

EDITORIAL

OUR HISTORY IS GEOGRAPHY ... ^{1*}

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What is Romania? In 1859 (the Small Union), our state was called *The United Principalities of Moldavia and Valahia*, with a cartographic outline that looked like a “flying eagle with its body missing” (Theobald Fischer), with its center of gravity outside the country (!); in 1862 it became “the *United Principalities of the Country of Romania and Moldavia*, while Alexandru Ioan Cuza was slowly sneaking in, among its ambassadors, the denomination of *Romania*, for making the occidental chancellors get used to this name, that became official only in 1866, in the constitution of Carol I.

The World War One reduced Romania to a cartographic fiction, while the year 1918 brought new borders, seen as natural, yet even those became ravished in 1940 by the Second International Arbitration in Vienna. We find ourselves with the borders resembling the shape of “a crocodile’s tale” (Simion Mehedinți) that was penetrating until close to Brașov. Having its fate sealed by Churchill through a paper note passed under the Stalin’s eyes, Romania got a slight adjustment of its borders after the second worldwide conflagration.

Counting the borders change during the past century we find a three generations perspective –grandfather, father, son (grandson)–that makes us reflect deeply about such powerful transformation. Each one of the three generations became accustomed to a different cartographic configuration of the state called Romania.

Then, why are these things happening? What historical mechanisms do determine such a dynamic? Could it be the geographical settlement perceived to be at the European periphery? We divert our look towards Ukraine finding that a much bigger country than Romania has been considerably modified since 2014: losing the Crimea Peninsula (re-attached to Russia), losing the East – the self-proclaimed separatist republics Donetsk and Luhansk (“New Russia”) – and, recently, losing the access to the Black Sea.

Cărtărescu, in his *Solenoidul*, unknowingly and without intention, has the best implied definition of geopolitics: to want up to *a thousand* and to only be able up to *six*... The Great Powers manifest power out of reflex, reserving for themselves the liberty of conforming or not to the international law, while the others, fallen into a column under “six”, must comply geopolitics for minimizing its loss. They lose anyway, as the situation is always asymmetric.

Who are the Romanians? To such a question, better phrased as “who/what are the Romanian people?”, one of the greatest Romanian historians, Gheorghe Brătianu, answered: *an enigma and a historical miracle* (expression that became the title of his book in 1940).

One century and a half under the Roman occupation, a millennium of foreign “ethnic alluviums”, at the same time a millennium of historical anonymity, and a millennium of Transylvania being occupied, with higher or lower degrees of autonomy, another three centuries of ottoman suzerainty, and in the middle of the 19th century we found ourselves with the *Romanian people?* This is Brătianu’s “miracle”, but what is the “enigma” behind the miracle?

Our history is geography... The Carpathians are not a “spine” that cancel the existence of the Apuseni Mountains, and that make them susceptible of bearing a natural frontier. A peculiar geological accident (the intersection of four tectonic micro-plates) gave the Carpathians a unique shape: *round like a hearth* (it has profound meanings if we think about the role of the hearth and fire in the history of human civilization). The mountain chain (like a “spine”) on the Western maps from the past centuries has transformed into a series of low-altitude rocks, with beveled peaks (“the peneplains” from the poem “Miorița”), circularly arranged around a large depression, a true cultural and civilizational hearth, in which the Romanian people were potted – the only European nation that knows no other place of formation but the Carpathians. Neither do they

¹ * In November 2018, the Department of Tourism and Geography launched the following title: *Geopolitics and Business MSc (Marius Neacșu Ed.)*. 2018. *România 1918-2018. Un secol de frământări geopolitice*. Bucharest: BUES Publishing.

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know no exact date of becoming Christians. While the Romans believed in *men sana in corpore sano*, the Dacian believed exactly the opposite, that there can't be a healthy body without a healthy soul. In addition, the immortality of the soul was a daily belief in this place, before the birth of Jesus.

The round shape of the Carpathians has imposed the round shape of the ethnic basis of our nation, of our country, of the national territory of the Romanian state. And regardless of the historical vicissitudes, Romanian people have always reunited under approximate the same frontiers and shape: Dacia (in Antiquity), in 1600 (under Michal the Brave), 1918 (King Ferdinand I) and up to today's Romania. *The geography's revenge* (not Kaplan's) *on history...* The characteristics of the Romanian Carpathians made them unsuitable for any artificial political borders.

If the Carpathians had a genetic role in the existence of the Romanian state, we must highlight the fact that, the bright periods of the nation in the Carpathians were tightly bound to the access to Danube and the Black Sea. And the other way around, anytime in history when we lost access to the Danube and its maritime extension, we lost our independence, and the political serfdom began. Without the Carpathians, the course of Romanians' history would not have resisted here, at the margin of Europe, as an island in the way of the storms, in a real geopolitical vice.

The 100th anniversary from the last reunion must not let us forget--as a folk, as a nation, as a country--as a state, that we exist thanks to the Carpathians, and that we are a nation of European substance, independent and free, thanks to the Danube river and the Black Sea.

Happy Birthday, Romania!