

DEMOGRAPHICS OF ROMANIA IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

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ABSTRACT:

THE ROMANIAN STATISTICS, SYNCHRONIZED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ONE, BRINGS FORWARD THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANIA'S INTERWAR POPULATION FROM A DEMOGRAPHIC POINT OF VIEW, WITH ITS DYNAMISM AND FLUCTUATIONS.

THERE IS A GENERAL TENDENCY OF BIRTH RATE DECREASE AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL, MORE PRONOUNCED AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL, ROMANIA INCLUDED, SCORING IN THIS CONTEXT ONE OF THE HIGHEST BIRTH RATES IN THE WORLD, THE ROMANIAN STATE CONSTANTLY INCREASING THE POPULATION OF THE COUNTRY, IN SPITE OF THE MORE PRONOUNCED BIRTH RATE DECREASE IN THE RURAL AREAS AS OPPOSED TO THE URBAN AREAS.

THE MOST SEVERE PROBLEM IN THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE COUNTRY – BOTH IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS- WAS THE EXTREMELY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF GENERAL DEATH RATE AND INFANT MORTALITY, ROMANIA OCCUPYING THE FIRST PLACE FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW.

DUE TO THE HIGH BIRTH RATE, THE NATURAL POPULATION SURPLUS RATE HAS STILL MAINTAINED AT A CONSIDERABLE LEVEL. DATA OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF BUCHAREST, CORPUS "SABIN MANUIŢĂ", WITH REFERENCE TO THE GLOBAL LEVEL, COMPLETE THIS PICTURE.

KEY WORDS: *DEMOGRAPHICS, BIRTH RATE, DEATH RATE, NATURAL POPULATION SURPLUS, RURAL POPULATION, URBAN POPULATION.*

SUPERIORITY OF THE ROMANIAN BIRTH RATE

In the interwar period, the birth rate in Romania was superior to the rates registered in other European countries; in spite of the fact that there was a general tendency of decline, Romania scored one of the highest birth rates in Europe and even in the world.¹

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¹ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuile, PhD, *doc. 68/25/1932*, f. 6.

Table No.1 – Movement of population, in different countries, in 1929²

No.	European countries	Birth rate ‰	Death rate ‰	Natural increase ³ ‰
1.	England and Wales	16.3	13.4	2.9
2.	Austria	16.7	14.5	2.2
3.	Belgium	18.1	15.0	3.1
4.	Bulgaria ^{***}	30.1	17.8	12.3
5.	Czechoslovakia	22.4 ^{**}	15.5 ^{**}	6.9
6.	Denmark	18.6	11.2	7.4
7.	Switzerland	17.1	12.5	4.6
8.	Finland ^{***}	21.0	15.5	6.0
9.	France	17.7	18.0	- 0.3
10.	Germany	17.9	12.6	5.3
11.	Italy	25.1	16.1	9.0
12.	Norway	17.5	11.2	6.3
13.	The Netherlands	22.8	10.7	12.1
14.	Poland	32.3	17.0	15.3
15.	Portugal [*]	32.3	19.1	13.2
16.	Romania	34.1	21.4	12.7
17.	Spain ^{***}	29.9 [*]	18.1 [*]	10.8
18.	Sweden	15.2	12.2	3.0
19.	Hungary	25.0	17.7	7.3
Non-European Countries				
20.	Japan ^{***}	33.0	20.0	13.0
21.	Australia	20.3	9.6	10.7
22.	United States	18.9	11.9	7.0
23.	Argentina ^{***}	30.1	13.6	16.5

Source of statistical data: D.I. Ciocârlan in *Buletinul demografic al României, Publicație oficială a Ministerului Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale. Oficiul Demografic, de Statistică Sanitară și de ocrotire*, Director: S. Manuilă, PhD, 1st Year, January, 1932, Publishing House of the Demographic Office, Bucharest, p. 29⁴.

The leading place occupied by Romania, with a percentage of 34.1‰, is followed by four European countries, with a birth rate exceeding the percentage of 30‰ (Japan with 33‰, Poland and Portugal with 32.3‰, Bulgaria with 30.1‰), seven countries with birth

² *Buletinul demografic al României, Publicație oficială a Ministerului Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale. Oficiul Demografic, de Statistică Sanitară și de ocrotire*, Director: S. Manuilă, PhD, 1st Year, January, 1932, Publishing House of the Demographic Office, Bucharest, p. 29.

³ *The Rate of Natural Increase* is the yearly difference between the birth rate and the death rate, unlike the effective growth, caused by natural growth and population growth by immigration, called population growth rate. Definition from the *Buletinul Demografic al României ...*, February – April, 1932, p. 14.

^{***} From “*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*”, 1931.

^{**} From “*Rapport Epidémiologique Mensuel de la Société des Nations*”, from 15 November 1931.

^{*} From “*Annuaire statistique de la France*”, 1930.

⁴ For England and Wales, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, The Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Australia and The United States, the data have been extracted from Statistical Yearbooks of the above mentioned countries.

rates of 20-30‰ (Argentina, Spain, Italy, Hungary, The Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Finland); the rest of 23 countries score a percentage under 20‰. We can also notice that the European Countries of Southern and Eastern Europe have higher birth rates than the countries from Western Europe.

In opposition, the lowest birth rate was registered in Sweden (15.2‰, England and Wales with 16.3‰, followed by Austria with 16.7‰, Switzerland with 17.1‰, Norway with 17.5‰, France with 17.7‰ etc.

Regarding death rates, Romania registered the highest percentage out of the 23 states, being the only European state with a death rate of over 20 ‰, an alarming phenomenon that must be reduced.

Sabin Manuilă, in the study “Spre 20 milioane de locuitori” [*Towards 20 million inhabitants*], brings forward the severe demographic situation from Romania, with the sad remark that „*in none of the developed countries there is such a high death rate as in our country, that nowhere else the average life expectancy was not more reduced than in Romania, and that nowhere else a new born had fewer chances of living than in our country*”⁵.

This death rate also influences the natural increase of population and the average life expectancy in our country. Due to a very high birth rate, the natural increase, even though it is decreasing, is still maintained at a level that ensures the country a natural increase of a quarter million inhabitants per year. Life expectancy is still very low, and the life expectancy of a new born is not higher than 40 years, whereas in other countries it is of approximately 60 years or even higher⁶.

The birth rate numbers determine the natural increase of population. From a biological point of view, the most advantageous situation is that of the countries scoring a reduced death rate and a considerable natural increase.

Hence, we can notice an intense phenomenon in the birth and death rates in the case of Romania's population, both rates scoring high percentages.

Regarding the natural increase, the first places are being occupied by Argentina, Poland, Portugal and Japan, Romania being at the same level as The Netherlands, in spite of the difference registered in birth rates (The Netherlands occupies the 10th position, with a percentage of 22,8‰, whereas Romania scores 34,1‰⁷); the only country scoring a higher death rate than the birth rate is France, the difference being of one per cent, resulting in a negative natural increase.

Hence, we can notice that The Netherlands has a similar natural increase of population to that of Romania (12.1‰ for The Netherlands, versus 12.7‰ for Romania), although the birth rate of The Netherlands is much lower than that of Romania. Sabin Manuilă noticed that

“In our case, 1.000 women at a birth giving age, have a fecundity of 202, more precisely one woman out of five is pregnant in a year and gives birth. This represents an extraordinary and useless effort because these extremely numerous births give a natural increase of only 12‰⁸. Or, this percentage is reached by The Netherlands as well, where fecundity per 1000 women is of only 132, so, in their case, a woman out of eight has a pregnancy, respectively one birth a year. This means that Romanian women from 16 to 45

⁵ Arch. St. Bucharest, doc. 103/26/1934, f. 1, Apud. D. Șandru, *Populația rurală a României între cele două războaie mondiale*, Yearbook of the Institute for History and Archeology “A.D. Xenopol” (Supplement II), Publishing House of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Iași, 1980, p. 26.

⁶ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 82/XII/1933, f. 25.

⁷ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Studiu demografic*, doc. 167/X/1940, f. 28.

⁸ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Studiu demografic*, doc. 167/X/1940, f. 27.

years old give birth once every five years, whereas the Dutch women give birth once every eight years, and the final result is the same number of children. Hence, a Romanian woman bares 50% more pregnancies than a Dutch woman, so that the number of children that survive is the same⁹. In Romania, fecundity was diminished mainly by the birth of dead children, of premature birth and other causes¹⁰. From the statistical data of the interwar period, the conclusion is that “the annual birth rate number in our country is almost constant, of more than 625.000 children”. Romania’s natural increase was still appreciable, in spite of the high death rate, due to the high percentage registered on the birth rate scale.

Romania was exceeded on the birth rate scale only in 1924, by Yugoslavia that scored 38,6 ‰ that year, comparative to a value of 37,9 ‰, registered by our country.¹¹

We are going to compare the data above with the data on the movement of population from 30 states, reported to the year 1930, the chart below providing also data on child mortality.

Table No.2 – Movement of population, in different countries, in 1930¹²

No	Birth rate	‰	Death rate	‰	Natural increase	‰	Child mortality	‰
1.	Romania	35.0	Romania	19.4	Poland	17.0	Romania	17.6
2.	Poland*	32.8	Portugal*	18.8	The Union of South Africa	16.7	Lithuania*	15.4
3.	Portugal*	32.8	Japan**	18.2	Romania	15.6	Hungary*	15.4
4.	Japan**	32.4	Spain*	17.3	Bulgaria	14.8	Portugal*	14.4
5.	Greece**	30.9	Greece**	16.2	Greece	14.7	Czechoslovakia*	13.8
6.	Bulgaria**	30.6	Lithuania*	15.9	Japan	14.2	Bulgaria***	13.6
7.	Spain*	29.0	Bulgaria**	15.8	The Netherlands	14.0	Japan*	12.1
8.	Lithuania*	27.4	Poland*	15.8	Portugal	14.0	Spain*	11.7
9.	The Union of South Africa**	26.4	France*	15.7	Canada	13.5	Austria**	10.6
10.	Italia*	26.0	Hungary*	15.3	Italy	12.3	Italy****	10.6
11.	Hungary*	24.7	Estonia*	14.9	Spain	11.7	Belgium***	9.3

⁹ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Studiu demografic*, doc. 167/X/1940, f. 28-29.

¹⁰ Sabin Manuilă, PhD, *Demografia rurală a României*, in “Revista de igienă socială”, Bucharest, year X (1940), no. 1-6, January-June, 269.

¹¹ G. Banu, PhD, *Biologia satelor*, in “Arhiva pentru știința și reforma socială”, Bucharest, year VII (1927-1928), no. 1-2, p. 91; Sabin Manuilă, PhD, D.C. Georgescu, *Populația României*, Bucharest, 1937, 81.

¹² *Buletinul demografic al României, Publicație oficială a Ministerului Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale. Oficiul Demografic, de Statistică Sanitară și de ocrotire*, Director: S. Manuilă, PhD, February-Aprili, 1932, Publishing House of the Demographic Office, Bucharest, p. 45 (Note: In the case of the Union of South Africa, reference is made to the white population;).

* From “*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*”, for the year 1931.

** From “*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*”, for the year 1932.

*** From “*Annuaire statistique de la France*”, 1931.

**** From “*Annuaire Statistique du Japon*”, for the year 1930.

**** From “*Annuario Statistico Italiano*”, for the year 1932.

12.	Canada**	24.5	Czechoslovakia*	14.2	Lithuania	11.5	Canada**	8.9
13.	The Netherlands*	23.1	Latvia**	14.2	Australia	11.3	Germany**	8.4
14.	Czechoslovakia*	22.7	The Irish Free State*	14.1	New Zealand	10.2	Denmark***	8.2
15.	Finland**	20.6	Italy*	13.7	Hungary	9.4	France*	7.8
16.	Australia**	19.9	Austria*	13.5	Czechoslovakia	8.5	The Irish Free State*	6.7
17.	The Irish Free State*	19.8	Belgium**	13.2	Denmark	7.9	The Union of South Africa**	6.7
18.	Latvia**	19.8	Finland**	13.2	United States	7.6	England and Wales*	6.0
19.	United States**	18.9	Sweden**	11.7	Finland	7.4	Sweden***	5.4
20.	New Zealand*	18.8	Switzerland*	11.5	Norway	6.9	Switzerland**	5.1
21.	Denmark**	18.7	England and Wales*	11.4	Germany	6.4	The Netherlands*	5.1
22.	Belgium**	18.6	United States**	11.3	The Irish Free State	5.7	Australia**	4.7
23.	France*	18.1	Germany**	11.1	Switzerland	5.6	Norway*	4.6
24.	Germany**	17.5	Canada**	11.0	Latvia	5.6	New Zealand*	3.5
25.	Estonia*	17.4	Denmark**	10.8	Belgium	5.4		
26.	Norway*	17.3	Norway*	10.4	England and Wales	4.9		
27.	Switzerland*	17.1	The Union of South Africa**	9.7	Sweden	3.7		
28.	Austria*	16.8	The Netherlands*	9.1	Austria	3.3		
29.	England and Wales	16.3	Australia**	8.6	Estonia	2.5		
30.	Sweden**	15.4	New Zealand*	8.6	France	2.4		

Source of statistical data: D.I. Ciocârlan in *Buletinul demografic al României, Publicație oficială a Ministerului Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale. Oficiul Demografic, de Statistică Sanitară și de ocrotire*, Director: S. Manuilă, PhD, February-April, 1932, publishing House of the Demographic Office, Bucharest, p. 45.

Comparative to the year 1929, statistical data do not change fundamentally for the year 1930, Romania still occupying the first position on both birth and death rates. Unfortunately, we have the highest percentage in the case of child mortality as well. Death rates decline from 21,4‰ in 1929, to 19,4‰ in 1930, and, regarding natural increase,

***** From "Annuaire Statistique de la Norvège", for the year 1932.

Romania occupies the third place, scoring a percentage of 15.6‰, comparative to 12.7‰ in 1929 (the 5th place).

The most advantageous position among the countries with a high birth rate is occupied by Poland: 2nd place on the birth rate scale (32.8‰), 8th place on the death rate scale (15.8‰), and 1st place on the natural increase scale (17.0‰). The most disadvantageous demographic balance is occupied again by France, with a birth rate of 18.1‰ (23rd place), a high death rate of 15.7‰ (9th place), and, in the case of natural increase, it occupies the last position (30th place), with 2.4‰. A similar position is occupied by Austria: birth rate of 16.8‰ (28th place), death rate of 13.5‰ (16th place), and natural increase of 3.3‰ (28th place).

At a global level, the most favourable demographic situation is the one of The *Union of South Africa*, with a birth rate of 26.4‰, occupying the 9th place, with a death rate of 9.7‰ (27th place), and with a natural increase of 16.7‰ (occupying the 2nd place). Making a comparison between The *Union of South Africa* and Romania, we can notice that both states have an almost identical natural increase rate (2nd place for The *Union of South Africa*, with 16.7‰, respectively 3rd place for Romania, with 15.6‰); regarding birth rates, Romania occupies the 1st place with 35.0‰, and The *Union of South Africa* occupies the 9th place, with 26.4‰; regarding death rates, the situation is strikingly different, Romania occupying the 1st place with 19.4‰, and The *Union of South Africa*, with 9.7‰, occupying the 27th place. Similar positions to that of The *Union of South Africa* are encountered, at a global level, in the case of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and, at a European level, in the case of The Netherlands.

Our country occupies a disadvantageous position in the case of child mortality rates as well, in spite of the decline from 19.7‰, in 1929, to 17.6‰, in 1930.

Although it scores a very high birth rate, because of the alarming death rate, much higher than the death rates of any other civilized countries, and reaching the national potential of Romania's population structure, the interwar period required a much clearer demographic policy, with better defined and more rapid effects on the decline of mortality.

BIRTH RATES IN THE RURAL AREAS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SUPERIOR TO THOSE IN THE URBAN AREAS

Birth rates in the urban areas have been much more reduced than in the rural areas, invariably, the rural population having an extremely low natural increase rate. Sabin Manuilă stated that:

„ Both from a biological, and social and economic perspective, the urban population has a totally different character from the rural population. [...] The rural population is conservative, less open to the idea of social and cultural progress, it has a higher natural increase, it is stationary and, generally, it is characterized by biological and social hyperfunctions. For the urban inhabitants, the situation is the other way around. The more intense pulse of the urban life necessarily produces a reduction of the vitality of the population, and it determines an exaltation of the social functions. As a result, *villages act as a reservoir of population, and the cities as population destroyers.*”¹³ Of course, the observation is taken to the extreme, but it is later on supported by the study „*Populația României*” [The Population of Romania].

If we analyse the phenomenon of reproduction, which ensures the perpetuation of human race, we can notice that, in the urban areas, this phenomenon is very reduced, and incapable of compensating the losses suffered because of yearly death rates. If the

¹³ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 82/XII/1933, f. 18.

population from the cities would be recruited just from the indigenous, in a few decades the cities would become completely uninhabited.

In the rural areas, child bearing is more frequent. Not only do they cover the losses caused by death, but they also give a significant natural increase rate. This natural increase is divided into two parts. One part remains in the rural areas, strengthening the rural population, and the other part inhabits the cities, filling in the gaps and increasing the population of the cities.

The capital had 321.000 inhabitants in 1912. In 1930, the population of the capital increased, reaching a number of 631.000 inhabitants, among which only 10% were born in the capital. The rest of 90% originated from the rural areas.

Although rural areas generate, urban areas develop, consume. In human biology, rural areas represent the industry: the creation, and urban areas represent commerce: the development.”¹⁴

In Romania, birth rates encountered bizarre fluctuations, whose causes have not been clarified yet. Around 1860, the birth rate was reduced to an approximate percentage of 30 ‰. In 1870, it increased from 40 to 50 ‰, and between 1890 and 1910 the birth rate maintained around a constant percentage of 40‰, increasing up to 43‰ in the years preceding the war. After the war, birth rates declined comparative to the interval 1910-1914, and they continuing to decrease, particularly in the rural areas. In the urban areas, the birth rate is much lower than in the rural ones, but it remains constant, without registering a decreasing direction¹⁵.

Nevertheless, as a general rule, the overproduction of the rural population flows into the cities, in order to fill in the gaps produced by the disappearance of the urban population, and to lead to a continuous increase of the cities. Analysing the situation of the cities form Romania, we could easily make use of this truth. Hence, in Transylvania and in 6 of the 8 cities with municipalities, in 1870, the urban population was of 151,059 inhabitants, and the population of the villages and of the rest of the cities was of 4,022,327. Up until 1900, the urban population increased up to 255,118, and the rural one increased up to 4,639,558 inhabitants, and, after another 3 decades, in 1930, the cities registered a number of 438,048 inhabitants, whereas the rest of 5,111,393 inhabitants have been registered in the rural areas. The increase in the municipalities was, in the first 3 decades, of 68.9%, and, in the last ones, of 190%; in the rural areas, the increase was of 15.3% in the first decades, and of 27.1% in the last ones.¹⁶

In order to thoroughly analyse birth rates in the urban areas, comparative to the rural ones, we are going to present the concrete situation of the number of child bearings in Romania, in both areas, from the interval 1920-1939¹⁷:

¹⁴ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 88/XII/1934, f. 6-7.

¹⁵ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Studiu demografic*, doc. 167/X/ 1940, f. 26.

¹⁶ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Studiul Dr. S. Manuilă, directorul Institutului de Demografie, depre “Întinderea și populația României”*, doc. 96/XII/1934, f. 9-10.

¹⁷ D. Șandru, *op.cit.*, 14.

Table No.3 – Number of child bearings in Romania

Year	Romania	%	Urban	%	Rural	%
1920	539 359	34,7	68 076	19,7	471 283	39,0
1921	624 460	39,4	78 771	22,7	541 689	44,2
1922	613 726	38,4	78 632	22,5	535 094	42,9
1923	608 763	37,6	78 032	22,3	530 731	41,8
1924	622 580	37,9	78 165	22,2	544 415	42,1
1925	605 655	36,3	73 380	20,7	532 275	40,5
1926	607 864	35,9	76 831	21,6	531 033	39,7
1927	603 284	35,2	76 354	21,4	526 939	38,8
1928	623 860	35,9	79 956	22,3	543 904	39,4
1929	600 556	34,0	77 189	21,4	523 367	37,3
1930	625 341	35,0	82 013	23,6	543 328	37,7
1931	607 130	33,4	77 989	22,3	529 141	36,1
1932	662 058	33,9	78 541	22,3	583 517	39,1
1933	597 834	32,0	73 240	20,8	524 594	34,7
1934	612 335	32,4	74 017	20,9	538 399	35,0
1935	585 386	30,7	73 580	20,7	511 806	33,0
1936	608 906	31,5	76 320	21,4	532 586	33,8
1937	601 302	30,7	77 301	21,4	524 001	32,9
1938	584 197	29,5	77456	21,4	507 741	31,5
1939	563 763	28,3	75 691	20,9	488 072	29,9
Total	12 094 005		1 530 515		10 563 490	

Source of statistical data: Dr. Sabin Manuilă, D.C. Georgescu, *op.cit.*, p. 80-83; Ing. I. Measnicov, *Mortalitatea populației rurale românești*, in „Sociologie românească”, year II (1937), no. 4, April, p. 158; D. Șandru, *Populația rurală a României între cele două războaie mondiale*, Yearbook of the Institute for History and Archeology “A.D. Xenopol” (Supplement II), Publishing House of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Iași, 1980, p.15.

We can notice that the highest number of child bearings, more precisely 625.341, was registered in 1930, Romania scoring a percentage of 35.0‰. Moreover, we can notice a tendency of decline in birth rates, each year, except for 1930.

In the **rural areas**, birth rates registered very high percentages.

More precisely, the main demographic data of the counties¹⁸, present the following fluctuations: in **Muntenia**, the birth rate is of over 40‰; in Brăila it even exceeds 48‰; an exception is encountered in Muscel, with a percentage of just 34‰; in **Dobrogea**, the average birth rate is of 45,1‰, with 48.1‰ in Tulcea and 49.5‰ in Constanța. **Moldavia** is the province with the highest birth rate scores, comparative to all the other Romanian provinces, scoring an average percentage of 44.5‰, in the county of Fălciu the birth rate reaching a percentage of 52‰, the highest percentage registered in Romania in 1930. Furthermore, it is important to point out that in Moldavia there is no county registering a birth rate lower than 41.0‰, in the rural areas. **Bessarabia** occupies the 3rd place on the birth rate scale, and a 2nd place on the natural increase of population scale; the average

¹⁸ Datele sunt culese din *Buletinului Demografic al României ...*, Februarie – Aprilie, 1932, p. 21-23; Arh. St. București, Fond Dr. S. Manuilă, *Studiu demografic*, doc. 167/X/ 1940, f. 27.

percentage of the birth rate declines below 40‰, because of the scores registered in the counties of Cetatea-Albă, Hotin and Soroca; a high birth rate is scored by the county of Cahul, with a percentage of 50.0‰. **Bucovina** registers an average birth rate, similar to Oltenia. In the case of **Transylvania and Crișana-Maramureș**, there is a reduced birth rate of 33‰, and no county of this area registers a percentage higher than 40‰ in the rural areas. The lowest birth rate is registered in the vilages of Banat, with a percentage of 23‰, the lowest percentage being registered in the county of Timiș, with 22,3‰. The lowest birth rate in Romania is registered in the counties of Timiș, Caraș, Hunedoara, Severin, Arad and Făgăraș.

In the rural areas, the teams of students also encountered major fluctuations: the team working in Stoeșești, county of Tutova, registered, for the years 1928-1937, an average birth rate of 51,8 ‰, while for the interval 1927 -1936 in Jdioara, county of Severin, the average birth rate was of only 26,47 ‰, namely approximately half the scores obtained for Stoeșești¹⁹.

The lowest birth rate, presenting alarming aspects from a demographic point of view, was registered constantly, between the two World Wars, in the west and south-west areas of the country; regarding the social criteria, the lowest birth rate was registered in the case of intellectuals, where there were few child bearings.²⁰

Regarding *overall death rate*, the percentage is of 19.8‰ in the rural areas. In 34 of the counties there is a death rate higher than 20.0‰, and 37 of them do not exceed this percentage. All the counties from **Dobrogea, Moldavia** (except for the counties of Baia and Neamț) and those of **Bucovina** (except for the county of Câmpulung), score death rates higher than 20‰. In **Banat, Crișana** and **Maramureș** (except for Bihor), there is no county that reaches the national average number, and in the case of **Transylvania**, only in 3 counties (Făgăraș with 20.5‰, Năsăud with 21.3‰, and Someș with 19.9‰) the national average number is exceeded. The highest percentage of mortality was registered in the county of Durostor (28.2‰), and the lowest was registered in the county of Soroca (16.5‰).

Regarding *the natural increase of population*, the average national percentage is of 17‰, with very high fluctuations: the county of Fălciu scoring a percentage of 31.6‰ and the county of Timiș-Torontal a percentage of only 3.7‰.

In the Romanian provinces, the natural increase varies by region. In Dobrogea it is very high, some counties of Dobrogea scoring a natural increase percentage of 40 ‰. At the opposite end, in the counties of Banat, particularly in the county of Caraș, we cannot talk about a natural increase rate, because of the demographic decline – very low birth rates, very high death rates, a decline in population. In the evolution of population, the situation of Banat is particular. Namely, Banat has a very low birth rate, a high death rate, a disparent natural increase and a decline in population. In 1929, the birth rate was of 220 in Banat, without being below the average birth rate of most European countries. Germany, Switzerland, Austria, The United States, England, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, etc. have lower birth rates than Banat; nevertheless, they register a considerable natural increase rate. The explanation is the lower death rate of these countries, of 15.0 ‰ in Belgium, 14.5 ‰ in Austria, 12.6 ‰ in Germany and Switzerland, 11.9 ‰ in The United States, 10.7 ‰ in The Netherlands and 9.6 ‰ in Australia²¹.

The situation of Banat is exceptional, the overall mortality being of 22.0 ‰, which means that, overall, the number of people being born is similar to the number of those

¹⁹ D. Șandru, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

²⁰ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, doc. 204/28/1940, f. 1.

²¹ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 82/XII/1933, f. 25-26.

decreasing. The disastrous result is caused particularly by child mortality of children under 1 year old²².

For the *urban areas*²³, we can notice as a general feature that there are large fluctuations from city to city, the birth rate in the cities being very low. In Bucharest, the birth rate is of 21.5‰. A high percentage is encountered in the case of small under populated cities or towns: Urlați 42.7‰, Isaccea 40.0‰, Măcin 42.9‰, Medgidia 41.9‰, Mărășești 41.7‰, Comrat 46.0‰; at the opposite end, we encounter cities with very low birth rates: Orșova 13.3‰, Oravița 12.5‰, Suceava 13.9‰, Făgăraș 11.0‰.

Death rates in the urban areas reach a percentage of 25‰, and in some cities, even above 30‰ (for example, Filipești-Târg from the county of Prahova, scores 31.9‰), a unique negative situation in Europe. For this reason, the natural population increase is low in the cities.

THE TENDENCY OF DECLINE IN BIRTH RATE IS A GENERAL GLOBAL PHENOMENON

In the interwar period, birth rates began to decline severely in most civilized countries. The decline was almost general and more significant in the European countries. Other continents faced a less severe decline in birth rates, and, in some countries, it even remained constant. An exception is represented by Japan, where birth rates grew significantly, Japan being considered one of the most fertile countries of the world.

Romania does not make an exception to this general tendency, Sabin Manuilă stating that: “Concerning birth rates, around the middle of the previous century, a decline began almost all over the countries of Europe.

Before the war, no serious tendency of decline was registered in Romania. After the war, a decline in the birth rates begins in our country as well, yearly.

In Transylvania, the decline between 1875 and 1930 is continuous. In the Old Kingdom the birth rate has a vertiginous tendency of growth.²⁴

As we can observe in Table no. 3, a general tendency of decline in birth rates occurs for our country as well, almost permanent each year, with a regulation around the percentage of 35‰ between the decades three and four, and around 30-32‰ in the following period, except for the year 1930.

Naturally, the population of the new united provinces was also included in the calculation of birth rates. As these provinces registered a lower birth rate, this led to the decline of the birth rate percentage at a national level. Sabin Manuilă, in the study „*Problema populației în cadrul planului economic*” [Aspects regarding population within the economic plan] stated that: „Certainly, we must take into consideration, in the analysis of this phenomenon, that after the unification of the new provinces, in the calculus of average birth rates, the very low scores registered by the provinces beyond the Carpathians influenced the calculation of the average birth rate. However, once the post-war level of Greater Romania was stabilized, a visible decline in birth rates was registered yearly. This decline is general and it covers all the provinces of the country. And in the provinces from the West, particularly in Banat, it reached such low extreme, that we can discuss about a population decline.”²⁵

²² Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 82/XII/1933, f. 26.

²³ Data collected from *Buletinului Demografic al României ...*, February – April, 1932, p. 25.

²⁴ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 82/XII/1933, f. 6; Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 82/XII/1933, f. 24..

²⁵ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Conferința Dr. S. Manuilă relativ la “Problema populației în cadrul planului economic”*, doc. 151/XII/1938, f. 3.

CONCLUSION

We draw the conclusion that, at a global level, while birth rates are in a significant and continuous decline all over the world, in Romania birth rates still maintained at a high level; still, on the other hand, death rates also registered alarming levels, Romania being situated on an unfortunate first place in the world, regarding the number of deceased per 1000 inhabitants*. The consequence of this high death rate and of the reduced birth rate was the decline of the natural increase rate in all European countries.

Comparing birth rates in urban and rural areas, we can observe that the low birth rates registered in the cities did not generate a stagnation in the growth of the urban population, as the high birth rates registered in the villages did not generate a high increase in the number of inhabitant of the counties. As a general conclusion, we can observe that the rural population, although prolific, proved to be stable, whereas the urban population, with a lower number of child bearings, registered a more rapid increase.

Hence, as interwar cities could not maintain the natural increase, it was obvious that the constant growth in urban population was the result of a migration of the inhabitants from the villages. Finally, the growth of both urban and rural population was the result of the rural population increase.²⁶

In a nutshell, we can observe that, in the first post-war years, the birth rate in the rural areas was of 40,5 per 1000 inhabitants, whereas in the urban areas it scored only 21,1 per 1000 inhabitants.²⁷ The average national birth rate for the period 1931-1935 was of 32,9‰; it scored 35,5‰ in the villages, while in the cities it scored only 21,4‰.²⁸ Birth rates in the rural areas, as well as those registered at the national level, revealed large fluctuations from one area to another, the highest score being registered in Moldavia, and the lowest one in Banat.²⁹ As a general rule, the larger was the city, the lower was the birth rate.

As a whole, the balance for the interwar period can be considered to be a positive one, as the population of the country grew up to approximately 5 million inhabitants; on the birth rate scale, Romania occupied the first place in Europe, the same leading position as it unfortunately occupied on the overall mortality and child mortality scales; should child mortality rates improve, it could lead to a considerable improvement of the population natural increase.

Fighting for the decrease in mortality rates should represent a prior concern, for an improvement in the standard of living and for an action of modern preventive medicine.³⁰

* This unfortunate finding has as source *Enciclopedia României*, vol. I, 1938, p. 511: „What is predominant in our high overall mortality rate is the enormous percentage of child mortality. From this perspective, we are in front of a totally particular phenomenon: even today we are scoring the record number of 50 years ago, that is not encountered anywhere else in the world, and that we could not modify at all.”

²⁶ Arch. St. Bucharest, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Populația României*, doc. 88/XII/1934, f. 5, *Apud.* Sabin Manuilă, *Evoluția demografică a orașelor și minorităților etnice din Transilvania*, Bucharest, 1926.

²⁷ Sabin Manuilă, PhD, *Demografia rurală ...*, 159.

²⁸ D.C. Georgescu, *Populația satelor românești*, in “Sociologie românească”, year II (1937), no. 2-3, February-March, 74.

²⁹ Sabin Manuilă, PhD, *op.cit.*, 159.

³⁰ Arch. St. Bucharest, General Directorate, Corpus S. Manuilă, PhD, *Studiul dr. S. Manuilă – Tendințele de creștere a populației românești*, doc. 68/XII/12 June 1932, f. 7-8.

* Quotations are translated by the author.

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