

OBITUARY

Dr. Paul Laviron

1905–1979



Dr. Paul Laviron died in Marseilles (France) on 3 July 1979 after a long and painful illness during which he showed exceptional courage and was devotedly supported by his wife.

Dr. Laviron had devoted all his life to leprosy, first in

the French overseas military medical services; then after his retirement from the Army in 1957 he undertook many assignments for the World Health Organization.

After his graduation in Montpellier and Lyon, he served in a rural area of New Caledonia from 1933 to 1937. He was then assigned to the Institut Marchoux, Bamako, in Mali (at that time French Sudan). In 1946, when the Marchoux Institute became the headquarters for all leprosy activities in former French West Africa, he, as Director of the Institute, was given the responsibility for an area covering about 3 million square kilometers. In addition to this overall responsibility, he was also directly and personally involved in a variety of activities: the training in leprosy of all doctors and paramedical workers, expatriate or otherwise; the technical guidance and supervision of hundreds of personnel; the collection of epidemiological and operational data, etc.

He was one of those who played a determinant role in the establishment of the concept of mass campaigns for leprosy based on mobile teams working in villages. As a result, in 1957, 313,621 leprosy patients were registered in those countries, half of them being under treatment.

Besides this, at the Institut Marchoux he led a small team which, at a time when research on leprosy was based mainly on clin-

ical and bacteriological observations in patients, made significant investigations on the therapeutic effect of chaulmoogra oil, dapsone, thiosemicarbazone, INH, etc. His main contribution was the development of a repository form of dapsone (suspended in a derivative of chaulmoogra oil). Finally, by his numerous scientific publications and participation in meetings, particularly the International Leprosy Congresses, he played a major role in building up the international reputation of the Institut Marchoux as a leading center for research in leprosy.

All these activities, including yearly visits to some fifty centers scattered over immense territories, required such dynamism that it is amazing how one man alone was able to do so many things at one time so efficiently.

In 1957, Dr. Laviron retired from the military medical services and went to Marseilles with his wife. He then continued to devote most of his time to leprosy through missions assigned to him by WHO in many countries in Africa and Asia (Cambodia, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Guinea, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia, United Arab Republic, United Republic of Cameroon, Viet Nam, Zaire). He was a member of the WHO Expert Advisory Panel on Leprosy and attended the second and third meetings of the WHO Expert Committee on Leprosy.

Dr. Laviron's reputation as a hard worker, meticulous and keen, and possessing a high degree of practical efficiency, was well known and respected. His qualities of leadership were fully recognized.

Hundreds of thousands of leprosy sufferers have benefited from the devoted efforts of Dr. Paul Laviron. May I also pay a special tribute to his memory on behalf of the many people to whom, like myself, he communicated his knowledge and flame.

—H. Sansarricq