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FOREWORDS



Dear Reader,

The Hungarian nation has formed a state at the heart of Europe for more than a thousand years. The roots of our historical constitution reach back to the reign of our first king, Saint Stephen. The first five hundred years of relatively peaceful Hungarian statehood were followed, however, by five centuries of national struggles and wars of liberation aimed at preserving our language, culture and constitutional rights.

As a consequence of Hungary's tempestuous history, which is derived from its geography, the political reasoning of Hungarians can seem convoluted to the sons and daughters of other nations. Yet knowledge of the causes may help clear this perception.

The first of these is that for more than a hundred years there has been a divergence between the borders of Hungary and those of the Hungarian nation. The country is surrounded by regions and territories that once formed an integral part of the Hungarian state and which are still home to many fellow Hungarians. It is, therefore, a duty of the Hungarian state to assist and support these communities, and we also feel a responsibility to preserve the historical and cultural heritage that now lies beyond our borders.

The second, which stems from the preceding point, is that the Hungarian state seeks close political, economic and cultural cooperation with the other peoples of the Carpathian Basin and all parts of Central Europe. We are bound together by our shared past as parts of the same multinational empire and by our shared fate in the many tragedies of the twentieth century; for this very reason, it is our common interest that the region should be one of peace and security.

The third and final reason is the self-perception of the Hungarian nation as an eastern people that successfully integrated itself into the Western world. Our language, our artistic and cultural motifs, and our origin myths tie us to the nomadic peoples of the Asian steppes. At the same time, we are bound to the West by our faith, our legal system and our architectural and literary culture. The binary nature of these bonds was for a long time a premise of the country's foreign policy, to which has been added a third element, namely the opening towards the Balkans. All this is made manifest in the mission to ensure that Hungary should be a meeting point rather than a collision zone between regions lying to the west, east and south.

This task still faces Hungary today as a member of the European Union and in the shadow of the growing threat of illegal migration from the south and an atrocious war in our eastern neighbourhood. The knowledge gained during a thousand years of statehood will help us meet this historic challenge.

VIKTOR ORBÁN

Prime Minister of Hungary



The geography of Hungary has greatly impacted on the social, environmental and economic characteristics of the country and on the development of its statehood. An atlas revealing the spatial and regional interactions that have occurred over a lengthy time span is indispensable to a presentation of the diverse processes currently underway in the Carpathian Basin.

As flagships of such information, the various volumes of the National Atlas of Hungary are the outcome of broad collaboration among academics. They show what truly characterizes the country and the neighbouring areas, revealing both the similarities and the differences between us.

According to Waldo Tobler's First Law of Geography, 'everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things'. Evidently, spatial interactions are more likely and more forceful between nearby, neighbouring places. The State and Nation volume of the National Atlas of Hungary proves this proposition.

With the formation of the Hungarian state in the Carpathian Basin at the very heart of Europe, a community arose that was unique in terms of its language, mentality and customs. The political and constitutional framework of the Hungarian state is indivisible from the values and history of Hungarians. In the course of a thousand years of history, the imprints of each era have come to form successive layers, giving rise to the Hungarian nation of our times.

The present volume, however, is just as much about the future as about the past. It is my conviction that this most recent addition to the atlas series will help us turn the challenges of the twenty-first century into opportunities for the entire Carpathian Basin.

ÁRON KINCSES

President of the Hungarian Statistical Office



The science of cartography, dating back to ancient times, is currently experiencing a new renaissance. It is undeniable that the content presented on maps and in atlases has always fundamentally shaped human thinking.

Cartographers have, from the very beginning, been seeking the answer to one question: How can they create the most accurate maps? For example, in a short story titled 'On Exactitude in Science', the Argentine poet, essayist, literary historian, and philosopher Jorge Luis Borges presents an Empire where the art of cartography attained such perfection that they created a map of the Empire that was as large as the Empire itself, and it matched it point by point. Obviously, a 1:1 map is impractical. However, I have long been intrigued by the Borges paradigm. Namely, can we, in science, craft models or representations of reality or the world that authentically depict reality, even if not at a 1:1 scale? Although, from a scientific perspective, creating a 1:1 description is impossible, a good map gets as close as possible to this ideal and, at the same time, impossible state. The 'National Atlas of Hungary' series, including the new volume titled 'State and Nation', prepared through extensive professional collaboration under the leadership of the Geographical Institute of the HUN-REN Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences, with Károly Kocsis as chief editor, is unquestionably such a creation.

The deep and unparalleled exploration of the geography and history of our country and nation provides valuable information not only to the scientific and professional community but also to a wider audience, including all our fellow Hungarians.

BALÁZS GULYÁS

President of the Hungarian Research Network

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www.nationalatlas.hu

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