

11/1/44

Did You Happen to See---

DR. ANTONIO FERNOS-ISERN?

THERE'S a bit of the Irish in Dr. Antonio Fernos-Isern, recently appointed resident commissioner for Puerto Rico—a fact which accounts for his sandy hair and complexion. This, coupled with a Spanish accent, makes a rather startling contrast.

"My Irish ancestor goes quite a way back," he smiled, "but he has left his mark as you see. Otherwise we are of Spanish extraction."

That Irish ancestor did more than bestow his likeness upon his descendant—he also imbued him with the ideals of freedom and democracy. For Fernos-Isern established the first public health center on the island, helped to institute social reforms which abolished the peonage system, outlawed payment in script and gave the working classes better pay and an opportunity to rise above the poverty and despair that had been their lot so many generations.



Born in San Lorenz, Puerto Rico, a son of the so-called upper classes, Dr. Fernos-Isern was educated in the United States. He attended preparatory school in Bloomsburg, Pa., and the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Returning to his native land in 1915, he went into private practice.

"I soon discovered," he said, "that health problems were tangled up with economic conditions, so in 1918 I went into public health work. One thing leads to another, as you know, and soon we had centers all over the island. We also instituted free hospitalization for those who could not afford to pay."

After several years in public health work Dr. Fernos-Isern returned to private practice, and, from 1933 to 1942, specialized in heart diseases. He was commissioner of health when appointed to succeed Jesus Pinero here upon the latter's appointment as governor of Puerto Rico.

The new resident commissioner said he had no new policy, but added:

"I will try to follow the same path as my predecessor. Like him my job will include close co-operation with the Congress of the United States."

ELIZABETH OLDFIELD.

Tomorrow look for . . . Madame Koo.