

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DOCTORS



No. 21:

This is the twenty-first feature article on physicians in various parts of the world, picturing their endeavors and their achievements. In each case the physician is interviewed by a member of MD's editorial staff.

Photography by Nancy Flowers

Dr. Mário Cardia of Lisbon

At a belvedere overlooking Lisbon, Dr. Cardia poses with the panorama of the city behind him.



May, 1969
Vol. 13, no. 5
p. 255

From its heights the sparkling city of Lisbon looks out over the broad bright waters of the Tagus, from which Vasco da Gama set out on his famous voyage of exploration. Like his countryman of nearly 500 years ago, Dr. Mário Cardia sets out regularly from Lisbon on voyages that take him halfway around the world.

Dr. Cardia's explorations are not geographic but medical, spurred by an inexhaustible spirit of inquiry into the science, practice and sociology of medicine in other lands. Surgeon, gynecologist and cancerologist, he is also his country's leading medical editor and its principal link with the professional world abroad.

Voyager. Dr. Cardia, the tireless traveler, is in the Portuguese tradition: the green and gold land edging the Atlantic is historically a nation of mariners and navigators, turning its mountainous shoulder to the Iberian peninsula and facing outward to the sea. Its 35,000 square miles are less in area than the state of Indiana, its population of some 9 million is little more than that of metropolitan London or New York, but since the Golden Age of Portuguese discoveries its interests have been worldwide.

Typically in a given month last year Dr. Cardia's international medical interests drew him to Geneva, Paris and London for the weekly journal *O Médico*, of which he is founder, director and editor. The next month he was off to Rome for a congress of UPIGO (International Professional Union of Gynecologists and Obstetricians) which he helped to organize. Four months later he flew to the United States for meetings of a new Portuguese international society (New Bedford, Mass., has the largest Portuguese population of any city outside Portugal) and touched down in Montreal and Toronto en route. A month after, as editor for Portugal of the French *Presse Médicale*, he headed eastward to Prague for a congress of this Paris-based European journal, extended his journey to visit Budapest and Bucharest.

Dr. Cardia has studied obstetrics and gynecology in 20 countries, has written and lectured at home and abroad on the problem of early detection of female genital cancer; for the fourth congress of UPIGO in Lisbon in 1959 he conducted a symposium on the social and economic aspects of this problem, with reports by colleagues from eight other European countries. He is a leading exponent in Portugal of colposcopy and colpocytology as diagnostic techniques widely practiced in Europe for cancer detection.

Recently he completed a study in five European countries of the relationship of physicians to the national health services and social security systems, on behalf of his government's ministry of health in which he holds an appointment. He has published hundreds of articles in Portuguese and foreign journals on medical and sociologic subjects: the spectrum of his interests embraces new therapies, drugs, anesthetics, the use of radioactive and ultrasound agents, surgical techniques, public health services, the problems of venereal disease, sterility, frigidity, castration, prostitution. A recent list of his books

numbered 17 titles of his own authorship and three more in collaboration with colleagues. Between traveling and writing Dr. Cardia has never found time to compile statistics in either miles or words, but the miles he has traveled number in the hundreds of thousands and the words he has written may be counted in the millions.

Beginnings. Medicine, journalism and travel were Dr. Cardia's triple inheritance from his father: Dr. Augusto Cardia Pires was a practicing physician in Oporto and health officer of its harbor at Leixões 10 kilometers away, who found time as well to publish a political magazine of royalist sympathies. The northern city of Oporto, on the mouth of the river Douro, was Mário's birthplace: it is Portugal's second city and a bustling shipping center for the export of cork, fruit and the country's renowned port wine, which has delighted Western palates for centuries.

He was one of nine children growing up in a big stone family house; as a schoolboy he was already interested in surgery and set up an operating room in the basement where his patients were stray dogs. He became a journalist at 14, editing and publishing his own magazine of articles, stories, poetry and school news which he called *A Criançada* (roughly, "Small Fry"); it was so successful that his father decided it was taking too much time from the boy's studies and put a stop to it after two years. Throughout his school and university years he worked on campus publications, found time to help with his father's magazine and at the same time made excellent grades in his studies.

He entered the university of Oporto in 1917, divided in his interests between law and medicine: the choice was made for him by the fact that Oporto had a school of medicine but no law school. He took his medical degree in 1923 with a thesis on "Humoral Reaction in Tuberculosis Patients," began his travels with postgraduate studies in Madrid under the chief of gynecology Dr. Sebastian Recesens at San Carlos Hospital. He went on to Paris, earned a diploma at the Tarnier clinic, worked at Broca Hospital and at Berck-sur-Mer; Professors Faure, Sebileau and Sorel were among his famous preceptors in surgery and pathologic anatomy. His specialty was gynecology, but tuberculosis, as his country's leading disease, remained one of his major interests.

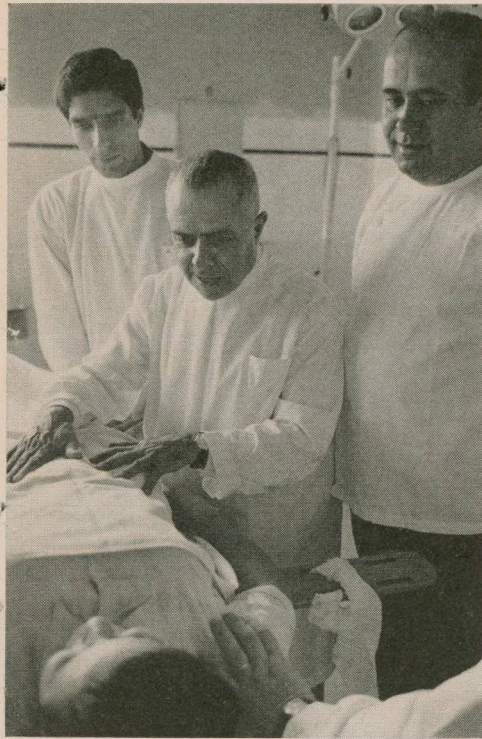
From then on the lure of lands afar was irresistible and Dr. Cardia found a way to channel his romantic wanderlust to the uses of medical learning and practice by spending part of every year studying his specialty in a succession of countries. From Spain and France he went on to England, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Austria, Italy. He crossed the Mediterranean to Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, turned back to Europe and Switzerland, crossed the Atlantic to the United States, Canada, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, turned east to Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland, Finland, the Soviet Union, to amass an unparalleled body of knowledge about medicine on four continents.

Physician. At the time of Dr. Cardia's graduation



At the Lisbon office of O Médico, which he founded, Dr. Cardia discusses editorial matters with some of his staff. At his left is his son Mário.

Each week when not traveling abroad Dr. Cardia makes the round trip between Lisbon and Oporto. At Matosinhos Charity Hospital where he is a consultant in obstetrics and gynecology, below left, he examines a patient. On the train, below, he checks the editorial content of O Médico.



One of Europe's outstanding medical journalists, Dr. Cardia in his role of reporter, below, attends a press conference announcing the convocation of the International Congress on Space and Aviation Medicine. Himself newsworthy, right, he addresses a convivial luncheon of the Lisbon Lions Club where he gave a report describing a recent enlightening as well as adventurous journey he made in South Africa.



in 1923, gynecology in Portugal, as in France and a number of other countries, had no separate standing as a specialty but was adjunct to general surgery in the medical schools and patients were assigned to the general surgical wards. His medical degree was only four years old when in 1927 he delivered a lecture titled "Modern Trends in Gynecology" to the Portuguese Medical Association, in which he traced the changing phases of gynecologic treatment, called into question the excessive recourse to surgery still prevalent at that period and pointed to other therapeutic methods that could replace the mutilative surgery then in fashion in the treatment of female genital problems.

His first appointment came in 1924 as assistant clinician at St. Antonio Hospital: this was the beginning of 37 years of service in that hospital, in the course of which he contributed to the expansion of the surgical service and to numerous advances in gastric and gynecologic surgery and anesthetic procedures, reporting on them in a number of published papers. In 1961, when the department of gynecology finally became autonomous, he was appointed its director.

At Matosinhos Charity Hospital, where he had worked as a medical student, he took first place in the physicians' examination in 1937, became clinical director the following year and later surgeon-gynecologist. He has been credited with improvements in equipment, nursing and medical services and the services of special clinics. During his 30 years of association with Matosinhos the hospital expanded from 50 to 200 beds and has a new building now in prospect; it has become one of the four leading medical centers of Portugal. On his retirement from the hospital staff in 1961 Dr. Cardia was named an honorary brother of the ancient charitable fraternity; he still calls at Matosinhos each week on his day in Oporto.

Doctor at Home. In 1965 Dr. Cardia moved his family from Oporto to Lisbon to take up his work at the ministry of health. In the rapidly growing capital, where almost every day sees another stretch of farmland being surveyed for residential development, the Cardias' live in a new apartment building overlooking fields of lush truck gardens; the only other building in view is a new tuberculosis hospital.

Residing over the household is Senhora Hilda Cardia, a slender, blue-eyed blond whose hair is now silver: she accompanies her husband on some of his trips, helps him in housewifely ways such as the decoration of his new Lisbon office. Like her husband and most educated Portuguese, she speaks fluent French.

Also like the doctor, Mrs. Cardia is Oporto-born: her mother was summering at the seaside resort nearby when she came into the world. Her family of jurists and army officers were originally landed aristocrats in northwest Spain who fled to Portugal during the turbulent feudal conflicts and are still there: her mother, Senhora Felicidade Pinto Sottomayor, now a great-grandmother past 90 who lives

with the Cardias, grew up in a château where the family has lived for 600 years. A wealthy American once offered Mrs. Cardia's uncle a large sum for the family seat, which he planned to transport and re-assemble stone by stone in the United States, but her kinsman refused. Literary men distinguish her father's family, who were friends with the Cardia family through two generations. She met her future husband as a young girl when they were frequently together in their parents' homes.

Mrs. Cardia loves the opera and the ballet, enjoys the cultural life of the capital but she misses her big house in Oporto with its garden. Her new apartment is actually two apartments thrown together to make ten rooms, bright with sunshine and flower-laden balconies. Her son and his family occupy one end; into the rest Mrs. Cardia has done her best to crowd her houseful of family heirlooms and silver, her husband's books and papers: she observes ruefully that he has two offices in Lisbon and one in Oporto but his study at home is also overflowing despite a large desk and a complete wall of bookshelves.

Four generations live here, from great-grandmother to baby Pedro Manuel, the Cardias' first grandchild. Dr. Cardia is proud of his son Mário, a philosophy student working on his doctoral thesis, and of his daughter-in-law who has a doctorate in Germanic languages and recently did the Portuguese translation of the American novel *Herzog* by Saul Bellow. She is the daughter of Dr. Armando Ducla Soares, professor of internal medicine at the university of Lisbon and one of Portugal's leading internists.

Unlike his father, who still follows the family tradition of royalist political sympathies, young Mário is a leading member of the youthful leftist opposition and on the editorial staff of a long-established socialist publication, *Seara Nova*. Mário was expelled from the university of Lisbon for his radical activities and finished his studies at Coimbra; at the age of 23 he ran for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies from a Lisbon district. Comments his father: "He is a fine political speaker." Mário shares an interest in the socioeconomic aspects of his father's work, has a part-time editorial position on the staff of *O Médico*.

Journalist. *O Médico* (The Physician) is a weekly with a circulation of 4200 to 4400, the most widely distributed medical publication in Portugal today; it has as contributors some of the country's most renowned medical men and many physicians from abroad. It has a nonmedical staff of 11, divided between Oporto, where the journal is printed, and the Lisbon office. This is a five-room suite in a new building near the Avenue of the United States, within sight of the old red-walled bullfight arena with its onion domes, surrounded by apartment houses characteristically festooned with flower-filled balconies.

Dr. Cardia founded the journal in 1950 as a fortnightly and it soon grew large enough to be pub-

In the dining room of his spacious Lisbon apartment decorated with pieces of family heirloom silver, below, Dr. Cardia chats with his son Mário, Pedro Manuel, his first grandson, and his daughter-in-law who recently translated Saul Bellow's novel, Herzog.



Adoting grandfather, Dr. Cardia carries Pedro Manuel during a stroll, left, and gratifies his grandson's curiosity about objects on the desk in his study.



Dr. and Mrs. Cardia take coffee at a cafe in Vizela, a spa in the north of Portugal, where the hot mineral baths are taken for treatment of rheumatism.



During a recent visit to the United States, Dr. Cardia is the cordial guest of MD Editor-in-chief Félix Martí-Ibáñez, M.D. at the MD offices in New York.



lished weekly. He had already had a decade of experience as cofounder and editor of the *Jornal do Médico*, which was for some years the only weekly medical journal in Portugal and exerted considerable influence in the profession. *O Médico* was originally conceived as a publication of purely medical professional purpose; it has since developed as a scientific magazine interesting to both medical and paramedical readers.

Another of the doctor's publications, *Acta Endocrinologica et Gynaecologica*, which he established in 1948, became the parent of two new journals: *Acta Endocrinologica Iberica*, later published in Spain and directed by Dr. Gregorio Marañón and Dr. Celestino da Costa, and *Acta Gynaecologica et Obstetrica Hispano-Lusitana*, of which Dr. Cardia is codirector with Professor Manuel Usandizaga. This journal, distributed domestically and also in Europe, the United States and Canada, is the only international magazine published in Portugal.

Dr. Cardia is also managing editor of the *Bulletin* of UPIGO, and director and editor of the Portuguese edition of *Europa Médica*. He serves on the scientific and editorial advisory boards of that publication and a number of others, such as *Gynecologie Pratique* in Paris, *Gaceta Médica Española* and *Domus Medici* in Madrid, *Ginecologia* in Recife. To encourage the exchange of ideas with foreign colleagues he organized the Portuguese-Swiss "Medical Days" in 1947 and Portuguese-Italian "Medical Days" in 1949, which brought together on each occasion some 200 physicians and their families. For his efforts in fostering medical interrelationships between Portugal and Spain, the Spanish government awarded him the Sanitary Order of Merit with the rank of grand officer.

On behalf of Portuguese medicine, Dr. Cardia was one of the organizers in 1940 of the *Ordém Médico*, an ethical, policy and representative organization of the profession, which formulated a draft of statutes for the government. Recently he has been making a study of hospital regulations in other countries for the ministry of health, with a view to framing new regulatory laws.

Doctor's Day. Dr. Cardia begins his day at about 7 A.M. with a breakfast of rolls and coffee, drives his Opel through the city's spacious squares and avenues streaming with rush hour traffic to reach his desk at the ministry of health, on the Avenue of the Republic, at 9 A.M. He drives home to lunch, where there may be seven or more at table: often a colleague or a foreign guest joins the family for the substantial mid-day meal. Dr. Cardia pours white and red wine with the fish and meat courses, port with the dessert which may be a pudding from Mrs. Cardia's own hand or one of the famous Portuguese pastries. Portugal produces excellent light table wines, a good beer and a very good dry white aperitif port in addition to the dessert port for which it has long been famous.

The doctor spends the afternoon working at *O*

Médico, is home again for dinner between 8 and 9 P.M. On occasion he and Mrs. Cardia entertain a guest at one of Lisbon's pleasant family restaurants, where they may enjoy the city's fine fish and seafood or its good steak.

Once a week, on Tuesdays, Dr. Cardia boards the evening train for the five hour trip to Oporto; it is a matter of pride to him that as a former physician to the railroad, he and his wife enjoy lifetime passes. In Oporto he spends the morning at Matosinhos hospital clinic, consults on cases, lunches with colleagues and sees two or three private patients before it is time to shepherd *O Médico* to press. He spends dinner and the evening with colleagues or members of the family, takes the train back to Lisbon on Thursday morning.

Energetic, resilient and rarely fatigued despite his rigorous schedule, Dr. Cardia regards his medical-journalistic travels as vacation, his investigations and reports on foreign medicine as recreation. At home, a pleasure shared with visitors from abroad is a Sunday drive through the capital, an 18th century city nearly all of which was built after the devastating earthquake of 1755. It is a city of flowers, palm trees, lush semitropical foliage and exotic birds, streets with mosaic pavements and, in the old quarter remaining on a hillside, housefronts glowing with multicolored Moorish tiles.

It is also a city of magnificent views: one of the finest, which Dr. Cardia enjoys showing his guests, is from the ancient castle of St. George which has walls dating from Roman, Visigoth and Moorish times. Below, the city lies spread like a gleaming jewel as the red-tiled roofs descend its seven hills to the silvery Tagus. The estuary, one of the world's finest harbors, is dotted with clusters of masts and colored sails, ever-present symbols of a nation of sailors and fishermen.

Over thimble-size cups of strong sweet Portuguese coffee Dr. Cardia recalls some of his observations of medicine abroad: the United States offers the highest quality of medical education; the highest general level of medicine is practiced in Britain; among the Communist countries Czechoslovakian medicine is the best. The profession there is divided about equally between men and women physicians, in contrast with the Soviet Union where about 80 percent of the physicians in practice are women.

Dr. Cardia finds that chiefs of services in the Russian hospitals are most often men, and quite elderly; he has met only one woman head of a department. He recalls a visit to one of Moscow's leading hospitals, with a capacity of 2000 beds: at the end of the day he met with the hospital's director and the chiefs of gynecology and surgery, all three of them men of 70 years or more.

Remarks Dr. Cardia: "Political fashions change. It is not fashionable in Europe at the moment to admire the United States. No matter, I am not fashionable in my opinions; I therefor persist in my admiration."

