

Introduction

Hungary, situated in the centre of Europe, is surrounded by the Alpine-Carpathian-Dinaric mountain range and occupies the inner part of the oval-shaped Carpathian Basin—also known as the Central Danubian Basin and sometimes as the Pannonian Basin. The country is approximately 1,200 km from the Atlantic Ocean, 400 km from the Mediterranean and equidistant at about 800 km from both the Black and the Baltic Seas. In addition it is roughly 3,000 km from the Ural Mountains, Europe's eastern boundary. The country is situated between longitudes 16° and 23° East and latitudes 45° and 48° North and measures 528 km from east to west and 268 km from north to south.

With an area of 93,000 sq. km, Hungary is the 17th largest of the 32 countries of Europe, while with over 10.6 million inhabitants, she is the 12th most populous. Lowlands comprise approximately three-fifths of the country, the remainder being either uplands or regions of low mountains. Up to the Second World War Hungary was essentially an agrarian country, but as a result of three decades of planned industrialization, she may now be termed semi-industrial. Sixty per cent of her area is intensively cultivated (in the form of arable lands, gardens, vineyards and orchards), 15 per cent is utilized as pasture, while some 15 per cent is forest.

Hungary's physical location, her geographical potentials and

a mildly continental climate provided favourable conditions on the lowland regions for the original growth of forest-steppes that were only disrupted by broad flood plains, while the hilly and mountainous areas were covered by deciduous forests.

In many parts of Europe, including Hungary, it is no longer possible to talk of the natural landscape that originally existed in these areas. During the course of centuries the activity of man has altered the natural landscape. A study of the Hungarian landscapes must therefore always take into account the effect of social activity upon the land.