

THE ACTIVITY OF “FRENCH MEDICAL MISSION” IN MOLDAVIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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“Each Romanian has two countries, the second one being France”.
(Ion C. Bratianu)

“I have seen no other place where France was so loved, we have there (in Iasi) real treasures – the people who like us. Squeezed, almost suffocated between these two colossuses, Russia and Austria, threatened incessantly by their ambition, they turn towards France with the entire power of their education, their tastes, their aspirations and their intelligence. They are the real Frenchmen of the East. Let us never forget this thing”.

(Edouard Grenier – 1894)

In September 1916, France decided to send a military mission at the special request of Prime Minister Bratianu. Aristide Briand, the French Prime Minister, and Joseph Joffre, the Chief of the French Army Headquarter, entrust this difficult task to professional, brave, duteous, great war experienced men. General Henry Mathias Betrhelot was assigned as their leader and according to the characterization sent to Bucharest he had “exceptional General Staff knowledge combined with modern war practice.

The French military physicians arrived in Romania at different times, some of them bringing their own families, joining those physicians and nurses who had already been there in the French institutions since before the war.

In the first stage, under Major Loredan and Major Jarquenau command, 15 physicians arrived in Iasi on October 11th. According to general Bethelot’s orders all the French military physicians were subordinated to the Romanian Headquarter who assigned them to available positions in Romania hospitals. Because of Walachia’ occupation by the German troupes, their assignments were especially in Moldavia. So, Iași became for a while the capital of the country and had the biggest number of hospitals (7), followed by Bacău (3), Botoșani, Vaslui, Roman, Piatra Neamț (2 hospitals each), and Galați, Brăila, Tecuci, Dorohoi, Onești, Podu Iloaiei (1 hospital each).

The foreign sanitary missions were organized by French, English, American and Russian governments also by the big French associations “La Croix Rouge Française” and “Les

Dames de Frances". The following missions acted in Romania: "Dehelly", "d'Harcourt" and "Doctor Lavernant Mission". The French physicians were assisted by nurses and nuns organisations like "L'Union des femmes française", "Société des blessés", "Notre Dame de Sion", "Saint Vincent de Paul" and "Ambulances de la Reine".

Difficult conditions confronted French mission such as the insufficient number of hospitals, the almost total lack of medicaments as well as the famine and the exanthematic typhus epidemic.

In 1916, with some French physicians' initiative, temporary hospitals were installed and directly ran by them.

Most of the medical staff worked with dedication in operation and treatment theater of these hospitals. They joined to the general effort of maintaining a high combative capability of the Romanian army. They were involved in organization and surveillance of wounded patient's evacuation from the battlefields, in people treatment and assistance during epidemics, as well as in implementation and improvement of hygienic and prophylactic measures.

Their high teamwork spirit also stand out as they provided an uninterrupted assistance.

"La service de Santé" counted 88 physicians in 1917. Over 60% of them were surgeons and their chief was Claude Coullaud the 2nd class main physician. Later, in April 1917, 16 others arrived so, finally they were 104 physicians. French physicians implemented new treatments for war

wounded patients and exanthematic typhus cases such as: the Carrel method, Dr. Lavenant's neurosurgical techniques as well as Dr. Bartue de Gantford's method, or the treatment of burns and frostbites with kerioresins (ambrine). The remarkable professional knowledge, the irreproachable behaviour and the ethics of the French doctors were accompanied by an outstanding scientific activity. Together with their Romanian colleagues, they founded the "War Medicine Society" which also published a magazine containing their permanent collaborations.

Through the papers and the interviews published in the press of time, doctors Clunet and Imbert led a real campaign for the sanitary education of the population regarding some essential issues such as the contamination with and the treatment of the exanthematic typhus.

Thanks to their perseverance and dedication in their attempt of eradicating the epidemics, Dr. Clunet and Dr. Lancien managed to cure 80% of cases, despite the unspecific therapeutical methods of that time.

The French military doctors brought asepsis and radiological equipment from France. A mobile delousing equipment was installed in the railway station of Iași and Piatra Neamț for delousing and desinsection activities. Romanian doctors as Ion Tănăsescu, Amza Jianu, Toma Ionescu, Apotheker (Iași), Pilescu (Galați), Korn (Huși) as well as some Russian doctors, collaborated in this action. The main military physician Coullaud and the assistant military

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Molina worked on the project of a law regarding the invalided out and war pensioners, which was appointed by the Parliament of Romania on 10th December 1916.

They worked in the following hospitals in IASI: Sf. Spiridon, The Catholic Seminary, Veniamin Costache Orthodox Seminary, The Boarding High School, "Alexandru cel Bun", Lower Secondary School, and also in two contagious diseases hospitals near the town, in Galata and Vila Greierul (The Cricket Mansion). Many physicians worked in specialized fields as radiology department, the war and pensioners department or coming in the department for reception of sanitary materials from France.

1. "ST.SPIRIDON" HOSPITAL .

Amza Jianu, Ion Tănăsescu and Toma Ionescu covered the surgery section. Also, there were two groups consisted of one surgeon and two assistants each: Mr. Lorier, Mr. Vandescal and Mr. Debrieu in the first one, and Mr. Loubat, Mr. Poliet and Mr. Dagneau in the second one. Meanwhile, the assistant physician Corylos was the assistant of Profesor Toma Ionescu, too.

The Loubat group received the assignment on November 25th 1916 and the Lorier group received it on December 3rd after evacuation from Bucharest. In December 1916, the Lorier group treated 222 wounded soldiers, performing 40 interventions and the Loubat group treated 317 wounded cases, performing 99 interventions.

2. *THE CATHOLIC SEMINARY.* 222 wounded people have been treated

after December 5th by Doctor Lhereaux and his assistant Dramez, performing 59 surgical interventions.

3. *THE ORTODOX SEMINARY.* The evacuated Brâncoveanu hospital together with the Dehelly Mission were settled here at the end of December 1916. The mission was composed of the military physician Vignal, the assistant pharmacist Gerard and Dr. de Vesins, an administration officer helped by 10 nurses (7 women, 3 men).

4. *THE BOARDING HIGH SCHOOL.* The military physician Desfosses assisted by Colaneri and two French nurses received an important assignment on December 6th. 23 operations and many orthopedical treatments have been performed in one floor of Boarding High School. Later, a mechanotherapy section run by Doctor Gulamina and his assistant Barotte was added to the surgery section of this hospital.

5. *THE LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL HOSPITAL.* In the Lower Secondary School hospital building shared with the Romanian physician Apotheker, military physicians Lancieux and Rioux and their assistants Nemours and Boutti have started to apply a special kerioresin treatment to the burns and the frostbites, with remarkable results. Two surgeons, Mr. Sorrel and Mr. Mourre, arrived at the French Hospital in Bucharest with equipment from their hospital which could not be settled yet. The military doctor Gaulejac together with some members of his staff went on a delousing and

desinsection mission to Piatra Neamt. Mr. Dumai, an administration officer was working to installing the mobile delousing equipment arrived in Iasi rail station. The military doctor Jaisson set up the two radiological devices of "St. Spiridon" hospital and supplied The Boarding High School hospital with a complete radiology installation. A radiological table was manufactured in "St. Spiridon" Hospital workshop. They performed 201 fluoroscopies and 26 radiographies.

6. GALATA HOSPITAL. The military doctor Vuillet helped by a French nurse and 5 nuns from Saint Vincent de Paul organized in Galata, 3 kilometers away from the town, an infection disease hospital of 50 places.

7. THE "CRICKET" HOSPITAL. Doctor Jean Clunet together with 3 nurses from "The Society for the helping of the wounded military" and 10 nuns from Saint Vincent de Paul worked for the setting up of this hospital, 9 kilometres away from Iași, but at the end of December they had no hospitalised patients, yet.

BOTOȘANI

Five French surgeons, Paul Bonnet, Luis Bonnet, Mutel, Nabias and Eugene Dufreche helped by 2 nurses provided assistance in "St. Spiridon" hospital and also in a high school. There, 50 wounded people were treated and 48 surgical operations were performed of which 12 were difficult ones.

DOROHOI

Physicians Chenier and Tartois arrived in Dorohoi on December 19th. They were assigned to "Hospital 402" and

treated 150 patients. Still today we have not enough details of their activities.

BRĂILA

The staff of the 1st class military physician Lavenant, composed by 2 military physicians (Angagneur and Jenicot), 3 assistants (Florence, Lucas-Champoniere and Germain) and 7 nurses from "The French Women Union" arrived in București and Brăila on December 3rd. They organized a 300 beds section in the Bulgarian school where they received more than 450 wounded soldiers and performed 100 surgical operations, most of them being difficult.

After the evacuation of wounded patients, they left Brăila and moved to Galați taking with them all their equipment which was settled in a high school near The Red Cross Hospital where both Romanians and Russians were treated. On December 26th the French group lost one of their members, the military physician Germain who died within a few days by an acute malaria crisis in delirious form.

GALAȚI

The 1st class military physicians Orticiani, Duguey, Gallois, the second class military physician Coutard, as well as their assistants Noel and Brousse provided assistance in an unit for the contagious and feverish patients organised in the monastery "Notre Dame de Sion". They made bacteriological tests in the Hygiene Municipal Laboratory. Physicians worked both in schools and military hospital. The radiographs of wounded

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patients were performed in “Alexandru cel Bun” High School.

VASLUI

On December 12th, the 1st class physician Drioux, the 2nd class doctor Houdart and their assistant Mainot together with the 2nd class eye physician Faure Beaulieu went to Vaslui where they treated many patients suffering from eye diseases. They were assigned to the Administration Palace Hospital and to the High School Hospital. Between 18th and 31 December 1916, 53 wounded patients were treated and 17 surgical operations were performed.

ROMAN

Three surgical teams (3 surgeons and 3 assistants) belonging to “The Queen’s ambulances” and run by the first class physician Thieux together with his assistants Pagès, Rudelle, Lemoing, Bloch and Pénard have been assigned there. 225 wounded patients and 110 newcomers were treated there. Between 25th and 31st December they performed 12 operations (10 difficult surgical operations).

BACĂU

Another three surgical teams belonging to “The Queen’s Ambulances” arrived in Bacău on December 28th (first class physicians Revechon, Madrange, Sieur, Chaix, Adam and Imbert) where they found 1436 hospitalized patients.

PIATRA NEAMȚ

The third group of surgeons from “The Queen’s Ambulances” composed by the main physicians Gauthier, the 1st class physician Bailly, the 2nd class physician Reinbourg and his assistant Logeais arrived in Piatra Neamț on

December 27th and have been sent to different city hospitals. Doctor Gauthier took over the surgical ward of The Civilian Hospital and sent Doctor Reimbourg to Hospital 428 and Doctor Bailly to Hospital 237. About 400 patients were treated by them.

HUȘI

On December 26th the military doctor Dantrelle, an ophthalmologist, have been sent to Huși where many cases suffering from eye diseases had been recorded. They found 26 patients, 3 with trachoma, 6 advanced conjunctivitis and others mild forms of conjunctivitis. After few days he let Doctor Korn to continue his work with the medicines he had brought and returned to Iași.

This paper describes the organization and the functioning of the French medical services in a relatively short period of time, namely a few weeks in December 1916, when the French military doctors treated with a profound dedication and devotion a high number of wounded patients (3635), and performed 363 surgical operations.

But at the same time, members of the French Mission died, victims of the exanthematic typhus epidemics, a disease which they tried and to a great extent managed to eradicate.

The names of the remarkable members of the French Sanitary Mission who lost their lives on duty appeared in the newspapers under the headings “Les Sacrifices de la France” and “Les Victims du Devoir”: Jean Clunet, doctor in chief of the Infectious

Diseases Hospital in București later appointed as chief of the Exanthematic Hospital of “The Cricket Mansion” in Iasi who died in the spring of 1917; Gabriel Adain who organized the ambulatory service and a hospital in the first lines of military front and founded in 1917 the Model Hospital in Onești; Ange Dominique Antoine from the sorting department of Iași railway station; Eugène Dufrière, surgeon in the hospital of Botoșani; Alfonse Duguey surgeon in the hospital of Galați; physicians Brousse, Leplay, Santoni who treated wounded patients in improvised hospitals of Iași rail station and physicians Germain, Charton and Vuillet from Galata Hospital.

We add to these victims of duty the names of the nurses Filippis and Geneviève de Goutel and the nuns

Antoinette, Anne and Angèle who died in these terrible epidemics.

As a sign of gratitude and affection for Jean Clunet, the Hospital Administration Board of Iași decided to give his name to the hospital he organized and ran, where so many lives were saved thanks to his dedication and devotion. To this very day, that hospital “Cricket Mansion” bears his name.

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