functions across political systems, and in the case of Vargas’s Brazil, corporatism left a legacy of inclusion that ‘allowed a claim to citizenship and a legitimate voice in public life’.<sup>72</sup>

### CONCLUSION: THE END OF THE ‘NEW STATE’

From 1942, the New State’s authoritarian institutional innovation lost its impetus. The international factor and the US’s Pan-American strategy in Latin America also had a big impact on Brazil, so this new dynamic could not have been strange. In the late 1930s, Vargas took a pragmatic stance in his foreign policy, attempting to take advantage of the rivalry between the great powers. After the 1937 coup, this position remained unchanged.<sup>73</sup> In 1938 though, Vargas distanced himself from the native fascism represented by the AIB, repressed Nazi-inspired movements, and declared the German ambassador *persona non grata*. Notwithstanding the reservations of some segments of the army leadership, Brazil broke off relations with the Axis and became the first Latin American country to declare war on the Axis powers, and the only one sending troops to the front in Europe.<sup>74</sup> During the war years, Brazil got in turn 70 per cent of all US aid given to Latin America.<sup>75</sup>

In 1943, Vargas began to suggest that there would, eventually, be a move towards democratisation just as he, rather ironically, began organising a top-down party ahead of elections.<sup>76</sup> Vargas’s social corporatism sought to create an apolitical labour movement consisting of unions that would function as consultative organs of government, with a model of

class harmony and collaboration, but from 1943, when Vargas was anticipating a process of regime change, he started to make a direct appeal to the working class.<sup>77</sup> In 1944, Minister of Labour, Alexandre Marcondes Filho, called for a plebiscite that was never carried out, proposing a ‘semi-corporatist’ state, with a CEN complementing, rather than replacing, the legislature.<sup>78</sup> The regime began to recognise and accept the political and electoral potential of organised labour, and Vargas strengthened his links with the working class, allowing union elections and even tolerating strikes, which, under the labour law, were illegal. *Trabalhismo* and the ‘populist’ Vargas were in the making.<sup>79</sup> The military, afraid of this dynamic, overthrew Vargas in 1945, but many of the legacies of the Estado Novo survived and even the ‘Father of the Poor’ would come back in the 1950s.

## NOTES

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