

LEE CONGDON

# Exile and Social Thought

*Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and  
Austria, 1919-1933*



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## **EXILE AND SOCIAL THOUGHT**



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SOCIAL THOUGHT

HUNGARIAN INTELLECTUALS  
IN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA,  
1919-1933

*Lee Congdon*

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***To Carol, Mitchell, and Colleen***



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## PREFACE

SCHOLARS have devoted a great deal of attention to the intellectual migration from Germany to the United States and England after 1933. Until quite recently, however, not even Budapest historians had studied the 1919 movement of Hungarian social thinkers from their homeland to Germany and Austria. And no one has yet attempted a comprehensive history, perhaps because even the most careful observers of the Weimar era have failed to notice that at almost every turn one meets with a Hungarian emigré. Indeed, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that exiled Hungarians *created* Weimar culture.

This, then, is a historical and critical study of some of the twentieth century's most seminal and influential social theorists. The vast majority of them were men and women of the left, but they were very far from being of one mind. United in opposition to Admiral Miklós Horthy's counterrevolutionary government in Hungary, they disagreed, often violently, about virtually everything else. Even within the three principal camps—communist, avant-garde, and liberal—they regularly engaged in vitriolic polemics.

And yet all of the Communists, among whom Georg Lukács was preeminent, professed allegiance to Soviet Russia and vilified avant-gardists and liberals. The avant-gardists, led by Lajos Kassák, shared a commitment to international modernism, a distrust of communist *parties*, and a contempt for liberalism. The liberals, the least homogeneous and predictable group, often surprised themselves by defending positions informed by a conservative logic. But they all looked to Oszkár Jászi for inspiration and, until 1933 at least, considered themselves to be progressives, more realistic and responsible than Communists and avant-gardists.

In what follows, my principal purpose has been hermeneutical—to interpret a rich corpus of social thought. To that end, I have directed attention to the interrelationship between the ideas these Hungarians entertained, the world in which they lived, and the conditions of their personal existence. The theories they developed were deeply affected by the Great War, the Russian and Hungarian revolutions of 1917–19, and the interwar histories of Germany and Austria. And in an even more literal sense, they were expressions of individual biography. Underlying similarities of outlook derived from a common experience of exile but also, with few exceptions, a common identity as assimilated Jews. Concerning the latter, I must say an introductory word.

Because they supported the national cause during the anti-Habsburg uprising of 1848–49, the Jews of Hungary earned the Magyars' gratitude; in 1849, the revolutionary government enacted a law of Jewish emancipation. Forged in the crucible of a lost war of independence, the act was little more than a

gesture of goodwill, but it did constitute a moral commitment on the part of the Magyars, and in the aftermath of the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867, the Diet enacted a new law. The Magyars assumed that the Jews would assimilate and strengthen the Hungarian nation, and they were not disappointed. By century's end, three-quarters of them had changed nationality, often magyarizing their names and surpassing "pure" Hungarians in their patriotic zeal for the nation and its ruling Liberal Party.

The principals in this study, assimilated Jews who came of age around 1900, had every reason to look forward to a bright future. Secure in their identity, they pursued advanced studies not only in Hungary, but in Germany and Austria as well. Language presented no obstacle because most of them spoke German at home. As a result, they rooted themselves more deeply than their more provincial countrymen in Europe's great bourgeois culture.

At the same time, they lived in a stimulating, and rapidly growing, capital. When Buda and Pest united in 1873, the "new" city of Budapest had a population of some three hundred thousand, making it only Europe's seventeenth largest. By 1900, however, it had climbed to eighth place, with over seven hundred thousand inhabitants. As the Monarchy's second city, moreover, it aspired to be a worthy rival of Vienna, and soon began to transform itself. City fathers saw to the laying out of impressive new thoroughfares such as the *Ringstrasse*, which described a huge arc in Pest, and Andrassy Street, which connected downtown Pest with the City Park. Underneath the latter, they built the continent's first subway. And still they managed to find funds sufficient to construct the Margaret, Franz Josef, and Elizabeth Bridges across the Danube. Everywhere city residents cast their eyes, in fact, they could see new structures rising: the East Railroad Station, the "Fishermen's Bastion," the Opera House, the imposing Parliament building.

This rapid growth produced an urban culture at odds with that rooted in the nobility's county life. It centered in editorial offices and coffeehouses, and framed a liberalism tinged with socialism that challenged the official version. Above all, it was critical, for behind the facade the city erected for the 1896 Millennium—commemorating the Magyars' entry into the Carpathian Basin—its creators discovered a "wasteland" where emigration, suicide, and other social problems testified to a profound malaise. The young Jews in the forefront of the new culture did not hesitate to break with their fathers' social and political conformism. Every bit as patriotic, they believed they could agitate for change without jeopardizing their assimilation.

As the new century opened, however, growing numbers of non-Jewish Magyars, bursting with Millennial pride, came to regard any publicly-voiced dissent from official optimism as "un-Magyar." Patriotism rapidly degenerated into nationalism and stirred the flickering embers of anti-Semitism. Just as incendiary, Jewish immigration continued to increase. Attracted by the opportunities Hungary offered, Jews poured into the country from the east, from

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Russia and Galicia. By 1910, 220,000 of them resided in Budapest, or "Judapest" as Austrian anti-Semites called it; they comprised nearly one-fourth of the capital's citizenry. What is more, they were conspicuous in public life. One-fourth to one-half of all physicians, lawyers, and journalists in Hungary were Jewish. Jews dominated banking and commerce even more completely, and as a consequence many who suffered from the disintegrative forces unleashed by the new capitalism channeled their disappointments into racial resentment.

To be sure, the philosemitic government disapproved. In the early 1880s, at the time of a "ritual murder" trial, Minister President Kálmán Tisza reaffirmed his resolve to protect the rights of every citizen and denounced anti-Semitism as injurious to the national honor. But neither he nor his successors could stem the ominous tide, and before long Hungarians, Jewish and non-Jewish, recognized that the problem was no longer merely that of Jewish immigration, but of Jewish assimilation itself. By the time the guns of August 1914 sounded, therefore, the thinkers whose work I have sought to interpret had begun to feel that they might be caught in a process of dissimulation.

Having thus prefaced my interpretive efforts, I wish to add only that I have attempted to accomplish my critical purpose indirectly rather than directly. Hence although I have not concealed my sympathy for the liberals, I have tried to treat each thinker with as much respect as possible. It is one of the failures of our time, I believe, that criticism too often precedes comprehension. As Karl Mannheim argued, we can only engage in meaningful conversation, and debate, when we understand what another intended to say.



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Harrisonburg, Virginia  
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## **EXILE AND SOCIAL THOUGHT**



# INTRODUCTION

## HUNGARIAN INTELLECTUALS IN WAR AND REVOLUTION, 1914–1919

### Tisza and Ady

COUNT István Tisza greeted with alarm the news that a Bosnian terrorist had assassinated Franz Ferdinand. The son of Kálmán Tisza, who ruled Hungary with an iron hand from 1875 to 1890, the Hungarian Minister President was a man of great personal courage, but he feared for his country because he knew that a European war might release national and social forces inimical to the continued existence of the Habsburg Monarchy. To be sure, his fervent Calvinist faith predisposed him to a pessimistic view of human affairs and, like most of his countrymen, he could not forget Johann Gottfried Herder's "prophecy" that the Magyars might one day drown in the Central European sea of Slavs. Nevertheless, his fears were not unfounded. The unifications of Germany and Italy had stoked the fires of nationalism within the Monarchy just at a time when Magyarization had become the Hungarian government's official policy. Thus, with the notable exceptions of Jews and Germans, the non-Magyar peoples of Hungary had steadfastly refused to assimilate. That was all the more disturbing because the Serbs to the South and the Romanians to the East lived in areas contiguous to already existing national states.

Tisza recognized that history was moving in the direction of unified nation-states. He knew, therefore, that he had his work cut out for him if he was to preserve Hungary's territorial integrity and maintain Magyar supremacy. As he put little faith in the policy of forced Magyarization, he had explored, with indifferent success, the possibility of compromise with the Romanians of Transylvania, the largest national minority. As matters stood, then, Tisza could not but oppose any extension of the highly restrictive franchise that would increase the political power of the non-Magyar peoples. Under mounting pressure to make government more representative, he did permit passage of a bill in 1913, but the new law provided for only a slight increase in the number of voters.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the importance that he attached to Parliamentary control, Tisza perceived that social reform movements also threatened Magyar nationalism. "Two great animating powers inspire human activities," he wrote in 1911, "the divisive social force and the unifying national idea, class interest and

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common interest, economic egoism and the altruism that aims at national greatness. Both are present in human nature and the struggle between them moves history."<sup>2</sup> As advocates of fundamental social change, the social democrats and "bourgeois radicals" around the sociological journal *Huszadik Század* (*Twentieth Century*) worked against Magyar interests. To offset their growing influence, therefore, Tisza and the conservative writer Ferenc Herczeg founded the *Magyar Figyelő* (*Hungarian Observer*) in 1911.

It was this beleaguered but combative political leader, controversialist, and Magyar nationalist who, in July 1914, represented Hungary in the Austrian councils deciding for or against war. Initially, Tisza opposed the resort to arms for which Conrad von Hötzendorf, chief of the general staff, and Count Leopold Berchtold, Foreign Minister, clamored. For one thing, he feared that the Romanians, presented with an opportunity, would invade Transylvania; for another, he had no wish to acquire Serbian territory and thereby increase the number of Serbs in Hungary. In a larger sense, he reckoned that war, whatever its outcome, might lead to a fatal disruption of the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich*.

That historic Compromise had given Hungary home rule without making it necessary to sacrifice the Great Power status that union with Austria afforded. It also guaranteed Magyar supremacy and maintained the social domination of the magnates and gentry. Tisza knew how fragile those arrangements were and he could discover no potential Hungarian gain that would outweigh the risks of war. If, he reasoned, the Russians defeated the Germans, the Monarchy would be destroyed, and if the Germans emerged victorious Hungary would be reduced to playing a minor role in a German-dominated *Mittel-europa*. Only when Berlin made it clear to Vienna and Budapest that the Reich expected decisive military action against Serbia did Tisza relent.<sup>3</sup>

At 6 p.m. on July 23, Baron Wladimir Giesl, the Monarchy's ambassador in Belgrade, handed an ultimatum to the Serbian government and demanded unconditional acceptance within forty-eight hours. With only fleeting minutes remaining, the Serbian Minister President Nikola Pašić presented the Serbian reply, which, though most conciliatory, was conditional. On July 28, therefore, Berchtold notified the Serbs that a state of war existed between their country and Austria-Hungary; within two weeks, all of Europe's Great Powers were at war.

In general, the European peoples greeted the outbreak of hostilities with enthusiasm. Those who bore direct responsibility for the decision to go to war exuded confidence, at least in public. That was no less true in Hungary, where even Tisza, once committed, did not betray his private doubts. Speaking for the Minister President and *Magyar Figyelő*, Herczeg mused that "if since the Persian Wars there has been any struggle that deserves to be called 'holy,' it is our present war."<sup>4</sup> Gyula Andrassy and Albert Apponyi, Tisza's conservative

parliamentary opponents, also defended the call to arms. Gyula Justh and Mihály Károlyi, leaders of the Independence Party's left wing, criticized the Monarchy's foreign policy, particularly its German orientation, but by August 2 they too had come around; *Magyarország* (Hungary), the newspaper that espoused their views, characterized the war as a "holy thing."<sup>5</sup> The social democrats, in common with their alleged comrades in other countries, quickly closed ranks behind the national leaders.

Like the responsible politicians and populations at large, the majority of Europe's intellectuals applauded the declarations of war. Among the reasons for their enthusiasm were such personal considerations as a love of adventure, a contempt for bourgeois life, and a weakness for the mystique of violence. Above all, however, Europe's intellectuals saw in the conflict the possibility of ending their felt alienation from their fellows.<sup>6</sup> That was particularly true of the Germans, as György Lukács, the brilliant Hungarian literary critic and philosopher living in Heidelberg, argued in an unpublished essay.<sup>7</sup> The isolation and exaggerated individualism that weighed so heavily on German intellectuals before the war had to end, he maintained; a path to "a new, fraternal community" had to be cleared. By compelling men to become comrades in the face of mortal danger, the war became for intellectuals a catalyst for a return from *Gesellschaft* to *Gemeinschaft*, society to community.

Lukács's analysis is consistent with what we know about his friends in the circle gathered around Max Weber. The renowned sociologist's wife Marianne remembered that the coming of war signified "an hour of the greatest solemnity—the hour of depersonalization (*Entselbstung*), of integration into the community. An ardent love of community spread among people, and they felt powerfully united with one another."<sup>8</sup> Her husband served proudly as a reserve officer and the promising philosopher Emil Lask volunteered for service at the front. For his part, Lukács deplored his friends' susceptibility to the war fever. When Mrs. Weber, whom he much admired, related to him acts of martial heroism, he snapped back, "The better the worse!"<sup>9</sup> Never a pacifist, he insisted that the war was nothing but the quintessential expression of an "age of absolute sinfulness," words he borrowed from Fichte.

Lukács's opposition to the war was, however, the exception rather than the rule among Hungarian intellectuals. Most were every bit as prowar as intellectuals elsewhere, and for many of the same reasons. Moreover, because they had been anti-Russian since the Tsar's military intervention in the 1848-49 revolution, they persuaded themselves that the Monarchy was waging a defensive war. Even writers on the political left such as Ignóty, editor of the modernist literary review *Nyugat* (West), novelist Zsigmond Móricz, and poet Gyula Juhász rallied to the national cause.<sup>10</sup> Oszkár Jászi, leader of the bourgeois radicals, was of two minds. One moment he was describing the war as a catastrophe, the next he was speculating about the better future that contemporary

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agonies might prepare. The war, he allowed, could set the stage for a lasting peace and, at the same time, promote greater economic and cultural integration in Central Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Béla Balázs (born Herbert Bauer), the poet, dramatist, and critic who had forged an intellectual alliance with Lukács in 1908, signaled his support of the war by volunteering for duty. He did so because he viewed the hostilities as a struggle between Germany and France for cultural hegemony. As a former member of Georg Simmel's private seminar and an inveterate champion of German culture, his choice was preordained. French culture was so stagnant, he argued in *Nyugat's* pages, that young French intellectuals were themselves turning to their Frankish heritage. Men such as André Gide and Romain Rolland looked for inspiration to Balzac and Cézanne, who, though French, did not embody the Latin spirit. They attempted to demonstrate, Balázs wrote, "that Mallarmé's sanguinary obscurity and Claudel's primitive profundity are more truly French because they are not Roman but Frank—of German origin!"<sup>12</sup>

Nor was that all, for, incredible as it seems in retrospect, Balázs believed that the war would foster an internationalist spirit. And if being a Jew helped him to recognize that truth, "then *this* is the great, proclaimed mission reserved for the Jews."<sup>13</sup> Finally, Balázs longed for community. "Forty million men have now walked into the shadow of death," he told the poet and artist Anna Lesznai. "I want to declare my solidarity with ten million Russians and Serbs and I don't know how many Frenchmen when I share with them a mutual suffering on a common battlefield."<sup>14</sup>

Balázs was the most fervent, but far from the only, Hungarian intellectual to put on a uniform. Béla Zalai, whom Lukács once described as "the only original Hungarian thinker" in the period prior to 1918,<sup>15</sup> answered his country's call and was promptly sent to the Galician front. So was Karl Polányi, who had been the first president of the Galileo Circle, a radical student organization that he helped to found at the University of Budapest. Ferenc Békássy returned from Cambridge in order to follow the colors. A poet and student of history at the University, he was a member of the circle around John Maynard Keynes, Bertrand Russell, and Virginia Woolf. After the war, in fact, Woolf and her husband Leonard published a small edition of his English poems. As a Hungarian poet, Békássy sought the advice of Mihály Babits, twentieth-century Hungary's greatest man of letters.<sup>16</sup> So did another poet-recruit, László Nagy (born László Weisz).

Ironically, all of these men detested Tisza and idolized Endre Ady, Hungary's most gifted modern poet and the war's leading opponent. Perhaps unconsciously they sensed that the personal destinies of those two extraordinary men were somehow intertwined and that, together, they embodied the nation's past and future. That intuitive recognition was first articulated in 1920 by the historian Gyula Szekfű, who in his brilliant, if tendentious, *Three Gen-*

erations, observed that the difference between Ady and Tisza was not as irreconcilable as that between good and bad. Their destinies, he maintained, exhibited a striking commonality. Though critical of Ady's life and work, Szekfű conceded that the poet belonged to the nation just as surely as Tisza did. "In moral worth, two lives as different as heaven and earth, but both are *Magyar* lives."<sup>17</sup>

Ady himself was fully aware that he was bound to Tisza in subtle as well as obvious ways. He too had been born to a noble, if impoverished, family and was heir to a Calvinist heritage. Indeed, he was descended from a long line of Calvinist ministers on his mother's side. For him as for Tisza, Calvinism was the Magyar religion—Roman Catholicism being the Habsburg faith—and Transylvania, the seat of Calvinism, was the most purely Magyar of Hungary's regions. The difference between them, according to Ady, was that Tisza personified the old Hungary, while he symbolized the new. Whereas the statesman adhered to Calvinism's dogmatic letter, he looked to its rebellious spirit. While Tisza's Magyarism was narrowly nationalistic and conservative, his was internationalist, politically democratic, and socially radical. And yet: "Even if we dislike Tisza, we cannot think of him without warming up our blood. What a strange, baleful, headstrong, vigorous, and fine man—what a Magyar."<sup>18</sup>

Like Tisza and Hungary, Ady was marked for tragedy. He was already suffering from the effects of tertiary syphilis when the war erupted and, like Tisza, he was deeply pessimistic about the outcome. His brother Lajos later recalled his immediate reaction; it might have been Tisza's voice. "Whether we lose or win the war is all the same: we are finished. If we win, the army, the railways, the postal service, and perhaps even public administration will be German within a year."<sup>19</sup> There are echoes of this despair in a poem Ady wrote in April 1915.<sup>20</sup>

To me comrade it is all the same,  
Whether the wolf or devil devours us.  
We are devoured.  
A bear devours us. That does not matter.  
It is an old and sad story.  
Chance only determines *by whom* we are to be devoured.

### Franz Josef's Last Years

Tisza and Ady's pessimism proved to be more in keeping with reality than the facile optimism to which so many succumbed. At the outset of the war, the Habsburg army numbered about 1,800,000 men, many of whom had received insufficient training.<sup>21</sup> This army, like that of the Reich, was asked to conduct a two-front war, its assignment being to defeat Serbia and, at the same time,



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hold off Russia long enough to permit the Germans to conquer France. It would have been a formidable task even if Conrad had been more competent than he was. In the event, the Austrian's inexplicable uncertainty about Russia's intentions and his strategic irresolution contributed mightily to early defeats and staggering losses of life. In the first half year of combat, the Monarchy's army lost three-quarters of a million men.<sup>22</sup>

As if matters were not difficult enough, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary on May 24, 1915. Yet although a substantial number of the Monarchy's professional soldiers had been killed in action the previous fall, its rebuilt army performed quite creditably, not only against the Italians, but also the Russians. Moreover, on September 6, the government joined Germany in initialing a treaty of alliance with Bulgaria. Together, the three allies attacked Serbia on October 7 and, three days later, entered Belgrade. From Tisza's point of view, the most important aspect of that campaign was the Bulgarian alliance, which was crucial to his hopes of discouraging a Romanian strike into Transylvania.

Despite military successes, however, 1915 witnessed the first stirrings of the antiwar movement in Hungary. The death toll had been catastrophic and there was no end to the bloodletting in sight. Moreover, the initial capital of enthusiasm on the home front was rapidly being spent as privations multiplied. Inspired by the Zimmerwald Conference of September 1915, the Hungarian social democrats began to consider legal methods of promoting peace, but because they feared being charged with disloyalty, they did not advance very far beyond vague declarations. Then too, Tisza showed that he was still very much in command by defeating in Parliament a proposal that would have extended the franchise to any soldier over twenty years of age who was serving in the field.<sup>23</sup>

The Minister President could not, however, keep the lid forever on the cauldron of dissent. Some of the *Nyugat* writers, including Móricz and Juhász, abandoned their original support of the war and began to publish stories and poems that not only reflected their personal disillusionment but dramatized the tragedies that so many Hungarian families were experiencing. The talented Margit Kaffka, wife of Béla Balázs's brother Ervin Bauer, recoiled from the slaughter at the front and gave voice to the frustration and pain that Hungarian women felt. Frigyes Karinthy employed his considerable satirical gifts to ridicule diplomats and military leaders, while at the same time celebrating front-line soldiers who, he knew, would quickly have concluded peace.

Even more important than these antiwar writers was Mihály Babits. Never sympathetic with the Hungarian hawks, Babits was sickened by the terrible loss of life, which he experienced in personal ways. He was badly shaken by the news that, on February 2, 1915, his friend Béla Zalai had succumbed to

typhus in the Russian prisoner of war camp at Omsk. Scarcely had he begun to recover from that blow when he received word that Ferenc Békássy had fallen in Bukovina during a successful Austro-Hungarian offensive.

In his anger and grief, Babits organized gatherings of like-minded intellectuals at his home. Jászi attended, along with Karinthy and the literary historian Aladár Schöpfung. Together they began to explore ways in which they might hasten the coming of peace and, at the same time, create a more healthy intellectual atmosphere. To that end, Babits composed a poem that greatly stirred the Hungarian intelligentsia: "Before Easter." In it, he sang of him who would first dare to speak the words: "enough! enough! it is enough!/peace! peace!/ peace! peace now!/let there be an end to it now!"<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, Balázs had returned to Hungary from the Serbian front, where he had fallen ill with endocarditis. For a time near death, by summer's end he had recovered and in the fall he was back in Budapest. At about the same time, Lukács, who had originally been classified as unfit for military duty, was reexamined. He would soon learn, he told the German dramatist Paul Ernst, whether or not "the Moloch of Militarism" would devour him.<sup>25</sup> Thanks to his father's connections and a timely letter from Dr. Karl Jaspers, he was again rejected for front-line duty and assigned auxiliary service, first in a military hospital and later in the office of mail censorship. Thus, from October 1915 to July 1916, when he was discharged—again due to his father's intervention—Lukács too was in Budapest.

In December, he and a small group of intellectuals began to meet for discussion on Sunday afternoons, the gathering place being Balázs's Biedermeier apartment on the Buda side of the Danube. It was Balázs, in fact, who conceived the idea of organizing the "Sunday Circle," and after the first few meetings, he was brimming with enthusiasm: "Only *serious* people who are metaphysically disposed are invited. Every new guest is recommended in advance and every member of the group possesses the power of veto."<sup>26</sup> In addition to Balázs and Lukács, the circle included Balázs's wife and principal lover (Edith Hajós and Anna Schlamadinger), and some of Hungary's most promising young thinkers.

Béla Fogarasi was one such individual. A man of varied interests, he worked closely with University of Budapest Professor Bernát Alexander on *Athenaeum* (the official journal of the Hungarian Philosophical Society), lectured regularly to the Sociological Society that Jászi led, and maintained contact with the Bolzano Circle around Jenő Varga. Fogarasi shared Lukács's admiration for Béla Zalai and Emil Lask (another sacrifice to the god of war), and after he began to attend the Sunday afternoon gatherings he fell more and more under the older man's spell.

Even more talented than Fogarasi was a student of philosophy named Karl Mannheim, who had been rejected for military service because of congenital



1. Members of the Sunday Circle. From left to right: Karl Mannheim, Béla Fogarasi, Ernő Lorys, József Nemes Lampérth, Elza Stephani, Anna Schlamadinger, Edith Hajós, Béla Balázs. Courtesy of the Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum (Petőfi Museum of Literature), Budapest. Photo by Csaba Gál.

heart problems. He had pursued university studies in Budapest and Berlin and had been particularly impressed by Bernát Alexander and Georg Simmel, the latter having introduced him to the philosophic problem of alienation. Neither Alexander nor Simmel was able, however, completely to capture Mannheim's mind and imagination. Instead, the aspiring philosopher discovered a mentor in Lukács.

These core members of the circle were joined by the aesthetician Arnold Hauser, the art historian Frederick Antal, and three remarkable women: Anna Lesznai, the psychologist Júlia Láng, and the novelist/philosopher Emma Ri-  
toók. In April 1918, the members admitted to their company the aesthetician Lajos Fülep. Among less frequent visitors were the psychologists René Spitz and Géza Révész, the art historian János Wilde, the chemist Michael Polányi, and the pianist-composer Béla Bartók, who once came to play his music for *The Wooden Prince*.<sup>27</sup>

As the acknowledged leader of the circle, Lukács always chose the subject for discussion. Anna Lesznai remembered that members touched upon a variety of themes—"painting, folklore, history. Most often the conversation turned to love, the philosophy of love."<sup>28</sup> Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the conversations revolved around religion in the broadest sense of the word. Balázs had only recently converted to Roman Catholicism and, like Lukács, admired the Church Fathers and the medieval mystics—both Christian and Jewish. All of the members of the circle respected Kierkegaard's indifference to dogma and emphasis on the importance of belief.

Dostoevski was even more important than SK. Hauser recalled that he and his friends never discussed politics but regularly explored the great Russian writer's work.<sup>29</sup> Lukács had only recently completed *The Theory of the Novel*, which had begun as a much longer study of Dostoevski, and like the young

people he had imagined for that purpose, he and the other members of the Sunday Circle withdrew from a world at war one day each week. They too attempted "to achieve self-understanding by means of conversations that lead by degrees to the . . . outlook on a Dostoevskian world,"<sup>30</sup> one in which human beings would form a genuine community.

Despite the fact that Lukács and his friends did not concern themselves directly with the war, the titanic confrontation formed the background and the presupposition of their deliberations. Most were inclined to favor Károlyi's pro-Entente position, but Lukács himself never had any use for the West. He later formulated his wartime dilemma in this way: "The Central Powers will probably defeat Russia. That could lead to the downfall of Tsarism: fair enough. There was some likelihood that the West would defeat Germany. If that led to the fall of the Hohenzollerns and Habsburgs, I would be equally pleased. But then the question arose: Who would save us from Western Civilization" or "Western democracy?"<sup>31</sup> In 1914-15, he believed, Western Civilization had failed the test and he therefore enjoined members of the Sunday Circle to look to the East for signs of hope. He had in mind the Russia of Dostoevski and Tolstoi, a Russia that could only be viewed through the prism of a utopian imagination.

At about the same time that Balázs and Lukács organized the Sunday Circle, Lajos Kassák formed a more radical antiwar group. Born in Érsekújvár (now in Czechoslovakia) in 1887, Kassák was the offspring of poor parents. A school dropout, he went to Budapest to find employment and eked out a living as an ironworker. In due course he joined the Social Democratic Party and moved in with Jolán Simon, an intelligent and talented woman whom he married. Restless and rebellious by nature, Kassák participated in strikes and pored over party literature. Soon, however, he was reading Ady and other *Nyugat* poets and trying his own hand. These initial efforts were rather pale imitations of the work he discovered in *Nyugat's* pages, but even at that he managed to place a few of them in lesser newspapers and reviews.

In April 1909, on an impulse, Kassák and a friend named Gödrös decided to make a pilgrimage to Paris. With little money and only the clothes on their backs, they boarded a Danube boat for Pozsony (Bratislava). From there, they set out on foot. In Stuttgart, they split when Kassák met a new companion, another Hungarian and published writer called Emil Szittya. An anarchist, Szittya was to exercise a lasting influence on Kassák's thinking.<sup>32</sup> Continuing on, the two men arrived at their destination in October.

In his extraordinary autobiography, *One Man's Life*, Kassák lamented the fact that he had seen and done little during the two months he spent in the French capital, but later, with the advantage of hindsight, he remembered that he had visited museums and coffee houses, where he took in the Parisian atmosphere. For the first time, too, he heard the magical names of Cendrars, Apollinaire, Rodin, Picasso, and Henri Rousseau. For the young autodidact, it

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was better than a university education, and he returned home in possession of a new and clearer sense of his own identity.

Although, for example, he got on well with *Nyugat's* working editor Ernő Osvát, Kassák now knew that he could never truly be one of the journal's own. There was in him, to be sure, a certain resentment toward those who were well born and educated, and who knew nothing of physical labor. He did not try to conceal his contempt for *Nyugat* writers, including Lukács and Balázs who were never members of the journal's inner circle. And even Ady left him cold. "He was not a socialist," Kassák once observed, "but a Hungarian aristocrat with wounded pride."<sup>33</sup> In addition to this *ressentiment*, however, Kassák recognized that he could make his literary mark only by writing about the life and world that he knew at firsthand and by approaching literature as a worker, or as he liked to say, a "craftsman."

By the time the war broke out, Kassák was an isolated figure in Hungarian cultural life. Even more so after he broke with the social democrats over their support of the war effort. Quite naturally, then, he was attracted to those writers and artists in other countries who espoused cultural internationalism and who, as a result, tended to be vocal opponents of the war. His interest soared when a friend provided him with rough translations of poems by Iwan Goll and Ludwig Rubiner, and showed him a copy of Franz Pfemfert's left-wing expressionist review *Die Aktion*. These, Kassák believed, were men with whom he could make common cause. "Our isolation," he wrote years later, "related only to Hungary. In foreign countries we already had comrades, in art as well as in politics."<sup>34</sup>

From the beginning, in fact, Kassák conceived of art, politics, and society as one. He despised the *l'art pour l'art* that some *Nyugat* writers championed and he could not be satisfied with a politics based upon historical experience, patient compromise, and national interest. He believed that the true aim of politics, as of art, was to create new men who realized their individuality only by identifying with members of all social classes and nationalities; Kassák later called these new men "collective individuals." In order to prepare the way for the inner, moral revolution he envisioned and to campaign against the war more effectively, Kassák resolved to create his own journal.

Although money was a problem, he and his closest friends dug into their own pockets and published the first number of *A Tett (Action)* on November 1, 1915. Kassák served as editor of this combative "literary, artistic, and social review," which aspired to be something of a cross between *Die Aktion* and Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm*. Among his fellow workers and contributors were such young Turks as Aladár Komját, Mátyás György, József Lengyel, and János Mácza. Béla Uitz was the best known painter. Together these firebrands contrived to attack virtually everyone in Hungary: government leaders, reformist social democrats, *Nyugat* writers. Their central obsessions, however, were the war and the postwar creation of the "new man."

By design, Kassák did not offer *A Tett's* readers a programmatic statement until the tenth number (March 20, 1916). After denouncing the horrors of war, he proclaimed that the makers of the new literature bore the solemn responsibility for forming the coming generation. To that end they had to maintain contact with progressive economic and political movements and free themselves from all conventional ideas and technical restraints. He refused to identify this new literature with any existing "ism," and he singled out Italian futurism for particular censure. The futurists, he complained, had sung the praises of war.<sup>35</sup>

From the beginning, the censors regarded *A Tett* with suspicion. For some reason, they judged Péter Dobrovits's illustration, *Lamentation Over the Dead Christ*, to be offensive to religious sensibility, and prohibited street sales of the review. When, in October 1916, Kassák put together an "International Number," they banned any further publication on the grounds that *A Tett* contained material detrimental to the war effort. The number included work by foreigners—Kandinsky, Verhaeren, Bernard Shaw—whose countries were at war with Hungary.

The government had good reason to be edgy. Despite victories in 1915, 1916 was a critical year for the Monarchy. The Russians, under the command of General A. A. Brusilov, launched an offensive that was halted only with the aid of German reinforcements. Austria-Hungary lost 750,000 men, 380,000 of whom were taken prisoner. To make matters worse, Romania entered the war as an ally of the Entente powers on August 27, and almost immediately three Romanian armies moved into Transylvania. All along this had been Tisza's—and Ady's—greatest fear. On receiving news of the attack, opposition leaders in the Hungarian Parliament demanded Tisza's resignation, while Károlyi insisted that Hungarian troops on other fronts be recalled and sent to Transylvania.<sup>36</sup> Once again, however, the Germans arrived in time and pushed the Romanians back. By the end of the year, in fact, they had occupied Bucharest.

Together with increasing hardship on the home front, the military setbacks and the mounting death tolls added greatly to Tisza's burden. In Parliament, Andrassy and Apponyi now favored some kind of suffrage reform and Károlyi was demanding that Hungary break with the Germans, sign a separate peace, and adopt a pro-Entente orientation. On July 9, 1916, he resigned from the Independence party in order to form the United Party of Independence and 1848, which while it opposed a war of annexation, sought a peace that would guarantee Hungary's territorial integrity. It championed universal suffrage and democratic social policies, but favored the prewar status quo with respect to the nationalities problem.

The Károlyi Party, as it was popularly known, did not exercise power sufficient to influence Hungarian policy in a decisive manner. As a result, intellectuals continued to direct the growing antiwar movement. Babits dedi-

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cated more of his time and effort to the cause of peace. Soon, Aladár Schöpfung put him in touch with Ervin Szabó, head librarian at the Municipal Library and father of Hungarian Marxism. These two very different men forged a close friendship and together with Jászi, met regularly to discuss the war.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, the members of the Sunday Circle marked time because, after his discharge from the army in July 1916, Lukács had returned to Heidelberg to begin work on his *Aesthetics*. The more publicly active Kassák, on the other hand, founded a new journal called *Ma (Today)*. "1916. October," he wrote in *One Man's Life*. "Millions of the dead lie everywhere beneath the ground. But we live, because we were born for life and we want to live."<sup>38</sup> This great review, which repeatedly invoked the primacy of life, was to become the voice of the Hungarian avant-garde, the center of a movement that was to produce a profound and lasting impact not only on Hungarian literature, but on modern European culture generally. "We do not," Kassák wrote, "want to remain in the sphere of the printed word, as *Nyugat* does."<sup>39</sup> Rather, he projected drama and poetry matinées, art exhibitions, and contacts with avant-garde composers.

Six days after the first number of *Ma* appeared, Franz Josef died. This was an event of enormous significance for Austria-Hungary and its peoples, for the melancholy old man had ruled since 1848 and, in the course of time, become closely identified with the monarchy; his death seemed to presage the empire's demise. Sensing this, Karl, the new Emperor-King, began a frantic search for peace that inspired new hope in intellectual circles. His Foreign Minister, Tisza's friend Count István Burián, made this entry in his diary on November 25: "Long conversation with the ruler. He wants to speed the drive for peace against German procrastination."<sup>40</sup> But for the Habsburgs, it was late in the day.

## The Russian Revolutions

After the death of Franz Josef, Tisza's position steadily weakened. More and more Hungarians had come to believe that the Minister President had visited the war upon them and stood in the way of a negotiated peace. The King himself seems to have held this view and attempted to pressure the recalcitrant Calvinist to make concessions on the volatile suffrage issue.<sup>41</sup> Precisely on that question, however, Tisza was immovable. So much so that even Count Burián finally became exasperated; the time, he concluded, was past when the government could maintain the restricted franchise. Despite his efforts to mediate between King and Minister President, matters came to a head in the spring of 1917. On May 23, Tisza submitted his resignation upon the King's request, and on June 15 the inexperienced Count Móric Esterházy formed a new cabinet, pledged to suffrage reform.

Almost as if his fortunes were linked directly to those of Tisza, Ady had, by 1917, sunk into the deepest despair. His syphilitic condition steadily worsened, and he was in and out of sanitariums. His chronic insomnia denied him needed rest, and he had barely enough money to live. It is unlikely that he would have been able to go on without his "Csinszka,"<sup>42</sup> Berta Boncza. Csinszka began writing to Ady in the fall of 1911, but the poet took little note of her until after he had broken off his long relationship with Adél Brüll (the "Léda" of his love poems) the following year. There were several lovers after Léda, but Csinszka's earnest love and refreshing innocence moved Ady most deeply. He wrote to her often and soon proposed marriage.

Ironically, Csinszka's father was a prominent figure in official circles and Tisza's close friend. He was therefore horrified to learn of his daughter's involvement with Tisza's archenemy. In a daring attempt to secure Boncza's blessing, Ady wrote to Tisza, asking that he use his good offices to promote the marriage; he received a curt reply from the Minister President's secretary describing the time-consuming burdens of public office. In the end, however, Csinszka triumphed over her father's objections, and she and Ady married in the spring of 1915. For the rest of the war, they lived at the Boncza family castle at Csucs in Transylvania, and the Ady family home at Érmindszent. In his solitude, the poet mourned the destruction of his prewar hopes for Hungary's national regeneration:

Everything we believed in is lost,  
Lost, lost;  
Fortunate and happy  
Is he who is unhappy only for himself.<sup>43</sup>

In 1917, he wrote "Remembrance of a Summer's Night," one of the greatest poems inspired by the war in any language. The haunting refrain, "it was a strange, strange summer night" (when he received news of the war's outbreak), is redolent of a lost world.

Two political issues were then paramount for the beleaguered Hungarian government: universal suffrage and peace. Esterházy quickly broke under the strain of dealing with those problems and, citing reasons of health, resigned on August 19. The following day, Sándor Wekerle assumed the responsibilities of Minister President. Of German descent, Wekerle was almost seventy years of age and had many years of government service to his credit. At first, he affected to share his predecessor's commitment to suffrage reform and proposed a reduction of the age limit from thirty to twenty-four, unconditional franchise for war veterans, and a redistribution of electoral districts.<sup>44</sup>

Tisza, who still wielded considerable power behind the scenes, opposed the measure, thus dooming it from the beginning. Wekerle did attempt to engineer some sort of compromise, but he acted half-heartedly, not relishing the prospect of challenging Tisza. In the end, Parliament passed a new suffrage



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bill on July 19, 1918, but the number of voters rose only to about 13 percent of the total population. Tisza exalted: "Only a small but vocal minority and not the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian nation demands universal suffrage."<sup>45</sup>

The search for peace was, if anything, more frustrating. Before the King dismissed Tisza, he and Count Ottokar Czernin, who had replaced Burián as Foreign Minister on December 22, 1916, made it clear to the Germans that the monarchy was at the point of exhaustion. Subsequently, they suggested that Germany make territorial concessions in the west in exchange for an extended empire in the east that would include much of Galicia.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, they sent out peace feelers to the Allies. Unfortunately, these efforts came to naught because of Italian ambitions and the monarchy's continued determination to maintain its territorial integrity.

The war dragged on. In the summer of 1917, the Russians began a new offensive which was all the more surprising for having been ordered by the Kerensky government that had taken over after the February Revolution had toppled the Romanovs. On July 1, following three days of heavy bombardment, General Brusilov struck in the direction of Lemberg. His troops quickly broke through the Austro-Hungarian lines, but on July 19 the monarchy's forces counterattacked and forced a retreat. On July 8 General Lavr Kornilov's army broke through south of the Dniester River, but the Germans and Austro-Hungarians quickly checked that drive as well. The scenario was much the same on the Romanian front, where the Russians and Romanians attacked jointly on July 22. After a twenty kilometer advance, the attack stalled and when General August von Mackensen counterattacked, the aggressors were obliged to retreat.<sup>47</sup>

Having defended themselves against the Entente attacks, the Central Powers went over to the offensive. In September they captured Riga and attacked in Eastern Galicia and Bukovina, driving the Russians back. The following month, they assembled fourteen divisions against Italy's four at Caporetto; on the 24th, they began the twelfth battle of the Isonzo with a bombardment. By November 10, they succeeded in driving the Italian forces back all the way to the Piave River, an overwhelming victory that all but put Italy out of the war.

The Central Powers' campaign in the east was given an even greater boost when, after the bolshevik seizure of power in October, Russia withdrew from the war. At Lenin's insistence, the new revolutionary government signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918, and two days later the Central Powers concluded a preliminary peace with Romania that was finalized on May 7. These successes encouraged the Germans to press on in the west, while the leaders of the monarchy continued to argue for a compromise peace. Unable to persuade their ally, they had little choice but to begin a new offensive against Italy. On June 15, the Austro-Hungarian army commenced an operation along the Piave River that the Italians repulsed with help from the

French and British. The monarchy's casualties numbered 142,000. After this defeat, mutinies and mass desertions increased in frequency.<sup>48</sup>

In the fall of 1918, General Franchet d'Esperey led French and Serbian troops in a Balkan offensive. He quickly forced the Bulgarian government to sign an armistice agreement, after which Burián concluded that the monarchy could not continue the struggle. Wekerle agreed, but he still insisted that Austria-Hungary's territorial integrity be preserved. Both men now hoped to achieve peace on the basis of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, even while the monarchy was collapsing around them. By the middle of October, the leaders of the nationalities were no longer willing to obey Vienna and Budapest. In a desperate effort to stave off the inevitable, the Emperor-King issued a manifesto (October 16) that made of Austria (but not Hungary) a federal state. Events, however, had overtaken any such solution.

On the same day that Karl issued his manifesto, Károlyi made a Parliamentary speech in which he demanded that power be given to those who would chart a new domestic and international course. A member of his party, János Hock, then read a list of demands that included calling Hungarian soldiers home to defend the country's frontiers, initiating democratic reforms, and settling the nationality question in a Wilsonian spirit. With a perfectly straight face, Wekerle replied that Wilsonian principles were consistent with Hungary's inherited traditions. But with pressure mounting, he resigned on October 23.

While Andrásy, Apponyi, Tisza, and the King deliberated about the formation of a new government, members of the left-wing parties—Independence, Radical, and Social Democratic—constituted themselves the Hungarian National Council. As the name suggests, the Council considered itself to be the true representative of the Hungarian nation, a claim that was clearly revolutionary in character. On October 26, the Council made public the twelve-point program that Jászi had written. It called for a new government, an independent Hungary, an immediate end to the war, an end to the German alliance, new elections on the basis of universal suffrage and the secret ballot, and a nationality policy that would be Wilsonian without endangering Hungary's territorial integrity.<sup>49</sup> Károlyi was the Council's President.

Károlyi's name had by then become synonymous with peace and democracy, for the war had driven this decent though not overly competent man steadily to the left. In November 1917, he and Jászi had attended the Bern conference of the League of Lasting Peace, where they discussed at length the latter's conception of a federated Austria-Hungary. Károlyi was completely won over, though he was moved as much by Jászi's character as his ideas. "What gives him [Jászi] a quite special place among Hungarian politicians," Károlyi later wrote, "is his rare moral courage. Only Justh in our camp and only Tisza in the opposite camp possessed this quality in equal measure with Jászi."<sup>50</sup>

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Like Károlyi, Jászi had done some rethinking. For a time, he had favored a democratic and antinationalist version of Friedrich Naumann's *Mitteleuropa* plan—according to which Germany and Austria-Hungary would establish a customs union and close political alliance. But after the first Russian Revolution of 1917 ended Tsarist rule, he adopted the pro-Entente position long advocated by Károlyi. As a result, he began to advance the idea of a United States of Danubia. According to his plan, five nationalities would possess political autonomy within the context of the monarchy: Magyar, German, Polish, Czech, and Serbo-Croatian.<sup>51</sup> Each of those nationalities, he argued, possessed the territory, population, and historical consciousness requisite for autonomy. Moreover, they would be bound, in consideration of the fate of their ethnic brothers in other states, to protect the rights of minorities within their frontiers.

At the time Jászi developed this plan, he was meeting regularly, sometimes throughout the day, with Babits and Szabó. Each of these men radiated a moral strength that exerted a formative influence on two generations of Hungarian intellectuals. According to Károlyi, "all progressive young intellectuals were /Jászi's/ devoted and enthusiastic followers." He exercised over them "an influence like that of Masaryk over the young Czechs."<sup>52</sup> One of his most faithful followers, Karl Polányi, compared Jászi to István Széchenyi, the nineteenth-century aristocrat who labored ceaselessly for Hungary's national and moral regeneration.<sup>53</sup> Like Széchenyi, Jászi was a reformer who opposed violent revolution. The Radical party he founded in 1914 steadfastly eschewed the use of brutal means to achieve its ends.

Though less of a public figure than Jászi, Babits also exerted a powerful influence on Hungarian intellectuals of his and the younger generation. We have seen that Ferenc Békássy sought his counsel and friendship. So did the philosopher Vilmos Szilasi, who in 1910 gave Babits a copy of his book on Plato. And during the early months of 1918, László Nagy sent postcards to Babits on which he had penciled some striking sketches. By the end of the year, the young man was signing his correspondence "László Moholy-Nagy"<sup>54</sup> and, having returned from the front, he reported to Babits that "somehow I must secure my livelihood (because for the time being I cannot live off painting), so I have become a newspaperman. Thus, once again I am trying my hand at poetry. Please, dear teacher, accept them with my esteem."<sup>55</sup>

Like Babits, Szabó was a private person. Never very healthy, he cherished books and the quiet of the libraries in which he earned his living. Always sensitive to moral issues, he turned increasingly in his last years to the moral foundations of his radical political convictions. Although he was stirred by the Russian Revolutions, he soon began to question the legitimacy of unfettered class struggle. According to Jászi, he spoke bitterly of the "moral defects of Russian bolshevism."<sup>56</sup> That is not surprising, for he always emphasized the importance of moral renewal. New laws and economic policies were needed,

he once observed, "but as the English say: not measures: men—above all we need men, different, better, more perfect men."<sup>57</sup>

Precisely, Jászi wrote, because of this moral sense, Szabó "exerted an almost magical influence on idealistic youth and on women."<sup>58</sup> The remarkable Ilona Duczynska was a case in point. Duczynska was the daughter of Helén Békássy and a ne'er-do-well railroad official of noble Polish descent. In 1904, her father emigrated to the United States, where he soon died. This loss marked her for life. Though well cared for, her mother and she were always treated as poor relations, in part because the Békássy family belonged to the gentry and had opposed the marriage. This experience of humiliation and loneliness was soon enough transmuted into a hatred of the upper classes and a combative temperament. At ten years of age, Duczynska knew already that she would always stand "against the world."<sup>59</sup>

Early on, young Ilona adopted her missing father's atheism, anarchism, and fervent belief in the natural sciences. In his library she discovered the latest scientific works as well as books—such as Ernst Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe*—that sought to establish science in the place once occupied by religion. Small wonder, then, that she was attracted to the nihilist student Bazarov in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. Before long she was reading all of the Russian writers, finding in them a new world and a messianic spirit.

With one of her relatives, however, she could discuss her longings and enthusiasms—her cousin Ferenc Békássy. A recent biographer suggests that Duczynska may have been in love with the ill-fated poet,<sup>60</sup> but there is no doubt that he reinforced her idealism, even though he himself possessed a conservative temperament. When the war broke out and the Socialists disappointed her, as they did so many others, she needed his companionship even more. She was pleased to receive his letters from officers' training school. In one he wrote: "Perhaps your plans are more beautiful than mine. If only I could believe that it is possible to improve the human condition!"<sup>61</sup> Seven months later he was killed in action.

Duczynska might have succumbed to bitterness and despair had she not, at about the same time, met Szabó at her aunt's home. Something of a parlor liberal, the aunt introduced the Hungarian radical by telling her niece that she could now "see the other Hungary." Instead, Duczynska saw the likeness of her missing father: "His Nietzsche-like head resembled that of my father, as did his rebellious spirit and his idealistic anarchism."<sup>62</sup> Near the end of her long life, she still remembered the profound impression Szabó made. "Finally I became convinced that I was not crazy and that there were other serious socialists."<sup>63</sup> Renewed in spirit, she traveled to Zürich to begin studies at the Polytechnical University where her father had once hoped to enroll.

The Swiss city was then a center for European and Russian emigrés and Duczynska always remembered seeing Lenin working in the library. Though she performed well in school, she was far more interested in the Zimmerwald

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Conference and the ideas of the Polish revolutionary Henrik Lauer, a teaching assistant at the university. Lauer encouraged Duczynska's radicalism until one day, in the same month that the Tsar's government collapsed, she announced her intention to return to Hungary to do something to help end the war. Still recovering from tuberculosis, she met first with Angelica Balabanova at the secretariat of the International Socialist Committee and obtained a copy of the Zimmerwald antiwar manifesto that was addressed to workers and soldiers. After a brief stopover in Vienna, she arrived in Budapest in late April 1917: "I was 20, tubercular, and rather unversant with Marxism."<sup>64</sup>

Duczynska was not, however, unversant with handguns. In Switzerland, she had practiced until she could acquit herself quite well. Years later, she still could not say why she had taught herself to use firearms, but she believed that she intended to imitate the Russian terrorists who called their organization "The People's Will." More likely, as she herself once speculated, this interest could be traced back to her childhood desire to target shoot as her father had done.<sup>65</sup> At any rate, one day, at the home of the radical dentist József Madzsar, Duczynska chanced upon a browning revolver and, almost without thinking, thrust it into her pocket.

It was May and Hungarian newspapers were filled with stories about the Austrian Socialist Friedrich Adler, who was about to be placed on trial for having assassinated Karl Stürgkh, Minister President in Vienna. In like manner, Duczynska decided that she would rid Hungary of István Tisza. She went to Szabó with her plan and, according to her account, he supported the idea in principle. Only recently, to be sure, he had described the Hungarian leader as "mankind's danger," but as the most distinguished student of his life has remarked, he always refused to sanction evil means to achieve good.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Duczynska, who related this story for the first time late in life, had a habit of recasting people in her own radical image. She claimed, at any rate, that he raised only a practical objection, namely that the Hungarian people might view her as an agent of the Entente.

In order to dispel that suspicion, he recommended that she identify herself with some Hungarian group, sending her to the Galileo Circle because by then she had matriculated in the University of Budapest's liberal arts faculty. To her chagrin, however, Tisza soon resigned. Dejectedly she returned Madzsar's handgun to the drawer of his desk. As she told it, Szabó expressed his sympathy and observed bitterly that Tisza would now direct Hungary's affairs from the background without having any longer to be a politically visible symbol of the war. More likely, he was relieved that the headstrong young woman did not carry the logic of some of his ideas to its murderous conclusion.

Duczynska's identification with the Galileo Circle was largely formal, since she disliked what she regarded as its ivory tower, apolitical, atmosphere. To be sure, beginning late in 1917, members of the Circle did advocate publicly a negotiated peace, but under the influence of Jászi and Polányi they eschewed violent action. That being the case, Duczynska, along with her lover Tivadar

Sugár, Miklós Sisa (then the Circle's president), and Árpád Haas formed their own group within the Circle, one committed to illegal action. Never more than twelve in number, they styled themselves "revolutionary socialists," sought Szabó's advice, and plotted to organize demonstrations and circulate antiwar leaflets to soldiers. Szabó lent them moral support and recommended contacts with workers uncontaminated by close association with Socialist trade union officials, but he refused to countenance street demonstrations. The radical young people pressed ahead nevertheless. From Russian bolsheviks living in Budapest, they learned the art of clandestine printing and began to prepare leaflets. In due course, Duczynska managed to throw a bundle of copies over the wall of a military barracks.

Perhaps on the strength of information received from an insider, police arrested Duczynska and her friends in January. In June the government accused them formally of having prepared and disseminated leaflets designed to demoralize the Austro-Hungarian army, and in September they appeared in court to answer the charges. From the first, Duczynska and Sugár (who later disappeared during Stalin's purges) were the most outspoken defendants. Rather disingenuously, she maintained that she regarded her mission as one of enlightenment, not agitation. He argued cleverly that they were merely popularizing views—a peace without annexations or reparations—that Count Czernin himself espoused. For all their chutzpah, however, the court sentenced Duczynska to two years in jail, Sugár to three.<sup>67</sup>

With their leaders under lock and key, the revolutionary socialists regrouped. Ottó Korvin (Klein), a bank employee and brother of one of the defendants, assumed the leadership. Never having been a member of the Duczynska-Sugár group, he was an ideal—because unknown—choice to succeed the jailed leaders. Like his predecessors, he and his followers sought Szabó's guidance, but the tireless librarian was by then mortally ill and, in any event, harbored doubts about their fanatical radicalism.

Korvin maintained far fewer scruples, witness his revival of the idea of assassinating Tisza. After some discussion, the lot fell to János Lékai (Jakab Leitner), who was consumptive and not expected to live. Korvin had to explain to him the use of a revolver, after which he took up a position near one of the Parliament building's exits. The date was October 16. When Tisza appeared, Lékai aimed and tried in vain to fire. Before he could release the trigger he had mistakenly locked, the Minister President's chauffeur restrained him. Despite Lékai's failure, however, Korvin and his followers continued their efforts to end the war and bring bolshevism to Hungary. Indeed, through his friend Ernő Seidler, Szabó's cousin, Korvin met Béla Kun, who had become a bolshevik during the time he was a Russian prisoner of war. Along with left-wing Socialists and Kun and other converted war prisoners, Korvin's "revolutionary socialists" organized the Hungarian Communist Party on November 24, 1918.

Whether or not Szabó, had he not succumbed to the Spanish influenza in late September, would have joined the Hungarian bolsheviks must remain a

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moot question. Jászi, who knew him as well as anyone, believed that in the end he would have given in to the temptation, though the fact that his moral sensibility almost always prevailed over his eclectic syndicalist/Marxist ideas might suggest otherwise. The question may not seem important, but Jászi rightly recognized that the war and the Russian Revolutions were driving even the most apolitical and morally literate Hungarian intellectuals toward the revolutionary left. Lukács, who once described Szabó as "the spiritual/intellectual father of us all,"<sup>68</sup> was a case in point.

He was still in Heidelberg when, early in 1917, the members of the Sunday Circle formulated plans to establish a Free School of the Humanistic Sciences, somewhat in the manner of the Free School of the Sociological Society that Jászi organized in 1906. Unlike Jászi's school, which was informed by positivism, their school was to be inspired by neo-idealism. After Balázs secured classrooms on the premises of the National Pedagogical Institute, he scheduled the first lectures and seminars for the months of March to June 1917.

Despite a high level of sophistication, the Free School achieved a considerable success. Lectures attracted as many as seventy students, among whom were the most gifted young men and women in Hungary. Obviously pleased, Balázs recorded his evaluation of the first semester's work in his diary: "Fogarasi's lectures on the theory of philosophic thought were first rate. Hauser's on aesthetics after Kant less able, but he had done an impressive amount of work. Antal's lectures were a bit weak, but Mannheim's on the logic of epistemology were excellent, exciting, and rich; the first appearance of an important philosopher of the future. Gyuri /Lukács/ also arrived, and although he improvised the ethical lectures, they were still paramount in importance. . . . What a splendid lecturer Gyuri is! An ideal professor. Everyone who heard him could sense that a new heroic age was dawning for philosophy."<sup>69</sup>

The Free School's second semester began in February 1918. Preparatory to its opening, Mannheim delivered a programmatic lecture entitled "Soul and Culture," in which he elucidated the school's central preoccupation: the problem of alienation. "We are many and we live apart," he told his audience, "divorced from one another, longing for one another, but unable to draw near to one another. But it is not only the other who is out of our reach, but we ourselves as well."<sup>70</sup>

Because modern man's soul (his essential self) had become alienated from his culture (the soul's objectivization), Mannheim explained, he and his colleagues had undertaken the task of cultural criticism, the analysis of the structure of each cultural form.<sup>71</sup> "Last /semester/ we assayed to analyze the fundamentals and structures peculiar to ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, philosophy, and art."<sup>72</sup> The faculty hoped, Mannheim continued, to further this effort during the semester to come, and as a result of such analysis, he held out the prospect of a new culture, the forms of which would express more authentically the soul's new experiences. Such a culture alone could overcome human alienation.

In the most general sense, Lukács identified himself with Mannheim's remarks, because he agreed that the alienation problem was central to the crisis of culture. He and Mannheim both believed that the "forms" of contemporary life had become divorced from human spiritual experience. Nevertheless, there was a fundamental difference between the two men. Lukács was searching for a utopian world beyond life's forms, including its *social* forms. Like Balázs, he hoped to discover a path that would lead to a world in which "naked souls" might meet directly, without the mediation of their social identities.

Mannheim, on the other hand, never entertained any sympathy for utopianism. He maintained that it had become evident, even before the war, that the forms of cultural expression—religion, ethics, art, politics, society—had begun to develop autonomously, in accordance with their own laws and without reference to the soul's ever maturing self-consciousness. Soul and culture, that is, were becoming ever more alienated. As Europeans became aware of this alienation, they attempted to reach beyond the forms, with the result that they created an even more desperate state of affairs. In art, expressionists and futurists—he did not mention the *Ma*-ists by name—sought to destroy all forms, while in religion, latter-day mystics searched for immediate union with God, rejecting the church's mediation. Those efforts, according to Mannheim, could not be successful, "because true freedom from form is not humanly possible."<sup>73</sup> Nor was it desirable, because men could confront their souls only through cultural forms.

Mannheim was not alone in his opposition to some of the views that Lukács, Balázs, and Fogarasi espoused. Lajos Fülep, Emma Ritoók, and, to a lesser degree, Anna Lesznai were also independently minded and incisive critics. Yet all of them recognized that they had enough in common with Lukács to make possible their cooperation at the Free School.

Unfortunately, we know relatively little about the second semester, for postwar events soon overtook the Free School of the Humanistic Sciences. Despite its brief existence, however, one can scarcely exaggerate its importance to *European* intellectual history. Lukács, Balázs, Mannheim, Hauser, Antal, Fogarasi, Michael Polányi, Charles de Tolnay; even this partial list of names suffices to indicate the scope and significance of its work. Perhaps Tolnay summed up the school's ideals and achievements as well as anyone: "In opposition to the scholarship for scholarship's sake characteristic of Hungarian and Western universities, the Free School set a new objective for scholarly work. Knowledge would no longer be an end in itself, but rather a road to the soul's self-fulfillment. . . . Within this circle of young people of learning, a spiritual community took form. For the first time in modern Hungarian spiritual life, there was realized . . . the most fervent desire of every contemporary scholar and human being: the rediscovery of community."<sup>74</sup>

On a more theoretical level, the leaders of the Free School awakened in Hungarian intellectuals a new interest in philosophic idealism. In his review of the published version of *Soul and Culture*, for example, Jászi praised