

New books

Sam Willner

Anne-Emanuelle Birn *Marriage of Convenience: Rockefeller International Health and Revolutionary Mexico*. University of Rochester Press, 2006. 434 pp.; ISBN 1580462227 (ppk)

In 1932 the Mexican artist Diego Rivera was invited to paint a mural for the Rockefeller Center in New York. The revolutionary artist created a work full of anti-capitalistic symbols and visions of a socialist society. The Rockefellers sought in vain to make Rivera to modify the motive. The painter was eventually dismissed and the mural was demolished.

This episode could illustrate the unlikely and sometimes stormy relationship between revolutionary Mexico and the Rockefeller Foundation, mainly in the field of public health projects. A relation that came to last for several years, dealing with public health campaigns against yellow fever and hookworm disease, founding of cooperative health units, education of public health professionals *etc.* Anne-Emanuelle Birn, associate professor at the University of Toronto, offers an interesting analysis of this interaction between the Rockefeller Foundation and Revolutionary Mexico from the 1920s to the mid-20th century in her book *Marriage of Convenience: Rockefeller International Health and Revolutionary Mexico*.

Marcos Cueto *The Value of Health: A History of the Pan American Health Organization*. University of Rochester Press, 2007. 239 pp.; ISBN 1580462634 (ppk)

Marcos Cueto, professor in the School of Public Health at the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in Lima, Peru, offers a well documented narrative regarding the origins of international public health in the American continent and the history of the Pan American Health Organization, created as “a product of the expansion of international commerce, medical advances, and a new political and diplomatic

relationship among the countries of the Americas”. The book begins by telling the history of the quarantine system and the international exchange of epidemiological information, concerning control of yellow fever and prevention of cholera and bubonic plague, and the rise of the United States as a power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The final chapter deals with “new” challenges faced in late 20th century, such as the cholera outbreak in Peru in the 1990s, the struggle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the persisting inequities in health in the region. This (and the previously reviewed) book contributes to new insights and a deeper understanding of the history of public health on the American continent in the twentieth century.