

NOTE

This is a preliminary narrative and should not be regarded as authoritative. It has not been checked for accuracy in all aspects, and its interpretations are not necessarily those of the Historical Section as a whole.

Ce texte est préliminaire et n'a aucun caractère officiel. On n'a pas vérifié son exactitude et les interprétations qu'il contient ne sont pas nécessairement celles du Service historique.

Directorate of History  
National Defence Headquarters  
Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0K2

July 1986

~~SECRET~~  
CANCELLED

REPORT NO. 86  
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

DECLASSIFIED  
AUTHORITY: DHD 3-12  
BY: Oge FOR DHIST NDHQ  
DATE: DEC 3 1986

20 Oct 59

The Eastern Mediterranean Theatre,  
1915-1917

1. Canadians served in yet another theatre -- the eastern Mediterranean -- in certain medical units. This Report is a preliminary account of their activities.
2. In all, five Canadian hospitals, totalling some 450 officers (including nursing sisters) and a thousand men, were sent from England. Four of these -- Nos. 4 and 5 General, Nos. 1 and 3 Stationary -- were in Salonica. The last, No. 7 General Hospital, was in Egypt. (Sir Andrew Macphail, Official History of the Canadian Forces..., The Medical Services, (Ottawa 1925), 295-8. Letter D.M.S. to Carson, 21 Dec 15, Carson file 8-4-26)
3. The first units to go were Nos. 1 and 3 Canadian Stationary Hospitals which opened on the Island of Lemnos for the treatment of patients from Gallipoli during August 1915. After the evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula four months later, both hospitals left Lemnos. No. 1 moved to Salonica in March 1916, where it remained until returning to England in August of the following year. No. 3 was transferred to France in April 1916. The General Hospitals, on the other hand, went directly to Salonica; No. 4 opened there in November 1915, while No. 5 opened a month later. Both returned to England in August 1917. The last of these hospitals, No. 7 General (which was sent out as No. 5 Stationary) opened



in Cairo during August 1915, with 400 beds. It became a General Hospital with 1040 beds in January 1916. Three months later it left Egypt, and re-opened in France in April. (Report of the Ministry, Overseas Military Forces of Canada, 1918, 396-7.)

4. It was at Mudros (Lemnos) that the greatest hardships were experienced. The site assigned to the two hospitals "had been occupied by a camp of Egyptian labourers; there was no sanitary provision; the water supply was precarious...; ordnance stores were on a ship in the roadstead only accessible in fine weather; food was scarce and unsuitable for the personnel, impossible for patients; dust and flies completed the distress." (Macphail, The Medical Services, 296.) By September, dysentery was prevalent, and ninety-five per cent of the hospital staff succumbed. The wards were crowded with cases mostly of the amoebic variety from Gallipoli. With autumn came heavy rains and floods causing acute discomfort until tents were replaced by huts in October. The lack of fresh vegetables brought an epidemic of scurvy in November, while the intense cold at the end of that month led to frost-bite -- four hundred cases were admitted in one week. (Ibid., 297.) Nor was respite obtained after the move to Salonica, for there malaria was common -- "over 60% of the unit have suffered from malaria since coming to Salonica." (Letter O.C. 1 Cdn Stationary Hospital to D.M.S. Salonica, 22 Sep 16, Carson file 8-4-63).

5. It was such conditions which, in September 1916, led the Officer Commanding No. 1 Stationary Hospital to request the transfer of his unit to England (Ibid.) His letter reached England at a time of great controversy



within the Canadian Medical Services. There, a Special Inspector-General (Colonel H.A. Bruce) who had been appointed (in July 1916) by the Minister "... to make a tour of inspection of all the Canadian Hospitals and medical Institutions... and make a report... of your observations with any suggestions you may deem advisable to add...." had produced a report on 20 September. This report violently attacked the administration under the Canadian Director of Medical Services, (D.M.S.), Major-General G.C. Jones, and proposed a complete reorganization of the Medical Services. ("Memorandum for... the Minister, on the latest memorandum of Colonel Bruce, Undated", 20 Jul 17; "The Bruce-Jones Controversy, Memorandum from the Minister", undated; both in drawer C-275, folder 6.) A principal recommendation emerging from the Bruce report was the segregation of Canadian sick and wounded in Canadian hospitals, ("Synopsis of Findings of the Baptye Board", 25 Jul 17, ibid.) and particular mention was made "... of the mistake in judgement..." in sending No. 4 General Hospital to the Mediterranean instead of acquiring buildings at Shorncliffe and using the hospital personnel to staff them. What Bruce obviously did not know was that at the time of the request for the hospital, Jones had borrowed Shorncliffe Military Hospital from the British, and it was found there were enough C.A.M.C. personnel available to staff it. This provided the required bed space for Canadians and at the same time permitted No. 4 Hospital to be sent to the Mediterranean. ("Observations on latest Memorandum of Colonel H.A. Bruce", <sup>n.d.</sup> Licut.-Col John McComb and Major M.H. Allen, ibid.)

6. The whole question of sending medical units



into areas where no Canadian troops were engaged was, however, controversial. All units had been despatched by Major-General Jones at the request of the Director General of the [British] Army Medical Services; General Carson had been informed and in turn, the Minister, but it is doubtful if the latter had remembered; in December 1915, he asked Carson "Why has Jones sent so many Canadian doctors to Serbia?[sic]" (Letter, Jones to Carson, 21 Dec 15, Carson file S-4-26. Letter, Jones to Carson, 9 Nov 15, S-4-22. Tel., Minister to Carson, 20 Dec 15, S-4-26). A letter from the British D.M.S. to his Canadian counterpart silenced all but the most unreasoning critics:

I had not any hospitals at that moment ready and I called upon you for assistance. You gave me... hospitals. As events proved, these saved the situation. They were good hospitals, containing good officers... I shall always be indebted to you for the help you gave me at a time when I was very pressed. ... The only alternative was to send home wounded in transports, which might have been sent to the bottom of the sea... if you had refused the help I asked... You were quite entitled to refuse to send Canadian Hospitals where there were no Canadian troops. ... I am very glad you did not. (Letter, Director General of the Army Medical Service [Sir Alfred Keogh] to D.M.S. Canadian Contingents, 14 Sep 16, D.M.S., London, file 30-3-1, Vol. 2.)

7. In Canada, meanwhile, the Minister had authorized the reorganization of the Medical Services as recommended by Colonel Bruce. (MacPhail, The Medical Services, 167). Major-General Jones was replaced in England by Bruce, who became Director in October 1916, but the new Director's tenure of office was not long. He lacked knowledge of military medical administration having "scarcely any military experience. He joined the service 11-8-15 and resigned 28-8-15." Under his direction the morale of the Medical Services declined rapidly; the care and treatment of patients decreased in efficiency.



("Observations on latest Memorandum of Colonel H.A. Bruce," n.d., McComb and Allen, drawer C-275, folder 6.) He was relieved of his appointment 30 December 1916 after a Board convened in England had considered his report and General Jones' reply, and Jones was reinstated in his stead\* (Macphail, The Medical Services, 169.) The matter had its repercussions in Parliament, and has been interpreted by the Canadian Medical Historian as the direct cause of the dismissal of the Minister of Militia, who, at a speech delivered before the Empire Club in Toronto on 9 November 1916 -- obviously misled by the Bruce Report -- made grave allegations which were unfounded. One of these was that "thousands of Canadians had lost months, and sometimes a year, in hospitals not under Canadian control, when they should have been back in the trenches." That same day the Prime Minister demanded his resignation; he received it two days later.\*\* (Ibid., 196.)

8. During his brief period in office, Bruce acted on the request submitted by the C.C. No. 1 Stationary Hospital to return his unit to England. "I might point out that this matter was dealt with in my recent report and not only this hospital should be recalled but all the other Canadian Hospitals serving in Salonika. With the new arrangements which we have in view we will require the personnel of these hospitals for work in England at

---

\*The "Bruce/Jones Controversy" is amply covered by MacPhail, notably in Chapters XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI.

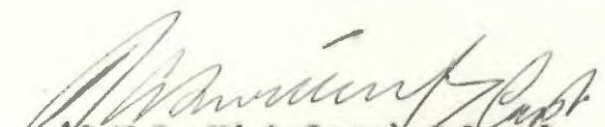
\*\*The final reason for Hughes' dismissal was a letter dated 1 Nov 1916 which he addressed to the Prime Minister; as a result, Borden called for the Minister's resignation on the 9th, (Borden Memoirs, Vol. 2, 569-70. Letter, Hughes to Borden 1 Nov 16, letter, Borden to Hughes, 9 Nov 16, P.A.C., C.C. 318(2)). By coincidence, Hughes made the irresponsible speech at Toronto on the same day the Prime Minister demanded his resignation.



an early date." (Letter, Bruce to Secretary C.E.F.,  
9 Oct 16, Carson file 8-4-63.)

9. In January 1917, the War Office agreed that the hospitals should be withdrawn, but suggested that all their equipment be left in Salonica on repayment or against replacement in England. Medical and nursing personnel would be replaced by British staff as it became available. (Letter, War Office to Secretary, H.Q. C.E.F., 7 Jan 17; letter D.M.S. [Canadian] to War Office, 16 May 17; both in D.M.S., London, file 30-4-4, Vol. 1.) To this the Canadians agreed, with the exception of the equipment of No. 4 General Hospital, which had been provided by the University of Toronto. (Letter, C.M.F.C. to War Office, 24 Jan 17, ibid.) The matter was settled by reimbursement being made to the university by the British Government. (Letter, President, Toronto University, to Chief Accountant, Dept. of Militia, 24 Dec 16, H.Q. file 54-21-15-86). By August 1917, all personnel had returned to England.

10. This Report was compiled by Capt. J.A.  
Swettenham, R.C.E.

  
(G.W.L. Nicholson) Colonel  
Director Historical Section