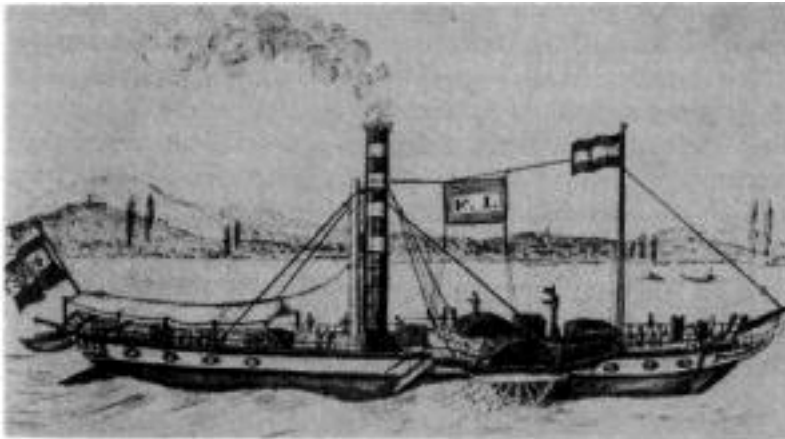


September

SOME HUNGARIAN “FIRSTS”

The first regular river-steamship service between Vienna and Pest was opened on the 4th of September, 1830.

The steamship was invented by Robert Fulton in 1807. By 19th century standards, Hungary was very progressive in using the new invention so soon after its first application.



The first Hungarian steamship (1830)

1830 was also the year of the invention of the steam locomotive by George Stephenson. Fifteen years after the first experimental run between Liverpool and Manchester, Hungary opened *Central Europe's first steam-train line* between Pest and Vac. A few years later, in 1848, a longer railway line was opened between Pest and Szolnok.



The first Hungarian steam locomotive (1847)

There are some Hungarian “firsts” in the field of communication. The electric locomotive invented by the Hungarian engineer *Kalman Kando* made it possible to use electricity in rail transport. The first underground

railway system on the European continent was inaugurated in Budapest in 1896.

The memorable year of 1896 - the thousandth anniversary of Hungary's statehood in Europe or Hungary's "*Millenium*" marked the completion of the water, sewerage, gas, electricity and public transport systems in Budapest and the major Hungarian cities. The engineers Banki and Csonka invented the petrol carburettor, thus making mass-production of cars possible. If they could see the congested roads of a modern city today, they might have second thoughts about their invention .

On the 5th of September, 1909, the first night of the play "*Liliom*" by Ferenc Molnar was a complete failure in the Budapest Comedy Theatre. The critics agreed that young Molnar would never be able to write a good play.

Since that fateful evening, "*Liliom*" has been shown in Budapest more than a thousand times. It has enjoyed similar popularity on the stages of Berlin, Paris, London and New York. Eventually the play was made into a "musical" with the music of Rogers and Hammerstein and has since been a great success on stage and screen - under the title "*Carousel*".

Ferenc Molnar was born in Budapest in 1878. He studied Law (a "must" for the gentry in those days) then became a journalist (a "must not" for the gentry), a writer, war-correspondent and playwright. He wrote pleasant, but rather forgettable short stories, but his only novel has become a world success. "*The Boys of Pal Street*" has been translated into most European languages and has been a juvenile classic for 70 years.

His real fame was created by his plays. As his themes were mostly humorous and universal, his plays are easily translated. They have reached the theatres of Western Europe and were especially well-received in the United States.

Molnar followed the path of the success of his plays and settled in New York. His comedies ("The Devil", "Olympia", "The Swan") his witty criticisms and pleasant bohemian personality made him a popular figure in the American theatre world. He *died in New York in 1952*.

His novel and plays still remain popular but his Magyar name has somehow faded into obscurity - very few theatre-goers today remember the author of "*Carousel*". The reading public is apt to forget the "very Magyar" names of *Arnothy, Gabor, Foldes, Harsanyi, Marai, Wass* or *Zilahy* although some of their works are bestsellers among German, French and English readers. On the other hand everybody knows the "western" names of such Hungarian-born authors as *Arthur Koestler, Hans Habe* (Janos Bekessy), *Rene Fulop-Miller* and, of course, *George Mikes*.

On the 8th of September, 1566, Miklos Zrinyi and the remaining defenders died in a heroic battle at the gate of the fort Szigetvar.

The Turkish Sultan, *Suleiman* led several campaigns into Hungary in an attempt to conquer Christian Europe. During the 50 years of his reign, he occupied the entire Balkan Peninsula and managed to conquer one-third of Hungary. However, his grandiose campaigns were halted each time by the stubborn resistance of the Hungarian garrisons of the country's frontier towns. Such a fortified town was Sziget in the south of Transdanubia, near Mohacs, the scene of Suleiman's greatest victory. Sziget was defended by Count Miklos

Zrinyi, a lifelong enemy of the Turks.

In 1566 Suleiman decided to direct one more attack against Vienna, and to commence this attack by destroying his arch-enemy Miklos Zrinyi. On the first day of August the 90,000-strong Turkish army began the siege of Sziget, defended by Zrinyi and his 2,500 men. The Hungarians defended the town, then the fort successfully for five weeks. During the siege, the old Sultan had a heart attack and died - ironically on the anniversary of the Battle of Mohacs. His commanders continued the siege and finally managed to set fire to the walls and buildings. On the *8th of September* Zrinyi realized that the fort could not be held any more. He collected the few men still capable of fighting, while the women and the wounded locked themselves in the fort's arsenal. Zrinyi had the gate opened and stormed out with his men. They all fought to the death - the Turks took no prisoners. When the Turks began to enter the deserted fort, the women blew up the arsenal killing all remaining Hungarians and a few additional Turks.

During the five weeks of the siege the Habsburg Emperor-King of Hungary, Maximilian, was camping not far from the battle with an army of 60,000. When Zrinyi's messengers asked him to come to the aid of the besieged fort, he sent back his messenger, instructing Zrinyi to hold out until the end of the hunting season, as the Imperial Court *could not interrupt their yearly duck-shooting...*

THE QUEEN OF MAGYAR HEARTS

Elizabeth, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, was assassinated on the 10th of September, 1898.

She was the daughter of the Bavarian Duke Wittelsbach and a cousin of King Louis II of Bavaria. Elizabeth was only 16 and reputedly the most beautiful princess of Europe, when she married *Francis Joseph* ruler of the Habsburg Empire in 1854. The gentle, romantic, poetry- and nature-loving girl suffered much in the atmosphere of pride, prejudice and etiquette of the Vienna court, ruled by her tyrannical mother-in-law, Sophia.

She turned to her more emotional and sensitive Hungarian subjects who responded warmly to her sympathetic understanding. She learned to speak and write Hungarian and was the first Queen of Hungary in 400 years to speak to her subjects in their mother tongue. She helped to alleviate the oppression of Hungary by Austria. The conclusion of the "Compromise" of 1867 between the two nations was to a great extent due to Queen Elizabeth's influence.



Queen Elizabeth (at her coronation, 1867)

The Austrians resented her popularity with the Hungarians, but she maintained her predilection for the Magyars. The first Queen of Hungary, Gisela, was also a Bavarian princess. Since that time, Bavarians seemed closer to the Hungarian hearts than other Germans or Austrians.

The tragic deaths of her only son, Rudolf, of her sister and then of her cousin, King Louis II, deeply affected her. She spent the last years of her life in a constant state of depression, a shy, melancholic figure who preferred the lonely rides in the forests, the philosophical solitude of a villa in Greece or walks in Switzerland to the stifling atmosphere of the Vienna court.

One day Elizabeth was walking on the shore of Lake Geneva when the anarchist Luccheni stabbed her. She hardly felt the shock, and died, an hour later, as she had always wanted to die: alone and far from the cold, cruel court of Vienna.

On the 11th of September, 1741, the Hungarian Parliament, in an emotional scene, pledged the nation's wholehearted support for the Empress-Queen Maria Theresa.



Queen Maria Theresa's allegoric picture
(on the occasion of the Pozsony Diet)

She was the last in the direct line of the Habsburg dynasty. As her father and predecessor had no male heir, Maria Theresa's succession was contested by several provinces of the Habsburg Empire. This led to a war of succession between Austria and Bavaria-Prussia-France.

The young Queen - whom a cynical historian once called the "*only man of the Habsburg dynasty*" - showed some remarkable qualities - mostly feminine ones. She had the Hungarian Parliament recalled and appeared before the assembled nobles in mourning. (Her father had just died - besides, black matched her blond hair admirably . . .) With her infant child in her arms, the Crown of Hungary on her head, and tears in her beautiful blue eyes, she looked very much like the image of the Holy Virgin Patron of Hungary. This must have been a familiar picture indeed before the dazed eyes of the Magyar nobles. Only a generation before, their fathers had fought the grandfather of the young Queen, under Prince Rakoczi's flags, decorated with the picture of the Holy Virgin, patron of freedom-loving Hungarians.

Now the beautiful "Queen in distress" appealed to her "beloved, noble and chivalrous" Magyars for help against the enemies of the dynasty. Her "noble, chivalrous" (and forgetful) Hungarians stood up and cheered, promising her "their life and blood."

So Hungary, not long before a defeated rebel, came to the rescue of her oppressor, Austria. Hungarian hussars fought gallantly for their "Queen in distress". Thanks to their help Maria Theresa kept her provinces.

Whatever the historians may say about her, Maria Theresa was *quite a woman*...

General Janos Czech died on the 14th of September, 1904 in Buenos Aires.

He was born in Hungarian Transylvania in 1822. During the Freedom War he served in the Hungarian National Army with distinction, rising to the rank of general at the age of 27. Severely wounded in the last battle,

he hid in Transylvania until 1850, when he fled to Germany, then to France and Africa. Eventually he settled in Spain where he met and married the daughter of a former Argentine President.

They went to Argentina and Czeucz entered the service of the Argentinian Army. He founded the country's Military Academy and became its first commander. He modernized various services of the army and died as a respected 'general of Argentina.

His statue in front of the Military Academy of Buenos Aires preserves the memory of the great general of two countries.

HE OUTLIVED HIS OWN EXECUTION

On the 21st of September, 1851, *36 leaders of the Hungarian Freedom War were sentenced to death* by an Austrian Military Court. Among them were Lajos Kossuth, Regent of Hungary, Bertalan Szemere, the last Prime Minister, several ministers, generals and politicians. On the following day 36 gallows were erected in the courtyard and a tablet with the name of a condemned man was hung from each gibbet.

The 36 condemned men were not present. They had fled from Austrian vengeance and were sentenced and executed "in contumaciam", in effigy, in their absence.

One of these "hanged" men was Count Gyula (Julius) Andrassy. *He was born in 1823 and died in 1890 - having outlived his own execution by some 40 years*



Count Gyula Andrassy

During the Freedom War he served Hungary's cause as a soldier and diplomat. After the capitulation, he fled to London and then to Paris. The handsome young Magyar diplomat-soldier soon became the favourite of

French society, earning the epithet "Le Beau Pendu": a reference to his good looks and good luck of not being hanged.

He received amnesty in 1858 and returned to Hungary where he worked for reconciliation with Austria. On the conclusion of the "*Compromise*" in 1867, he was appointed *Prime Minister* of the Hungarian Government.

In 1871 Francis Joseph appointed him *Foreign Minister of the Dual Monarchy*. Andrassy became instrumental in establishing peaceful relations amongst the European powers at the Congress of Berlin. Andrassy possessed a world-wide outlook. He saw the aggressive designs of Russia and countered them by cultivating friendly relations with Germany and Great Britain. He also supported the ailing Turkish Empire, to counter Russian ambitions, but at the same time managed to conclude an agreement between Russia and the Monarchy to maintain peace.

Gyula Andrassy was the first Magyar statesman for centuries who occupied a leading diplomatic position. He was the most amiable of men uniting in himself the best qualities of the Magyar magnate and the modern gentleman.

His son, Gyula Andrassy (the Younger), played a similar but less spectacular role in world politics. He was the last Foreign Minister of the Monarchy in October 1918. His last task was to sue for peace at the end of World War I.

The first and the last Foreign Ministers of the monarchy were Hungarians - father and son. During the four decades between them, the Austrian Foreign Ministers managed to destroy the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy.

"THE GREATEST OF ALL HUNGARIANS"

Count Istvan (Stephen) Szechenyi was born on the 21st of September, 1791.

He was the son of a rich and progressive aristocrat. In his youth, he served in the army during Napoleonic times with distinction, then travelled in the western countries of Europe. He studied the economic and social structures of the western democracies, especially that of England. On his return to Hungary he advocated similar financial, economic and social reforms. Hungary was, at that time, little more than a province of the Austrian Empire whose leaders endeavoured to keep Hungary an underdeveloped agricultural provider for the Empire.

Szechenyi's ideas which he expounded in his publications and speeches in the Diet, inspired the young reformers of Hungary. The leader of these "young Magyars", Lajos Kossuth, became Szechenyi's devoted follower and called him "The greatest of all Hungarians". Gradually however, the younger reformers changed their priorities: for Kossuth and his circle, Hungary's political independence became the primary aim of the Reform movement, whilst Szechenyi and his "Moderates" emphasized the importance of social and economic reforms.

When the country was at last given a constitution and a responsible government, Szechenyi, together with Kossuth, took part in the first ministry. Soon, however, the Vienna Government began to limit Hungary's freedom and incited the nationalities against the central Hungarian Government. This manoeuvring eventually led to the Freedom War of 1848-49.

Szechenyi, horrified by the vision of a civil war, suffered a nervous breakdown. He resigned his portfolio and withdrew to a private hospital in Vienna. Here he remained until his death while the nation fought its losing war against Austria and Russia. During the years following the defeat of the freedom struggle, Szechenyi again served his nation by his writings. Pretending mental illness, he remained in the hospital and from there he wrote tracts (under an alias), defending his nation's cause.

Some of his tracts were published in England, whilst some of his articles appeared in "The Times", under the nom-de-plume "Ignotus".

The Viennese police became suspicious and began to harass him. They threatened to shut him up in a public mental hospital. This threat and the continuous harassment drove him to suicide: *he shot himself on the 8th of April, 1860.*

Szechenyi had had many talents. As a young hussar officer, he had served the Austrian Empire well during the Napoleonic Wars. Before the decisive Battle of Leipzig, he had ridden through the French lines to convey the Austrians' message to Blucher and Bernadotte concerning the impending battle. In Italy he had once led a dashing cavalry charge against Marshal Murat (himself a cavalryman of fame).

At the conclusion of the war, he had resigned his commission and begun to learn *his own native tongue*. Having spent his youth abroad he could hardly speak Hungarian. Soon, however, he was able to write and speak Magyar well. He is, in fact, one of the great Hungarian authors.

He had also been a practical man - and a rich landowner. He had used both his practical skill and fortune to promote the ideas he had acquired while studying the western countries. His donations had helped to establish the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Danube Navigation Company and other institutions. He is also credited with having introduced horse-racing, in order to improve horse-breeding. He had played an important role in the construction of the first railway lines and the building of the first steamships on the rivers. He had initiated improvements of the navigability of Hungary's rivers and the construction of the first chain bridge between Buda and Pest. In one of his many writings ("Credit") he had expressed his faith in his nation's future in these words:

"Some people believe Hungary to be a noble relic, a fine thing that was. I like to believe the contrary, that our country was not but will be. ."

Sandor (Alexander) Kisfaludy was born on the 22nd of September, 1772.

He fought against the French as a member of the Hungarian Noble Guard and was eventually taken prisoner. It seems that his captivity, spent in sunny Provence, was made bearable by the charitable attentions of the French ladies who inspired his first poems. On his return from his "French leave", he received a rather cool reception from his Hungarian fiancée. The repentant hussar wrote the song-cycle "*Plaintive Love*" to his (Hungarian) lady. The cycle, published in 1800 met with unprecedented success. The fresh, imaginative verses show the inspiration of the emerging French Romanticism - obviously the result of his extended "study-tour" in that country.

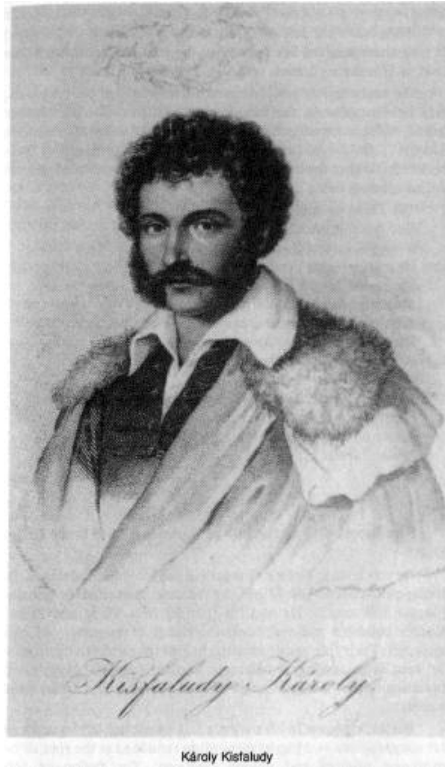
His fiancée forgave and forgot - at the turn of the 19th century no girl could remain unmoved by stanzas, such as these:

*Days come, days go,
but sorrow does not range;
the 'hours fly and pass,
but my destiny does not change.
Volcanoes tire;
rivers, lakes run dry:
but not my fire
or tears from' my eye;
forests, meadows come alive;
star-clusters turn and swill;
fortune revolves and thrives;
only my misery stands still.*

(Tr. by PaulDesney)

After their happy reconciliation, Kisfaludy wrote the second cycle, "Happy Love" - considerably shorter than the first part. They then married and lived happily ever after - without the help of poetry.

Karoly (Charles) Kisfaludy, Sandor's younger brother, born in 1788, was the black sheep of the family. He broke with the conservative traditions of the nobility and embarked upon the career of an itinerant painter. He then tried his hand at drama with more success. His witty, easy flowing comedies mark the beginning of the modern Hungarian drama. As a lyric poet he turned to the people for fresh vocabulary and even wrote some folkish songs. His patriotic poetry expressed hope in the future instead of the emotional lamenting over the past as was the fashion of his day.



By the end of his life he became the supreme authority in the field of Hungarian drama.

The sarcastic wit, which ensured the success of his comedies, may be illustrated by the following extract from the humorous ballad, *"The Sorrowing Husband"*. This is the story of "Mistress Therese", the fiery, beautiful, but domineering wife of a henpecked innkeeper during the time of the Tartar invasion. Here are the concluding lines:

*The Tartar comes. His eyes are fire,
And burning with brute desire
When Mistress Therese he spies
He realizes what a prize
She would be. So with no ado
Up comes to her the Tartar foe
And taking hold around her waist,
With one strong pull he had her placed
Beside himself, and then with haste
He into the far distance raced.
...The spouse, whose wife had just been stolen,
Feels, that his eyes with tears are swollen;
Looks up the road on which they fled
"Poor Tartar!" is all that he said.*

(Tr. by W. N. Loew)

Bela Bartok died on the 26th of September, 1945 in the United States.

He was born in eastern Hungary in 1881. While studying at the Budapest Academy of Music, he became interested in genuine Magyar folk music. He and his friends, Bela Vikar and Zoltan Kodaly collected and published thousands of genuine, old folk melodies. Their folk-music research helped the public to distinguish between original Magyar folksongs and the popular, gypsy interpretation of the “Magyar songs” of the operettas and urban songwriters.

Bartok’s interest in his nation’s folk music has left its mark on his compositions - Magyar inspiration remained at the root of his otherwise original and unique creations. The fusion of folk inspiration and his original genius created music which strikes the audiences as harsh, ultra-modern and dissonant. He usually accompanied his simple, basic themes by disharmonic decoration. The result was a unique, difficult, philosophical music better suited to the 21st century than to ours.

His compositions include a number of piano pieces, concertos and sonatas. Of his string quartets Sir Malcolm Sargent said that they were “the most important contribution to chamber music since Beethoven”. Bartok’s orchestral compositions (e.g. “Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta”), are among his most often performed works. His opera “Bluebeard’s Castle” and his ballets “The Wooden Prince” and “The Miraculous Mandarin” are very difficult to perform.

Bartok was a true humanist: his love for his Magyar nation blended with his love for all mankind. He appreciated and studied the folk music of people everywhere and gained his inspiration from many folk-cultures other than Hungarian. His musical expression created a synthesis of Eastern inspiration and Western harmonies.

