

Demographic phenomena and behaviour in Transylvania during World War I

Sorina Paula Bolovan¹, Ioan Bolovan²

¹*Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, bpsorina@yahoo.com*

²*Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of History and Philosophy, bolovani@yahoo.com*

Abstract. As in other territories, during World War I in Transylvania there were significant political and military, social and economic, but also cultural and mentality mutations that influenced the demographic situation of the province. The dynamics and the structure of the population in Transylvania during this period accurately mirror both the domestic and the international circumstances that caused ampler or less perceptible variations in demographic behavior. Some of it was immediate, whereas other consequences were to be felt in the following decades or they even went beyond the interwar period, up to the second half of the 20th century. Birth rate had the most dramatic evolutions, but mortality rate also reflected the socio-economic and the political-military circumstances. Marriage and the couple's morality were visibly influenced by the war state; people reacted in a complex manner when faced with the new framework of their daily life. The increased mobility of the population, especially of those drafted during those years, contributed to the "contamination" of large segments of the population with practices, attitudes, and feelings that would have hardly been noticeable in normal conditions of peace and traditional mentality background.

Keywords: Romania, Transylvania, World War I, demographic behaviour

From the demographic point of view, in Europe World War I meant approximately 8,5 million victims among combatants only, out of which 1,200,000 casualties came from Austria-Hungary (Davies, 1997, p. 1328). These figures are highly significant for the demographic

evolutions in the belligerent countries of those years. From Transylvania, between the 1 August 1914 and 1 November 1918, approximately 926,500 men were drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army. This represented 16.5% out of the total population of the province (Maior, 2006, p. 131). Consequently, as in other territories, during World War I in Transylvania there were significant political and military, social and economic, but also cultural and mentality mutations that influenced the demographic situation of the province. The dynamics and the structure of the population in Transylvania during this period accurately mirror both the domestic and the international circumstances that caused ampler or less perceptible variations in demographic behavior. This situation should not be regarded as surprising. Both in the belligerent countries and in the countries which were neuter from the military point of view, there were several similarities during this period of the history of the European population since the war affected the entire population but with different intensity degrees (Bardet & Dupaquier, 1999, p. 7 sqq; Singer & Small, 1972, p. 4). In the following pages we will use the notion of “Transylvania” in its limited sense, namely the territory of the ancient autonomous principality that was to be founded inside the Carpathian arch and in 1914 it included as many as 16 counties (Bolovan, 2000, p. 30 sqq). There is no doubt nowadays that the World War I had a serious impact upon the Transylvanian society. Some of it was immediate, whereas other consequences were to be felt in the following decades or they even went beyond the interwar period, up to the second half of the 20th century. The first visible consequences of the war’s outbreak were related to the emigration issue. If in the previous years the number of emigrants from Transylvania had been increasing gradually until 1914: 16,458 in 1912, 20,327 in 1913 and 26,536 in 1914 (Bolovan & Bolovan, 2003, p. 49), from 1915 on this phenomenon was, officially at least, non-existent, since the authorities stopped issuing passports. However, the emigration phenomenon was not completely annihilated since many inhabitants from Transylvania crossed the mountains to Romania, a country that declared its military neutrality in 1914. Some emigrants only wanted to avoid fulfilling the military service in the Austro-Hungarian army, as they used to do before the war’s outbreak as well. The 12 September 1914 report by the *vicecomitele* (a “comite” was the administrative leader of a county) of Făgăraș County which addressed to

the Hungarian Minister of Interior is revealing in this respect: “last year the emigration of men that were to fulfill the compulsory military service was banned, and no more passports were issued for the people who belonged to the armed forces. Consequently, those who despite the existing ban preferred to leave the country without an emigration authorization and without a passport, used to that purpose the numerous mountain paths leading to Romania and which are very difficult to watch over.” (Adam & Pușcaș, 1987, p. 768). Moreover, after the drafting decree in Austria-Hungary, a trend favourable to emigration developed among the youths. However, despite the fact that some of those who were targeted for conscription avoided it, approximately half a million Romanians joined the Austro-Hungarian army during the summer and the autumn of 1914 (Maior, 2004, p. 172). Both the leaders of the National Romanian Party and of the two Romanian churches (Orthodox and Greek Catholic) urged the Romanians to stay loyal to the emperor and join the army in great numbers. As shown above, very many Romanians acted on this advice, especially as they had the experience of other wars in which the monarchy had been involved and they hoped that the war would not last more than a few months (Maior, 2006, p.127 sqq).

However, the emigration trend, which had been a practice with the Transylvanian Romanians even long before the war broke out, followed its natural course despite the measures taken by the Hungarian authorities. The increasing number of emigrants to Romania in 1914 was attributed by the authorities to the reality that “since the end of the Second Balkan War, the national awareness of citizens whose mother tongue is Romanian has been increasing dangerously” (Adam & Pușcaș, 1987, p. 760). The authorities associated most of the emigration from Transylvania to Romania to the consolidation of national feelings. According to the report sent by the Sibiu county’s *comite* to the Ministry of Interior on 26 November 1914, clandestine emigration increased in the summer of 1914, after the outbreak of World War I, especially among the youths fit for military service: “as passports have no longer been issued since the war broke out, I do not have any more data, but according to my sources there are many who take flight to Romania. And, this cannot be done without the cooperation of people who live in the villages near the border, because they are the only ones who know the cross-mountain paths.” (Adam & Pușcaș, 1987, p. 770). In the

autumn of 1914 the reports of the Austro-Hungarian consulates or the diplomatic representatives of Austria-Hungary in Romania constantly reported that in Romania there were many Transylvanians who refused to declare their presence lest they should be listed, drafted and then sent to battlefields or garrisons in Transylvania (Maior, 1985, p. 360).

Undoubtedly, in Transylvania as well, the war caused important mutations in demographic behaviour, with regard to the human being's attitude towards the fundamental moments in his / her existence: birth, marriage, death. As it is well known, systemically, the population is defined by "state variables that represent population stocks – demographic aggregations and structures, permanently modified by fluctuations – births and deaths – forming the natural movement of the population" (Trebici, 1996, p. 37). Consequently, the natural movement of the population (or its birth and mortality rates) represents one of the major problems of demographics, since the actual unfolding of this natural movement ensures the reproduction of the population. The difference between the number of deaths and the number of births represents the natural growth rate of the population. When this is positive, the population is on the increase, and when it is negative, the population is on the decrease. The birth rate and the mortality rate accurately mirror the socio-economic and the cultural circumstances, mentalities, as well as the composition of the population. One of the characteristics of the population as a demographic system is interdependence. Consequently, the natural movement, in its turn determines the structure of the population and has important consequences on the socio-economic, the cultural and even the political realities. Most of the specialists also include marriages into the natural movement of the population. They motivate this option by claiming that births generally occur within the marriage framework; most of the births occur in officially set up families (legally recognized by state and church). Anyway, the prolonged war affected all the components of the natural movement, marital behaviour; it changed the demographic policies of the government, etc. (Winter & Wall, 1988, p. 2). In Table 1 we have synthesized the numerical evolution of births, deaths and marriages, as well as the crude birth, mortality, and marriage rates.

Table 1. The natural movement of the population in Transylvania between 1913-1918

| Year | Births | | Deaths | | Marriages | |
|------|---------|------------|--------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Crude rate | Number | Crude rate | Number | Crude rate |
| 1913 | 105.083 | 34,9‰ | 77.354 | 25,9‰ | 26.595 | 8,9‰ |
| 1914 | 102.555 | 34‰ | 73.718 | 24,9‰ | 19.929 | 6,6‰ |
| 1915 | 70.099 | 23,6‰ | 83.065 | 27,4‰ | 9.351 | 3,1‰ |
| 1916 | 47.391 | 15,7‰ | 65.285 | 21,8‰ | 8.046 | 2,6‰ |
| 1917 | 44.452 | 14,8‰ | 59.918 | 20,2‰ | 9.466 | 3,2‰ |
| 1918 | 42.336 | 14,2‰ | 70.307 | 23,4‰ | 15.289 | 5,1‰ |

Source: *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1913-1918. évi népmozgalma*, in *Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények. Új sorozat*, LXX kötet.

Let's focus next on the evolution of the three components of the natural movement of the population in the entire province. It is interesting to investigate the manner in which the war influenced birth rate each year. Thus, as the harmful effects of the war conditions were increasing, the number of births in Transylvania was decreasing: 105,083 in 1913, 102,555 in 1914, 70,999 in 1915, 47,391 in 1916, 44,452 in 1917 and 42,336 in 1918. During the first year of war the number of births was still high because the conceptions had taken place in the previous year. Also, the year 1915 seems to be an intermediary one, since the births from the first months of the year were the result of conceptions from April-July 1914. Only the years 1916-1918 do really show the fertility rate from the war period. Obviously, the crude birth rate decreased during those years from 34,9‰ in 1913, to 34‰ in 1914, 23,6‰ in 1915, 15,7‰ in 1916 and 14,2‰ in the last year of World War I, the latter being the lowest value recorded during those years. The same decreasing tendency is to be noticed at the micro-level as well. Thus, the data provided by the evolution of the total number of births in 6 small and medium sized rural communities from the south, the centre and the north of Transylvania are the following: 104 in 1913, 90 in 1914, 58 in 1915, 47 in 1916, 44 in 1917 and 39 in 1918 (Bolovan & Bolovan, 2003, p. 103).

Figure 1. The evolution of the natural movement of the population in Transylvania between 1913-1918

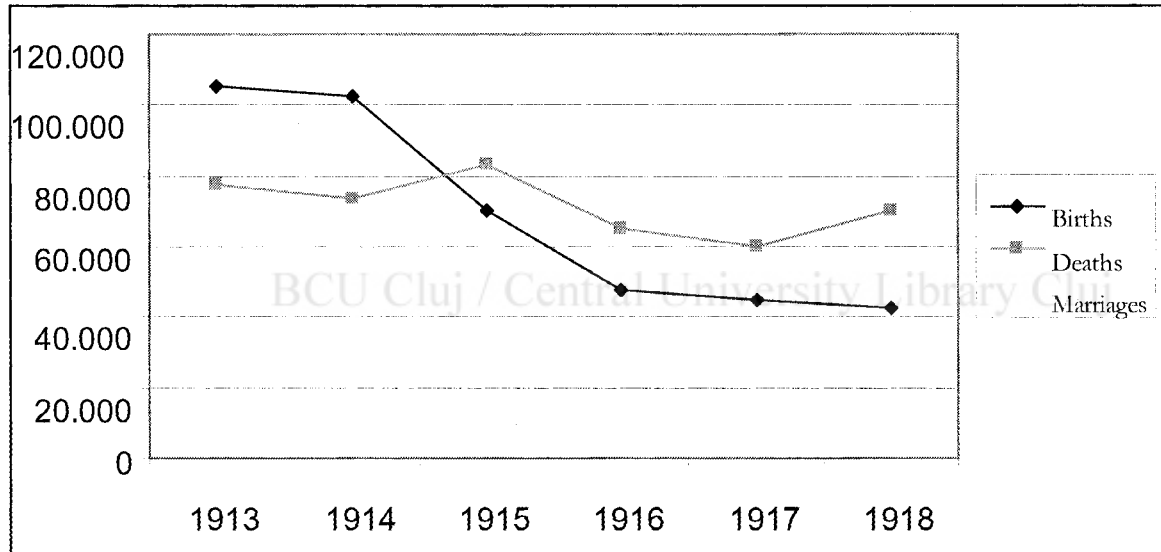


Table 2. The number of births in Transylvania between 1913-1918

| County | 1913 | 1914 | 1915 | 1916 | 1917 | 1918 |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Alba de Jos | 8719 | 8393 | 5733 | 4061 | 3855 | 3096 |
| Bistrița-Năsăud | 4101 | 4130 | 2801 | 2137 | 1892 | 1794 |
| Brașov | 3209 | 3123 | 2160 | 1401 | 1292 | 1330 |
| Ciuc | 6011 | 6160 | 4042 | 2284 | 1816 | 2368 |
| Făgăraș | 3277 | 3125 | 2006 | 1058 | 931 | 801 |
| Trei Scaune | 4967 | 5088 | 3463 | 2024 | 2272 | 2227 |
| Hunedoara | 10558 | 10709 | 7325 | 4471 | 4449 | 4592 |
| Târnava Mică | 4319 | 4078 | 2497 | 1904 | 1786 | 1480 |
| Cluj | 9152 | 8801 | 5828 | 4377 | 3862 | 3515 |
| Town of Cluj | 2066 | 2006 | 1539 | 1188 | 1144 | 1011 |
| Mureș-Turda | 7215 | 7425 | 5023 | 3450 | 3058 | 3111 |
| Town of Târgu Mureș | 848 | 867 | 667 | 628 | 554 | 567 |
| Târnava Mare | 4772 | 4637 | 2916 | 1963 | 2017 | 2022 |
| Sibiu | 6091 | 5943 | 3873 | 2571 | 2375 | 2219 |
| Solnoc-Dăbâca | 9066 | 8602 | 6105 | 4371 | 4039 | 3600 |
| Turda-Arieș | 7188 | 6941 | 4989 | 3563 | 3321 | 2910 |
| Odorhei | 4267 | 4131 | 2816 | 1722 | 1890 | 1829 |
| Sălaj | 9257 | 8396 | 6314 | 4215 | 3899 | 3864 |
| TOTAL | 105.083 | 102.555 | 70.099 | 47.391 | 44.452 | 42.336 |

Source: *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1913-1918. évi népmozgalma, in Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények. Új sorozat, LXX kötet.*

Without any doubt, the fall in the number of births in Transylvania between 1913-1918 is primarily due to the drafting of young men who were around their marriage age. Since they had been drafted, they could not get married and have children. Then, the young married men who were drafted were away from home for a long time. Those who were near their hometowns or villages and who benefited mostly of leave taking did not always “take the chance” of increasing the number of their family members. One can also infer that the war and its sufferings and deprivations also contributed to the increasing individual and collective questioning about the couple’s responsibilities towards the

new family members. Not only that wives did have to take care of the already existing children, but they also had to be in charge of the peasant households which supposed an immense amount of housework. Moreover, as the letters to and from soldiers reveal (Bârlea, 2004, p. 117), wives had many difficulties in making the ends meet. Consequently, it was women who must have been the most reluctant to procreation during their husbands' few and short leaves. The folklore productions, which were very rich and numerous during the war time, talk about these social and economic realities that certainly influence the reproductive behaviour during that time: "Many a spring has passed, / Since I saw a man / Leading a plow! / And now another spring is coming, / And the lads still aren't home / Neither lads, nor married men, / 'Cause in mountains are they all scattered / In Tyrol and the Carpathians." (Cuceu et al., 2002, p. 95).

As far as birth rate distribution is concerned in the urban and the rural areas, we can notice from Table no. 2 that during the war in the towns of Cluj and Târgu Mureş the decrease of the birth rate was not as dramatic as in the counties they belonged to or in other counties. The urban population did not suffer from such an impressive decline since here one could find, almost exclusively, the industries that fulfilled the army's supply necessities. Thus, in the urban area more young men and married men fit for procreation "survived" the drafting process than in the rural milieu. Old men and women could work in the fields without any prior professional preparation, whereas the personnel from the industrial sector, the services, and the administration could not be so easily replaced. Consequently, the main supplier for the "cannon fodder" was again the village. Most of those drafted in the Austro-Hungarian army were of rural extraction.

Death rate is the second important component of the population's natural movement. It also influences a lot the population's dynamics in a given chronological sequence (Bacci, 1978, p. 4). A biological, but also a social phenomenon, death rate varied in Transylvania during the almost 5 years of World War I under the complex influence of socio-economic, political-military factors, etc. But now, let's see how number of deaths evolved in Transylvania during the first world conflagration. In 1913 77,354 deaths were recorded. This was a rather important figure for a year that was not affected by the

calamities and the special problems of the war. Of course, the 73,718 deaths in 1914 can be easily explained since the effects of the first months of war had not been felt yet.

Table 3. The number of deaths in Transylvania between 1913-1918

| County | 1913 | 1914 | 1915 | 1916 | 1917 | 1918 |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Alba de Jos | 5835 | 5721 | 6864 | 5817 | 4687 | 4855 |
| Bistrița-Năsăud | 3323 | 2969 | 3692 | 2711 | 2566 | 2790 |
| Brașov | 2124 | 2.263 | 2193 | 1760 | 1949 | 2311 |
| Ciuc | 4197 | 4.100 | 4274 | 3055 | 2226 | 3108 |
| Făgăraș | 2844 | 2189 | 2144 | 1460 | 1404 | 1351 |
| Trei Scaune | 3615 | 3343 | 3821 | 2596 | 3437 | 3621 |
| Hunedoara | 9205 | 8106 | 8245 | 7388 | 7665 | 8639 |
| Târnava Mică | 3159 | 3092 | 3474 | 2640 | 2597 | 2515 |
| Cluj | 5834 | 6067 | 7342 | 5367 | 4553 | 5770 |
| Town of Cluj | 1540 | 1501 | 1678 | 1640 | 1549 | 1427 |
| Mureș-Turda | 6191 | 5449 | 6314 | 4802 | 3752 | 4674 |
| Town of Targu Mures | 708 | 649 | 720 | 788 | 762 | 834 |
| Târnava Mare | 3552 | 3284 | 3731 | 2993 | 2897 | 3788 |
| Sibiu | 4005 | 4268 | 4591 | 3886 | 3678 | 4163 |
| Solnoc-Dăbâca | 6785 | 6660 | 7976 | 5844 | 5032 | 6892 |
| Turda-Arieș | 4681 | 4568 | 5607 | 4424 | 3787 | 4075 |
| Odorhei | 3581 | 3130 | 3425 | 2763 | 2663 | 2698 |
| Sălaj | 6175 | 6359 | 6974 | 5411 | 4714 | 6766 |
| TOTAL | 77.354 | 73.718 | 83.065 | 65.285 | 59.918 | 70.307 |

Source: A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1913-1918. évi népmozgalma, in Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények. Új sorozat, LXX kötet.

However, in 1915 there was a sudden leap to 83,065 deaths, a record figure for the entire war period. A similar phenomenon took place in other belligerent countries: England, France, and Germany (Todea, 1974, p. 60; Winter, 1990, p. 382sqc). Then, between 1916-1917 the number of deaths significantly decreased under the average during the peace period (65,285 and 59,918). At first sight, the 1917 situation seems to be paradoxical: during the third year of the war the number of deaths is much below the level during the peace period. We consider that

“the natural selection” had a word to say with respect to this situation. During 1915-1916 the civilians most affected by war were rather weak (especially elderly people and children).

We should also say that the deaths recorded in Transylvania during those years do not include the soldiers drafted from the province and who died on Europe’s battlefield. The actual human losses in Transylvania were significantly bigger than the global figures that were made public. An evaluation, unfortunately an incomplete one, was done after the war through the ASTRA association. However, these results do not mirror, not even by far, all the deaths on the European battlefields where combatants from Transylvania died (Păcățian, 1923). During the last year of the number of deaths increased dramatically again; there were 70,307 deaths. This was, on the one hand, a consequence of the misery after four years of war, on the other hand, it was mostly the result of the Spanish flu raging across the entire Europe (Pozzi, 2002). A similar trend in the dynamics of mortality rate is to be found in many rural communities. Thus, the case of the village of Vâlcele is symptomatic for the manner in which number of deaths evolved during World War I not only all over Transylvania, but also locally: 17 deaths in 1914, 22 deaths in 1915, 15 in 1916, 10 in 1917, and 36 in 1918. The 1918 figure is a consequence of the Spanish flu which was active in the province, as well as in almost the entire Europe who was undernourished and feeble at time (Apostol, 1927, p. 611; Winter, 1990, p. 389). The crude mortality rate during World War I was lower than during the pre-war period, but for the year 1915 when it grew to 27.4%. Thus, we assert that the numeric decrease of Transylvania’s population during that period was due not to a severe death rate crisis, but to a drastic decrease of the birth rate. In other words, contrary to our expectations, the war and its effects (lack of food, fodder, animals – destined both to alimentation and traction -, poor medical care, psychological problems etc.) affected procreation, i.e. the yearly number of births, more than mortality.

The family, a fundamental and multi-tasking institution of human society, is historically determined. It is a product of the social system and it develops and evolves according to social changes. One of the many coordinates that also includes the concrete-historic family is marriage. Setting up and forming a family come only after the marriage

ceremony (more often than not legal, since the free unions, especially in the rural areas, are not very frequent). Generally, in order to know the manner in which a family was formed, one has to be familiar with the following essential elements: marriage motivation, marriage purpose, criteria for partner selection, period when it was concluded, etc. Of course, the prolonged war period had important consequences on marriage and on all the elements deriving from this demographic phenomenon. In the next part of our paper we intend to make some statements on the numerical evolution of marriages in Transylvania between 1913-1918, on their seasonal movement, as well as on the age and marital status of those who got married. Obviously, during the war period there were fewer marriages. This was both because of the material deprivations and the drafting of men for the battlefields. Thus, the marriage dynamics during 1913-1918 had the following evolution: 26,595 in 1913, 19,929 in 1914, 9,351 in 1915, 8,046 in 1916, 9,466 in 1917 and 15,289 in the last war year. The most serious decreases in the number of marriages are to be found in the counties at the foot of the Southern Carpathians: Sibiu, Făgăraș, etc. (Todea, 1973, p. 85). This aspect is accurately rendered in Table no. 4 where one can notice the fall in the number of marriages in 1915 and 1916 in the counties of Sibiu and Făgăraș, while in the counties of Sălaj and Solnoc, farther away from the Romanian border, the number of marriages was slightly on the increase.

An interesting case is the year 1918, when 15,289 marriages were recorded. Although we do not have any data on the number of marriages per month, we do think that many were concluded during the months of November and December, when the war ended and the people wanted to re-enter the normal demographic cycle quickly. Many soldiers who came back from the battlefield rapidly got married. On the one hand, this is easily understandable from a biological point of view, but it also signifies that they wanted to forget about the war traumas, set up a family which might give meaning to their life. Such behavior was characteristic for other demographic spaces in modern Europe as well: in the post Napoleonic wars age, after the 1848 revolutions and after World War I the population from the European countries rapidly increased.

Table 4. The number of marriages in Transylvania between 1913-1918

| County | 1913 | 1914 | 1915 | 1916 | 1917 | 1918 |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Alba de Jos | 2118 | 1259 | 459 | 536 | 753 | 925 |
| Bistrița-Năsăud | 1105 | 837 | 326 | 286 | 361 | 660 |
| Brașov | 893 | 745 | 323 | 203 | 271 | 532 |
| Ciuc | 1277 | 961 | 293 | 256 | 325 | 618 |
| Făgăraș | 931 | 632 | 143 | 86 | 103 | 243 |
| Trei Scaune | 1200 | 895 | 399 | 370 | 482 | 781 |
| Hunedoara | 3580 | 2360 | 1216 | 803 | 1166 | 2030 |
| Târnava Mică | 978 | 638 | 335 | 352 | 424 | 534 |
| Cluj | 2079 | 1532 | 714 | 714 | 799 | 1234 |
| City of Cluj | 597 | 708 | 600 | 413 | 469 | 512 |
| Mureș-Turda | 1827 | 1408 | 699 | 577 | 675 | 1154 |
| Town of Targu Mures | 237 | 364 | 658 | 358 | 189 | 281 |
| Târnava Mare | 1155 | 982 | 346 | 290 | 435 | 680 |
| Sibiu | 1520 | 1234 | 424 | 299 | 378 | 613 |
| Solnoc-Dăbâca | 2238 | 1568 | 711 | 826 | 764 | 1334 |
| Turda-Arieș | 1684 | 1245 | 565 | 514 | 574 | 917 |
| Odorhei | 1005 | 915 | 432 | 344 | 460 | 662 |
| Sălaj | 2171 | 1646 | 708 | 819 | 843 | 1579 |
| TOTAL | 26.595 | 19.929 | 9.351 | 8.046 | 9.466 | 15.289 |

Source: *A Magyar Szent Korona Országainak 1913-1918. évi népmozgalma, in Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények. Új sorozat, LXX kötet.*

The functioning-recuperation mechanism was an extremely simple one: the number of marriages increased significantly and afterwards that of births increased as well (Bouthoul, 1935, p. 212). One of the conclusions drawn by the specialists who studied the social and demographic effects of World War I was that the war created favourable conditions for the consolidation of family ties and of the marital institution. The catastrophic human losses during the war led to a consolidation of family life in 1918 and in the following years which meant, first of all, an increase in the number of marriages and, afterwards, a normal “explosion” in the number of births (Winter & Wall, 1988, p. 9).

During the war there were considerable changes in the number and the frequency of marriages (in urban and rural areas). If until 1913

the crude marriage rate in the big towns was relatively similar to that from the rural area, from 1914 on one can notice an important difference. The crude marriage rate in the rural area is much below the urban area. The most important difference was recorded in 1915, when the crude marriage rate was 6.7‰ in towns and only 2.7‰ (Todea, 1973, p. 88) in the villages. During the entire 1914-1918 period there was a certain difference between the higher "density" of marriages in the urban area in comparison to the realities from the countryside. An unusual marriage rate, even when compared to that from other towns, was recorded at Târgu Mureș in 1915: 22.9‰. Meanwhile, in the town of Cluj, for instance, the marriage rate was only 9.6‰. (In the following year there was more similarity between the two towns: 12.9‰ in Târgu Mureș, and 6.8‰ in Cluj).

In those years many changes occurred in the number of marriages per age group. Before 1914, most women getting married belonged to the 20-24 age group, followed by the 17-19 age group, etc. During World War I one could see a shift towards older age groups with women. Thus, although most women married belonged to the 20-24 age group, they were followed by women from the 30-49 age group, then by women aged between 25-29 and only then came the women aged between 17-19. The percentage of women getting married under the age of 17 also decreased from 8.6% out of the total number of marriages before the war to 3.2 % during the war. At the same time one can notice a rising tendency in the percentage of women from the 50-60 age group as well as women over 60 who got married. This percentage increased from 2.1% before the war to 13.6% during the war. Closely related to these changes in women's age groups is the modification of percentages related to the marital status of spouses before marriage. During the war there was a significant increase in the number of *palingam* marriages (marriages where at least one of the spouses had already been married) as a consequence of the drafting of young men who would have normally contracted *protogam* marriages (marriages where none of the spouses had been previously married). Thus, the percentage of *protogam* marriages decreased from 82.6% in 1913 to 70.3% in 1916. There was a timid revival in the following years, up to 74.2% in 1917 and 78.1% in 1918 (Todea, 1973, p. 88). The 1918 increase can also be explained through the high number of marriages that occurred during this year in

comparison to the 1915-1917 period. Some of the men who got married in that year were either soldiers who deserted in the last part of the war or / and came back home in November and December 1918.

Last but not least, we have to mention the changes in the spouses' professions. One can notice that the most visible mutations are those related to the married men's professions: from peasants they turned into industrial workers or miners in order to ensure the workforce claimed by war production. Thus, the percentage of married men whose main occupation was farming decreased from 63.9% in 1913, to 56.2% in 1918, while the percentage of married men working in the mining sector was on the increase from 17.1% to 22.1% during the same period (Todea, 1973, p. 89). Such a tendency also explains the higher percentage of marriages in the urban area as compared to the rural one during the war period, since in towns there were more men available for marriage who were employed in the industry supplying the war than in the countryside.

Of course, the war affected to the same extent people's private life, both the lives of those who remained at home and of those who were on the battlefields. The war also emphasized types of behaviour and morality that had existed in the Transylvanian society before the outbreak of the war. One of the major problems the church – the century-old keeper of the morality of the faithful – had to face was conjugal fidelity (Bârlea, 2004, p. 126). In the press of the time, in the circulars of the church, in the folklore from the interwar period, in memoirs, etc there are transparent allusions to the disorderly life both of men on the front, as well as of the wives who stayed at home. The latter, especially if they were young and beautiful, had many difficulties in rebuffing the advances made by the men who remained in the village, the policemen, and the war prisoners who were sent to the rural areas, to work on the big farms in agriculture. Thus, as Eugenia Bârlea – a subtle observer of the realities of the Romanian rural world in Transylvania – has recently underlined, “it was rather a notable feat than a common fact for a woman to keep her conjugal virtue unblemished” (Bârlea, 2004, p. 126; some lines that circulated in a village from Hateg (Hunedoara county) during the interwar period are relevant, in this sense, of the erosion of the traditional morality: “Hey, hey my man / In Galicia is your place, / Not with your fists in my head. / In Galicia is your place, /

Not with your fists in my head. / May God prolong the battle / So that I get the state aid / And spend it with my lover”, apud. Conea, 1935, p. 302). Of course, neither the men gone sent to the battlefields were champions of exemplary conjugal fidelity. On the contrary, various sources indicate the moral relaxation among the soldiers. In the press periodically there came out articles condemning such behaviour, particularly deplorable because the number of people who got infected by venereal diseases increased: “A statistic drawn even during the present battle shows that among all the other soldiers, the Romanians infected by worldly diseases score the highest percentage” (Bârlea, 2004, p. 127). The phenomenon was not singular. The French authorities were also worried by the score of venereal diseases among the soldiers, which diminished the combative capacity of the French army (Le Naour, 2002). Despite the orders of military authorities, despite the appeals to morality made by church authorities, the immoral behaviour and the conjugal infidelity were characteristic for the drafted troops and even for those on the battlefields. Such an attitude is suggested by an episode narrated by a soldier in his memoirs. After spending some weeks in Lemberg, he was sent, with his unit, somewhere else. Upon his leaving, at the train station “women from Russia gathered and cried in their mother tongue. And then we left to the Russian Poland” (Leu & Albert, 1995, p. 25).

World War I caused mutations that were certainly ampler than those we managed to analyse in these lines. Our purpose was not to talk exhaustively about the war victims’ problems or matrimonial behaviour. We rather wanted to enumerate the main demographic mutations that occurred during wartime and were immediately visible or they manifested sequentially during the 5 years of the world conflagration. There is no doubt that social mobility and the natural movement of the population were most affected. Birth rate had the most dramatic evolutions, but mortality rate also reflected the socio-economic and the political-military circumstances. Marriage and the couple’s morality were visibly influenced by the war state; people reacted in a complex manner when faced with the new framework of their daily life. The increased mobility of the population, especially of those drafted during those years, contributed to the “contamination” of large segments of the population with practices, attitudes, and feelings that would have hardly been noticeable in normal conditions of peace and traditional mentality background.

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