



THE INFLUENCE OF BRAZILIAN PUBLIC HEALTH OF THE 1930S ON THE STRUCTURES OF POSTWAR GLOBAL HEALTH

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Abstract

The Brazilian public health scientist Geraldo de Paula Souza (1889-1951) and the British epidemiologist Melville Mackenzie (1889-1972) had a determining influence on the structures of postwar global health. In 1930, Mackenzie was invited by de Paula Souza to visit Brazil, en route to a challenging assignment in Bolivia on behalf of the League of Nations Health Organisation, which he undertook together with the Spanish epidemiologist Marcelino Pascua Martinez (1897-1977). Mackenzie prepared himself for this important mission to Bolivia – viewed by de Paula Souza as 'the least progressive of all South American countries' – by observing the work of Clementino Fraga (1880-1971), João de Barros Barreto (1890-1956) and Carlos Chagas (1879–1934) in Rio de Janeiro, and of Waldomiro de Oliveira in São Paulo. Mackenzie's personal papers include a contemporary description of the Cooperative Yellow Fever Service, which Fraga led.

Mackenzie and Pascua had not set foot in Latin America when a New York newspaper carried a prominent article on 8 October 1929, headlined 'Concern Felt Over Ignoring the Pan-American Bureau'. The nub of the concern was that Bolivia had asked the League of Nations for help in solving a problem 'for which Pan-American machinery already had been provided'. The present paper reveals the origins of the tensions between the League of Nations and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau in the 1930s and describes how global/regional tensions re-emerged in 1946, resulting in the establishment of the World Health Organization as a regionalised body.