

The central part of the European continent is the Carpathian Basin and its surroundings. Among the borders strongly dissected by peninsulas, inland seas and bays, this area has the most continental position on the narrow, peninsula-like European part of the large continent of Eurasia. To the west of the shortest line which may be drawn between the Black and the Baltic Sea, there is that Inner Europe lying, which in its historical development, culture, economy and social structure has always been considerably separated from the Russian regions regarded partly as Asia. In this Inner Europe the most distant area from the seas is the Carpathian Basin, the northeastern portion of the Great Hungarian Plain.

The Carpathian Basin and its surroundings do not occupy but a geometrical central place on the continent of Inner Europe, they are a center in structure too, a special individual combination of regions lying between the typical large regions of Europe. Considering the location of the climate and vegetation zones, so important for human life, as well as the formation of the hydrographic system and natural routes of transportation, the Carpathian Basin is partly a meeting place, partly a combination of regions in which the European types of regions are harmonised the most.

The influence of these geographical conditions is also evincible in the political and economic development of this area. It is shown in the number of settlements, in the population density, in the distribution of towns and villages, in the spread of races, languages, nationalities, religions and

culture, in the speed of the increase in population, in the standards of agriculture, in the methods of cultivating the soil, in the degree of industry and so on. In all these points this region is a transition area, intermingling and influencing each other, between the Western and Eastern European portions, between Northern and Southern Europe.

However, the modern geographical and political literature dealing with this region does not use the term of Central Europe, but Eastern-Central Europe, South-Eastern Europe and some other expressions. The name of Central Europe is given by German literature to the German language territory, although its considerable portion lies on the western and northern borders of Europe, while another fairly large part extends into the Central European territory. This wrong denomination has chiefly historical causes. In the XVI. and XVII. centuries in consequence of the expansion of the Osman Empire advancing from Asia and Africa, the political frontiers of Inner Europe shifted into the Carpathian Basin to such an extent that this territory and the surrounding regions too, politically became the borders of Inner Europe.

In the Middle Ages, however, the Carpathian Basin and its surroundings occupied also politically a central position among the western, eastern and southern states of Europe./German Empire, Poland and Russia, Byzantine and Osman Empire respectively, as well as the Italian States./ The recent evolution evidently gives back this territory its central character.

THE PLACE OF CENTRAL EUROPE ON THE CONTINENT

