

Part III

Cause-Specific Mortality Trends from 1965

Introduction to Part III

After devoting Part I to historical reconstructions, in Part II we analysed the major trends in age-specific mortality from the inter-War period onwards. Apart from the major crises of the past, the most striking aspect of the recent history of mortality trends in Ukraine is the reversal observed in that country in the mid-1960s, as in all countries of the former USSR; it is to this major event that the INED research project on *the health crisis in the countries of the former USSR* is mainly devoted. An analysis of cause-specific mortality trends is vital to a better understanding of this spectacular “exception” to the health transition theory (Caselli et al. 2002), and Part III is devoted to this analysis.

Unfortunately, its historical range is limited by the nature of the available data. We were able to gain access to cause-specific death statistics from 1959 onwards. However, as we shall see in Chap. 9, the use of these data requires consistency to be imposed on time series that have been broken by changes in cause-of-death classification. In the process of reconstructing series of causes with constant definitions, each change in classification requires lengthy, sensitive comparisons between the two successive classifications, both from the point of view of the medical content of the items used and from the point of view of changes in their statistical content over time. At the time of writing this book, this task has been performed for only the last three changes in classification (in 1970, 1981 and 1988) and therefore we are able to analyse cause-specific mortality trends only from 1965, the first year covered by the earliest of the classifications concerned. In order to take advantage of the information contained in the 1959–1964 data, it would have been necessary to deal with the transition between the 1952 classification and the 1965 one; not only was this more complex than the later transitions, but we would also have had to work with very partial data, for just a fraction of the period covered by the 1952 classification. We therefore decided not to do this in the context of the present study.

In the next five chapters, we shall first describe the Soviet system of recording deaths and causes of death and then discuss the quality of data collected in this way (Chap. 8). Next we shall present the methods that enabled us to reconstruct time series of deaths by cause from 1965 onwards, in line with the medical definitions of the most recent detailed list (Chap. 9). We shall then be able to use these series to give an overview of general trends in mortality by cause (Chap. 10), to measure the impact of these trends in major groups of causes on life expectancy trends (Chap. 11) and, finally, to analyse in depth detailed cause-specific trends within five large age groups, marking the principal stages in life (Chap. 12).

Reference

- Caselli, G., Meslé, F., & Vallin, J. (2002). Epidemiologic transition theory exceptions. *Genus*, 58(1), 9–52.