

EDITORS' NOTE

February of this year marked the hundredth anniversary of the death of Oswaldo Cruz, unquestionably the leading light of Brazilian science and medicine and founder of the institutional complex that today bears his name. The irony that the centennial coincided with the threat of the resurgence of yellow fever did not go unnoticed by the media, as it was precisely the disease that Oswaldo Cruz managed to bring under control in 1907 in the city of Rio de Janeiro, where it had been an endemic menace.

Although currently only detected in the wild in Brazil, the risk of an epidemic taking hold in major cities has become very real. It is a serious risk due to the proximity of the locations in which it has occurred and the abundant presence of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito in the urban environment. Due to the involvement of the vector in the transmission of three other diseases – dengue fever, zika and chikungunya – a veritable health nightmare would be unleashed if urban yellow fever were to become established. Amid many controversies, improvisations and limitations in the vector control strategy, the public authorities sought to prevent this scenario by encouraging the distribution of vaccines, which is a prophylactic resource that only became available in the medical arsenal after 1937.

In the light of the political impasse that Brazil is currently facing, in a State mired in inaction in a quest for neoliberal consensus, one harks back to the dynamic and modern campaign of Oswaldo Cruz, who effectively “defeated” the mosquito. Until today, prevails the rhetoric of a militaristic tone that refers to the mosquito as an enemy to society, with the complex dynamics that favor the re-emergence of old challenges and the persistence of others that have not yet been tackled with the same intensity.

There is no point dwelling on the similarities and the differences between the health campaign of Oswaldo Cruz and the current efforts. For now, we can stress that the conviction in the methods adopted at that time and the clarity of guidelines contrast with the dissonances that nowadays involve the media and national and international health agencies, such as the World Health Organization, such that there is currently no consensus on the number of individuals affected for example.

Regarding the other achievement of Oswaldo Cruz's work – Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz) – it is an opportune moment to recall the motivations that led the public health physician to create the institution. He designed a dynamic center for constant innovation, capable of solving public health issues, but also of broadening the frontiers of knowledge through scientific research. He hired young researchers to work in well-equipped working

conditions, set up an advanced research and production infrastructure and ensured the autonomy of the institution by offering services to the State and, to a lesser extent, the private sector. With successes and setbacks, it was in this way that it survived the vagaries of political upheavals, such as the interventions of the Vargas State and the “massacre” perpetrated during the civilian-military dictatorship.

There is no clear course that links us directly to the figure of Oswaldo Cruz. It is a question of memory to create a pacified past; genealogies that define the path that leads into the present. For history, it is necessary to problematize this past, to point out the turbulences, ruptures and contradictions, in order to show that values, projects and ideals are achievements that must be permanently updated, and not a legacy that stands in isolation. In this sense, it behooves us to reflect on the relevance of the project of institutional autonomy conceived by Oswaldo Cruz in the conception of State and of country at the dawn of this century. In this respect, the role of the public sector must be considered in encouraging scientific research, innovation and the training of new staff, as well as the safeguarding of a universal, robust and unrestricted health system, whose defense has become one of the hallmarks of this complex and multifaceted organization, which Fiocruz is today.

Twenty-three years ago, the then editor of this journal, Sergio Goes de Paula, pointed out in the first issue that the fact that “Manguinhos” featured in the title reminded us of the character of the knowledge produced in the place where the headquarters of Fiocruz is to this day. Sergio Goes de Paula also enunciated the ideal of, starting from this particular place, “to dialogue with researchers from Brazil and from all over the world, about issues that, over time, are relevant to understanding our current reality; after all, what other importance can history have?” In this perspective, the questions raised by the centenary of Oswaldo Cruz’s death are of a universal character; they are gaining momentum in a world now convulsed by wars and conflicts, by migrations of large population groups, by the neoliberal offensive and by financial capital, and by the advance of undemocratic and extreme right wing doctrines. Within the conservative, xenophobic and sexist rhetoric there has been no lack of attacks on science, such as those made by US President Donald Trump. On April 22 of this year they set in motion a movement in favor of scientific knowledge. The “Marches for Science” that took place in several countries, including Brazil, defended the role of science in the debate on climate change and sustainable development.

One hundred years ago, in a no less turbulent world engulfed in a war of hitherto unprecedented proportions, Oswaldo Cruz died in the peaceful Petrópolis. His “disciples” were struggling for broader coverage of health services, while in far-off Tsarist Russia the first steps of the revolution were being taken, which for Eric Hobsbawm would be as relevant to the “short twentieth century” as the French Revolution was to the nineteenth century. Months later, the first general strike organized by segments of anarchist inspiration took place in Brazil. A state led by the workers? Or an order without the existence of the State? Many questions were asked and many answers were bandied about. Whatever the case, those historical actors were instilled with the hope of a more prosperous future. A century later, what will the situation be? Where are the future projects capable of

replacing structures that seem to collapse before our eyes? The questions continue to arise, however the answers...

In the pages of this journal and through other vehicles of historiographical production, we hope that our readers will find in the past not a crystallized narrative of great figures, events and “milestones,” but a repository of questions, projects and ideals.

André Felipe Cândido da Silva, science editor

Marcos Cueto, science editor