

November

On the 2nd of November, 1938, the so-called "First Vienna Award" returned to Hungary the southern strip of the Magyar-inhabited land given to Czechoslovakia in the Trianon Treaty (Cf. June 4).

Hungary never ceased to protest against the injustices of Trianon and the revision of the treaty was foremost in the mind of the nation between the two wars.

When Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy agreed at the *Munich Meeting* in September 1938 to return to Germany the German-inhabited region of Czechoslovakia, the four governments suggested that the Hungarian claims be settled by negotiation between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Should the negotiations fail, the Agreement promised arbitration by the same powers.

The negotiations did fail and Hungary appealed to the four powers for arbitration. Great Britain and France authorized Germany and Italy to make a decision on their behalf, which the two powers did.

Their arbitration decreed that Hungary should receive the regions where the bulk of the Magyar population lived, which was about one-fourth of the land originally taken from Hungary. The British and French Governments acknowledged these territorial changes made under the original Munich Agreement.

Thus the "First Vienna Award" was not "Germany's gift to Hungary", but a partial rectification of the original treaty made by *the signatories of the same (Trianon) Treaty*: a legal peacetime agreement ratified by the governments of the signatories of the original Trianon Treaty.

"A NEW WORLD OUT OF NOTHING"

On the 3rd of November, 1823, a young man of 22 wrote to his father: "... *I have created a new world out of nothing.* ."

The young man, Janos Bolyai, did not exaggerate: on that day he had completed his 30-page treatise on geometry, written in Latin and entitled, rather modestly: "*Appendix*". In this short study the young Bolyai had created the nucleus of a new world of science, a new approach to geometry in which the traditional principles of the Euclidean geometry were partly refuted, partly revised. This new system, called the "Absolute Geometry" has since supplied the basic principles for Einstein's theory of Relativity and other advances in modern science.

Jonos was the son of Farkas Bolyai who was himself a mathematical genius and creator of many new and revised principles concerning the philosophical foundations of mathematical thinking. He was born in 1775 to an old Hungarian-Szekely family. In addition to his exceptional talent he was also a poet and dramatist, a painter of some note, a practicing doctor, a skilled

technician and builder, a forester and a linguist.

While studying at the Gottingen University, in Germany, he became a close friend of *Gauss*, the great mathematician. On his return to Hungary, Farkas Bolyai became Professor of Mathematics in the college of his hometown, *Marosvasarhely*, in Transylvania. He wrote several studies on the fundamental questions of mathematical philosophy. He died in 1856, after a miraculously active and rewarding life, at the age of 81.

His son, Janos Bolyai, was born in 1802. He inherited his father's exceptional talent, but his interests were not as wide as his father's. Under his father's teaching he managed to master the entire structure of higher mathematics before the age of 13. He then completed the Academy of Military Engineering and served as an engineering officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Though he was an enthusiastic sportsman and accomplished musician, his principal interests were mathematics and geometry. On his father's suggestion he studied the fundamental principles of the traditional Eudidean geometry and succeeded in refuting the famous axiom of the parallels. On this revised basis he built his new system of geometry which he called "Absolute Geometry."

Though his discovery was completed in 1823 — the date of his letter to his father — the European scientists only learned of his theories much later, when the treatise was translated into French. Three years after Bolyai's initial discovery, in 1826, the Russian mathematician, *Lobachevsky*, reached the same conclusions, independently from Bolyai. Today scientists attribute the creation of

Absolute Geometry equally to Bolyai and Lobachevsky, joining their names with that of *Riemann*, a German scientist, who a few decades later developed and explained their ideas and completed the system.

Thus Bolyai's discovery helped to lay the foundation of modern mathematical science which led eventually to the modern theories of relativity, quantum-mechanics and other principles of atomic-age science.

The two Bolyais are probably the only example of a talented father-son combination in science. They are also unique inasmuch as the foreign students and teachers pay tribute to their genius more willingly than the average Hungarian who knows very little of Hungary's greatest scientists.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica, after stating that Janos Bolyai was one of the two founders of non-Euclidean geometry, concludes' the article on the two Bolyais:

"The creation of non-Euclidean geometry has been compared with the Copernican revolution in astronomy for its profound influence on philosophy and science."

November the 5th is the day of Saint Imre (Emery), son of King Saint Stephen.

He was Saint Stephen's only son to reach adulthood. He received the best education for his future task from his father, and from Bishop Saint Gellert (Gerard). In his book "Admonitiones" the king himself gave his son an excellent summary of the duties and desirable qualities of a Christian king.

Imre grew into a fine young man, possessing exceptional intellectual and moral qualities. He

was also an enthusiastic sportsman: a circumstance, which led to his premature death. He died as a result of a hunting accident in 1031.

Instead of becoming his country's king, Imre became the Patron Saint of Hungary's youth.

Count Mikloss Bercsenyi, the commander of Rakoczi's army, died on the 6th of November 1725, in exile in Turkey, at the side of Prince Rakoczi. He was the first aristocrat to join Ferenc Rakoczi in his freedom fight in 1703. He stood by the prince faithfully and followed him into exile, spurning the offered amnesty at home.

His son, *Laiszlo Bercsenyi* settled in France where he founded the first hussar regiment of the French army. He died a Marshal of France. The hussar regiment he founded still bears his name.

Another of Rakoczi's officers, brigadier *Andras Toth* settled in France with his son. Toth rose to the rank of general in the French Army and was made a Baron. He gave up his position and joined his prince in exile in Turkey. His son, Ferenc Toth (Francois Tott), however, remained in France and made a career there, first as an artillery officer, and then as the French king's envoy in Turkey. During his diplomatic mission he gave the Turks expert engineering advice on fortifying the Dardanelles. He also submitted the first detailed plan of the future Suez Canal. At the height of his career he resigned his posts and returned to Hungary, the country of his ancestors he himself had never seen. He died in Hungary.

On the 7th of November, 1895, the Hungarian scientist, Lajos Biro set out to explore New Guinea. He spent six years studying the anthropology and natural history of the great island, which was at that time, still largely unexplored.

Laszlo Mecs, the priest-poet, died on the 9th of November, 1978, in the Abbey of Pannonhalma. Mecs was probably the most popular literary personality of the thirties. He was a member of the Premonstratensian Order and lived and worked as a parish priest in a small village in northern Hungary. After the Treaty of Trianon his village was given to Czechoslovakia, but Mecs remained with his people as their spiritual leader.

His poetry became known all over the Magyar-speaking regions of Central Europe. His colourful, easy-flowing lines sang of peace, love and justice. His imaginative symbolism and rich language carried a joyful message of Christian humanism.

This is how he described his own role as a poet-priest:

*"My face to every smile a mirror gives;
That is the end for which my being lives;
Reflecting smiles of flower and butterfly,
Woods, wolves, sheep, tempest, rainbow in the sky,
Sun, moon and starlight, affluent man and poor,
Suffring and joy, good days and days unsure.
At rose-trees, at the Cross, with smiles I nod,
Learning to smile back in the Face of God."*

("The Child longed to play", tins]. by W. Kirkconnel).

TWO CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

At this time of the year we remember two soldier-statesmen of the 17th century. Though they belonged to different denominations and political alignments, their ultimate goal was the same: the restoration of independent, Christian Hungary.



The Protestant rebel Bethlen and the Catholic royalist, Zrinyi lived and died for the same cause — Hungary's freedom.

Prince Gabor Bethlen died on the 15th of November, 1629. He was ruling Prince of Transylvania (1613-1629), a semi-independent Magyar state between the Turkish Empire and "Royal Hungary", the realm of the Habsburg king of Hungary. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Transylvania managed to maintain a precarious independence by cleverly playing off one great power against the other. According to their temperament and talent, the elected rulers or princes of the little country kept their menacing neighbours away by either paying them tribute or by fighting them. Thus the little mountainous region became the last bastion of Hungarian religious, cultural and — to some extent — political freedom.

Bethlen, a soldier of humble origin, was a devout Protestant. When he was elected Prince in 1613, Transylvania was threatened by the Habsburg Emperor-King whose Viennese Government decided to end the little country's independence. By clever diplomacy, Bethlen managed to secure the benevolent neutrality of this other dangerous neighbour, Turkey, and allied himself with the western Protestant powers, England, Holland and Sweden, enemies of the Catholic Habsburg

Empire. As their ally he joined the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and led several successful campaigns against the imperials in northern Hungary ("Royal Hungary"). Though unable to defeat the emperor decisively, he was able to negotiate on a stronger basis after each campaign. Thus he managed to strengthen Transylvania's independence, extend its territory into northern Hungary and to gain religious freedom for Hungarian Protestants under Habsburg rule.

At home, he maintained an absolutist, but benevolent and enlightened rule. He granted complete religious freedom to all nationalities, promoted the arts and education and strengthened the little nation's economy by progressive reforms inspired by the western countries.

He died after a reign of 16 years, his task still unfinished.

The other great soldier-statesman, Count Miklos Zrinyi died on the 18th of November, 1664. He was a Catholic, and a loyal subject of the Habsburg king of Hungary. He fought for the liberation of Hungary with the same courage and wisdom as Bethlen. He chose a different path towards his ultimate goal. He felt that Hungary had to be freed from the pagan Turks first with the help of the Habsburg Empire.

Leading his well-trained troops, he defeated the Turks in several minor engagements, but the Emperor refused to commit imperial troops to a major campaign against the sultan. Zrinyi held the rank of a general in the Imperial Army but he was not given command of German troops, he could only dispose of his own soldiers, recruited, trained and financed by himself.

Only once did he manage to draw the imperial commander (Montecucculi) into a major battle, at Szentgotthard, which ended in a great victory over the Turks. Unfortunately, the imperial diplomacy failed to profit by this great victory and Vienna concluded a humiliating peace with the sultan, granting all Turkish demands in the hope the sultan would not attack Vienna again.

Embittered by this, cowardly policy, Zrinyi began to contemplate an anti-Habsburg policy in cooperation with his Protestant friends in Transylvania. He then died as a result of a very suspicious "hunting accident".

This great soldier-statesman was also the *greatest Hungarian poet* of his time. His lyric poetry expresses his secret longing for peace and the quiet enjoyment of the beauty of life, denied to the Magyars of his century. His epic poem "Zrinyiasz", proudly sings the praise of his great-grandfather, his namesake, the hero of the 16th century struggle against the Turks (cf. 8th September). His prose writings laid down the principles of the military and political struggle against the Turks.

The concluding lines of his "Zrinyiasz" summarize his goal in life:

*"I seek my fame not only with my pen,
But also with my sword so feared by men;
And all my life I'll fight the Ottoman moon,
And gladly for my country die, be it late or soon."*

He fought for his nation all his life with all his talent. He also died for Hungary — unfortunately too soon.



November the 19th is the feast of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.

Elizabeth, the daughter of King Andras II was born in Hungary around 1207. At the age of 14 she was given in marriage to Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia, in Germany. Their ideal, happy marriage, which was blessed by three children, lasted only six years because Louis died on his way to the crusade.

The young widow gave up all her wealth and retired to a hostel she had built for the poor and sick. There she shared the harsh life of the needy. She joined the Third Order of Saint Francis of Assisi whose charity, compassion, humility and poverty she imitated. The emperor asked her to marry him, but Elizabeth declined. The severity of her devotion and dedication probably shortened her life, as she *died at the age of 24, in 1231*.

Seven princes acted as her pallbearers. The emperor placed on her coffin the crown she had declined to wear.

Elizabeth was canonized four years after her death, in the lifetime of her father and family. She is one of the best-known saints of the Middle Ages.



Mihaly (Michael) Vorosmarty died on the 19th of November, 1855.

He was the greatest Hungarian poet of the Romantic period. He established his fame with his epic poems, a genre very popular during the first half of the century. The colourful style and imaginative beauty of the language lends an almost lyric beauty to these epics. For the same reason they are practically untranslatable.

Vorosmarty really excelled in an original type of *contemplative lyric poem*, of which he was the greatest master in Hungarian literature. One of these fine philosophical poems is entitled "To the Daydreamer". He wrote it to his young bride. The poem ends with these stoic words:

*"He who wants a flower does not bear a bush;
He who would have vision gazes not into the sun;
He who would seek after pleasure loses out.
Only the humble are not brought pain through desire.
Don't look, don't look into the distance of desire,
The entire world is not our land to hold;
Only that which the heart alone can encompass,
That only we can hold as our own."*

(Transl. by Paul Desney)

He wrote this to the only girl he ever loved, whom he married and with whom he lived happily until his death.

His age was not called the Romantic period for nothing.

Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary died on the 21st of November, 1916, after a reign of 68, years.

He was made Emperor of Austria in 1848 after the removal of the weak Emperor Ferdinand V. The Hungarian nation was, at that time, already at war with Austria in defence of its constitutional rights. After the defeat of the freedom struggle, the Viennese Government, under Francis Joseph's authority, led a cruel campaign of revenge against the leaders of the war and the young Emperor signed hundreds of death sentences. In 1867, after the so-called "Compromise" Agreement, Francis Joseph was accepted as Hungary's King and crowned in Budapest. His family life was beset with tragedies: his son committed suicide, his wife was killed by an anarchist and his brothers died violently.

In 1914 *he declared war on Serbia* at the urging of his Austrian advisors, against the advice of the Hungarian Prime Minister. This was to avenge the assassination of his nephew, the heir to his throne. But it set off a tragic chain of events, the First World War, and indirectly also the Second World War, and its tragic aftermath in Central Europe, Francis Joseph's former Empire.

On a November day in 1457 a Hungarian deputation arrived in Paris asking for the hand of a French princess for the Hungarian King Ladislas V. The magnificent gifts were carried by a strange, new type of vehicle which had springs in its undercarriage and light, spoked wheels. This was the first time the light, sprung Hungarian-type carriage became known abroad. This horse-drawn carriage, first built in the Hungarian town of Kocs in the 15th century, was lighter, faster and more comfortable than the heavy carts of the Middle Ages. This invention soon became known as the "cart of Kocs", in Hungarian "kocsi szekér" — "kocsi" for short. The Hungarian word became soon adopted by all European languages to indicate the "coach" ("kutsche", "coche", etc.), a Hungarian invention.

Another Hungarian achievement has a more recent date. On the 25th of November, 1953, the Hungarian National Football (Soccer) Team — the so-called "Golden Team" — *defeated the English National Team 6 to 3* in the famous Wembley Stadium. This is the first time in the history of Soccer that the inventors of the game were defeated at home.