

Relief.

Mountainous districts divide Central Europe into distinct compartments. The largest and the most remarkable of them is the Carpathian Basin; well-isolated from their surroundings are the Bohemian and Moravian Basins, and well-bordered is just as well the Roumanian Wallachia. Next to these basin-like compartments there are two types of relief to be found there: highland areas covering large territories /the western half of the Balkan Peninsula and the regions of the Alps/, and a wide flat table-land /the Polish and Russian plains/. Within the compartments there are some levelled plains to be found, such as the Great Hungarian Plain, the Little Alföld and the Roumanian Plain. By their flat grounds and appropriateness for settlements these plains have become the antropo-geographical centers of the basins. The bordering highland areas are not rich enough in mineral wealth, consequently the people are not attracted to the borders of the basins. Conditions change, however, in the Bohemian Basin, where on one hand, a larger central and fertile plain is lacking, and on the other hand, the mountainous districts are rich in mineral wealth, consequently the peripheries of the basin are more densely populated than its middle portion.

Within the compartments not only plains, but lower elevated mountain areas, lowlands and varied transition areas are to be found as well. The interior of the Carpathian Basin is especially characterised by the diversity of relief. Nearly every type of region, from the elevated highlands down to the typical lowlands, are to be found here, and not in a disorder but grouping around the Great Hungarian Plain. Beside the Great Hungarian Plain two smaller basins have been formed within the belt of the Carpathians: the Transylvanian Basin and the Little Alföld. The Bohemian Basin is also divided into two parts by the Czech-Moravian Downs. The basin of the Lower Danube is divided into two halves by the Lower Danube itself. On the left bank of the river the Roumanian Plain is lying, on the right one a little higher, the North Bulgarian table-land. They are separated by the broad stream of the Danube and her still wider marshes. The variety of these basins results in the diversity of agriculture and in a lively inner trade, as well as in the division of labour among the inhabitants. Accordingly, these from geographical point of view isolated compartments have become harmonious agricultural ones consisting of

homogeneous and complementary portions.

Although the expansive mountain areas seemingly are much more varied and diverse in relief, from the point of view of agriculture, economy and settling they do not offer so varied possibilities for living as the large basins. Considering either the region of the Alps or the Dinaric Highlands, they show a picture of ramified and sparsely settled areas with a one-crop production, lacking in agricultural products. Because of the lack of larger unifying regions there is no cooperation between the areas being not interdependent anyhow. From the point of view of economy these regions with a great variety of landscape are monotonous.

The Eastern European territory is even more monotonous. Into the peaceful plains only the rivers of changeable courses have cut in more or less deep ditches. The roads lead along the ridges of hills not dissected by rivers, and greater centers arise at the junctions of these roads, or at their crossings of some larger rivers. Among the settlements there are neither uninhabited areas, natural boundaries, nor differences in farming. The area is almost entirely of an agricultural character. A livelier inner trade and a division of labour is only to be found between the southern and northern portions differing from each other in their climatic conditions.

From economic-geographical point of view the mountain frame and districts are of twofold importance. They serve as effective physical barriers to the settlements and agriculture, and push the system of routes into the valleys or passages. As mining places - on the contrary - they create a dense population and industry, the elevated basins serving as sources of water power, accordingly, they may give an energetic impulse to the development of economy. From both points of view a distinction ought to be made between the ancient mountainous districts and the youthful mountain ranges. These ancient highlands do not hamper transportation in such a way, as the less eroded, boldly shaped and generally higher youthful ranges; however, they are much more rich in mineral wealth. These youthful ranges are less passable and less suitable for settlements, and are poorer in mineral wealth. The ancient mountain areas therefore are often areas attracting population and economy, while the youthful ranges are regions repulsing population and economy. Of the ancient mountainous districts of our ter-

territory the most important ones are the Bohemian Forest, the Bohemian Erz Gebirge and the regions of the Sudeten where a dense population, mining and industry of importance are to be found. In the midst of the Balkan Peninsula too, there are ancient massives of considerable extent, the mineral wealth of which, however, is far below that of the Czech areas, besides they are not actively exploited either, and in their neighbourhood there are no densely populated agrarian regions. Among the youthful ranges the Alps, the Carpathians and the Dinaric Alps have the greatest isolating influence. In the maps representing the settlements and roads, these young ranges are conspicuous by their being uninhabited and poorly equipped with roads. Much more passable are the Balkan Mountains. That is why it has not become a boundary line in the midst of the Bulgarian population territory. The least passable are the mountain areas of the western portion of the Balkan Peninsula, which - not to mention the region of the Arctic - is the most sparsely populated and in roads the poorest territory on the whole continent. In the small compartments which may be found here, the economic, as well as the political life is dissected, consequently a coherent state territory is hardly to be developed.

The vast mountain-ranges exert a profound influence upon the formation of the route-system of the whole continent. They divert the dense system of roads from the Pyreneese, the Alps and the Carpathians up to the north. However, in the south of the Mediterranean area, water transportation in consequence of the strongly dissected coasts, as well as of the mountainous districts has rather developed.

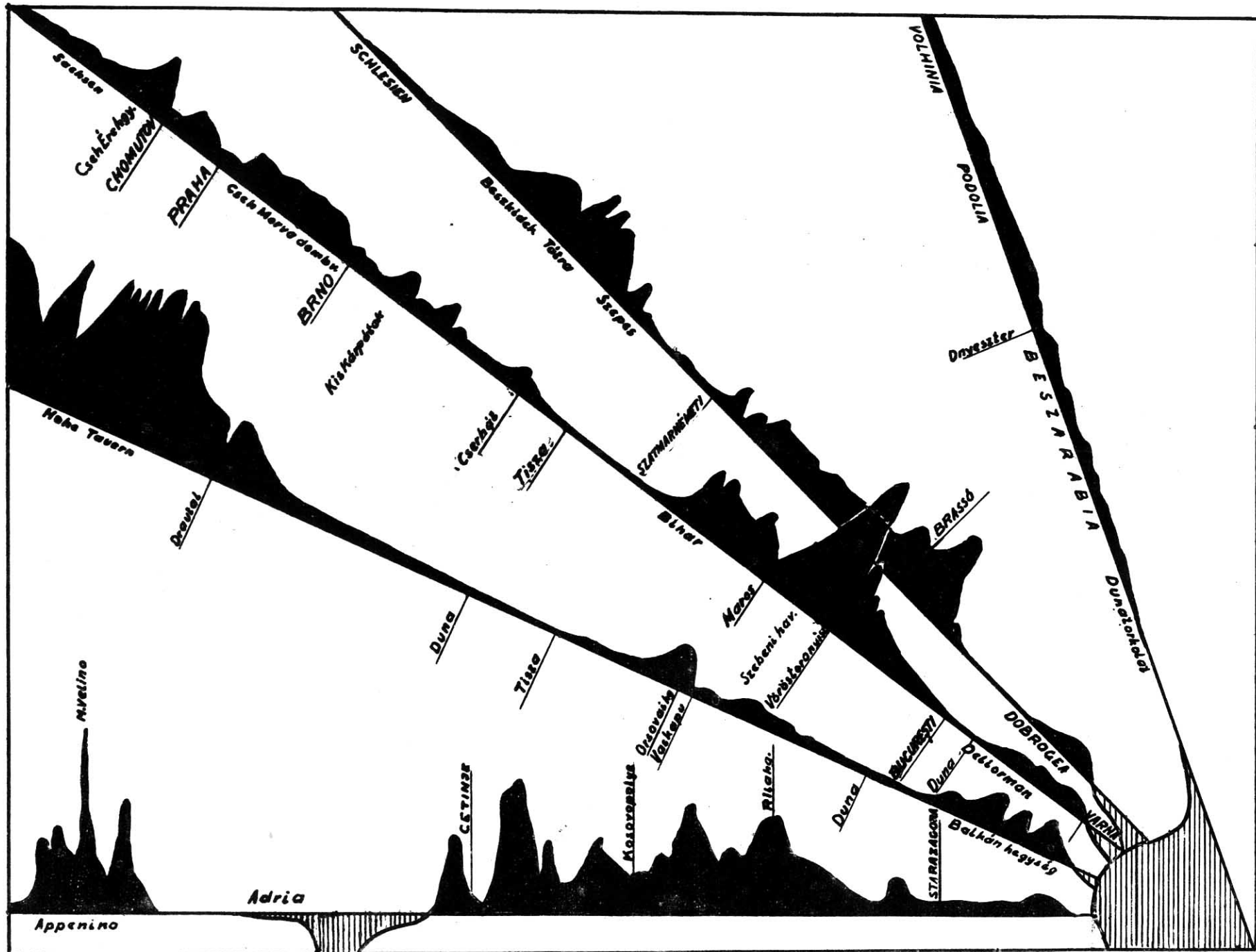
Trade carried on between the northern regions and the Mediterranean area had to find natural gates, passes and defiles. Being the traffic always lively, these passages became of great importance. In Central Europe the Moravian Gate, the Dévény Gate, the Semmering and Brenner Passes, the Morava and Vardar Valleys with the Kumanova Pass, the Wisava and Maritsa Valleys with the Dragoman and Vakarel Passes, the Iron Gate Pass of the Lower Danube, the Focsani Gate and the north-eastern entrances of the Great Hungarian Plain should be mentioned here.

Some two-third of the territory of Central Europe is lying under the level of 800 meters, accordingly from the point of view of relief it is in a favourable position for

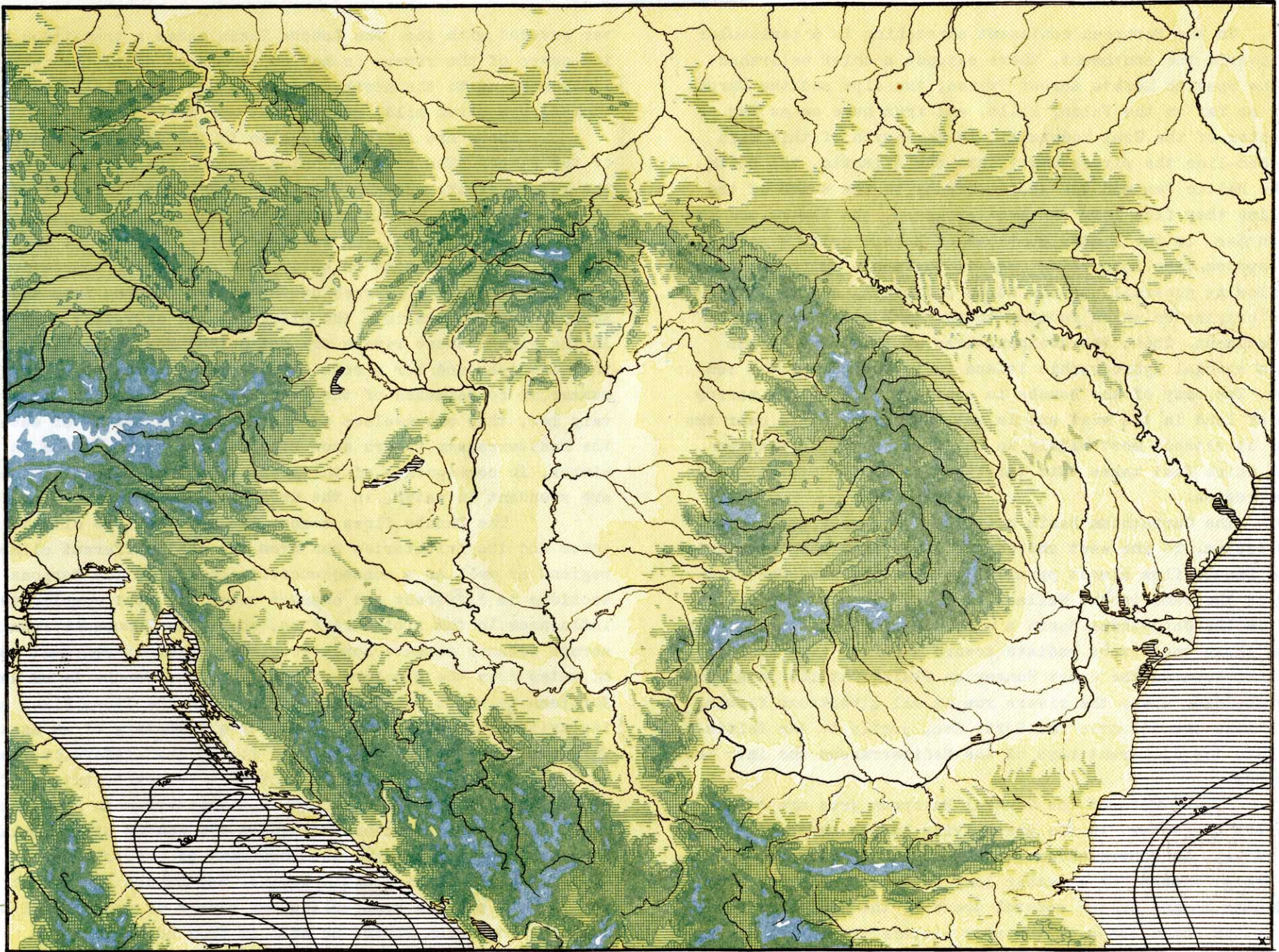
agriculture. In the Alps and the Dinaric mountainous districts the soil is cultivated at a height often exceeding 1000 meters or in some places even 2000 meters; this is, however, regarded as a curiosity. In general, in our regions the arable land does not rise above 600-800 meters. In consequence of the wide expanse of rugged lands there is a very diversified agriculture possible on the slopes of different steepness and facing different directions. The soil is also diversified especially in the plains and the hill-districts. In the area of high mountains with a great amount of rainfall, as well as to the north of the Carpathian Basin, in the lower elevated highlands too, the gray podsollic soils are rather monotonous. Further down in the south and in the less elevated highland areas and lowlands there are brown and chestnut coloured forest soils to be found to a considerably large extent. After the clearing of forest lands they provide a proper ground for agriculture. In the low areas, on the borders of the plain, especially in the damp, marshy areas black forest soils are to be found. They also exist round about the peripheries of the Hungarian and Roumanian Plains. In the drier basins, as well as in the larger lowlands steppe soils had been formed. They are of the largest extent in the southern portion of the Russian table-land; but they also may be found in larger spots in the Great Hungarian and the Roumanian Plain, in the interior of Transylvania, in Bessarabia and Dobrudja, while in smaller spots in the Bohemian Basin and in the Little Alföld.

This soil is favourable to all kinds of cereals. Karst-like, barren table-lands to a large extent are only to be found in the Dinaric mountainous districts, in other places at most in smaller spots. However, just a considerable part of our largest plain, the Great Hungarian Plain is occupied by the unproductive or hardly fertile acid salt soil. Here in the Great Hungarian Plain barren sandy soil is also to be found /formerly blown sand/. They were chiefly planted with fruit-trees and acacia-trees, but were also used as potato-fields, vineyards and rye-fields. Large spots of loess-soil being generally productive are to be found in the Russian table-land and in the Great Hungarian Plain. Alluvial soils /silt, meadow-clay/ in larger spots are to be found in Central Poland, on the peripheries of the Great Hungarian Plain, in the Hungarian Little Alföld, on the Danube delta, as well as along the Drava and Sava rivers.

OROGRAPHICAL SEGMENTS



RELIEF



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