THE MEDICAL DISCOURSE IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSYLVANIAN SPACE. BETWEEN VULNERABILITY AND ACCEPTANCE

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Abstract: *The theme of this study is mainly related to the analysis of reactions in collective mentality from Romanian rural space in Transylvania toward a complex issue of medical discourse, especially in the second half of the 19th century.*
Obviously, the presence of some doctors even in the rural space was a process of modernization, which remained unfinished, because they were few or less important in comparison to popular medicine, which continued to have an overwhelming role.
Rural community began to understand the intervention of doctors through the medium of local dean, especially in cases of epidemic or individual disease, when they considered the ailing person was lost. An interesting case is mentioned by data about preventing children (infectious) diseases like pox or spotted fever, scarlet fever and also by data about vaccination campaign against pox. As a matter of course, medical discourse in rural Transylvanian space was hardly accomplished and disseminated, not necessary by doctors, but rather through conferences and pieces of advice that clergy and teachers gave the community, both through Astra organization and Church.

Keywords: *Epidemic, Romanian Village, Priest, Doctor, Government*

Although an interesting subject, it was difficult to approach, and this is due to the complexity of all the involved aspects. That is why we chose to follow all the references to medicine, diseases and epidemic on the pages of the *Romanian Telegraph*, even though some articles and notes had been taken from other local newspapers or official documents of the administration of the dualist state (Şuţa, Tămaş, Ciupală, Bărbulescu,2009), (Bărbulescu,2015).
The interest for the medical act in itself, for the doctor and the various deficiencies voiced by the Romanians on this matter had convinced the editors of the mentioned newspaper to pay attention to this subject. Meanwhile, the pressure of the editorials with the political content or studies of confessional nature was also answered in the *Romanian Telegraph*.
Ignoring the plague epidemic that haunted in Transylvania and Banat during the 18th century, along with many years of rains and droughts, the medical situation of the population from these Eastern provinces of the empire had faced hardships of the same type, but much more diverse later. It is obvious that the great material periods had corresponded mostly with a demographic growth and with a certain development of the rural space, but still not in the

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required rhythm by a bourgeoisie with urban ambitions on the rise. Although it hadn't been spared of epidemic in the first decades of the 19th century, Transylvania experienced difficult years around the Revolution of 1848 – droughts, famine and epidemic – so that even from this perspective it is integrated in the European reality (Nicoară, 1997).

After 1848 the Romanian population of Transylvania benefited from a good demographic period, characterized by positive values of the average birth rate and of the average of population density, as well as fruitful years for agriculture. The situation had changed because of the Crimean war and subsequently when the cholera epidemic in 1855 interrupted this process, which began again in 1869. Although the demographic growth tripled, being superior to the one from the Western Europe, it was shadowed by the negative values of the infant mortality, beyond the European ones: while in Europe the infant mortality was until 20%, in Transylvania it reached 32% especially in the rural Northern area (Berindei, 722, 2013).

The development of agriculture (increasing the arable space) reduced a part of the pressure because of the material lack for the majority of the rural population. Thus, the decade 1855-1865 was characterized by such an evolution, even though during the same period the climate factors were worse: the drought 1864-1865, cattle disease and cholera epidemic, overcome only by the pox in terms of virulence. Despite the deficiencies, the great collaboration between the authorities, doctors and society contributed to ending the cholera epidemic. The mobilization wasn't that good as in the case of the next cholera epidemic in 1872-1873 (the worst of all), with 22.053 victims in Transylvania and over 50.000 victims in Transylvania, Banat, Crisana and Maramures.This is a huge number, especially when we compare with other numbers: in 1855 in Transylvania were 1049 victims of cholera, and, in 1841, 1866 victims. There were also other epidemic in 1879 – pox, diphtheria and whooping cough (Berindei, 755, 2013).

This study is focused on the main debates on various medical subjects in the pages of the newspaper *Telegraful Roman* (*Romanian Telegraph*) and of a *Romanian calendar* (*Calendariul pe anul visect de la Christos, întocmit după gradurile şi clima Ungariei şi României pe anul...)*, both were publications of the Sibiu Metropolitan and were attempts to present and analyse the medical act in the Transylvanian space. It is well-known that there were not special journals in this space; only in 1876-1880 in Timisoara appeared *Higiena şi Şcoala (Hygiene and School)*, edited by one of the most renowned doctors in Banat, Paul Vasici-Ungureanu, and in 1908 in Brasov the publication *Sănătatea.Foaie pentru igienă*

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şi medicină populară (*Health. Paper for Hygiene and Popular Medicine*) (Bărbulescu, Popovici, 2005).

Paul Vasici-Ungureanu is not to be regarded only as a doctor, but also as a well-known man of high culture, the first author of some books on popularizing anatomy and hygiene and some textbooks famous in that period. Although he was the author of an impressive number of articles in the *Romanian Telegraph*, only those written in 1854 were actually signed[1].

The first section of the paper mentions the official position of the state toward the medical act and the attitude toward the doctor in general, which began to be built by the Romanians in Transylvania, both by the elite and by the rural space. As it was established, the expectations of the doctor and of the Romanian society didn't always coincide, while the disparity had brought sufficient moments of doubt on both sides.

We find many references about the workplaces of communal and regional doctors in the pages of the *Romanian Telegraph*, as well as the critical mentions on the small number of these workplaces, being presented in antithesis the policy adopted by the Austrian neo-absolutist regime. Overtaking an article from *Albina* (*The Bee*) in Arad regarding the "Matter of the Sticky Cholera" there were explained some difficulties in eradicating the epidemic, including the small number of doctors, because the "Hungarian constitutional life" distributed one doctor to 20-30 villages (Romanian Telegraph no.76,1871,304-305).

Doctors appeared in the pages of the *Romanian Telegraph* in a permanent state of emancipation and valuing the editorial efforts. Among the Romanian students who graduated medical studies, after the great example of Ioan Piuariu-Molnar at the end of the 18th century, we find enthusiastic figures and especially lucky scholars. This was also the case of those who studied medicine

[1] See the laudatory activity of the doctor Paul Vasici-Ungureanu who graduated studies in Budapest in 1831, founding member of Astra in 1861, member of the scientific section of the Romanian Academy in 1879, director of a hospital of infectious diseases, with various research studies regarding diphtheria, the first supporter of Darwinism in the Romanian space of Transylvania and Banat, author of the first anatomy textbook, published at Buda in 1830 - *Antropologia sau scurtă cunoştinţă despre om şi însuşirile sale[Anthropology or Short Knowledge about Man and His Peculiarities]*, author of a work dedicated to diphteria in 1870 and of some textbooks used in those times for elementary schools-*Catehismul antropologic întocmit pentru poporul românesc şi şcolile elementare [Anthropological Catechism for the Romanian People and Elementary Schools]*,Timişoara, 1870 or *Catehismul sănătăţii (Igiena şi Dietetica)întocmit pentru poporul românesc şi şcolile elementare [Catechism of Health)Hygiene and Dietetics= for the Romanian People and the Elementary Schools]*,Timişoara, 1870, http://www.romanian philosophy.ro/ro/index.php?title=Pavel_Vasici_%28 Ungureanu%29, accessed on the 30th of November 2012.

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in 1790-1850, such as: Sava Popovici-Barcianu, Paul Vasici-Ungureanu and Constantin Pomutz (Sigmirean, 2000, 23-108).
The oldest doctor in medicine mentioned in the *Romanian Telegraph* was Octavian Blastian in 1879 (Romanian Telegraph no. 18,1879,71).
For the dualist period, the statistics made by Cornel Sigmirean mentioned a number of more than 2499 Romanian students at the University of Budapest, among them 609 were students at the Faculty of Medicine. Other data, more restrictive chronologically, such as those of the Society of the Romanian students "Petru Maior" established that during the university year 1897/1898 in Budapest 25 Romanian medical students out of 674 (a small percentage, only 3,7%). The number was bigger at the University in Cluj, where in 1872, 515 Romanian students were present.
Moreover, Budapest managed to impose the validity of the doctor diploma only for the studies of medicine at Budapest and Cluj due to an order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of 1 January 1899 (Romanian Telegraph no. 93, 1898, 375).
As obtaining a complete cycle of praxis supposed a great material effort and years spent in various clinics of the dualist state, the Ministry of Resort needed to accept several years later (starting with 1 January 1901) the equivalence of medical diplomas, making no difference between the faculties.The Vienna faculty was regarded as one of the best, comparable to the universities of France (Romanian Telegraph, no. 88,1912,363).
The well-known example is Victor Babes, who completed studies in Budapest and Vienna, assistant at the Faculty of Medicine in Budapest, doctor in Vienna, lecturer from 1881, scholar of Gojdu Foundation, then in 1882 scholar of the dualist state, with specialized studies at several German and French clinics in Europe. In his thirties he occupied the Pathological Histology Department in Budapest, but he gave up in 1888 and began his activity at the Bacteriology Department of the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest (Sigmirean, 2000,74).
We mention some other famous names of the Transylvanian Romanian medicine: Traian Leucuţia, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, A.C.Popovici, Iuliu Haţieganu sau Sabin Manuilă (Sigmirean, 2000,82-110). Known especially due to his support in leading the Romanian elite in the difficult space of diplomacy from Vienna to Budapest, the doctor Alexandru Vaida-Voievod found time to pay attention to the critics for the Hungarian background concerning the medical act till 1918. We refer to his relevant observations voiced in the Hungarian parliament during the meetings on the 19th of July and 27th of November 1906, when discussing the public budget, he pointed out the fact that the sum for public health was ridiculously small compared to other

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areas.He explained that some real medical problems should have been addressed: tuberculosis, infant mortality, improvement of hygienic conditions for the population, highlighting the necessity of a better salary for doctors (Salvan, Salcă, 2002,79).

A special case, which helps us in delineating the medical discourse in the Transylvanian space of the second half of the 19th century, was represented by the Romanian doctors from the spas that were known in those times: T. Mera, graduated in Vienna and doctor in Karlsbad, (*Romanian Telegraph*,no.43,1893,150), R. Craciun, who established in Borsec after a specialization in Karlsbad,(*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 60,1910,178), Baiulescu from Baile Eforiei Romane in Brasov (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 80, 1896,319) or Craciunescu in Baile Herculane, known in the Viennese medical circle for his studies dedicated to tuberculosis (*Romanian Telegraph*,no.102,1901,417).Dr. Sterie Ciurcu started an interesting career in 1892 when announcing in several numbers of the *Romanian Telegraph* the opening of his consulting room in Vienna. He promised to his Romanian patients facilitating the "communication with the medical capacities" in the city (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 52, 1892, 207).

One of the most exciting ascensions was Augustin Dumitrean's, awarded for his studies regarding typhus, promoted in 1909 as the chief-doctor of the Budapest police. He was also the initiator of a foundation (4 million Hungarian crowns and 50.000 lei) for those who wanted to study medicine.His ambition to study is impressive, especially because of his modest background, as his parents, poor peasants, could do little for him. He supported his studies by tutoring during the years of the Roman-Catholic gymnasium in Alba-Iulia and then of the gymnasium in Oradea Mare. Later, he obtained a scholarship at Gojdu Foundation that ensured him the necessary support to follow medicine in Vienna in 1873-1878. Being a doctor at the hospital Saint Rokus in Budapest in 1881, he was mentioned as chief-doctor of Beius county and then he was promoted as chief-doctor of the Budapest police in 1908. He was also part of the parochial committee of the Romanian Orthodox Community in Budapest, which belonged to Arad bishopric.His career ended in 1918 when he retired and got the noble title de Sard, his native place. In spring 1918 he came back home to Alba county, where he was born in 1852. He proved his efficiency as a specialist in the area of public hygiene by fighting against cholera epidemic in 1893 in Maramures county as governmental commissioner, and against diphtheria angina in 1894 in Bistrita-Nasaud county or against Asian cholera in 1910. During World War I he maintained the hygiene of the Austro-Hungarian army (1916-1917), being decorated with the Iron Crown for his services in the

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area of public hygiene and the Red Cross, 2nd category, as well as the Golden Cross with crown (Romanian Telegraph no. 18-19, 1927, 1-2).

Another category is represented by the Romanian military doctors: among them, few were distributed in the Transylvanian space. The most mentioned names are those from Brasov and Sibiu garrison – dr. H. Cosmuta, the superior doctor of the Regiment 2 of cavalry, detached in Sibiu in 1904, awarded the Medal with crown for his "devotion manifested during the typhus epidemic" (*Romanian Telegraph,* no. 23, 1906,50).

Dr. Patrascu was decorated by the emperor Francis-Joseph with the Golden Cross after less than a year of his activity as a military doctor due to his efforts in fighting against the typhus epidemic in Sibiu in 1909, a unique case in the history of military doctors (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 32, 1909, 73).Due to various detachments, there are sequential contributions in constructing a medical discourse for the Romanian space in Transylvania.

The second section is constituted by the references to workplaces for doctors; there were many notices regarding this subject in the pages of the *Romanian Telegraph* concerning also the number of villages, the number of the inhabitants and the material support they could ensure. There were also variations of salary from a workplace to another; a workplace in Panciova, Banat region, for example, had an established income of 600 crowns and money for rent, (*Romanian Telegraph,* no. 87,1893, 347), while a workplace in Tohanul vechi, Bran region, had 2450 crown and money for heating (*Romanian Telegraph*, no.106, 1910,453); a workplace in Ilva Mare, Rodna region, had 2000 crowns and 400 money for rent, as well as taxes from the patients in 1901(*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 140, 1901,569).

Other workplaces were subject to a contest for the villages from Sibiu county: Poiana-Jina-Rod with 1400 crowns salary or a workplace for 15 villages in Bran region, Brasov county, in 1895 (*Romanian Telegraph,* no. 78,342 and no. 115, 1895, 515).

During the Medical Congress in Hungary in 1900 the taxes for the medical consultation were established: 2 crowns in the cities and 1 crown in the village; the price was doubled if the doctor made visits at night (Romanian Telegraph no. 95, 1900, 393).

In 1908 some discussions concerning a law project on the communal and regional doctors' salary started in the Budapest parliament; according to these discussions, the salary could reach 1600 crowns and 800 crowns as a personal increase, while midwives were to be paid by villages (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 54, 1908, 223).

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Other workplaces, although remunerated well, supposed a special effort, as it was the case in Jibert, Cohalm region: the basic salary could reach 1000 crowns if the candidate had PhD in medicine, adding also money for rent and the money given by the community for supplementary activities: inspecting the butcher's shop, treating the poor sick people and "inspecting the dead" (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 40, 1903, 167).

The most attractive workplace was probably at the paper factory in Zarnesti, where the income was established at 2400 crowns and money for heating and rent, but it required knowledge of Hungarian, German languages, as well as experience. The high value of the salary could be explained by the fact that the doctor was to be paid by the factory owner and not by the state (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 100, 1903, 411).

The Romanian inhabitants wanted a Romanian doctor for their region, and the competition was fierce in many cases, but the winner was highly regarded and praised for his efforts. The political-administrative factor played a certain role in these contests for medical workplaces.

In 1897 in Offenbaia, under the leading of the proto-praetor, the contest for one doctor workplace took place, and dr. Nerva Moldovan was chosen from 3 candidates with 21 votes (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 19, 1897,431).

In 1898 for the region Rasinari-Poplaca-Raul Sadului A. Draghici was chosen (Ibidem, no. 19, 1898, 75), while in 1902 the workplace of a communal doctor in Rasinari was for Ioan Bucur, highly appreciated for his medical knowledge and for his modest social background, "son of a peasant and beneficiary of a scholarship", promising to be "a true support of the people's interests" (*Romanian Telegraph*, no.129, 1902, 525).

In 1885 the workplace as a doctor in Avrig was occupied by Sabin Comsa, chosen unanimously by Romanians and by Saxons (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 96, 1885, 387).In the region Baia de Cris, dr. Nicolae Rob became a doctor in 1896, appreciated by the *Romanian Telegraph* for his native origin and for his love for his people (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 11, 1896, 43).

Other doctors became famous due to their initiatives; such is the case of dr. Titu Pertia in Fagaras who initiated a course for nurses (*Romanian Telegraph*, no.134, 1913,551),dr. Toma Ionescu was the representative of the Romanian doctors in Transylvania, who delegated dr. Ioan Mihu, communal doctor in Poiana Sibiului to participate at the discussions held by the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding the constitution of the pension fund of doctors in 1909 (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 8, 1909,13).

Not all the contests for medical workplaces took into account the candidate's right to enter the competition, as in the Arpasul Inferior, Fagaras county, out of

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6 candidates, 4 of them Romanian, authorities accepted only one, the others considered "exponents of the Daco-Roman theories and therefore dangerous for the county" (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 95, 1898, 383).

Overtaking the notice from *Gazeta Transulvaniei*, the *Romanian Telegraph* announced the workplace of a doctor in another region of Fagaras county, Sercaia, where only 2 foreign candidates registered (*Romanian Telegraph*, no.25,1894,499).Sibiu county and city became known for the increasing popularity of the Romanian doctors; the most promising doctors, Ilie Stancila and Ioan Moga, died around their forties, the first one only 3 years after being elected as doctor in Avrig (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 2, 1890, 7).

The latter die at 44 years old due to a cardiovascular affection, being well-known in Petrosani, where in 1871 he eliminated the danger of scarlet fever epidemic.He was also a doctor in Sibiu, doctor of the Andreian Seminar, of the Sibiu Consistory and of the Insurance Company "Transylvania" (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 58, 1891, 232). Another case was of the young doctor Sabin Coriolan Secula from Arad, PhD in medicine, who became the second doctor of the Vienna sanatorium Lövinger, who died at the age of 27 (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 45, 1893,179).

Due to the fact that the Red Cross had a lasting activity in Sibiu county and it was considered a meritorious association in the Transylvanian space, the Romanian elite fought to become part of it. Some other medical associations played an important role in Transylvania so that the Reunion of Hygiene in Sibiu county at the end of the 19th century had, among its participants, Romanian doctors, as Partenie Cosma, Ioan Beu and even the archpriest of Sibiu Ioan Hannia (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 16, 1892, 63).

All the initiatives considered useful for the Romanians were popularized insistently, including the regrets that the consequences were not the desirable ones. One example is the opening of the communal house for poor people (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 15, 1886, 59, no. 50, 1877, 202), as well as the initiative in 1865 of midwife courses in Cluj and Sibiu, where even Romanian people could register. Moreover, according to the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 28 November 1886, the midwife course in Sibiu became clinic for midwife (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 7, 1886, 27) and in 1894 it had the official title of Hungarian Royal Institute of Midwife in Sibiu. The courses in Sibiu were organized in German and Romanian, while the poor candidates benefited from 10 places with free accommodation.There were also some scholarships, but the only condition was to practice for 5 years in a village with no qualified midwife (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 98, 1894, 393).

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Another laudable initiative was valuing the curative qualities of the lakes in Ocna-Sibiului, especially for children and of the sanatorium in Avrig for chronic illnesses. The Evangelical Institute permitted the access for the Romanian patients, especially to craftsmen from Sebes, Sibiu, Poiana, Rasinari, Miercurea-Sibiului, who contributed to the so-called *Krankenkassa* for ensuring the workers. The launched invitation in the *Romanian Telegraph* was unsuccessful so that in 1910 at Avrig, among 47 sick patients, only 3 were Romanians (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 13, 1910, 37).

As a consequence of the devastating effects of tuberculosis in Sibiu county, the building of a dispensary for patients was decided; the contribution of the state was around 3000 and then 5000 crowns.The statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1909 established that in Hungary were 5332 deaths due to tuberculosis, among them 591 in Transylvania, the most affected were Hunedoara (71 cases) and Cluj (68 cases) (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 46, 1909, 191).

The most reputable chief-doctors of the Sibiu county were Czekelius and Süsmann, who held many conferences in 1890-1900 with the main subject tuberculosis and fighting it before it became chronic. And this is due to the fact that in Transylvania were 2690 sick people and among them 492 were condemned (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 70, 1900, 279).

In most of his conferences dedicated to tuberculosis, dr. Süsmann highlighted aspects on the prevention and less on the chronic tuberculosis that gave the patient only up to 5 years of life. He pleaded for sanatoriums and for life in the country in case of financial problems. The most disturbing fact was the perception of society regarding the people who suffered from tuberculosis: "to be sick of tuberculosis or to be condemned to death is the same for the lay world" (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 72, 1900, 289).

There was an obvious medical contact in Sibiu and in Transylvania between the Romanian and German people. This is due to the conferences held in Sibiu. At the conference held by dr. Czekelius in December 1890, dr. König from Berlin brought 2000 doses of vaccine for the Sibiu hospital, and this was during the period when Germany and France were at pains to discover a complete vaccine against tuberculosis (it was discovered in 1921 by Albert Calmette and veterinary Camille Guerin (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 127, 1890, 507).

What was the impact of the medical discourse on the Romanian elite and especially in the Romanian rural space? It was multiple and with various consequences. It is clear that the effort of the Romanian doctors for awareness in the rural space on the benefits of hygiene was successful.

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The successor of doctor Ioan Moga at the Theological Seminar, dr. Ioan Beu supported the awareness campaign of families and confessional schools in the rural space, offering the children a minimal sanitary education. His serial referring to hygiene in school was published in the *Romanian Telegraph* in 1904 and analysed the building of the school, the schoolrooms, the correct way of airing, the gym room, the toilet, the courtyard and notions of hygiene to respect at home (taking a bath at least in 2 weeks or building a pool at the river of the village (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 10-16, 1904, 20-35).

There were conferences at the Andreian Seminar regarding the necessity of improving the level of hygiene, an objective helpful for the teachers at the pedagogical section, Petre Span and Aurel Brote. Petre Span pleaded for these matters during some conferences of *Astra* society, as a common effort of the elite to educate what he called "an intelligent proletariat", while at the primary confessional school "Hygiene" as an object of study disappeared and only several notions were taught (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 121, no. 122, 1890, 140, 149).

Professor Aurel Brote was much more virulent addressing families in the rural space, asking for a greater effort on the behalf of the rural elite in order to obtain positive results. He was disappointed by the general attitude of the peasant toward a primary hygiene that could have been respected. For Aurel Brote, the idyllic Romanian village was where you could find modest homes with poor airing, the same alimentation with no variation, comfortable clothes, but not always clean, and a hygiene that wasn't quite exemplary.His biggest pain was related to the infant mortality, which could have reached even a 35-40% during the first year. Called only when nothing else could have been done, the doctor was useless; these aspects showed the peasants' distrust in doctor's abilities (*Calendariul pe anul de la Christos, întocmit după gradurile şi clima Ungariei şi Românie*i, 1907, 150-161).

Data offered by the recruiting committees refer not only to critics regarding the peasants' health, but also to authorities' attitude, less interested in developing a network of modern medicine, highly needed to raise the level of the "sanitary state of the citizens"(Romanian Telegraph, no. 101, 1890, 401).

In the pages of the *Romanian Telegraph* there were published some official initiatives, mandatory for raising the level of hygiene in the rural space. We mention here the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1909 concerning the cleanliness of the streets that also included some penalties for those in charge (*Romanian Telegraph*, no. 60, 1909, 251).

Another article on popularizing the benefits of consulting a doctor tried to ensure a balance between the classical and the traditional medicine, the latter

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completed by the doctor's knowledge. If a witchdoctor could heal a broken sprained leg, could help at birth and knew various teas for illnesses, then epidemic and especially stopping their spread brought the doctor in the foreground (*Romanian Telegraph*, no 59, 1908, 176-179).

The existing difference between the doctor's discourse and its acceptance in the rural space was gradually reduced, especially in the cases of rabies, where the offsets between the starting point of the illness and the medical intervention proved to be fatal for many people. The main critic brought by doctors in the rural space was the refusal to go to the hospital and delaying for a proper treatment.

The priest continued to play a great role in these matters, and the people were guided to trust the doctor, to follow the instructions during epidemic and to support communal pharmacies within the vicarage (*Romanian Telegraph*, no.45, 1904, 152-155).

All these facets that illustrate the medical act and the efforts for adopting a modern conception of the population toward the doctor and the medical discourse offer an image of the various reactions of the institutions, regardless of their origin (dualist state or Romanian elite).

Thus, at the central level, the Budapest government tried to solve some issues regarding health, although these initiatives were not greatly appreciated due to the small budget. When the Ministry of Internal Affairs transferred some of the responsibilities to the local administrations, there were some positive consequences, sensitizing the community on the necessity of ensuring the medical act.

The Church and the school, the recognized Romanian institutions, regardless of confession, contributed to raising the level of hygiene in the rural Romanian space, a process supported by the local Romanian elite. Teachers and professors at the few Romanian gymnasiums used the chance offered by *Astra* organization concerning the modernization of the medical act and popularization of the doctor in a space with many traditional reminiscences.

We may say that generally the evolution of the medical act was of great importance by raising the number of doctors and contributing to epidemic prevention. In this way, the doctor became an important character within the community, regardless of its ethnic particularities.

The Church also contributed to this acceptance of the doctor in the society, along with doctor's permanent role. The doctor's status in the rural Romanian space was encouraged by the Romanian elite and by the desire to have more Romanian doctors. However, the latter aspect can't be considered an objective of its own.

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The rural Romanian society was the obvious target group of all the mentioned efforts, requiring a continuous attention on the behalf of the authorities and local elite. It is evident that the offered data from the mentioned publications and especially from the *Romanian Telegraph* constituted in a case for the Romanian society to recognize and respect the medical act. On the other hand, what was understood as traditional or popular medicine wasn't condemned. Furthermore, what we nowadays call homeopathist medicine was used with the double aim; firstly, people believed in its efficiency in preventing some illnesses, secondly, its presence represented a compromise, as the elite asked for doctor's acceptance in society as a counter-balance.

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