

Sobral Pinto, "The Conscience of Brazil": Leading the Attack against Vargas (1930-1945)

John W. F. Dulles



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Praised by his admirers as "one of those rare heroic figures out of Plutarch" and as "an intrepid Don Quixote," Brazilian lawyer Heráclito Fontoura Sobral Pinto (1893-1991) was the most consistently forceful opponent of dictator Getúlio Vargas. Through legal cases, activism in Catholic and lawyers' associations, newspaper polemics, and a voluminous correspondence, Sobral Pinto fought for democracy, morality, and justice, particularly for the downtrodden.

This book is the first of a projected two-volume biography of Sobral Pinto. Drawing on Sobral's vast correspondence, which was not previously available to researchers, John W. F. Dulles confirms that Sobral Pinto was a true reformer, who had no equal in demonstrating courage and vehemence when facing judges, tribunals, and men in power. He traces the leading role that Sobral played in opposing the Vargas regime from 1930 to 1945 and sheds light on the personalities and activities of powerful figures in the National Security Tribunal, the police, the censorship bureau, and the Catholic Church.

In addition to the many details that this volume adds to Brazilian history, it illuminates the character of a man who sacrificed professional advancement and emolument in the interest of fighting for justice and charity. Thus, it will be important reading not only for students of Brazilian history, but also for a wider audience dedicated to the crusade for human rights and political freedom and the reformers who carry on that struggle.

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