

January

HUNGARIANS IN AUSTRALIA

On the occasion of *Australia's Foundation Day in January* it is fitting to study the history of the Hungarian migrants in Australia.

The first Hungarians arrived in Australia about 150 years ago. A few more came after the defeat of the *1848—49 Freedom War* seeking a country free of oppression. Some of the immigrants were former officers of the Hungarian National Army.

Very few immigrants of Hungarian descent came around the turn of the century or in the twenties. Those who came were mostly unmarried young men, and they soon married Australian girls, integrating quickly into the Australian society.

The *thirties and forties* of this century saw the arrival of migrants who left Hungary because of the oppressive atmosphere in Hitler's Central Europe. They were mostly *Jewish intellectuals and businessmen*. Hard—working and ambitious, they soon became respected members of Australian society, some achieving fame as eminent businessmen, professionals and artists. They cherished their Hungarian culture and helped to dispel some misapprehensions about Hungary during World War II. The Australians learned through them that Hungary was, during the Nazi oppression of Europe, the refuge of Jews.

About 15,000 Hungarians arrived in Australia as "*displaced persons*" after *World War II*. The bulk of them were professional and middle-class people, most of them with families. Having met the earlier group of Hungarian refugees, the two groups found the common reason why they came to this country: to flee tyranny of one kind or another. The Hungarian migrant families kept their Magyar ethnic consciousness and their children learned to appreciate their ethnic heritage through Hungarian weekend schools, Scout activities, dance groups and other associations of cultural nature, without interfering with their harmonious integration into Australian culture. The Hungarians never formed cultural ghettos and always adopted Australian citizenship.

After the *uprising of 1956* yet another 15,000 Hungarians came. After the sixties many immigrants of Hungarian descent came from Yugoslavia and Rumania. They came in family groups and kept their Hungarian identity.

It is estimated that in 1982 about 60,000 Australians have Hungarian ethnic origin.

Although only half of one percent of Australians are of Hungarian descent, the involvement of Hungarian-Australians in certain *professions and occupations* is well above that rate. They favour occupations in which independence, initiative and imagination prevail and hard work assures success.

There are, for instance, about 50 professors at various Australian Universities at the time of writing of this account. In *art and music* Australia lacked the attraction of some other countries, thus only a few well-known artists settled here, but many young artists of Hungarian origin have achieved success. The number of successful Hungarian *businessmen* has reached proverbial proportions. In *sport*: table tennis was made popular by Hungarians and soccer owes its rise in popularity, to a great extent, to Hungarians. The less spectacular sports of chess and bridge have been, at various periods, the preserve of Hungarian champions. Fencing, a popular Hungarian sport has reached a great degree of popularity, especially in Victoria, thanks to the Hungarian sportsmen there.

We may say that the Magyar immigrants have invaded the farthest corners of Australia: English with a characteristic Magyar accent is spoken in such distant places as the Birdsville Track in Queensland and the Australian Antarctic Territory. As false modesty is not one of the Hungarian national vices, they do not conceal their presence nor the fact that they are Magyars. In fact their vitality, industry and extrovert friendliness make them more conspicuous than population statistics would suggest.

Without them the hot Australian sun would still rise, life, inflation and strikes would still go on, but the lights would be a little paler, music a little duller and Australia a little poorer.

Hungary's best known poet, Sandor Petofi was born on the 1st of January, 1823. His short, but meteoric career ended on the 31st of July, 1849, when he was killed in one of the last battles of the Hungarian Freedom War.

The two main themes of his poetry were *love and freedom*. The "love" of his poetry was the romantic, pure love of courtship and marriage. The "freedom" of his battle-hymns was inspired by his boundless love of the Magyar nation and Magyar soil.

In a short poem he defines these two themes, his ideology, in fact his whole life:

Liberty and love

These two must I have.

For my love I'll sacrifice

My life.

For liberty I'll sacrifice

My love."

He did sacrifice both his love and his life when he died on the field of battle, fighting for his nation's freedom.

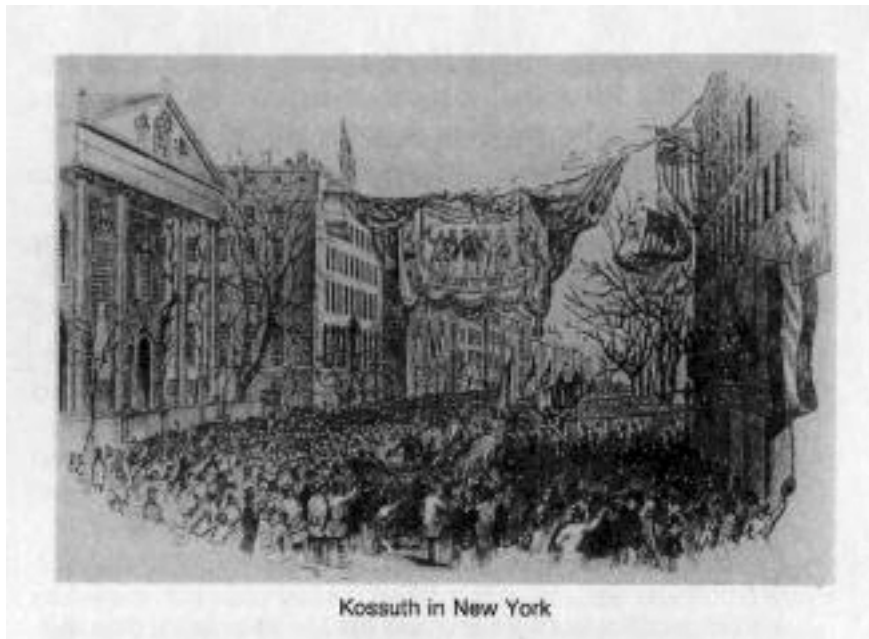
His poems have been translated into 60 languages. These translations render, in an imperfect way, the inimitable beauty of Petőfi's Magyar words, treasured by Hungarians all over the world.

The 2nd of January is the anniversary of an interesting Hungarian victory.

During the eleventh century the German emperors made several unsuccessful attempts to make independent Hungary a vassal of the Empire. In January, 1052 the army of the emperor was besieging the Hungarian frontier city Pozsony. It was midwinter and the German army lived on supplies stored aboard their ships moored in the Danube River. On a cold, misty winter day a Hungarian diver, named Zotmund, swam to the German ships under the ice floes and sank them by piercing the hull of each ship. Having lost their supplies, the Germans retreated in order to avoid starvation.

This is a rare instance of *the besieged starving the besieging army*.

On the 5th of January, 1852, Lajos Kossuth, leader of the Hungarian struggle for freedom, addressed the U.S. Senate and two days later he spoke to the Congress at the invitation of the American Government.



This honour has since been granted to only one other foreign statesman: Winston Churchill.

On the 6th of January, 1764, several hundred Szekely women and children were massacred at the village of Madefalva in Transylvania.

This massacre was the indirect result of the defence policy of the Austrian Empire under the rule of empress-queen Maria Theresa. During the first years of her reign, she managed to assert her right to succession through various wars with the help of the Hungarian soldiers in her army. Having discovered the value of the Magyar soldier, she ordered the drafting of a large number of peasant boys for the imperial army. As the draft meant 8-12 years of military service, the Hungarian youngsters were obviously reluctant to join the imperial army. The peasants of Transylvania were particularly reluctant to leave their small farms in order to serve the Austrian ruler. So the young Szekely-Hungarian men of military age began to flee to neighbouring Moldavia, a Rumanian province under Turkish rule.

The commanders of the imperial army districts took stern measures to secure the required number of recruits. They practically kept the families hostage for the return of the fugitives. In one Szekely village, Madefalva, there was a large number of dependants — mostly women and children — waiting for the departure of the recruiting units.

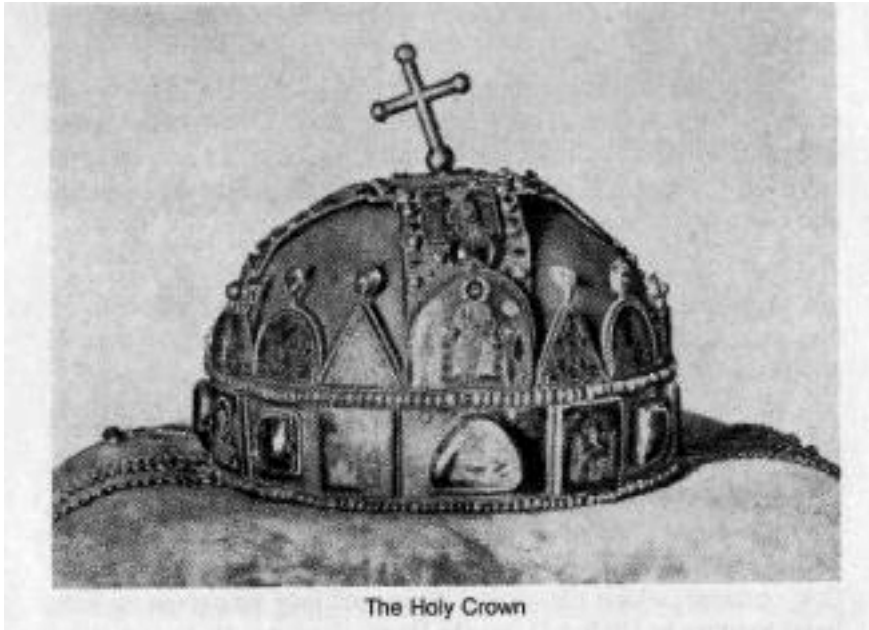
Then, suddenly, on the 6th of January, the military attacked with cannons and muskets and massacred about 500 women and children.

After this outrage, entire Szekely villages left the country and settled in Moldavia and Bukovina. They formed several Hungarian villages there and called themselves “csangos” (Szekely-Magyar word for “refugees”). Here they have kept their Magyar language and customs for two centuries.

SAINT STEPHEN'S CROWN

The government of the United States returned Saint Stephen's Crown and the other coronation regalia to the Hungarian people on the 6th of January, 1978.

The Hungarian royal crown, which the historians call “The Holy Crown of Saint Stephen” is made of two royal crowns. The first segment, which constitutes the upper part was given to King Saint Stephen in 1000 A.D. by the Pope, Sylvester II. In that year, the ruling Christian Prince of Hungary, Stephen, turned to the Pope asking for his recognition as an independent Christian king, implying that he did not wish to become a vassal of the Holy Roman (German) Emperor. The Pope sent him a crown and bestowed upon him the title of “King by the Grace of God”, thus acknowledging his independence from the emperor. This crown was placed upon Stephen's head on Christmas Day 1000 A.D.



The lower half of the crown was given to the Hungarian king Geza I in 1074 by the Greek emperor in gratitude for the humane treatment of the Greek prisoners of war. The two parts were made into one crown at the end of the 11th century.

This crown became not only the sign of royal authority but, more importantly, the symbolic embodiment of the supreme and *sovereign authority of the Hungarian nation*. Through the solemn act of the coronation — a rite somewhat resembling the ordination of a Catholic priest — this supreme ‘power is handed over to the king. The free Hungarian nation is, however, the ultimate source of all law and power?: the nation freely elects the king and invests him with these sovereign powers when the act of coronation is legally performed with Saint Stephen’s Crown. This is placed on the head of the king by the two “first lords” of the nation, the Head of the Church and the Head of the Government.

In the symbolic language of the Hungarian Constitution the members of the free nation are called the “members of the Holy Crown”, the land of Hungary is “the land of the Holy Crown”. Until 1848 only the nobles were considered to be members of the free nation — but since March 1848 all Hungarian citizens are equal members of the nation and of the Crown without any discrimination towards race, creed or nationality.

The *fortunes of Saint Stephen’s Crown* seem to mirror the turbulent history of the Hungarian nation. Like many Hungarians, the crown often had to be hidden or to find refuge abroad. It was lost and found several times. Once, when it was carried in a wooden cask, it was lost and then found, miraculously, at the bottom of a marsh. Once an ambitious baron stole it and held it to ransom: he wanted the king to marry his daughter in return for the crown. (It does not say much for the young lady that the king remained an uncrowned bachelor . . .). Once it was smuggled out of Hungary by a vengeful dowager

queen in the pram of the infant crown prince. Subsequently, the widowed queen pawned it for a mere 2500 florins. On another occasion the fleeing ministers of the defeated Revolution contemplated destroying it — eventually they hid it underground, damaging the cross on the top in the process.

During a tragic period *after the defeat at Mohacs*, the crown was captured by the Turks and the Turkish pashas tried it on, one after the other, only to find that it was too large for them; Or, possibly a little uncomfortable, considering that the previous wearer of the crown had been the unfortunate King Louis, killed at the Mohacs battlefield.

At times of reconciliation it was returned to the nation's capital from its various hiding places. In 1790, for instance, the Habsburg king sent it back to Buda from Vienna. The crown and the other regalia were transported in an ornate coach, escorted by a thousand mounted guards of honour and received by long rows of singing people, kneeling at the roadside as the procession went by. In Buda, the nation's capital, the crown was greeted by the salute of 500 cannons and then exhibited at the royal castle, guarded, in turn, by the noble guards of Hungary's 72 counties.

During the period *between the World Wars*, Hungary had no king and was ruled by a Regent. The Holy Crown, the symbol of the nation's sovereignty was constantly guarded by a Crown Guard created for this task. At the end of 1944, the Crown Guard took it to Austria, then handed it over to the American Army, asking the U.S. Government to keep it until the liberation of Hungary.

The U.S. Government kept it until 1978. Then it was decided that the relics should be returned to Hungary and handed back to the Hungarian people, not to the Budapest Government.

The crown and the regalia are kept in the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest, as the possession of the Hungarian people.

THE FORSAKEN ARMY

The Hungarian 2nd Army was destroyed in the Battle of the Don, which began on the 12th of January, 1943. During the three weeks of bitter fighting, the army suffered about 150,000 casualties, among them 100,000 dead — about half of its total effective strength. *This was the worst military disaster of Hungarian history.*

In January 1943, the southern sector of the German front in Russia was in full retreat under the repeated, ferocious attacks of the Soviet armies. In the centre, the Don-front was held by the poorly equipped smaller allies of the Axis: Italian, Hungarian and Rumanian armies. The Hungarian 2nd Army was holding the eastern-most, exposed Don-bend, south of Voronezh, along a 190 kilometre-long line. The army consisted of nine so-called "light" divisions — practically brigades with two regiments each. The army's armoured brigade had been placed under German command and was subsequently used

elsewhere, covering the German retreat. The air-brigade had no fuel for its planes. The infantry divisions had no armour, very few heavy weapons, no efficient anti-tank weapons, no air-cover, no fuel for the vehicles. It was mid-winter in Central Russia: the temperature dropped to minus 40 degrees C at night. The Hungarian soldiers had no winter quarters, and only insufficient winter clothing, in spite of the Germans' firm undertaking to supply everything.

On the 12th of January the main Russian attack struck the northern sector of the Hungarian line. The Soviet attacking force consisting of eight infantry and five armoured divisions concentrated on the sector held by two Hungarian brigades. After two days of bitter fighting, the Russians broke through, cutting off the northern part of the army, the 3rd Hungarian Corps. Two days later, on the 14th, the second wave of the Russian attack hit the southern sector of the Hungarian Army with four infantry and five armoured divisions. The Hungarian line was held for eight days, but in the meantime the Hungarians' southern neighbours, the 8th Italian Army, retreated without warning, leaving the right flank of the Hungarians unprotected. The Russians threatened to encircle several Hungarian and German divisions here, but the menaced units managed to break through the Russian line. The breakthrough was spearheaded by a Hungarian regiment, which lost 80% of its effective strength.

In the north, the 3rd Hungarian Corps continued to cover the retreat of the German 2nd Army. The three divisions of this corps fought until February 1st, surrounded by Russian armoured divisions. On this day the Germans ordered the corps to attack the Russians in order to enable the encircled German units to retreat. The Hungarian Corps Commander, General Count Marcel Stomm, refused to obey and explained his action in his Order of the Day in the following words: ". . . The Royal Hungarian 3rd Corps. has been covering the withdrawal of the German 2nd Army for the last 12 days. During this time the Hungarian soldiers had to suffer the horrors of the Russian winter outdoors, without food, ammunition . . . Today I received the order to lead you in an attack to break through the Russian lines . . . which even the well— equipped and. armed German troops were unable to stop . . . I cannot pass this order to you, as it would be senseless to expect the half-starved, half-frozen Hungarians to go to their deaths .

After this I must allow everybody to look after himself. . . God be with you, Hungarian soldiers!"

On issuing this order, General Stomm said goodbye to his staff and began to walk in the direction of the Russian lines. He could hardly walk as both his feet were frozen. He was captured — with his service revolver in his hand — the only armed general captured by the Russians .

In attempting to stand fast in the face of an enemy 10-20 times superior in numbers and equipment, the Hungarian Army lost, in this single battle, three times the number of Australians killed during the entire war. These enormous losses tell the true story of courage and sacrifice of these forgotten men. In present-day Hungary, it is still forbidden to honour the memory of these brave soldiers. Their remains lie in unmarked mass-graves .in Russia and the Communist Government of Hungary forbids the honouring

of their memory.

It is left to the Hungarians living in the free world to remember them and their supreme sacrifice.

The last king of the Arpad dynasty, Endre III (Andrew) died on the 14th of January, 1301.

His only child, a daughter called *Elizabeth*, renounced her right to the throne and withdrew to a Dominican convent. She died in 1336 and was subsequently canonized by the Church as the Blessed Elizabeth.

The dynasty of Arpad ruled Hungary for 400 years. The five ruling princes and 24 kings of the dynasty gave the nation a new land, a new religion and a new civilization. Some 20 members of the family have since been canonized by the Church.

During their reign Hungary became a national state with its own independent policy and a civilization which was truly Christian but still characteristically Hungarian,

Kalman Mikszath was born on the 16th of January, 1847 in northern Hungary.

He spent most of his life as a writer, journalist and part-time politician in Budapest where he died in 1910.

In some respects he was the opposite of his rival and contemporary, Mor Jokai. Mikszath was a realist and his "heroes" were simple peasants or middle-class people all possessing venal vices and modest virtues. Mikszath described everyday life in 19th century Hungary with understanding and sympathy but he did not hesitate to view the shortcomings of his society with a touch of humour and sharp-witted satire. He also discovered the children whom most 19th century novelists ignored. His juvenile novel "The Two mendicant Students" is still a popular classic. So is "Saint Peter's Umbrella", a fairy tale for all ages. In his short stories he describes the simple peasants of the north, Magyars and Slovaks in peaceful coexistence.

A fine example of his social satire is the novelette "*The Gentry*" in which he describes the hypocritical vanity of the impoverished country nobility of northern Hungary. After a luxurious wedding, the narrator, a Budapest journalist, questions his friend about the pomp displayed by the guests at the wedding:

"And those four-in-hands," I exclaimed, "the pomp, the splendour and brilliance, the Havana cigars and everything everything?"

"So much eyewash. The four-in-hands were borrowed from one place; the trappings here, the first pair of horses there, the second pair from another place. .

"But this is sheer deceit!"

“Poppycock, “Bogozy interrupted passionately. “Who would be deceived? Everyone knows that the other hasn’t got four horses. These good boys, myself included, simply keep up form beautiful, ancient form. Why, all this is so charming... This is the custom with us and customs must be respected at all costs. . . but as regards the merits of the case, even if the brilliance and pomp, the splendour... don’t belong to one or the other... by all means, they belong to somebody — to all of us. These things happen to be scattered among us and whose business is it if on certain occasions, we artificially pool them on one spot . . .“

(Tr. by L. Halapy, Oxford Uni.Press, 1967). _

Certainly a novel way of “keeping up with the Joneses”

January the 18th is the day of Saint Margaret of Hungary, another saint of the House of Arpad.

Margaret, or “Margit” in Hungarian, was the tenth child of *King Bela IV*. Bela, himself brother of the great Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, had three of his children canonized by the Church: Blessed Kinga, Blessed Yolanda and Saint Margaret.

Margaret was born during the *Tartar-Mongol invasion of Hungary in 1242* in the then Hungarian province, Dalmatia where the royal family had taken refuge. The parents offered their child to the service of God if Hungary was liberated. Margaret was placed, at the age of four, in a Dominican convent, was educated there and then took her vows in the new convent built on the island which today bears her name, Saint Margaret Island in the Danube, between Buda and Pest.

Margaret accepted her parents’ wish eagerly and spent her life as a voluntary sacrifice for Hungary. She accepted no privileges and performed the lowliest duties in the convent. Her prayers and sacrifice helped the king in the almost impossible task of rebuilding the country ravaged by the Mongol devastation. She refused several offers of marriage and continued her harsh devotion until her death at the convent, at the age of 28.

Her name became a symbol of Christian sacrifice and devotion in the service of the nation. The memory of her self-sacrifice has served for centuries as consolation and comfort at times of tribulations. It was during such hard times, *in 1943 that Pope Pius XII canonized her.*

The Blessed Eusebius (or “Ozseb” in Hungarian), founder of the monastic Order of Saint Paul, died on the 20th of January, 1270.

Born into a rich, aristocratic family, Eusebius became a canon in Esztergom. Shocked by the horrors of the Tartar invasion of Hungary in 1241-42, he withdrew to the wilderness of the mountains and lived there as a hermit praying for his ravaged country. One night he saw a vision of many flickering lights

uniting into one great flame. He interpreted this vision as God's indication of his new vocation. He assembled the hermits living in the forest and formed a monastic community of contemplative monks. He named the new order after Saint Paul the Hermit, so its members became known as the Pauline or White Monks.

Subsequently many Pauline monasteries were founded in Hungary and other countries of Central Europe. The order gave the Church many eminent prelates and saints.

The order has been disbanded in Hungary by the Communist regime, but Pauline monasteries still stand in Poland.

Imre Madach, author of the greatest Hungarian drama, *'The Tragedy of Man'* was born on the 21st of January, 1823.

He found ample emotional inspiration for his drama in his own life. He suffered persecution and imprisonment for his participation in the Hungarian Freedom War. During his imprisonment his wife was unfaithful to him. Madach divorced her, but never ceased to love her.

His drama, a philosophical tableau of the fate of mankind, depicts Adam and Eve being guided by Lucifer through various phases of human history. They experience in dreamlike prophetic scenes the struggles and frustrations of their descendants. The final scene however ends with a message of hope: God's last words to Adam are: "Man — strive and have faith — unfaltering faith . .

Adam represents mankind in search of progress and happiness, whilst Eve is the symbol of the ideal Woman — Man's inspiration and comfort and his loyal companion. Obviously, the kind of woman Madach's wife never was . . .

This is how Eve describes Woman's eternal vocation:

"I'll shine beyond the tomb!

While Love and Poetry and Youth endure

Upon my homeward way I still will go.

My smile alone the ills of Earth can cure,

And flush men's faces with its sunny glow."

Madach died soon after the publication of his great work, in 1860.

General Sandor Asboth died on the 21st of January, 1868 in Buenos Aires, where he was at the time United States Ambassador to Argentina. He was a military aide to Lajos Kossuth during the Hungarian Freedom War of 1848. He fled to America after the defeat of the Hungarian Army. During the Civil War he led a Union division and fought with distinction as one of the several Hungarian generals in Lincoln's

army. After the war the president appointed him ambassador to Argentina where he eventually died as a result of an old war injury.

Farkas Kempelen, the adventurous scientist was born on January 23, 1734. His best-known invention was the chess-playing robot, which he constructed to entertain Queen Maria Theresa. This enigmatic machine was probably only an intricate magic trick: a box with a chess-playing dwarf cleverly concealed inside. It entertained — and frustrated — such eminent chess players as Maria Theresa, Frederick the Great and Napoleon. Kempelen never revealed its secret. After his death the machine was taken to America where it was destroyed in a fire. (Did it have a “self-destructing” device?) Kempelen did however have some *genuine inventions*: he constructed a “speaking machine” which can still be seen (and heard) in the museum of King’s College, London, He also invented a system of writing for the blind — ten years before Braille. He was also a skilled civil engineer and architect: his achievements included the building of the giant fountain at Schonbrunn, a theatre in Buda, and a cotton mill in southern Hungary.



On January 24, 1849 the adventurous Hungarian soldier, Istvan Turr set up a Hungarian Legion to help the Italians of Sardinia to fight for their freedom. After the defeat of the uprising, he fled to Germany and fought the Austrians there. Defeated again, he fled to South America in search of new battles to fight. On returning to Europe, he met Lajos Kossuth, the exiled leader of the Hungarian freedom struggle.

Kossuth charged Turr with the organization of a "Hungarian Legion" in Italy. It was Kossuth's hope to liberate Austrian-oppressed Hungary with the help of the French who were at war with Austria at the time. The French however concluded peace with Vienna and Kossuth disbanded the legion.

Turr and his legionnaires joined the Italian freedom fighters under Garibaldi. Turr became *Garibaldi's chief-of-staff*. Between campaigns he found time to marry the niece of Napoleon III. At the conclusion of Garibaldi's successful campaign, Turr returned to Hungary and his original profession, civil engineering.

He played an important role in the construction of the canals of the Hungarian Plain. Later he also worked on the construction of the Suez and first Panama canals.

To everybody's surprise (including, probably, his own), he died peacefully at home, at the age of 84.

"NEW MELODIES OF NEWER YEARS..."

The poet Endre Ady died on January 27, 1919 in Budapest.

His first collection of poems, published in 1906 had a shattering effect on the stagnating Hungarian literary life of that complacent era. He published several collections in the following years, each raising a storm of both praise and attack for its prophetic, scolding patriotism, sensuous longing for love and for the poet's imaginative symbolism.

Ady created a symbolic language of his own to convey his dramatic message, as, for instance, in his appeal to the nation presented as a paraphrase of an old Magyar folksong:

*"New winds are shaking the old Magyar maples,
Waiting we wait for the new Magyar miracles. ."*

He felt deeply for his Magyar nation, and saw the faults of his contemporaries. He despaired of the nation's future, and raised his scolding voice against it like an angry parent, calling it *'This detestable, lovable nation . . .'* His was the tragic role of the unwanted Messiah, his impossible task the awakening of the nation with the *"new melodies of newer years"*.

His weary heart repeatedly found peace in his never-failing refuge, God's love. He remained, indeed, throughout his erring, prophetic career a God-seeking, repenting Christian psalmist, echoing David's eternal human cry from the depths of his misery and passion. The destiny of this lonely prophet was *"sadly, between Heaven and Earth to wander . . ."* Like the ancient prophets, he found his consolation in God.

In 1919, at the end of the World War, thousand-year old Hungary was being destroyed by enemies within and without. On a cold January day Ady's tormented soul finally found peace in his Christian faith:

"I have already found Him in my heart

*I've found Him and have clasped Him in my arms,
In death we'll be united, never to part. ."*