

"THE MOST CHRISTIAN OF MODERN POLITICAL SYSTEMS": FASCISM AND CATHOLICISM IN THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE YOUNG SAN TIAGO DANTAS

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"EL MÁS CRISTIANO DE LOS SISTEMAS POLÍTICOS MODERNOS": FASCISMO Y CATOLICISMO EN EL PENSAMIENTO POLÍTICO DEL JOVEN SAN TIAGO DANTAS



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ABSTRACT: In the first half of the twentieth century, many Catholic intellectuals saw Fascism as an ally in the struggle against the decadence of Christian Western civilization and considered the Fascist State as the secular form best able to realize the Church's vision in the modern world. In Latin American countries, Catholics were among the main groups that were receptive to fascist ideas throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In this article, I analyze the political thought and action of the Brazilian intellectual Francisco Clementino de San Tiago Dantas, between 1929 and 1945, when he was linked to the Catholic laity and to the Brazilian Integralist Action. Still little studied, the political and intellectual interventions carried out by San Tiago Dantas in this period may provide important clues to the understanding of the reception and circulation of fascist, authoritarian and corporatist ideas among Brazilian Catholics, as well as to the understanding of his performance during the Vargas Era.

KEYWORDS: Catholicism. Fascism. Integralism. San Tiago Dantas.

RESUMO: Na primeira metade do século XX, muitos intelectuais católicos enxergaram os fascismos como aliados na luta contra a decadência da civilização cristã-ocidental e o Estado fascista como a forma secular mais apta a realizar a visão da Igreja no mundo moderno. Nos países da América Latina, os católicos estiveram entre os principais grupos que receberam e disseminaram as ideias fascistas na região ao longo das décadas de 1920 e 1930. Neste artigo, analiso o pensamento e a atuação política do intelectual Francisco Clementino de San Tiago Dantas entre os anos de 1929 e 1945, quando esteve vinculado ao laicato católico e à Ação Integralista Brasileira. Ainda pouco estudadas, as intervenções políticas e intelectuais realizadas por San Tiago Dantas neste período podem trazer importantes pistas para o entendimento da recepção e circulação das ideias fascistas, autoritárias e corporativistas entre os católicos brasileiros, bem como para a compreensão de sua atuação durante a Era Vargas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Catolicismo. Fascismo. Integralismo. San Tiago Dantas.

RESUMEN: En la primera mitad del siglo XX, muchos intelectuales católicos veían al fascismo como un aliado en la lucha contra la decadencia de la civilización cristiano-occidental y al Estado fascista como la forma secular más adecuada para hacer realidad la visión del mundo moderno que tenía la Iglesia. En los países latinoamericanos, los católicos fueron uno de los principales grupos que recibieron y difundieron las ideas fascistas en la región a lo largo de las décadas de 1920 y 1930. En este artículo, analizo el pensamiento y la acción política del intelectual Francisco Clementino de San Tiago Dantas entre 1929 y 1945, cuando estuvo vinculado al laicado católico y a la Acción Integralista Brasileña. Aún poco estudiadas, las intervenciones políticas e intelectuales de San Tiago Dantas en este período pueden proporcionar importantes pistas para la comprensión de la recepción y circulación de ideas fascistas, autoritarias y corporativistas entre los católicos brasileños, así como para la comprensión de su actuación durante la Era Vargas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Catolicismo. Fascismo. Integralismo. San Tiago Dantas.

Introduction

The relationship between the Catholic Church and fascist movements and regimes during the first half of the 20th century has been the subject of public debate and historical and sociological analysis since Pius XI and Benito Mussolini took over the leadership of the Holy See and the Italian government, respectively, in 1922. Despite the fact that the Italian Fascist movement had strong anti-clerical leanings at its beginning, the Catholic Church was one of the Fascist regime's most important allies in its process of institutionalization and consolidation of the social consensus that allowed it to rule Italy for two decades (POLLARD, 2008; AQUARONE, 1965), although this relationship has always been marked by tensions and crises (GENTILE, 2015).

Far from signifying an opportunistic alliance between the two parties, the links between Catholicism and Fascism, not only in Italy but in the rest of the world, can also be explained by the existence of convergences from a doctrinal point of view: the cult of authority, hierarchy and discipline; the criticism of liberalism and individualism; the corporatist conception of society and political representation; the perception of the existence of common enemies such as Freemasonry, socialism and Bolshevism (CECI, 2013; MICCOLI, 1973).

Many of these commonalities were mobilized, especially during the first half of the 1930s, by Catholic clerics and laypeople prone to political action to justify their support - or at least sympathy - for fascism in various parts of the world (CONWAY, 1997). On the other hand, from the outset, there were Catholics who opposed the alliance between the institutions, denouncing the anti-Christian and totalitarian character of fascism and condemning its claim to constitute a political religion of deification of the State, the Nation and the Leader, competing with the Catholic Church (GENTILE, 2015).

In Latin American countries, Catholics were among the main groups that received and circulated fascist ideas in the region throughout the 1920s and 1930s - and much of the authoritarian and corporatist ideology of various ideological matrices in vogue in Europe at that time (ABREU; COSTAGUTA, 2021; PINTO; FINCHELSTEIN, 2019; BERTONHA, 2019; CASSIMIRO, 2018; CEPÊDA, 2017; FINCHELSTEIN, 2010; BENDICHO BEIRED, 2007). According to Bertonha (2022, p. 208, our translation), "Catholicism had a fundamental influence in shaping other fascisms and authoritarianisms, [...] but it was only really hegemonic in Latin America, providing a common basis for debates within the right-wing camp and, especially, the extreme right". In Brazil, very close relations were established between the

clergy, the Catholic laity and the Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB) during the 1930s (RIBEIRO, 2023; SILVA, 2022; AMADO, 2017; LUSTOSA, 1976; WILLIAMS, 1974).

In this article, I analyze the political thinking and actions of Francisco Clementino de San Tiago Dantas between 1929 and 1945. Best known for the important role he played during João Goulart's government (1961-1964) as a labor leader and ideologue and formulator of the Independent Foreign Policy, San Tiago Dantas began his political, intellectual and professional career linked to the Dom Vital Center in Rio de Janeiro, the main Catholic lay group in Brazil, and to the integralist movement. Between 1929 and 1937, he defended the rapprochement between Catholicism and fascism from a doctrinal point of view and the political alliance between Catholics and integralists. From 1938 onwards, he began a process of political-ideological conversion away from fascism and towards democratic principles, while still trying to reaffirm his ties to the Catholic camp.

In the following three sections, divided into chronological order, I try to analyze how San Tiago articulated fascism and Catholicism in his political thought and how he positioned himself in the spaces in which he participated between 1929 and 1945. Still little studied, the political and intellectual interventions made by San Tiago Dantas in this period² can provide important clues for understanding the reception and circulation of fascist, authoritarian and corporatist ideas among Brazilian Catholics, as well as for understanding his actions during the Vargas era.

Catholicism and Fascism (1929-1932)

From the mid-19th century onwards, a conservative restoration movement was consolidated in the Catholic Church, which sought to reverse the losses accumulated by the institution since the end of the Middle Ages with the advances of secularization and laicization of politics by the liberal state, scientific rationalism and revolutionary movements for social transformation. During the pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878), the subordination of Catholics to the Vatican, the infallibility of the pope and anti-modern and anti-liberal criticism were reaffirmed. Although there were certain openings to the modern world during this period (such as the acceptance of class society and the updating of the corporatist vision of the Church by

² A maioria dos textos desse período estão reunidos em *Escritos Políticos: 1929-1945* (DANTAS, 2016), coletados e organizados por Pedro Dutra. Dutra publicou também a primeira parte de uma biografia sobre San Tiago Dantas, compreendendo os anos de 1929 a 1945 (DUTRA, 2014).

Pope Leo XIII in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891), there was a predominance of ultramontane and conservative Catholicism until the early 1960s (MANOEL, 2004).

In the first decades of the 20th century, especially during the pontificate of Pius XI (1922-1939), the Church encouraged Catholic militancy among clergy and laity, even though it defended submission to Vatican directives. Lay Catholic intellectuals, many newly converted to religion - such as Jean Cocteau, Jacques Maritain, Henri Bergson, G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc and Nikolai Berdiaev - played a major role in the elaboration and dissemination of Catholic thought during this period. The 1920s saw a growing rapprochement between Catholics and Italian fascism and similar movements in other countries, seen above all as allies in the reaction against modernity (MORO, 2015; CHENAUX, 1999; CORRIN, 1981).

The Catholic reaction in Brazil began with the clashes over the Religious Question during the Empire and was structured during the First Republic (1889-1930), culminating in the work of Dom Sebastião Leme and the Catholic laity during the 1930s and 1940s (VILLAÇA, 1975). In its project to re-Christianize Brazilian society, the national Catholic Church bet on the conversion of the national intellectual elite and on strategies to influence Brazilian politics after the 1930 Revolution (RODRIGUES; PAULA, 2012; MAINWARING, 1989; BEOZZO, 1986).

The Dom Vital Center, founded in 1922 in the federal capital by Jackson de Figueiredo, became the main center for the production and dissemination of Catholic thought in the country, but also for the reception and circulation of European authoritarian, corporatist and fascist ideology. The Center brought together a significant group of intellectuals and liberal professionals whose religious affiliation was their main element of cohesion (PINHEIRO FILHO, 2007). These figures considered themselves "guardians of national history and identity, from which it should be concluded that the group had a legitimate right to interfere in the political and cultural life of the country" (ARDUINI, 2014, p. 69, our translation).

During Jackson de Figueiredo's presidency, the Center and its influential magazine *A Ordem* took a traditionalist stance in tune with the counter-revolutionary thinking of authors such as Joseph de Maistre and Charles Maurras. From 1928 onwards, under the leadership of Alceu Amoroso Lima, the influence of neo-Thomism became predominant, especially the personalist approach of Jacques Maritain. A propensity for militancy and proximity to radical right-wing movements, especially the AIB, marked the work of a large part of the vitalists until the integralist party was practically wiped out in 1937 and the outbreak of World War II.

When San Tiago Dantas entered the National Law School in 1928, he found the university divided between left-wing groups (such as the Red Students League) and defenders of spiritualism, linked to the Church and the Dom Vital Center, such as the Catholic University Action (AUC) and the Academic Center for Legal Studies (CAJU)³. Both groups would provide an important part of the militants dedicated to the expansion of the Dom Vital Center in the 1930s, with San Tiago Dantas being one of the figures who achieved the greatest relevance in national politics and culture until his death in 1964.

San Tiago was a member of CAJU between 1929 and 1932, a group that brought together students such as Antonio Gallotti, Américo Jacobina Lacombe, Hélio Vianna, Thiers Martins Moreira, Vicente Chermont de Miranda, Octávio de Faria, Gilson Amado and Almir de Andrade (some of whom were also members of the AUC). During this period, the group became close to Alceu Amoroso Lima and Augusto Frederico Schmidt⁴, who ran the Catholic Bookstore (linked to the Dom Vital Center). Between May 1930 and August 1931, they published the *Revista de Estudos Jurídicos*, one of the main right-wing magazines in the federal capital in the period before the formation of the AIB.

San Tiago Dantas made his publicist debut in *O Jornal* in 1929 with the article "*O grande livro de Tristão de Athayde*" (The Great Book of Tristan de Athayde). In the Catholic magazine *A Ordem*, San Tiago published the articles "*Conceito de sociologia*" (Concept of sociology), in June 1930, and "*Catolicismo e fascismo*" (Catholicism and fascism), in January 1931. In 1930, he took part in the publication *Novidades Literárias*, organized by Schmidt, and was responsible for the "*Crônica Universitária*" section. He was one of the authors of the "*Inquérito de Sociologia Brasileira*" published by CAJU in the third issue of its magazine.

³ On CAJU, see Ribeiro (2023).

⁴ Between 1924 and 1928, Augusto Frederico Schmidt (1906-1965), from Rio de Janeiro, came from a wealthy family and was linked to the most important figures in the São Paulo modernist movement, especially Plínio Salgado. Close to Jackson de Figueiredo, he co-founded the short-lived magazine *Pelo Brasil* and met Alceu Amoroso Lima through him. After Jackson's death and very close to Alceu, Schmidt went on to run *Livraria Católica* and founded *Editora Schmidt* in 1931, which was responsible for publishing important political and literary works, such as the books in the Blue Collection ("*Brasil errado*" by Martins de Almeida, "*Introdução à realidade brasileira*" by Afonso Arinos de Melo Franco, "*O sentido do tenentismo*" by Virgínio Santa Rosa, "*A gênese da desordem*" by Alcindo Sodrê and "*Psicologia da revolução*" by Plínio Salgado), and of the authors Otávio de Faria (*Maquiavel e o Brasil*), Jorge Amado (*O país do carnaval*), Marques Rebelo (*Oscarina*), Raquel de Queirós (*João Miguel*), Graciliano Ramos (*Caetés*), Gilberto Freire (*Casa grande e senzala*), Leonel Franca (*Ensino religioso e ensino leigo, Catolicismo e protestantismo*), Virgílio de Melo Franco (*Outubro de 1930*) and Alceu Amoroso Lima (*Problema da burguesia, Preparação à sociologia, Debates pedagógicos and Estudos, 4ª série*). Schmidt also published several integralist authors: Plínio Salgado (*Doutrina do sigma, O que é o integralismo*), Olbiano de Melo (*Razões do integralismo, concepção do estado integralista*), Osvaldo Gouveia (*Brasil integral*), Olímpio Mourão (*Do liberalismo ao integralismo*), Miguel Reale (*Atualidade brasileira*) and Gustavo Barroso (*O integralismo em marcha*) (CALICCHIO, [n.d.]).

His first articles, written in 1929 and 1930, were strongly influenced by the anti-liberal nationalism disseminated at the time in works such as Oliveira Vianna's and by Catholic social thought, especially neo-Thomist personalism and Catholic corporatism. In tune with the criticism of the First Republic, San Tiago understood that the Brazilian political institutions founded in 1891 on the basis of abstract liberal ideals did not correspond to the national reality and, for this reason, Brazil found itself in a deep crisis at the end of the 1920s.

The author, however, emphasized that the Brazilian crisis could only be understood if it was located within the larger crisis that Western-Christian civilization had been experiencing since the end of the Middle Ages. For him, the crisis in which the world found itself had been generated by the rise in modernity of materialistic values that affirmed the primacy of economic factors over other aspects of life. Thus, he argued that

the historical error whose consequences we have suffered was precisely to separate the economic order from the other social aspects, and, by increasingly eliminating all the supernaturality that permeated medieval civilization, to come to isolate it as the only reality (DANTAS, [1929] 2016, p. 26, our translation).

According to San Tiago, this materialistic view of society had permeated modern Western thought since the Renaissance, and was reinforced by the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment principles of the 18th century. Furthermore, this tendency was expressed in modern social thought from the 19th century onwards, in authors such as Comte, Durkheim, Spencer and Marx. For him, this naturalistic sociology, falsely objective and neutral, hid the fact that its premises were also founded on a philosophical basis of their own: that of renouncing the metaphysical principles that govern human life. From this materialist and naturalist conception, a politics free of any commitment to morality, utilitarian, would be born, which "without seeing in men any religious or philosophical purpose whatsoever, will only come to fix norms of organization, so that they better adapt to a given social life" (DANTAS, [1930] 2016, p. 39, our translation).

In this sense, San Tiago understood that the (highly abstract) political principles derived from this type of thinking, victorious with the French Revolution, would have stimulated the growth in bourgeois societies of individualism, materialism and utilitarianism, from which its current crisis would originate: "Demoralized, corrupted, living in open and continuous disregard of all the principles on which it was founded, bourgeois civilization is rolling towards annihilation, without an ideal to lift it up, nor a moral force to discipline it" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 75, our translation). For the author, the fate of Western societies that broke with their

metaphysical foundations would inevitably be communism; there would be a strong tendency towards "socialization" in the modern world:

Under this naturalistic orientation, which guides almost all of today's sociology, a truly socialist mentality has been formed in the minds of nations. In fact, in both socialism and modern capitalism, Sombart has already observed this same common tendency towards socialization. And if there are countries where it is accentuated, both in its theoretical conception and in its practical consequences, they are those of more traditional liberalism, such as England and the United States (DANTAS, [1930] 2016, p. 35, our translation).

According to San Tiago, in both liberalism and communism, human improvement ceased to be the purpose of social organization and man, reduced "to a simple phenomenon in the natural order", began to live "for society, and no longer society for man as humanism had wanted" (DANTAS, [1930] 2016, p. 35, our translation). To deal with the trend towards "socialization" in the modern world, the author advocated a "new humanism" that would give man back his place, "without this, however, in any way meaning a return to individualism" (DANTAS, [1930] 2016, p. 36, our translation). Societies founded under this new humanism should foster and encourage the development of the personality, "seeking in the improvement of man not a means of improving the society in which he lives, but a means of improving himself" (DANTAS, [1930] 2016, p. 37, our translation).

Only Catholic sociology, moreover, has distinguished this subject with precise clarity, differentiating between individuality and what it calls personality in man. Individuality, as Maritain teaches, is common to everything, the atom, the plant, the raw body. Personality is what is in the superior man, and is thus defined by St. Thomas: "Persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura"⁵. The individual thus lives for society, as the part lives for the whole, but the extreme purpose of all life must necessarily be personality (DANTAS, [1930] 2016, p. 36).

In these initial texts, San Tiago took on a large part of the theses defended by Alceu Amoroso Lima in books such as "Outline of an Introduction to Modern Economics" (*Esboço de Introdução à Economia Moderna* - 1930) and "Preparation for Sociology" (*Preparação à Sociologia* - 1931), especially the understanding of communism as an offshoot of capitalism and the notion of the human person as opposed to the liberal individual, as proposed by authors such as Maritain. Thus, while San Tiago agreed with the diagnosis of the Brazilian crisis made by national authoritarian authors, such as Oliveira Vianna and Pontes de Miranda - "the masters who are now training us seek, first of all, to make us feel the uselessness of the theoretical ideals

⁵ Translation: "The person is the most perfect thing in all of nature."

in which successive generations from the Empire to the Republic have been losing themselves" (DANTAS, [1930] 2016, p. 39, our translation) -, he differed from them by insisting on the need to adopt a spiritualist point of view in order to understand reality and propose new forms of social and political organization:

National sociologists since Tavares Bastos have based all their studies on this [naturalist] orientation. Looking at society more or less as a complex of facts governed by laws as constant as physical laws, they try to make any philosophical principle disappear from their observation, any more egocentric understanding of social phenomena; their policy, based on this data of pure observation, must necessarily be a policy of simple organization. That is to say, without seeing any religious or philosophical purpose in men, only to establish norms of organization so that they are better adapted to a given social life (p. 39, our translation).

Faced with the challenges posed by industrial capitalism and the rise of the masses to politics in the 20th century, San Tiago thought that societies were at a decisive moment in those years when they would have to choose between deepening the consequences of the materialist model or promoting social re-foundation based on the Catholic vision of man. Communism or a spiritual renaissance were the two options to which the world was necessarily heading at the beginning of the 1930s.

Starting from this apocalyptic vision of politics, the question that arose for San Tiago at that time was how to make the reconstitution of the Christian social order viable in the modern world, since he understood that it was not possible to bet only on a spiritual revolution based on inner transformation. The Italian fascist model appeared to San Tiago, especially from 1931 onwards, as the most suitable political form available for carrying out Catholic work in the modern world and combating the advance of communism.

San Tiago Dantas' openness to fascism demonstrates an important change that took place among Catholics in the West at the beginning of the 1930s. After the Crisis of 1929, Italian fascism was emerging in the world as a successful model for implementing an authoritarian and corporative state capable of replacing the decaying liberal model and offering resistance to communism (PASETTI, 2016). In addition, the Conciliazione that took place between 1929 and 1931 between the Mussolini regime and the Catholic Church, led by Pius XI, had a profound impact on the global opinion of Catholics about fascism. In this sense, for many Catholics, "*Fascism needed to be understood not as an ideology or a theory, but as a concrete experience that had officially recognized the Catholic religion and given rise to a 'Catholic State'*" (MORO, 2015, p. 79, our translation).

In Brazil, the outbreak of the 1930 Revolution also helped to radicalize Catholics. In the political struggles to reformulate the state and institutions that marked the post-revolutionary period, the Church and lay Catholic intellectuals took up the defense of their own program. At this time, the ideals of fascism and corporatism circulated widely among Catholic publications and inspired many of them to take sympathetic political positions or even to publicly support radical options, such as the Revolutionary Legions (FLYNN, 1979) and, later, the AIB. As Cassimiro points out, "the political language of fascism offered an important part of the authoritarian nationalists in Brazil what their diagnosis of the spiritual and political crisis of the modern world demanded as a form of political mobilization" (2018, p. 150, our translation).

But even among Catholics, adherence to fascism was not a peaceful point. In the early 1930s, Alceu Amoroso Lima expressed the view that, although the Fascist revolution had saved Italy (LIMA, 1931, p. 69), the "absolute predominance" of the state in the Fascist regime and its tendency to subjugate the Catholic Church were very worrying points. For him, "both Italian fascism (in part) and German Hitlerism have a distinctly socializing, statist and anti-individualist character" (LIMA, 1931, p. 67, our translation), thus approaching communism in some respects.

In the article "*A extinção do legalismo*" (The extinction of legalism), which marked San Tiago Dantas' adherence to the project of organizing the Revolutionary Legions, the author defended the need for national unity around a program capable of giving meaning to the revolutionary government. For him, the 1930 Revolution had been the consequence of the split between the elites and the masses, between the government and the Brazilian people, caused by the inadequacy of the republican and liberal regime of 1891. Despite his ideological vagueness, his reading was that the Revolution had precipitated a moment of great decision in the country, and there was no longer any possibility of returning to the previous regime (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 32). In the text, San Tiago lamented the fact that fascism continued to be "masked for Brazilian opinion by the cloak thrown over it by its detractors - of terrorism and individual violence", and defended the need for society to unite in order to defend spiritualist ideals and the notion of national community against the materialism of capitalism and communism: "In the modern world, revolutions that have barely been won are huge concessions to communism" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 30, our translation).

At the beginning of 1931, San Tiago published the article "*Catolicismo e fascismo*" (Catholicism and fascism) in the Catholic magazine *A Ordem*, in which he examined the relationship between the Church's program and the fascist model. In this important article, the

author dialogued with Alceu Amoroso Lima, who had recently criticized fascism for its identification with socialist collectivism. San Tiago disagreed with Alceu's view that fascism was similar to communism. Although they were both anti-individualist doctrines that preached the need for a strong state, the author considered that private initiative would continue to be the engine of society in a fascist regime, so that the state would only intervene to ensure that social forces worked in harmony according to the national interest. Thus, "what the [fascist] state called upon, in addition to this coordinating power, was nothing more than the services of public order, of public interest, which the liberal organization abandoned to private initiative" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 57, our translation).

San Tiago also developed, for the first time, arguments to justify why the Fascist state was the model of modern state that best suited the aims of Catholic thought. For him, the "law of class coexistence" assumed by the Italian regime (embodied in the *Carta del Lavoro* and the other mechanisms for the corporate organization of society and political representation) corresponded to the corporatist conception of Christian social doctrine expressed since the *Encyclical Rerum Novarum* (consisting of the defence of the existence of a multiplicity of classes and the promotion of social justice between them). In this way, Dantas thought that fascism was the political and social system that existed at that time that came closest to this central objective of the Catholic vision.

Anyone who is familiar with the political and economic structure of the corporative state, the legal discipline of collective labor relations, the articulated union organism, whose root ends plunge into the smallest centers of life in the country, will certainly recognize in this political apparatus everything that Christian sociologists have called for in society. [...] Taking labor relations out of the realm of natural struggle in which liberalism had left them, and where capitalism and communism had successively dominated them, to treat them in the legal realm, condemning all violence, establishing judicial means of settling labor disputes, it can well be said that fascism did the Christian work (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 58-59, our translation).

For San Tiago, however, there was one point where fascism and Catholicism did not coincide. While the purpose of Catholicism was man and the development of his personality, the purpose of fascism was the nation. The question, therefore, was to investigate whether "fascist national finalism" clashed with "Christian supernatural finalism".

San Tiago argued that Christian principles were wounded by the ultranationalism of the German philosopher Johan Fichte (in *Discourses to the German Nation*), whose social philosophy derived from the absolute principle of the racial and moral superiority of the German people. In this case, this ultranationalism "explains man by the nation, [...] shifting the core of

social life from man to the state" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 60, our translation). On the other hand, he thought that the nationalism of Italian fascism was not only compatible with Christian finalism, but also constituted the mechanism that would allow for the human perfection defended by the Church in the modern world: "The nation is here itself the historical product that has acquired personality and with it the right to expansion and life. Individuals belong to it, in the sense that they are economic and political units of a great body that exceeds them" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 60, our translation).

Even though its purpose was the nation, San Tiago understood that fascism contributed to the Christian purpose, leading to the spiritual improvement of man, when it instituted, for example, laws of ethical restrictions on private property, mechanisms of social justice or institutes for the re-education of its citizens, such as the *balila* and the *dopo lavoro*.

Thus, San Tiago concluded that, although fascism did not have a Christian moral background, it was the "most Christian of modern political systems" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 61, our translation). The author argued that Christians should integrate fascism and work to incorporate into fascist doctrine and practice Christian elements capable of going beyond its purely national aims. For him, the alliance between Catholics and fascists was mutually advantageous:

Just a few days ago, Mussolini, speaking to the Chamber of Deputies about the world economic crisis, gave the problems their true colors, and showed the impotence of the "Fascio" itself to solve it. A crisis like this would be settled in history if we moved from the economy of production to which liberalism has led us to an economy of consumption, which would naturally lead to the right price and readjust the world's productive forces. But such a reform could only begin morally. And that's where fascism stops. That's also where Christianity could begin, in order to continue (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 61, our translation).

In the Manifesto of the Fluminense Revolutionary Legion, written by Lourival Fontes and San Tiago Dantas and released in April 1931, the authors pointed to the divorce between "the popular masses and the leaders" as the cause of the 1st Republic's crisis. Among the various measures listed, they proposed the adoption of a nationalist system of government in which there would be corporate representation of the classes and a legislature made up of technicians, who would replace empiricism in the drafting of laws with "prior consultation with scholars and specialized councils, so that the legal rule adapts to reality, avoiding the absurdity of pretending that reality conforms to the legal rule" (Manifesto da Legião de Outubro Fluminense, 1982, p. 129, our translation).

In several articles in *A Razão*, a São Paulo periodical directed by Plínio Salgado, San Tiago also dedicated himself to analyzing the fascist state and corporatism in relation to the other state and societal options available: liberalism and communism. By allowing the organization of groups and classes into competing parties and instituting universal suffrage, liberalism would, for the author, promote conflict and factionalism within society. The alternation of groups in power would be detrimental to a policy that continuously pursued the interests of the nation (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 97-98). In this way, liberalism would be "no more than a doctrine of minimal authority", in which those who were stronger would be able to make their interests prevail over those of the weaker. Its refusal to direct economic forces towards national and general interests would lead to increased exploitation of man by man and a decline in civilization (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 208). By defending the expansion of freedoms, without considering the national interests above those of the parties, the Liberal State, by its very nature, would allow communism to take hold in society

For San Tiago, the emergence of the working classes was an inexorable fact of modern societies and the state could not remain neutral in the face of the fact that industrial development was creating, "day by day, a situation of inequality in the enjoyment of the benefits of technology" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 200, our translation). He thought that the communist movement had succeeded in understanding the new configurations of the modern world and in establishing a program of its own that was much more attractive to the masses than "the absenteeism of the liberal state". But although communism recognized the existence and importance of social classes, San Tiago considered the idea - derived from the "dualistic sense of Marxist dialectics" - of seeking to achieve a classless society without a sense of nationhood to be erroneous. While the liberal state subjected the whole to individuals, communism "intends to express society in the state, dispensing with nationality", "aiming to operate the transition from proletarian dictatorship to Marxist socialism" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 207, our translation).

Against the absenteeism of the liberal state in relation to values and morals, against its weakness in directing the interests of the nation and coordinating the classes, San Tiago defended the superiority of the fascist state, which at that juncture he considered to be "the only great barrier against communism" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 91, our translation). For him, the fascist state was:

the one that can exert its action in the widest possible orbit. It is the one that disciplines and guides the living forces of the nation. It is the one that can

exercise secure control over relations between Capital and Labor. It is what is supported by an expressive policy of great class conciliation. It is what is expressed through the material and moral energy of the nation (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 285-286, our translation).

Against the materialism and abandonment of the spiritual sources of life that both liberalism and communism professed, Dantas believed that the state should be "open to all popular activities" and take care of the "moral and religious life of the nationality" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 188, our translation). The state should be constituted as an entity above social classes and divisions, acting to mitigate inequalities between social classes and coordinating its activities according to a clear objective: "the conformation of organic society to the functions proper to each group, so that this society can be the instrument not of man's misery and satisfaction, but of his greatness and virtue" (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 387, our translation). For this reason, the ultimate aim of the fascist state was nationalism: "Social-nationalism wants to concretize nationality in the state, which in turn will condition society" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 207, our translation).

With regard to political representation in the modern state, San Tiago postulated the adoption of a political system that was not based on the abstract idea of the citizen, but which took into account men's ties to their class and family.

When someone votes, that is, when they exercise their political rights, they do not do so in the unrealizable incarnation of a citizen, but as a professional who wants to protect the interests of their class and as a member of a family, reflecting its moral designs. (...) Now, anyone who thinks that it is the classes and families that are responsible for public government, because it is within these natural associations that men live and act, cannot have the same ideal concept of representation as a democrat. With it, he will want to make the state weigh down the unitary complex of interests, ideals, principles and traditions that make up the nation as a whole (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 181-182, our translation).

In this sense, one of the most important characteristics of the fascist model was its "political realism" in place of liberal abstractions, which meant "a total inversion of the concept of the state" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 274, our translation). For him, fascism represented "the language of the clearest and most advanced political realism, postulating the need for state intervention in labor relations, and creating attributes for the protection and coordination of productive forces" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 274, our translation).

Like socialism, fascism was for the author profoundly anti-individualist and collectivist. However, one of the main differences between them, apart from nationalism and the organic conception of society, was the maintenance of property and private economic activities.

Liberalism had freed economic agents from any control, forging an anarchic production economy that generated crises such as that of 1929. Fascism was supposed to generate a consumer economy, "which would naturally lead to the right price and readjust the world's productive forces" (DANTAS, [1931] 2016, p. 61, our translation).

Catholicism and Integralism (1933-1937)

In the mid-1930s, the attraction of fascism was at its peak around the world, fomenting the organization of various movements and regimes in several countries (BAUERKÄMPER; ROSSOLINSKI, 2017; LARSEN, 2001). Many Catholics, in turn, further radicalized their positions, aligning themselves with the fascist camp:

The Nazi seizure of power in Germany in 1933 and the election of the Popular Front government in France in 1936 as well as the Spanish Civil War which began in the summer of the same year were all developments that, in very different ways, contributed to a more militant mood among Catholics (CONWAY, 1997, p. 6).

In Brazil, the networks of sociability formed in the early years of the 1930 Revolution among intellectuals inspired by fascism contributed to the emergence of the largest fascist movement outside Europe, the Brazilian Integralist Action, under the leadership of Plínio Salgado (GONÇALVES; CALDEIRA NETO, 2022; BERTONHA, 2020; ARAÚJO, 1987; TRINDADE, 1979). In the years of the party's existence (1932-1937), many Catholics, including vitalists such as Hamilton Nogueira, Jônatas Serrano and San Tiago Dantas, joined Integralism or expressed a sympathetic position towards it, such as Alceu Amoroso Lima⁶. Among the integralists, "almost all were Catholics. If not a Catholic movement, it was a movement of Catholics" (MOURA, 1978, p. 98, our translation).⁷

⁶ In articles published in *A Ordem* in 1934 and 1935, Alceu argued that "laypeople can perfectly well participate in the Integralist movement, even more so than in any other party", since the AIB was "the political organization that most explicitly and peremptorily, in its recent 'directives', accepted all the points of our program" (LIMA, 1934, p. 413, our translation). On Alceu's relationship with Integralism, see, for example, Silva (2022) and Cordeiro (2008).

⁷ As Marilena Chauí (1978, p. 76, our translation) points out, "However, it must be remembered that the AIB's relations with the Church were always complicated and not always peaceful, with the Chief needing to prove his orthodoxy at every turn and appeal to the testimony of integralist ecclesiastics. The ambiguity of Tristão de Athayde, with whom an endless polemic would be waged, the attacks of D. João Becker, Archbishop of Porto Alegre, together with the lack of religious fervor of Gustavo Barroso and the reservations of Miguel Reale, make it problematic to admit the religious position of the members of the AIB as the source of the anti-communist position".

In April 1933, San Tiago, Augusto Schmidt and the Cajuanos, with the exception of Octávio de Faria and Almir de Andrade, joined the AIB, forming the integralist nucleus of the Federal District. San Tiago took on the role of Provincial Secretary of Doctrine and ran for councilor in Rio de Janeiro in October 1934 for the party but was not elected. Between 1933 and 1937, he disseminated the movement's ideas and doctrine through articles in integralist and nationalist periodicals and by holding conferences in various centers. In 1936, with the reorganization of the party's national structure into ten National Secretariats, San Tiago became National Press Secretary and director of the magazine *A Offensiva*, the AIB's main publication.

When San Tiago joined the AIB in 1933, his diagnosis was that the 1930 Revolution and the anticipated constituent process that had already been set in motion had not been able to break with the vices and flaws of the First Republic. In the texts he wrote after becoming a member, especially in the articles on the doctrine and practice of Integralism published from 1934⁸ onwards, San Tiago did not even differentiate between the years before and after the 1930 Revolution, placing them under the single label of the Republic. For him, the 1930 Revolution was merely an "illusory political adventure to purify the regime" (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 394).

Unlike the existing parties, the AIB embodied, in the author's view, the modern conceptions of parties that had been experimented with in Europe and which were more suited to the contemporary world. For San Tiago, Integralism had a policy, in other words, "a system of social construction to be carried out", expressed in its doctrinal lines, from which its administrative acts would derive. In Brazil, the only existing political movement similar to Integralism was communism: "Only it has, like us, a policy" (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 385). Brazil, like the whole world, was "in an hour of historical deliberation" (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 373) and between communism and Integralism the "final dialog" would soon be held (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 385):

Integralism is already the winning force against the bourgeoisie. [...] The rest of us, who today number in the hundreds of thousands throughout Brazil, are in the party of blood. Our real enemy is communism. [...] But we are already victorious against it. Because they fight in the name of voluptuousness and

⁸ Although he did not write books like Plínio Salgado and Miguel Reale, Dantas' texts published in periodicals of the time seem to have been relevant within the movement, and were recovered in the 1950s as important texts for the composition of the Encyclopedia of Integralism: "The most representative names from the beginnings of the movement, Plínio Salgado, Gustavo Barroso, Miguel Reale, San Tiago Dantas and Lauro Escorel contributed decisively to the construction of the integralist interpretation of the Integral State. No wonder the texts selected in the Encyclopedia for this theme are theirs" (CHRISTOFOLETTI, 2010, p. 135, our translation).

hatred. We, in the name of sacrifice and justice (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 388, our translation).

As early as 1931, in "Catolicismo e Fascismo" (Catholicism and Fascism), San Tiago had established that the fascist state was the only one capable of carrying out Catholic work in the modern world. Now a supporter of the AIB, the author asserted that a "more active spiritual reaction than a simple individual change of ideas" would be necessary and that the integralist party would be the instrument capable of implementing it in Brazilian society.

Integralism brought to life the great revolution that was brewing in the scattered peoples of the homeland. Integralism understood that the spiritual forces of the nation wanted to give themselves totally to the work of our temporal salvation. These forces have been stirring for years. The Liberal Alliance was a mystification of their desires (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 374, our translation).

From 1934 onwards, he began to more explicitly defend the one-party form as a replacement for liberal parliamentarianism. For him, the political parties should be replaced by a single party which, instead of instituting ideological struggle in the system, would work to represent the general interests of the nationality. The author understood that, in the liberal parliamentary and multi-party regime, the parties differed only in the concrete solutions they offered to problems, but did not differ significantly in the ideas they defended, so that "parliamentary partisanship became the negation of partisanship itself" (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 370, our translation).

The modern Party, on the other hand, would base its government on a pre-government doctrine, which did not contain concrete formulas for administration, but "the principles within which the Party conceives public life, and outside of which no practical solution can in its view be founded" (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 370, our translation). Thus,

there is a gender opposition, as we can see, between Integralism and the Parties. They differ in the immediate measures they promise. Integralism does not promise any measures, it does not announce administrative programs. Its administration will be the concrete execution of the policy it establishes in doctrine. It will not be premeditated, but elaborated by the experience of government, with the knowledge and deliberate choice of directions (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 385, our translation).

The failure of the "preconceived regimes" was also revealed in the rise, in the new times, of a new type of public man: the hero. In his view, there was no point in virtuous political leaders if they did not know how to lead the forces of the nation towards the same goal and, more importantly, there was no point in conceiving virtuous regimes if there was no leader

capable of channeling the energies of society to make them work. Heroism was the "vitality of the present world". In the era of mass politics, only the hero was capable of leading society towards the "creation of new values for existence" that the modern world demanded; only he could lead the task of "rejuvenating the world":

Mussolini, like Stalin and Hitler, are regime founders, there's no doubt about that. But which regimes? Those that will be realized, in a visible theoretical direction, through their actions and their thoughts. The hero is the immediate object of our political passion. And behind him, through him, the regime of his advent (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 376, our translation).

Another element that had proved important for modern politics, and which Integralism incorporated, was social mobilization as a way of providing the "psychic energy of the revolution". For him, the "true revolution does not cease", it always needs an element to drive it forward. In Integralism, this force would be the militia, made up of the most conscious and active elements of society, in other words, the vanguard of the Integralist revolution, which would guarantee the impetus for the transformation of the state and society.⁹

In speeches and articles, San Tiago called on Brazilians - especially young people, Catholics and the military - to join the integralist "legions". The author called on "men between 20 and 30 years old", those who "in wars sign up first as volunteers, those who in the rallies of all times have always attacked first" to guide Brazilians in the transformation of politics, "to motivate the conduct of those who will come after", in short, to constitute the vanguard of the Integralist Revolution (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 373-4, our translation).

San Tiago reminded Catholics that even the Pope recommended that spiritualists unite to influence and guide secular institutions, and that in Brazil, Catholic Action and the Catholic Electoral League corresponded to this Vatican directive. For him, Catholicism and Integralism were not identical doctrines, with Integralism being an "eminently temporal doctrine" suited to "present social life", but both coincided in their defense of the same values.

I therefore believe it is the duty of Catholics, not dictated by the limits of principles, but by the knowledge of the historical moment we are going through, to join the integralist movement, influencing its tendencies and its morphology, instead of assuming a timeless attitude contrary to the interests of man's social salvation (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 399, our translation).

⁹ This mobilizing perspective is one of the main points that differentiates fascist and integralist thinking from demobilizing bureaucratic authoritarianism (of authors such as Oliveira Vianna and Azevedo Amaral) and traditionalist conservatism (à la Jackson de Figueiredo).

For San Tiago, the general guideline of integralist ethics and politics was the construction of an organic society, promoted by the Integral State. He argued that, according to the materialist conception of life, society was merely an arithmetical collection of men, so that at the same time as we were witnessing the material splendor of bourgeois society, we could observe the degradation of all the intermediate societal forms necessary for human fulfillment: the state was nothing more than a weak and arbitrary administrative body; the trade union had become an instrument of disorder and class struggle; the family had been reduced to a legal fiction to regulate the regime of property. On the contrary, the organic society, the society of the integralist doctrine

can be roughly defined as a system of groups or forms necessary for human life. Of these groups we highlight, by the permanence of their nature, the Family, the State, the Church; by the necessity with which a certain historical period presents itself, the Corporation, the Trade Union (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 387, our translation).

The Integral State would concentrate authority and exercise it in order to promote social harmony, fostering a spiritualist attitude opposed to bourgeois and communist materialism. And so the Integral State would be the one best suited to Catholic aspirations.

San Tiago considered the identification made by many at the time between fascism and the bourgeoisie to be erroneous. This error derived, in his opinion, from the false conception of class struggle, which did not recognize the possibility of cooperation between them (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 387). In the moral field, fascism and Integralism were even anti-bourgeois, as they defended Christian morality, whose centrality was in the spiritual improvement of the individual, to the detriment of bourgeois utilitarian values. While bourgeois society projected itself in an incessant and thoughtless movement forward and towards progress, Integralism proposed what the author called the "heroism of the return":

What is eternal about the ephemeral face of the integralist movement is its orientation towards the purity of man. Returning to the simplicity of customs, breaking with the taste for luxury, dreaming of the rustic society of the founders of nations, seems to me the ideal that best reveals the fundamental category of integralist thought. Where the bourgeois put pacifism, the integralist puts violence, not as a revolutionary weapon, but as an authentic gesture, as a genuine reaction of the human character. All the political theory that the masses do not feel is being elaborated in the party's organs of thought is, in my opinion, nothing more than a search for purity and the conditions for its preservation. Which regime keeps human life faithful to its truth? Which institutions prevent the intimate and social breakdown of man? How can we maintain the austerity necessary for the dignity of life? These are the questions posed to the bourgeois by the young men who have renounced giving their

energy to a true so-called practical life in order to give their energy to a true Revolution (DANTAS, [1934] 2016, p. 381, our translation).

Moving away from Fascism and Integralism (1938-1945)

Catholic circles began to question their perception of fascism(s) more strongly from the second half of the 1930s. In Italy, friction between Fascism and the Holy See increased as the regime deepened its totalitarian character and drew ever closer to German Nazism. At the end of 1938, Pius XI criticized the alliance with Hitlerism and the enactment of racist and anti-Semitic laws in Italy. For their part, more and more Catholic intellectuals joined the anti-fascist voices, such as Jacques Maritain, who condemned the totalitarian essence of fascism in his influential 1936 book "Integral Humanism". Similarly, in Brazil, several Catholic clerics and intellectuals sought to distance themselves from Integralism and the fascist camp in the last quarter of the 1930s. Alceu Amoroso Lima took a more open and progressive stance that would lead to the post-war defense of the doctrine of Christian democracy, thus following the political-ideological evolution of the French author.¹⁰

The Estado Novo (1937-1945) was organized as an authoritarian state inspired by corporatism, which, although it resembled the fascist state in many aspects, differed in others. It did not adopt the single party or the strategy of permanent mobilization characteristic of European fascist regimes and defended in Brazil by the AIB (PINTO, 2020). With the extinction of the integralist party in 1937, especially in Rio de Janeiro, the former militants and leaders split into two main wings. Those who wanted to continue integralist ideas formed cultural associations in the coming years, such as the Cruzada Juvenil da Boa Imprensa and the Apollo Sport Club, and with re-democratization in 1946, they reorganized politically into the *Partido de Representação Popular* (Popular Representation Party) (GONÇALVES, 2018; CALIL, 2001). The other group were the so-called "assimilados"¹¹ (assimilated), a wing of the movement led by San Tiago Dantas, Miguel Reale and Hélio Vianna, who became part of the ranks of the Estado Novo, incorporating themselves to a greater or lesser degree into the

¹⁰ On the ideological trajectory of Jacques Maritain, see Souza (2022). On the ideological trajectory of Alceu Amoroso Lima, see Souza (2021), Cordeiro (2008) and Rodrigues (2006).

¹¹ The assimilated integralists "are those who joined the Estado Novo, participated in its policies and, in the case of public figures, their main function was to work with the movement's base, discrediting the doctrine (not its values) as a project for society. They are the ones who reject any possibility of integralism returning to the public scene, as they consider it to be outdated. [...] even with the return of integralism under the PRP label, they remain unyielding in their position. Although they produced few records in this sense, there is no doubt that they made up a considerable number" (MIRANDA, 2009, p. 228, our translation).

authoritarian and corporatist projects of the Vargas regime, especially in the educational and cultural fields (MIRANDA, 2009; GUIMARÃES, 1999).

Until 1937, San Tiago Dantas publicly defended integralist ideals, although there is evidence that, from at least 1935, he stopped believing that the movement and its leader constituted the vanguard capable of carrying out an authentic Brazilian revolution, based on the methods of fascist experiments¹². Despite this, San Tiago and the other *cajuanos* remained loyal to Plínio Salgado. At Salgado's request, San Tiago and Miguel Reale analyzed the Constitution drafted by Francisco Campos before the November coup (DUTRA, 2014, p. 352). San Tiago was one of those responsible for the attempt to transform the party into a cultural society, the Brazilian Cultural Association (ABC), in December 1937. He did not take part in the May 1938 uprising, but fled Rio de Janeiro to avoid arrest (TRINDADE, 2016, p. 281). At that point, he left the group for good.¹³

After this period of political activism (1929-1937), San Tiago dedicated himself to his legal career, accumulating three professorships: Institutions of Civil and Commercial Law at the then Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences (1939); Roman Law at the Pontifical Catholic University (1941); and Civil Law at the National Faculty of Law at the University of Brazil (1940). Despite his disagreements with the Estado Novo, he joined the educational project adopted by the Minister of Education, Gustavo Capanema, with strong ties to the Dom Vital Center and Catholic conceptions of education (GRECCO, 2015; SCHWARTZMAN, 1985), assuming strategic positions in it. Due to his strong ties with Alceu Amoroso Lima, San Tiago was chosen by Capanema to be the director of the National Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Brazil¹⁴, position he held between 1941 and 1945.

¹² In correspondence with his comrades, Dantas revealed his constant displeasure with the direction taken by the movement and expressed his desire to give the AIB "purity and purpose" and to "lead the movement without being its head" (DUTRA, 2014, p. 313-4). Since at least the end of 1935, they had expressed discontent with the party's direction. In a letter to Dantas, Chermont de Miranda lamented "the lack of agitation, this absence of aggression against any order other than our own" that seemed to be taking hold of the movement (DUTRA, 2014, p. 316, our translation).

¹³ According to Afonso Arinos, at that moment, "San Tiago began not to feel comfortable within Integralism. I remember a lot of the confidences he made to me about this, after the frustrated assault on the Guanabara Palace in May 1938. That spectacle of ineffectual coup-plotting, very much along South American lines, filled the young man who was used to reading Rocco, Mussolini and other intellectuals of fascism with disgust and boredom. His departure from the movement was inevitable" (FRANCO, 2001, p. XIV, our translation).

¹⁴ "Finally, the Church contributed to the ideological selection of ministerial officials and professors, particularly those at the University of Brazil (today the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). In addition to the profusion of vetoes and indications of names that appear in the correspondence between Alceu Amoroso Lima and Capanema (and many more, surely, that do not appear), there was a direct influence of the Church in the closure of the University of the Federal District, created by Anísio Teixeira and later handed over, for a brief period, to the direction of Amoroso Lima. The National Faculty of Philosophy, organized afterwards, was also destined for Amoroso Lima, who ended up not taking up the post, leaving it to San Tiago Dantas, a prominent figure in the integralist movement of the 30s. The ideological selection of professors at the National Faculty of Philosophy was

From 1939 onwards, the unfolding of World War II was directly reflected in the Brazilian public debate, and the opposition between fascism and anti-fascism was reproduced internally. After a period of uncertainty, Vargas decided to support the Allies, declaring war on the Axis on 22 August 1942. If, on the one hand, the government exploited the feeling of national unity in the fight against the external enemy, Brazil's entry into the war also led internally to the loss of support for authoritarianism (dominant during the 1930s) and the strengthening of support for democratic and liberal values¹⁵. The war also reinforced in Brazil the tendency towards economic planning and state intervention with a view to industrialization, a tendency that would become hegemonic during the Republic of 1946 in the form of developmentalism (BIELSCHOWSKY, 2004) and would be expressed even within the Catholic camp (GODOY, 2020a; 2020b).

Between 1938 and 1945, San Tiago changed his position on fascism, especially after Brazil entered the world conflict. In his speech "The Encyclical 'Rerum Novarum'", delivered in 1941, on the 50th anniversary of the papal text, we can see that the author was moving further and further away from the fascist political model. For San Tiago, the spirit that emanated from the Encyclical of 1891 was among the most valuable assets to be preserved in the new order that would emerge from the war.

According to the author, the encyclical's importance lay in the fact that it had provided a vision of the modern world capable of containing the most powerful movement of "historical subversion", the socialist movement at the end of the 19th century. Despite its apparent invincibility, the social revolution had receded in all parts of the West in the first decades of the 20th century, and it was *Rerum Novarum* that had first and most wisely indicated the new paths that law and the state should follow in order to adapt to the social configurations of the modern world. It contained the ideals of coexistence and collaboration between classes, the role of the state as arbiter of classes and protector of social harmony, distributive justice, the principle of hierarchy against the egalitarian ideas of socialism, state interventionism against the liberal dogma of state absenteeism. For him, however, the most important principle enshrined in the charter was the defense of property and "the restoration of this institute to its natural foundation and human purposes" (DANTAS, [1941] 2016, p. 462, our translation).

made mainly for subjects with a social and philosophical content, but was also present in the choice of French professors invited to Rio, along the lines of the São Paulo experience of 1934" (SCHWARTZMAN, 1985, our translation).

¹⁵ Ao longo de 1943-1945, diversos intelectuais e atores políticos lançaram manifestos pelo fim da ditadura varguista, como o Congresso de Escritores e o Manifesto dos Mineiros, além de organizarem a União Democrática Nacional.

At this point, San Tiago argued that modern philosophical and political systems, including fascism, had ended up dehumanizing politics by presupposing, on the one hand, the high plasticity of the masses to absorb major reforms and, on the other, the continuous heroism of leaders. To the dehumanization of the modern spirit, San Tiago proposed a profound Christian humanism. Only it would be able to indicate the direction to take at that moment of immense uncertainty and destruction. In this sense, *Rerum Novarum* was still a sure compass and its legacy had to be defended. "And that is where its guiding spirit shines through, launching viable reforms and through them achieving the substantial transformation of institutions" (DANTAS, [1941] 2016, p. 465, our translation).

We can see, therefore, that during the war, San Tiago once again emphasized the idea from the beginning of his activism, that politics should serve the development of man's personality. Fascism, which until recently had been the "most Christian of political systems", was gradually losing this status for the author.

During the war, one of the main issues that featured prominently in the national public debate was the situation of the former members of Integralism in the face of the country's participation in the world conflict. For many, the former Integralists were representatives of the international movement that Brazil was fighting, so their reintegration into the public sphere was highly questioned during the period. The disputes surrounding the figure of San Tiago Dantas and his position in the debates unleashed at that time are exemplary of the political-ideological conversion processes of ex-integralists.

Only in the second half of 1942 did San Tiago explicitly break with the fascist camp. In an interview with *Diário de Notícias* in October 1942, part of an inquiry promoted by the newspaper with former Integralists to discuss the problem of Integralism in the face of the war against the fascist countries, San Tiago declared "the irremediable bankruptcy of the right in the modern world" and the duty to abandon any ideological commitment to it.

In the text, he argued that the right-wing movements had originally been driven by resistance to the class struggle and internationalism defended by the left, proposing instead the doctrine of class balance (implemented through a corporatist structure) and nationalism (which affirmed the need for institutions to reflect the peculiarities of each people). In this first phase, the Italian Fascist regime was the predominant political model.

However, with Hitler's arrival in power and the consolidation of the Nazi regime, it "soon became the most creative and the most typical of the right-wing regimes" (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 487), profoundly transforming the movement. In the first place, Hitlerism would

have implemented state socialism, constituting "a bureaucratic apparatus that curtails private initiative and public freedoms like that which has now become characteristic of totalitarian nations", which ended up denying the corporative ideal of offering a "corrective to the omnipotence of the state and a guarantee for social justice" (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 487, our translation).

Secondly, it would have built the regime around its racist philosophy, "whose influence would be felt in Europe's Germanic minorities, contaminating the primitive nationalist sense of fascism with a new element - German expansionism" (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 488, our translation). The German Nazi party had become the vanguard of a "super-national fascist movement", turning all right-wing parties into its satellites.

For the author, these two mutations that occurred with the rise of Hitlerism - state socialism and internationalism - would have brought the fascist movement closer to Soviet communism: "the struggle of the right and the left had an unforeseen evolution, because between the regimes and politics of Russia and Germany, close affinities emerged, both of an economic and social nature" (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 485, our translation).

Designating true nationalism as a virtue, such as love of country and independence (understood as sovereignty), San Tiago sought to rehabilitate the term so associated with fascism for the new world moment. The author argued that Integralism had been formed in Brazil as an expression of the political ideal of the nationalist and corporatist right, between 1932 and 1937, and that, despite a few intellectuals, it had not absorbed the racism of the German model. Five years after its extinction by the Estado Novo, faced with the "political experience of recent years [which] has led to a new judgment of regimes, parties and ideas" and the war (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 486), San Tiago called on his former party colleagues to reform their positions and make them public:

After 1937 and 1938, each former integralist may have readjusted their political principles to the present world, especially to the new Brazilian order, so that making known the doctrinal position of each one, verifying the extent to which moral or intellectual commitments to the right persist, is a work of public enlightenment that is very useful for our collective preparation for war and for the foundation of future peace (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 487, our translation).

In this way, Dantas declared that the duty of the former integralists, who had joined the movement because of their patriotism, "with no other objective than social justice, the preservation of the family, the spiritualist traditions of our people, and the consolidation of our independence, both economic and political" (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 490, our translation),

was to break "courageously and resolutely" with the right and join the efforts of national unity in the fight against totalitarian countries.

I understand that Integralism - whether we conceive of it as a latent party or as a right-wing ideology - cannot contribute to the Brazilian Union against Hitlerism, because the cause of the right has become a German cause in recent years, and the parties that defend it, even when they remain pure of foreign infiltration, are satellites of the future order inspired by Germanic political thought (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 491, our translation).

The war, according to Dantas, could be a "vital opportunity for the unity of a people, which may well emerge from it renewed in its energies, its ideals of life and its capacity for action" (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 490, our translation). National unity, incorporating even the communists, would therefore have to have as its fundamental principle the defense of the freedom of Brazil and the allied countries to choose and determine "according to the genius of our respective peoples, our institutions and ideas of life" (DANTAS, [1942] 2016, p. 491, our translation) that would come to prevail in the post-war period.

In 1945, Dantas definitively converted to the democratic camp and joined the voices pressing for an end to the Vargas dictatorship and for elections to be held. During the Republic of 1946, San Tiago Dantas became one of the most important Brazilian intellectuals and politicians, joining the Brazilian Labor Party in the mid-1950s. In the crisis that preceded the civil-military coup, he played his most prominent role in national politics (RIBEIRO, 2021; PETROCCHI, 2015; GOMES; FERREIRA, 2014; ONOFRE, 2012; FIGUEIREDO, 1993; SERRA, 1991).

Conclusion

The relationship between Catholicism and fascism cannot be easily defined in general terms due to the complexity of the Catholic field, made up of the Holy See, the national Churches, the clergy and the Catholic laity. This relationship involved a long and complicated history, differing in its various moments throughout the existence of fascist movements and regimes in the West in the first half of the 20th century. In this sense, the article sought to understand how San Tiago Dantas, an important lay intellectual in the Brazilian Catholic field, received fascist theses, articulated them with Catholic ideology and defended them on the national political scene.

Even before the formation of the Brazilian Integralist Action, San Tiago argued that the fascist model, put into practice in Italy since 1922, was the modern political system that would

best suit the objectives of the project of Catholic restoration in the modern world. Considering that both liberalism and communism were based on materialistic conceptions that hindered the development of the human personality, San Tiago defended the need for modern political thought and institutions to take on the spiritualism proposed by Catholic sociologists. At this point, there was a great influence of Jacques Maritain's neo-Thomist personalism on his thinking, disseminated in Brazil by Alceu Amoroso de Lima. However, his interpretation of the compatibility between fascism and Catholicism differed from that of Alceu, who saw points of conflict between the two institutions, despite being sympathetic to fascism.

For San Tiago, fascism was the only existing model capable of establishing a society centered on human improvement, as Maritain advocated. In particular, he believed that the promotion of corporatism through an authoritarian state would be able to provide an effective solution to the modern social question, overcoming bourgeois utilitarianism and communist class dictatorship. In the debates that followed the 1930 Revolution to redefine the Brazilian state and institutions, San Tiago advocated the adoption of a political system based on fascist formulas, albeit adapted to national peculiarities. This explains his militancy in consolidating the Revolutionary Legions in 1931 and his membership of the Brazilian Integralist Action between 1933 and 1937. Understanding that the modern world was experiencing a final struggle between fascist and communist models, the author advocated a political alliance between Catholics and integralists.

His assessment of fascism changed after 1938 and especially during World War II, when he took a stand against the Axis countries and began to defend the democratic model. Justifying his new positions, San Tiago argued that the hegemony exercised by Nazism over the international fascist movement in the second half of the 1930s had de-characterized the nationalism and corporatism that were at the heart of the Italian model he had previously defended. In this way, fascism, instead of enabling human improvement, had become an instrument for the annihilation of the personality, moving closer to the communist state. Between 1938 and 1945, San Tiago distanced himself from Integralism and sought to reaffirm his affiliation with Catholic principles. During this period, his positions were closer to the new democratic and progressive stance taken by Alceu Amoroso Lima, influenced by Maritain's ideas of integral humanism and Christian democracy. San Tiago's political-ideological conversion during these years allowed him to play an important role in the Catholic educational and cultural project during the Estado Novo, as well as enabling his projection as an important

intellectual and politician in the subsequent period (1946-1964), marked by the defense of developmentalism, social reform and democracy.

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