
Dear Albert,

I was extremely surprised to receive your letter of 16th November, informing me that Dr. Martinho da Rocha had written you to the effect that Wellcome had not been able to supply Brazil with all the oral polio vaccine they wanted for continuing their immunisation campaign, either in those areas where a first dose had already been given, or for initiating a schedule in other cities.

It seems to me that Dr. Rocha is probably unaware of what happened following the abdication of President Quadros.

Without going into detail, but at the same time giving sufficient information for you to understand the situation, I can give you the following facts.

We contracted to supply Brazil with nine million doses of monovalent vaccine which they were going to blend, either at Rio de Janeiro or in Sao Paulo, to make three million doses of trivalent vaccine.

The first three million doses were dispatched to Rio some months ago, and Dr. Woodroofe went out to Brazil to show them how to make the blend. His arrival coincided with the upheaval following President Quadros’ abdication.

To enable us to import the vaccine into Brazil it was necessary for the Wellcome Organisation to deposit, in cash, with the Brazilian Government, approximately twice the actual purchase value of the vaccines that we were to supply. This was forced upon us as the Brazilian Authorities insisted that our Brazilian Company should go
through the same procedure for importing the vaccine as they would for any other commodity required for sale by them in the ordinary course of business. This involves the purchase of exchange of an equivalent amount to the sterling value of the invoice, plus the purchase of an import letter at a cost of 90% of the sterling value of the invoice. You will see, therefore, that we had not only to supply the vaccine but in addition, nearly twice the amount of money required for its importation. In return, once the hullabaloo had died down, following Quadros' abdication, and this took some time, we received payment in cruzeiros for the supply of the vaccine. We are, however, still left with a deposit in Brazil in respect of the Import Letter which will not be returned to us for some months yet, and on which we are incurring exchange loss.

You will probably know that the Exchange Rate slumped, following the political crisis, and the cruzeiros we received for the supply of vaccine are now worth only 60% of what they were when the transaction was first negotiated.

For several months we have held in store the remaining six million doses of vaccine for supply to Brazil and have been most anxious at Beckenham that this should be sent out to continue the campaign as soon as possible.

The Brazilian Government Health Authorities, both Federal and Provincial, were anxious to receive this vaccine, I understand, but at the same time expected us not only to supply it at the original cruzeiros price, despite the fact that the Exchange had deteriorated by some 40%, but they also expected us to continue to follow the import procedure which was involved in the first dispatch of vaccine referred to above, but now increased from no less than 90 to 150% of the sterling value of the invoice. This meant tying up further sums of money in Brazil, and thereby involving us in yet a further substantial loss on exchange.

On the other hand we felt morally obliged not to sell vaccine which we had reserved for Brazil, in spite of heavy pressure from other countries for supplies.

In these circumstances, Mr. Robinson, our Financial Director, issued instructions that arrangements must be made with the Brazilian Authorities to avoid the purchase of the Import Letters referred to above before further dispatches of vaccine were made. Pending the outcome of these negotiations it was decided to continue to hold the reserve of 6 million doses which we had agreed to supply.
I learnt this morning, by telephone, that the Authorities have now agreed to dispense with the purchase of Import Letters and that the second batch of 3 million doses is expected to leave Beckenham this week and the Brazilian Authorities propose to take the third lot of 3 million doses during December.

To sum up, Brazil should have their first order for nine million monovalent doses completed before Christmas.

Should Brazil require additional quantities of vaccine, the initiative must, of course, come from them, but I have been assured by our overseas marketing division that no such enquiries have been received.

I understand that Uruguay are now ready to go ahead with their campaign. I believe they are taking their first half-million doses of each of the three types in the very near future, and are making enquiries about further supplies for another half-million of each type. I sincerely hope this order goes through, if only to counter the considerable intrigue which has gone on behind the scenes, involving other commercial organisations in attempts by those organisations to prevent our vaccine being used in Uruguay.

We have not had any enquiry either from Argentina or Chile, which I find very surprising.

The situation in the United Kingdom changes almost daily, and, in some cases, almost hourly. It was, therefore, with a tremendous sense of relief that I learned that you will be lecturing to the Royal Society of Health at Caxton Hall on February 1st.

I hope there will be a good turn-out, and that you will be able to drive some sense into the heads of the powers that be, and guide them firmly on to the right lines for the British campaign. My own efforts in London have been extremely frustrating, and I almost despair of getting a common-sense approach. However, to quote, "My head is bloody but unbowed".

I shall be away from England for the greater part of January, but I am certainly most anxious to have a talk with you when you arrive. When you make your final plans I hope you will be able to fit in a couple of hours when we can dine together and discuss the general situation.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

C. Lyn Greening.