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The Most Influential Physicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Risto Jeremic (1869-1952)

Izet Masic

Dr. Risto Jeremic (1869 - 1952) was born on May 8, 1869 in Foca, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he finished elementary school. He started his high school in Sarajevo, then in Dubrovnik, where he graduated on July 29, 1889 (1-3). He started his studies at Faculty of medicine of Vienna university and graduated at Faculty of medicine of Graz university in 1897. He was promoted to the Doctor of Medicine in 1898. Dr. Risto Jeremic was the first domestic surgeon in the former Bosnia and Herzegovina and the first man from Foca who graduated at one university. As a student, during school breaks, in 1892 he attempted to establish the „Focanski Soko" Serbian Gymnastics Association in Foca, banned from the Austrian authorities, which was the forerunner of the "Srpski Soko" ("Serbian Falcon"). This association has been active for more than four decades and has been a model for the founding of a number of similar anti-capitalist societies.

Upon completion of the studies, Dr. Risto Jeremic works at the Land hospital in Sarajevo (Landespital, opened on July 1st, 1894), first as an intern at Department of Internal medicine, chaired by Dr. Geza Kobler (1864-1891), Director of the hospital, then as a secondary doctor and a district doctor. Specializing in the field of Surgery, he studied with Dr. von Josef Preindlsberger (1864-1938), who at that time chaired Department of Surgery at Land hospital. From 1904 until the First World War Dr. Risto Jeremic was the Head of the Surgical Department of the hospital in Tuzla. With the arrival of Dr. Risto Jeremic in 1904, people of Tuzla had their first surgeon at their disposal. He was soon to become the new Tuzla hospital manager. After approval provided by the authorities, in the year 1906 Dr. Jeremic founded the construction of his private sanatorium on a hill named Kojisino, just above the Hospital itself. From 1919 till 1923 he was Director of the State hospital in Sarajevo (during his presidency Land hospital changed the name to State hospital) (4-7).

Figure 1. Dr. Risto Jeremic (1869-1952)

After the Sarajevo assassination, together with many free and respectable Serbian citizens, he was deprived of his liberty and was tried on the so-called „Veleizdajnicki proces" (High-treason Process) in Banja Luka, because of his national ideas and also because of connections with the „National Defense" he was sentenced to three years in prison. By the amnesty of Emperor Karel, he was released in 1917.

Dr. Risto Jeremic worked in Subotica from 1923 to 1934 as Head of Outpatient Clinic at the State Railway Directorate. In that city he taught forensic medicine at the Law School for a while. He began his scientific research work since 1904 (8, 9). Becoming acquainted with Jovan Cvijic at the Surgical Congress in Belgrade in 1911 influenced the widening of his scientific interests, so Dr. Jeremic began collecting and publishing material on the origin of

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the population of the Tuzla region. At the same time, he began research work in the field of the history of health culture and medicine in the Yugoslav countries. He was the author of fifteen books, mostly in the field of history of medicine in the former Yugoslav countries and more than sixty scientific papers in various fields. Dr. Risto Jeremic has written an important book on the history of medicine in Bosnia and Herzegovina – „Contributions to the History of Health and Medical Opportunities of Bosnia and Herzegovina under Turkey and Austro-Hungary“, published in the 1951 (2).

Dr. Risto Jeremic was elected in 1952 as a member of the Scientific Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, later the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU). Also, he has been elected on December 22nd 1937 as an honorary doctor of the University of Belgrade. He was one of the initiators and founders of the Serbian cultural and educational association „Prosvjeta“, and then president in the period 1903-1904 (8-9), and, also, he founded the Treasury Society „Pobratimstvo“.

During the Second World War he was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Central National Committee, and after the war he was elected to Honorary President of the Serbian Medical Society based in Belgrade. After retirement, he came to Belgrade and was hired as an expert in medical history at the Central Institute of Hygiene. In 1937 he established the Medical History Museum, the first museum of medical history in Serbia, within the Department of Social Medicine of the Central Hygiene Institute. After many years of research into the history of

health culture in the archives of Dubrovnik, Sremski Karlovci, Slavonski Brod and Zemun, Dr. Jeremic published several monographs, including a valuable „Bibliography of Serbian Health Literature 1757 – 1918“, published by the Serbian Medical Society in 1947. He died on September 16, 1952 in Mostar, where he was buried.

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