

OPENING SPEECH

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Carlos Chagas, with his knowledge as a research scientist in tropical disease, as an administrator and as an emeritus professor, passed through this world like a blazing constellation, leaving in his path a pleiad of eminent disciples. Teaching in the renowned School of Manguinhos and in his chair of Tropical Medicine at the Medical School of the former University of Brazil, his admirable flares of knowledge and enthusiasm manifested themselves in gleams of light which shined in his brilliant brain.

In this Symposium the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation pays tribute to Carlos Chagas on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. Topics such as biochemistry and molecular biology, biology and ultrastructure, epidemiological studies, immunoprophylaxis and therapy, and above all the first presentation which will be given, in few moments, by Professor Carlos Chagas Filho, make clear the excellent opportunity created by a group of research scientists from FIOCRUZ and from Brazilian universities who by contributing with their competence and intelligence are leading Brazil and Latin America, in the process of controlling Chagas' disease by the end of the present century.

I will not describe the life of Carlos Chagas since those who honor us with their presence in this auditorium know perfectly well his life and his work. I will only mention that he was a great malariologist, who begun his scientific work with a thesis entitled "Hematological studies in malaria"; and who also eliminated malaria from the ports of Santos, Lassance and Rio de Janeiro. However without doubt it was the great discovery of American Trypanosomiasis which placed him at the top of biomedical research in Brazil; more than that, it had the great merit of changing a pattern of colonial science, done in an under-developed country, into a pattern of science with international quality, drawing attention and curiosity from Europe and the United States.

Director of Manguinhos, Director and reformer of Public Health, University Professor, Extraordinary Member of the National Academy of Medicine, he was deeply worried about the formation and the training of personnel, in both the areas of research and public health, setting an exemplary model for both scientists and citizens.

In his honor, the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation and the Secretary of Health of the state of Minas Gerais are taking the necessary steps to preserve, by the National Service for Historical and Artistic Heritage, the group of buildings in Lassance, which include the Railway Station and the Carlos Chagas Hospital, as a landmark of that great discovery.

I thank all of you who contributed to the success of this Symposium and I call on Professor Carlos Chagas Filho to make his presentation.