

# From the Avant-Garde to “Proletarian Art”

The Emigré Hungarian Journals *Egység* and *Akasztott Ember*, 1922–23

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We have to imagine these tiny groups, succeeding and turning against one another. Some had significant entourages, art magazines, and often well-known theorists. . . . They imagined themselves explorers of the spirit, scouts of the desire to find one's way. But life played a tragic game with them. If they found a . . . little security—which some recognition, or the forced imaginings and formulations of theorists could give them—the . . . clamor of a new trend knocked it into the dust. If we can visualize the uncertainty of their goals, the indifference of their environment, the chaos and vulnerability of spirit and feelings in which their denial of tradition left them, I believe we cannot deny them our sympathy. It's as if they'd been wandering in some pleasant, mirage-projected land, of which, at nightfall, only the stark puszta [wasteland] remained.<sup>1</sup>

As 1922 began, the Viennese Hungarian Activists were at the peak of their success.<sup>2</sup> Exiled from Hungary after the collapse of the short-lived Soviet regime of 1919, they gathered in Vienna around the journal *Ma* [Today] (Budapest, 1916–19; Vienna, 1920–25), its founder Lajos Kassák and his co-editors and brothers-in-law, the poet Sándor Barta and the artist Béla Uitz (fig. 1). Early in 1922, however, the Activists began to break away from Kassák and *Ma*, forming contending groups of artists and writers who founded their own journals. May 1922 saw the publication not only of a sumptuous double issue of *Ma*, but also of the first issue of *Egység* [Unity] (Vienna, 1922; Berlin, 1923–24; Vienna, 1924), a rival journal co-edited by Uitz. In July, the remaining Activists, unable to attend the International Congress of Progressive Artists held in Düsseldorf in late May, formulated their position with respect to the Congress, calling for the establishment of an “International Organization of Creators with a Revolutionary *Weltanschauung*.”<sup>3</sup> This was their last unified stand. By the time the document had been published in the August issues of *Ma* and *De Stijl*, Barta, his wife the poet Erzsébet (Kassák) Ujváry, the artist Sándor Bortnyik, the poet Andor Simon, and László Moholy-Nagy, *Ma*'s Berlin correspondent, had also broken with Kassák, soon to be followed by the art critic

Ernö (Ernst) Kállai and the dramatic theorist János (Ivan) Mácza. By November Barta's rival journal *Akasztott Ember* [The hanged man] (Vienna, 1922–23) was in print. Both *Egység* and *Akasztott Ember* contained artistic material of significance to nascent International Constructivism in Central Europe and contributed to the debate concerning the avant-garde and what the Hungarians called “Proletcult.”<sup>4</sup> This essay will locate these offshoot journals within the 1922 crisis of Hungarian Activism and trace their development to March 1923, when they finally submitted to the dictates of the Party.

The influence of the Russian avant-garde was central to the shift among the Hungarian Activists from Dada to International Constructivism.<sup>5</sup> On November 20, 1920, the Activists sponsored a “Russian Evening,” including a slide-illustrated lecture on Russian art by the art-history student and news correspondent Konstantin Umansky.<sup>6</sup> Impressed by this event, Uitz soon joined the Party of Hungarian Communists (KMP), which in January 1921 sent him to Moscow to attend the Third Comintern Congress, held in late June and early July. There he met fellow Hungarians, the critic Alfréd Kemény, who had also been sent by the KMP, and Jolán Szilágyi, a student at the recently established VKhUTEMAS. Through Szilágyi and her friend Lazar El Lissitzky, Uitz and Kemény met Kasimir Malevich, and visited VKhUTEMAS and INKhUK, where they encountered Alexander Rodchenko and other Constructivists.<sup>7</sup> Thus Uitz and Kemény were among the first foreign-based professionals to learn of the formation of the “First Working Group of Constructivists” at INKhUK on March 18, 1921, and among the few foreigners to see the “Second Spring Exhibition” of the OBMOKhU (Society of Young Artists), which opened May 22; and featured the work of the Constructivists.<sup>8</sup> As a result of these experiences, Kemény became a supporter of the OBMOKhU and held a lecture on it at INKhUK before his return to Berlin late that year,<sup>9</sup> and Uitz became an admirer of both Malevich and Constructivism, collecting relevant texts and photographs, which he later published in *Egység*.

Uitz's trip convinced him that it was possible to be socially and artistically “progressive” in the socialist state.



FIG. 1 Photographer unknown, the Activists' Group in Vienna, ca. 1920–21, from left to right: Sándor Bortnyik, Béla Uitz, Erzsébet Újváry, Andor Simon, Lajos Kassák, Jolán Simon, Sándor Barta.

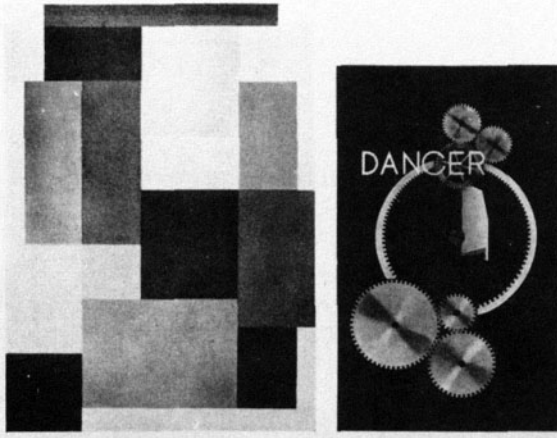
This must have made the other Activists, still engaged with Dada, seem hopelessly retrograde to him. After his return to Vienna, Uitz ceased to frequent the Schloss Café, where the Activists met, and began to patronize the Café Beethoven, hub of Hungarian Communist political emigrés. There, as one eye-witness reported, “on every occasion, Uitz recounted another detail of his recurring disagreements with Kassák. He deeply condemned the about-face of the ‘Kassákists.’ In his eyes Kassák was a defeatist.”<sup>10</sup>

Not having been to Soviet Russia, and aloof from political parties by this time, Kassák was convinced that artists must begin creating the culture of the coming socialist age, for he, like all Leftists, was still awaiting the world revolution. By 1922 Kassák saw emergent International Constructivism as the avant-garde of this new culture. Consequently, though the May Day 1922 issue of *Ma* presented a mixture of Dada and proto-International Constructivist material, the balance was clearly tipping in favor of the latter (fig. 2). This trend was underlined in Kassák’s text “Mérleg és Tovább” [Evaluation and onwards], published in that issue, in which he announced the shift in the Activists’ aesthetics towards what was effectively International Constructivism. Kassák later implied that the 1922 collapse of the Activists’ Group was the result of some members not being able to cope with this announcement.<sup>11</sup>

When Aladár Komját, a founder of the KMP and a former Maist poet, announced plans for the publication of a Party-oriented cultural journal early in 1922, Uitz was eager to join this venture. For Komját and his associates—the theorist Gyula Hevesi, the artist Béla Friedbauer, and the former Maist poets Mózes Kahána and Irén Komját (née Réti, Aladár’s wife)<sup>12</sup>—Uitz, who had recently returned from Moscow, seemed the obvious choice as co-editor.

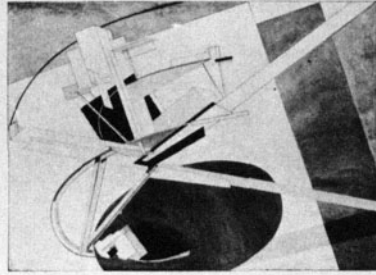
The first issue of *Egység* appeared soon after the opulent May Day 1922 issue of *Ma*, and seems to have been calculated to contrast with it. Its cover (fig. 3), though not signed, was probably the work of Uitz; its blocky, rough lettering and bold layout recall early Russian avant-garde designs and contrasted with the refined style of *Ma* (pl. 3, p. 11). The covers of the second and third issues (June 30 and September 16, 1922) were redesigned to be even simpler (fig. 4). The rest of *Egység*’s typography and layout reflected the elegance of *Ma*, though *Egység* was not illustrated as lavishly, and a lower-grade paper was used, except for the plates.

*Egység*, subtitled “Literature/Art,” was a cultural publication with explicit ties to the KMP and the Austrian Communists. Its political affiliation was indicated in the article “Az *Egység* útja és munkaprogramja” [The road and program of *Egység*]: “*Egység* is a Communist cultural pro-



Theo van Doesburg: Rengszel (Hollandia)

Man Ray: New-York-dala, 'Hollandia'



Piet Mondrian: Komposizio 100 (Hollandia), 1930

Éppen, hogy kezembe vessem a világ sorsát, a házak visszabontsam teglakká, a tengereken egy órára megáltsam a hajókat, a gyárakban a hajószijakat, a bankokban a telefonkákat és az ügyveket, az országokat drótpárhuzamban a táviratokat, a nemzőkben a nemző vágyát és utóján kezdők el mindent, hogy minden utóján kezdje sorsát, ember emberért, állat állatért, fü fűért, kő kőért.

A városban ember szemében ijedten lobogtak a zórák kancók. Egy szelítőt kinyitva és egy szelítőt nyitva röhejesével próbálkozott felegyenesedni.

Zaharás akkor odalépett a székhez s a karfától lélegző két vállánálról szípen belékapcsolta a vezetéket, s akkor egyszerre röpökdi és illatoni kezdék a nővérek s a kanárok körömsósan lezokogtak.

A legvörösebb haja ember mint egy kigétt fehér mézashab kezdhett a pulórára.

Zaharás akkor megöltött a széken egy kis agyonalapított bádogreleket, abban pedig egy szál papíron, egy arany forint lekiált. A forinnot megköpöste, elást a mellébe s a hársógó szardreggében indult ki vigan a palotából. Kint csak végig szagolt a sok szármavocentiméteres rendőrső s a kilencedikben megérezte a széhszagot.

A rendőrök még alig tértek magukhoz, amikor ók már a házak fölött repültek újból s a csillagok megkövéredt arccal lobogtak fölöttük.

A hatalmas grundon már tengervízre dagadt a néplított körösök zengtek föl a bágyadnan visszarenydtek a csöndbe. A szorongásig tele térség fölött forrón gözölgött az éjtel.

Ekor az ég leleti aljából ökölnyi fényesség uszott lefelé s egyre emelkedett és egyre teltebben világított le a mélységbe.

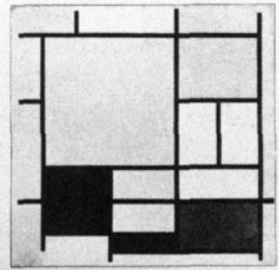
A tömeg lábjára állt, szónokos emelkedett ki belőle, s a megváltozó jövendőt hirdettek elcsókán. Asszonyok kiejtek a székkelől meg lélegző magzatjüket alkoholisták meggyújtották a kényelüket és sóp zórák redőket emeltek maguk föl s az ökölnyi fényesség egyre közeledett és kő volt miat a kennek tíze és ragyogott mint a meglágyított vér.

S rezekdeli leték a teremmagamban hirtelen megállott.

S akkor látták, Zaharás volt, a méternyi tehénk s a macskabőrök málajára eltergett az estben.

S Zaharás így szólt hozzájuk:

— Örvendeztek ti tolvajok, fűdőlészek, gyilkosok és alkoholisták, mert meg akarták váltani mindannyiatokat. S akinek eddig nem adott meg annyira emelőt örvendezni, mert gyárakban csurgatta el karjai erejét, ma új karokat és mindenféle új emeltyüket és dinamókat vásárolhat magára és akinek nem adott meg telelőpi feneketlen zsebet a legdrágább holmikkal, ma csurgó aranyon kifutóllati a behívások legfinomabb árúharmadonosságát, s akinek nem adott meg kilómai mellesk és egykiloai szonját a csaprazsebben, ma a sárköz vízvezetékcsövök és betapasztathatlan források alá lékelődött, amelyekből a legzsibabb borok harmatomak, s akinek nem adott meg meggyújtóssá a megyyil-köt és lelobbantott uralkodók és bensek emléköt, ma megfűrődhet az országokat porában s bizony újja fog születni. Mert a megváltás eho napja van ma, amikor a szerezvény maguk közé verék a bemooskolhatatlan aranyat j magukra vásárolják az élet minden jóját és bölcsességét.



Piet Mondrian: Komposizio 100 (Hollandia), 1930

Menjtek hát ti emberek vezérek magatok közé az életre szükséges kenyeret és bort és énekeljétek a teljesséig életet!

S akkor Zaharás valami hatalmas fényeséget vett ki a székéből, ez pedig az arany forint volt, amely megkövéredett a tehénké nyálában és mint a bróssan állt kenyeret a tömeg fölé aprította.

Az arany csurgott szakadtlanul s megduplázódott a tonnyereken.

Zaharás pedig újból felemelkedett a tehénké fölé, fenne néhány pillanat múlva kihúnyt a déli égből alján.

Már újból éjteleket és nappalokat röplétek s a harmadik éjdel egy leltérre meszelt város fölé értek. A házak állatosan gubbanzódtak, s a tornyok és a hegydombra épített létezősítőst palota derűlen perceltek az éjtelben.

A tehénké akkor így szólt urához:

— Uram én már sok városokat átrepültem, s átrepültem mélységek tengereket és merethefen szálakat, de jaj őrizkedj a sok tornyos városokból, mert azokban aranytáblás papok posztolnak, de jaj őrizkedj a létezősítőst palotákból, mert azokban feneketlen szobák és mérges lérekk leskelődnek az együgyűekre.

S Együgyű Zaharás akkor válaszolta:

— Ó leltérzem, te kis együgyű állat, hiszen én éltt meg én voltam az én erőmben a lepedőfőber városokban, én voltam és kő patakok torkolatában, én voltam én gyök lovogók mellett, én voltam az inkvizitorok magyán, hegyek oldalán rohadó gyökér, s övöltő káltsa szől torkában, én voltam éok cserepjéti én voltam szállítadó barlang s szállítókerülő vándor. Az élet minden menekéit és csapdáját magamban hordom én vagyok az együgyűek leggyűlöltöje, kinek a ségőbbosok és az adisták ezer veres furlangja is csak egyszerre együgyűség.

Akkor a kis tehénké még háromszor körözögláztta a létezősítőst palotát, s a palota egyik elhagyottat kis ualvárára kezdőtt. Ott menten letérvis változott, s amikor pedig Zaharás felkászott rajta s egy kerek ablakokba meglétt éltit, világító mécsesét változott s ott röpökdi meglétt.

FIG. 2 Works by Theo van Doesburg, Man Ray, Lazar El Lissitzky, and Piet Mondrian reproduced in *Ma [Today]* 7, nos. 5–6 (May 1, 1922): 20–21.

gram . . . not a new direction, nor is it a ‘school with a manifesto.’”<sup>13</sup> The journal’s Communist politics were reflected in its contents. For example, the issue of June 30, 1922, included an analysis of the failed Hungarian Soviet by one of its chief ideologues, the former Maist poet József Révai, and a Marxist analysis of the contemporary European economy by Jenő Varga. *Egység’s* belles lettres, written by Komját, Andor Simon, Pál Acél, Uitz, and Kahána, were in the Expressionist style of Hungarian Activism. Indeed, the sharp-eyed journalist Andor Németh, in his perceptive review “Egység kontra Ma” [*Egység versus Ma*], published in the *Bécsi Magyar Újság* [Viennese Hungarian journal] of July 16, 1922, praised the new periodical’s theoretical articles while pointing out that its poetry hardly differed from that of *Ma*.

The fine-arts policy of *Egység*, expressed in the writings of Uitz and two former Activist critics, Andor Rosinger and Iván Hevesy, was perhaps its most interesting and controversial aspect. A central part of this policy was an attack on Kassák’s politics and aesthetics. In “A ‘Ma’ forradalmi ideológiája” [The “revolutionary” ideology of *Ma*], Rosinger accused the Activists of having an anarchist ideology of opposition to all authority, including that of the proletarian state. He also attacked Mácza for supposedly anti-Communist remarks made at the May 28, 1922, Viennese matinee performance and reading of the Activists, and he

sarcastically called Barta “Nietzsche reincarnate,” referring to Barta’s anarchist-dadaist literary works.<sup>14</sup> Kassák responded to this and other attacks with his “Válasz sokfelé, és álláspon” [A response in many directions, and a position]. In it, to demonstrate his political precociousness and loyalty to the proletarian cause, Kassák recounted the history of *Ma* and placed the defections of Uitz and others in a positive light, asserting that “I knew that this selection [i.e., shake-down] had to happen, and I am happy that it finally has. It unburdens us, offers us new possibilities for development.”<sup>15</sup> While maintaining that his journal was consistently Communist in its stance, Kassák also claimed that *Ma* advocated the autonomy of art, and resisted any control, financial or otherwise, by the Party. This was contrary to fact, however, for the Activists had tried to gain cultural hegemony during the Hungarian Soviet and to secure Party funding in 1920.<sup>16</sup> By omitting these facts from his account, Kassák helped establish the myth of his consistent opposition to artists’ memberships in political parties and to the political control of art. His article did, however, contain an impassioned and articulate argument for the autonomy of art—a position he held to after 1920—as well as a cutting critique of the blind loyalty demanded by the Party. Responses to Kassák’s article included “Válasz a ‘Má’-nak” [Answer to *Ma*], by “The contributors to *Egység*,” and “A négyszögösített világnézet” [The squared *Weltanschauung*], by Iván Hevesy, both appearing

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FIG. 3 Béla Uitz?, cover, *Egység* [Unity], Vienna, no. 1 (May 10, 1922).

in the September 16 issue of *Egység*. In “Answer to Ma” Kassák was accused of appropriating *Képarchitektúra* [Pictarchitecture]—a style of abstract geometric art developed by Bortnyik and Kassák in 1920–21<sup>17</sup>—from “Bortnyik, Braque, Puni, and especially the Suprematists,” and what was even worse, of being counter-revolutionary.<sup>18</sup> For his part, Hevesy attempted to demolish *Képarchitektúra* by labeling it “planar decoration,” mere *l’art pour l’art*,<sup>19</sup> something Kassák himself had railed against since 1915. As Kassák offered no reply to these attacks, the debate between *Ma* and *Egység* ended.

The fine-arts policy of *Egység* reflected Uitz’s support of the Russian avant-garde. With the exception of a painting by Uitz, the art reproduced in the Viennese *Egység* was limited to the work of Russian avant-garde artists whom Uitz and Kemény had encountered in Moscow in 1921. In the June 30, 1922, issue of the journal, Uitz reproduced works by the INKhUK and OBMOKhU members Vladimir Stenberg and Karl Johanson, the VKhUTEMAS student Nikolai Prusakov, the VKhUTEMAS-associated artist Naum Gabo, and the VKhUTEMAS teacher Ivan Kliun (also an INKhUK member),<sup>20</sup> as well as a photograph of the Constructivist room of OBMOKhU’s “Second Spring Exhibition,” which included works by Rodchenko, Johanson, Konstantin Medunetzky, and the Stenberg brothers. With the publication of two texts, the proto-Constructivist “Realistic Manifesto” of August 1920 by



FIG. 4 Designer unknown, cover, *Egység*, Vienna, no. 3 (September 16, 1922).

Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, and Alexei Gan’s “Program of the First Working Group of Constructivists” of April 1, 1921, this was the first, and for a time, the most extensive anthology of Constructivist and Constructivist-related material to appear in the West. In the issue of September 16, 1922, Uitz published five images from Malevich’s book of lithographs *Suprematism, 34 Drawings*, accompanied by Uitz’s own estimation of Suprematism, and his translation (with minor changes) of Malevich’s introduction to the book, perhaps the first translation of a Malevich text.<sup>21</sup>

Uitz had revealed an early understanding of the conflict between the Russian avant-garde and Proletcult. After hearing the Umansky lecture in Vienna in 1920 he wrote: “in Russia the material and spiritual revolutions are undergoing a parallel development [which] has only one obstacle: Proletcult, a conception which seeks to serve the cause of the new art by forcing . . . artists back into the old, exhausted forms, while emphasizing today’s *Weltanschauung*.”<sup>22</sup> This aesthetically negative assessment of Russian Proletcult was made ideologically easier for Uitz by Lenin’s attack on and severe restriction of the movement in December 1920. Also, in his own work of the time, Uitz clearly followed the examples of the Suprematists, the Constructivists, and the “material research” methods at the VKhUTEMAS.<sup>23</sup> Still, Uitz attempted to express political sympathy towards Proletcult in his overview of the Soviet art world, “Az orosz művészet

helyzete 1921-ben” [The condition of Russian art in 1921]. In this account, he examined the various art groups, drawing a parallel between the Hungarian Activists and what he saw to be the “individualistic” trends, the Russian Futurists, Expressionists, Suprematists, and “Spatial Cubists” (i.e., Tatlin and his followers).<sup>24</sup> He contrasted these avant-gardists with the Proletcult artists, whose ideology he considered to be more advanced. However, he faulted both—avant-garde artists for their cult of the individual and their failure to see their works as products of a transitional historical period, and Proletcult artists for their use of primitive representational imagery. He wrote: “The revolutionary [avant-garde] groups call for anarchy, but produce the [correct] pan-central form. Proletcult calls for a collective ideology, but creates formal anarchy.”<sup>25</sup>

While Uitz grappled with contradictions between ideological correctness and aesthetic value, Rosinger, in “Forradalom és kultúra” [Revolution and culture], declared both figurative propaganda art (known in German-speaking Central Europe as *Tendenzkunst*) and formal art (i.e., the Russian avant-garde) to be headed along the correct path. He supported the former because “it leads to the development of class consciousness and ideological unity” and the latter because “it is the way towards a new formal unity, the architectural organizing principle of the *Gesamtkünste*, the new construction,”<sup>26</sup> that is, architecture in the socialist state. This statement echoes the call for a new monumental art that Georg Lukács had initiated in his 1910 talk, “Az utak elváltak” [The ways have parted], given at the Galileo Circle in Budapest, that Kassák had reiterated since 1917 and that Uitz expressed as a need for “pan-central” form.

One discerns a defensiveness on the part of Uitz and Rosinger, an attitude that may have arisen in response to pressure from Komját, Varga, and Gyula Hevesi. The pair’s carefully worded statements maintained for a time an uneasy balance. However, the authors of the September 16, 1922, editorial, “The Road and Program of *Egység*,” stated their intention to establish “Proletcult” in Hungary without any mention of the avant-garde, and announced that the fourth issue of the journal would be devoted to Proletcult. After the issue in which this announcement was made, *Egység* ceased publication, and the Komját, Rosinger, Friedbauer, Hevesi, and Varga moved to Berlin.<sup>27</sup> When the publication was revived in Berlin in March 1923, Rosinger contributed to it but Uitz, who remained in Vienna, did not, although Komját solicited cooperation from avant-garde artists.

After the cessation of the Viennese *Egység* and Mácza’s break with Kassák around October 1922, Uitz and Mácza began to plan a new publication to replace *Egység*.<sup>28</sup> “Kritika” [Critique] was intended to be an organ of “Communist culture” devoted to “Proletcult,” that is, the development of a socialist *Weltanschauung* among proletarians.<sup>29</sup> Mácza called for a return to figurative art as a means of agitating for the economic revolution, which he believed had to precede

the cultural one.<sup>30</sup> Uitz heeded this call. Struggling with the relationship between form and ideological content on the one hand, and between ideologically charged forms and figuration on the other, Uitz devised his theory of the “ideology of form,” by which he ascribed ideological content to basic geometric figures, and attempted to base a new (i.e., Communist) figurative art on relevant combinations of the forms. This was a valiant, though—I believe—failed, attempt at creating a *Tendenzkunst* of theoretical rigor.<sup>31</sup> The artistic result was his *Luddite Series* of etchings depicting the story of Ned Ludd and his followers.<sup>32</sup> “Kritika” did not materialize, perhaps for financial reasons, or maybe because relatively few Hungarian workers lived in Vienna, severely limiting its potential readership.

With the apparent demise of *Egység* and the failure of the “Kritika” project, there was no journal for Leftist emigré Hungarians dissatisfied with *Ma*. An alternative was produced when the first issue of *Akaszott Ember* appeared on November 1, 1922. Barta’s problems with Kassák had been indicated already in his article “Merre” [Whither], published in the July 1, 1922, issue of *Ma*; in this Barta had criticized the production of art when the political transformation was not yet complete and proclaimed literature as the only legitimate means of artistic struggle under the circumstances, effectively attacking Kassák’s experiments in the visual arts, *Képarchitektúra* for example. The article also explains why Barta did not join the *Egység* group. Apart from the likelihood that Komját and Uitz found him too individualistic and anarchistic, still too steeped in Dada anger and revolt for their tastes, the concern in *Egység* with visual art, together with the belief of its editors and contributors in the need for the political revolution to precede the cultural one, must have precluded Barta’s collaboration. Barta explained his choice of a Berlin Dada-style title for *Akaszott Ember*—“the hanged man”—by writing: “As people, we now feel ourselves to be hanged. And if someone doesn’t feel hanged, he belongs among those who hang and kick us.”<sup>33</sup>

Although *Akaszott Ember* was not labeled as Communist and Barta did not join the Party until 1924, he did call himself Communist and he made it clear that his principal intention was to produce a journal radically independent of bourgeois culture, in order to attack that culture mercilessly.<sup>34</sup> The introductory manifesto characterized the publication: its tone of anarchism and rebellion and its concern for social issues set it apart from both the generic socialism of *Ma* and the Party-centered tendentiousness of *Egység*. A litany of what was wrong with capitalist society included the status of women and their “fate of double slavery” in “house-cages,” film theaters as “the lassos of the capitalist construction of life,” and the technomania of avant-gardists. Barta called for a boycott of bourgeois cultural institutions, including schools and cinemas, and the commencement of cultural revolution through the formation of an “International Cultural Revolutionary Internationale”(sic) to be realized through the



FIG. 5 Sándor Barta, cover, *Akasztott Ember* [The hanged man], nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922).

“Proletcult network.”<sup>35</sup> In “Magasabbrendű koncentrációk felé” [Towards concentrations of a higher order], Barta outlined a program that included anarchist ideas such as the communication of family life and economy, the demolition of their patriarchal/matriarchal authority systems, and free love.<sup>36</sup> In an effort to lay claim to the right to be utopian while giving the appearance of being practical, he wrote: “*Akasztott Ember* struggles against the givens of . . . life with relevant weapons, and to a certain extent taking reality into consideration, but strictly with ‘utopias’ in mind.”<sup>37</sup>

The typography and layout of the first issue (fig. 5) owed much to Kassák’s work in the Viennese *Ma*. On the cover, the alignment of the text on the left, balanced by the vertical black rectangle on the right, recalls International Constructivist designs. The contradiction between this and the anti-art rhetoric of the contents may have prompted Barta to redesign the cover of the second and third issues. For these he created a very different headline (fig. 6), which, with its centered words and choppy, angular lettering, was Expressionist in style and appeared calculated to distinguish *Akasztott Ember* from *Ma*.

This subtle stylistic polemic paled next to the verbal attacks on Kassák. Barta railed against what he (as well as Uitz and others) saw as Kassák’s aestheticism and careerism

in his satirical pseudodrama “Az örültek első összejövetele a szemetesládában . . .” [The first meeting of lunatics in the garbage can . . .], with its inventive typography and intentionally juvenile figurative marginalia (fig. 7). In “Kulturreform vagy kulturfordalom?” [Cultural reform or cultural revolution?], Barta replied to Kassák’s “A Response in Many Directions, and a Position.” He attacked Kassák’s view that the masses must be encouraged to appropriate modern technology and asserted that contemporary culture, even its “modern” or “up-to-date” version, was rotten to the core; rather than be appropriated, it had to be re-created.<sup>38</sup>

Another salient feature of *Akasztott Ember* was Barta’s attack on aestheticism, first expressed in “Whither.” In two statements published in the first issue of *Akasztott Ember*, “Jegyzet a festészet mai formáiról” [Notes on today’s forms of painting] and “Az ige ‘halálára’” [On the ‘death’ of the word], Barta specified the two forms of painting politically permissible in capitalist society: *Tendenzkunst*, described as “subjective (combative) painting—and thus bad painting from the point of view of objective [i.e., Suprematist and Constructivist] painting—its assignment is to present, agitational drawing, etc.”;<sup>39</sup> and painted surfaces as parts of *designs* for buildings proposed for the coming socialist utopia, an idea

39



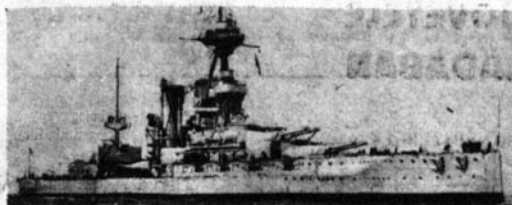
FIG. 6 Sándor Barta, cover, *Akasztott Ember*, nos. 3–4 (December 20, 1922).







# Éljen a gépművészet!



Ime a gép és az ember, aki felelőtlenül eltekint: Éljen a gépművészet! És abban a korban kiáltja el azt, amelynek legjellemzőbb gép-alkotásai nem az élet feltételeire, hanem ésszesúsására szolgálnak. És hiába állnak a cellakamrás felhőkarcoló és a páncélkonstrukciók cirkáló kőst. Mindkettő ugyanannak az etikátlan kornak plasztikus monumentuma. És ebben a korban csak ilyen és hasonló célokat szolgáló gépművészetre van szükség. Ezt melegen figyelmebe ajánljuk a gépművészet magyar híveinek is.

## Bábjáték

A szin közepén egy mély háromszögbe vágott bányanyílás  
A nyílás fölött kis harangocska, mellette vöröslámpás ég  
A tárna mögül jobboldalt keskeny sín fut végig a szinen  
Baloldalt ablaktalan munkásházak.  
A nyílás fölött most vékony hangon megszólal a harang  
A házakból elindulnak az emberek. Fejük helyén nagy csákányok  
ülnek. Karjaik végig szántják az utakat. Mellükből artikulá-  
latlan hangok szállnak az ég felé.

Harang csak énekel.  
Lépésüktől mindig nagyobbra nyílik a bánya szája  
S mellükben fájdalmasan sirni kezdenek a hangok  
A legfiatalabb csákányát megfogtatja a levegőben és hirtelen föl-  
nyújtja a fejét  
Az egész menet egy pillanatra szóflantul megáll  
Elől a legöregebb énekelni kezd: A gyerekeink ... egy ... kettő ...  
egy ... kettő ...

Ujra elindulnak  
Legfiatalabb vállára emeli a csákányt  
Mellükből újra fölcsirnak a hangok  
Legöregebb a harang melletti lámpást a nyakába akasztja  
A nyílás szája mindig kisebb lesz és lassan elnyeli őket  
Jobboldalt nagy ostorosember kis lovacskát állít a sín közepébe  
A lovacska fara mögé egy fekete vasszekeret gurít  
Lovacska a gazdája elé térdel  
Az ember kezét forog az ostor  
Lovacska föláll szeméből meleg kövek gurulnak a földre  
Ember a nagy szekeret a lovacska nyakába fűzi, aztán az ostorral  
égő csikokat éget a hátára  
Lovacska nyerítve a tárna mögé fut  
Baloldalt kinyílnak a házak kapui  
A küszöbön sápadt asszonyok ülnek nagy barna cserépfazekakkal  
az ölükben. Néha szájukhoz emelik a fazekakat, de karjuk  
fáradtan visszaesik

Az első ház küszöbén az asszony előtt gyerekek térdepelnek  
Elsőgyerek magasán szája fölé emeli a fazekat  
Másodikgyerek: kezével fájó fejét támogatja,  
Elsőgyerek: mama ... mamáskám ... én ... jó voltam ...  
Anyja: s a gyerekek ujjait a szájukba rakja az ajtó elé fekteti őket,  
aztán az üres fazekakkal a falu felé röptül.  
A második házból egy öregasszony vizsgálja az eget, az udvaron  
álló köhöz tipeg és sietve a ház tetejére rakja  
Jobboldalt a tárna háta mögül két kamasz csuszik elő  
Elsőkamasz: a szin közepén hirtelen elnyúlik:

Merre?!?

Másodikkamasz: Egy percre ő is összecsuclik aztán fölpattan:

JÁTSZANI!

Lovacska már harmadszor fut elő a tárna mögül, hosszan fájdal-  
masan fölnyerit

Elsőkamasz: ijedten megfogtatja a fejét  
Másodikkamasz: karjaira emeli a másik vékony testét és lassan elfut  
vele.

A lovacskának most összecsucliknak a lábai nyelvvel kérőn a gaz-  
dája lábát nyalogatja

Kocsis kezében forog az ostor, forog, forog  
Lovacska sir testét újra fölfojtja és elindul  
A nyílás fölött megszólal a kis harang  
Az asszonyok ijedten kiforogtak a házakból  
A bánya szája fölnyílik  
Emberek jönnek karjukon a legfiatalabb munkással.  
Az utakon asszonyok röptülnek.  
Legfiatalabb munkást: a földre fektetik.  
Egyik asszony elvágódik a lába előtt  
A haldokló még egyszer fölül:

MIÉRT!!

Aztán élettelenül visszaesik.  
A többiek csak állnak, szájuk hangtalanul mozog  
Valaki lassu templomi énekbe kezd  
A kocsis megjelenik a lovacskával  
Halottat az üres szekérbe emeli és kifut a szinről  
A munkások újra visszacsuszának a bányába  
Az asszonyok elindulnak a házak felé  
Csak a halott felesége jagat föl néha a közepén.

Ujvári Erni

## Páris ég

(Részlet Iwan Goll eposzából)

Chicagóban az utestre zuhan a közismert téglá  
Grönlandban felfordul egy foka  
Shantangban így dudol a pénzügyminiszter:

Van egy aranykoronám  
szép, tejszin fogamon  
Van száz egypár részvényem  
A vasérc Olympuszon  
S van mintegy huszér évre  
Csaldái sirboltom  
O kérem  
O kérem  
Nem csak tegeled de idebe  
Sőt este is arany van fogamon.

Mire beadja lemondását  
Távirat Moszkvából Gomorrhába:

FORRADALOM

Munkások a két villamos tankokban elfoglalják a Louvret  
Az összes kávéházteraszokon virítanak a májusi kokárdák  
„Singer-féle varrógépek“  
A vasutasok sztrájkolnak  
Express vonatok elpihennek a lenyvesekben  
Négy napra  
De zümmögnek a Radiogrammák  
Az Eiffeltorony méhei  
A távolból felvillog a Mont-Blanci állomás  
Gyémántos jelzések  
„Vegyétek testvérek az Extrablattot!“  
Az eszmények eszménye  
Boxmatch Jersey-Cityben  
Az új század ökölfoga  
Mészáros-testületek küldöttségeket menesztenek az óceánon túlra  
Vigyázat! Első round!  
Európa lekezel a néger Zeusszal  
Kék-leher-vörös az uszónadrágja  
Izzó-acéll boltozódik a férfi mell  
Morse sztrájk  
Négy ököl dagasztja a világ becsületét  
Amerikában megálltak az összes óraművek  
A municiógyárak leálltak  
Az atlantióceánon megmérvedtek a gőzösök  
Negyedik Round  
Sziklák görögnek  
A bankokat kifosztották  
77 öngyilkosság  
300 gutaütés  
Knock out!

KUNCOG A SZABADSÁG SZOBRA

Es gyászként milderre kirobban a háború  
Csontvázak verik a dobokat  
A cukorárak robognak a magasba  
Dijmentes tömegietekézések  
A marhavagyonokban röhög a felszallagozott hős  
Egy szív fityeg az okmánypapírok közé ragaszva  
Koporsókból való D-vonatok vonulnak  
Roma és Stokholm között.

Es ekkor  
az üres kávéházi asztal mellett  
egy GENIE  
felalítja az emberszeretet!

FIG. 9 Page 5 of *Akasztott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922), layout and captions by Sándor Barta, including the image/text juxtaposition *Long Live Machine Art* at the top of the page.

sion on the problem of the new content and the new form]. Taking exception to Barta's anti-art rhetoric, Moholy-Nagy and Kállai asserted that the artist, rather than abstaining from art-making during the period of capitalism or working exclusively for the destruction of the latter, should create a new art prophetic of and preparatory for the art of the coming utopia.<sup>45</sup> Publicly distancing himself from International Constructivism for the first time, Bortnyik sided with Barta, proclaiming that Constructivism practiced within capitalist society also served that society. Bortnyik further criticized the implicit stand of Kállai and Moholy-Nagy (as well as Kassák), that the artist had something to teach the proletariat.<sup>46</sup>

The declaration "Az összes homogén erők koncentrációjáért!" [For the concentration of all homogeneous forces!], dated January 29, 1923, published in the last issue of *Akasztott Ember*, and signed by "Barta, Mácza, and Uitz, in the name of all Communist Artists and Writers living in Vienna," affirmed the authors' intention to produce a journal of "Proletcult."<sup>47</sup> With this act, the way was prepared for Barta's acceptance of Party control over his activities, while Uitz, who had ceased to propagandize for the Russian avant-garde, moved closer to an uncritical acceptance of Party control over art in general. On March 20, 1923, the first issue of *Ék* [Wedge] appeared in Vienna, with the signatories of the declaration constituting the editorial board. Mácza, despite reservations about Barta's seriousness as a Marxist,<sup>48</sup> thus succeeded in realizing his plans for a journal of "Proletcult."

Meanwhile, in Berlin, Komját initiated plans to revive *Egység* and to establish a "proletarian cultural association."<sup>49</sup> He discussed the matter with Rosinger and the Communist writers Béla Vágó and Béla Szántó in a meeting held at the Komját's apartment. Despite some opposition, they decided to again elicit the involvement of avant-gardists.<sup>50</sup> As a result, another organizational meeting was held, this time at Moholy-Nagy's studio. The painter Aurél Bernáth, who attended the meeting, recalls:

*The next day there was a big get-together at Moholy's—Hungarian. Komját, Rosinger, [artist László] Péri, Kállai, [writer János] Székely—some with their wives. There was an argument over Constructivism and the resurrection of Egység, sometimes . . . idiotic, sometimes very interesting. Important: Komját wishes to reestablish the journal here in Berlin on a wider basis, but he no longer wants to tie himself to Moholy concerning painting. During the argument it became apparent that both he and Rosinger have had it with the whole thing [presumably Constructivism] . . .*<sup>51</sup>

The result of these meetings was the first issue of the revived *Egység*, published in Berlin on February 10, 1923. In "Nyilatkozat" [Declaration], Kállai, Kemény, Moholy-Nagy, and Péri announced that they were "joining" with *Egység*.<sup>52</sup> The text of the declaration condemned the *embourgeoisement* of Constructivism in de Stijl's "constructive (mechanized)

aestheticism and the technical Naturalism achieved by the Russian Constructivists with their constructions representative of technical mechanisms," and asserted that their own "constructive art that springs from . . . Communist ideology," which "is breaking the ground for the collective architecture of the future, . . . will be the pivotal art form of Communist society."<sup>53</sup> One can discern in the text elements of Barta's attack on avant-garde technomania, Kállai and Moholy-Nagy's defense of the avant-garde as preparatory of art in the coming utopia, Moholy and Kemény's concept of the "dynamic-constructive system of forces,"<sup>54</sup> Rosinger's (and Barta's) belief in architecture as the primary art form of this utopia, and even of the contemporary attack on the avant-garde in Soviet Russia itself. The statement that constructive art "*clearly sees the partial role it fulfills in the integrated process of social transformation at the present time*"<sup>55</sup> conflicted with Komját's (and Barta's) assertion that agitational art was the only appropriate art form to be practiced until after the revolution, while the call for the subordination of their individual interests to those of the proletariat under the leadership of the Party, and for the establishment of a Proletcult organization, was a bow to the wishes of the Party-centered faction opposed to the avant-garde. Clearly this was a statement of compromise not only among the signatories—the Communists Péri and Kemény and the "fellow travelers" Moholy-Nagy and Kállai—but also with respect to Komját, Vágó, Hevesi, Szántó, and even Rosinger, who by this time were suspicious of an art form under attack by the Soviet leadership, and who were insisting that what they referred to as "proletcult" be the only form of art given expression in *Egység*. At best, Komját and his associates saw Constructivism as transitional from bourgeois to proletarian art;<sup>56</sup> this, presumably, was the basis for the compromise.

Given the fragility of this cooperation and the fact that there were no means of enforcing it, as there would have been in Soviet Russia, it is not surprising that the coalition collapsed by the time the second Berlin issue of *Egység* appeared on May Day 1923, just as it had in Vienna the previous September. Consequently, the first Berlin issue of *Egység* alone featured International Constructivist content, including an agitational poster design addressed to workers by Péri (fig. 10) and Kemény's review of the "Erste russische Kunstausstellung" [First Russian art exhibition] held at the Galerie van Diemen in Berlin in 1922. The next issue announced the exclusion of Kemény and Kállai, however, because they had published in "bourgeois" journals.<sup>57</sup> Since Péri and Moholy had done the same, they were excluded by implication. *Egység's* turn to *Tendenzkunst* was made clear not only through stated policy, but also by the fact that Bortnyik assumed its artistic direction and by the subsequent publication of agitprop works by Bortnyik (under the pseudonym "Sándor Bényi"), Grosz, Jolán Szilágyi, and Friedbauer.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, by March 1923, those associated with *Ma's* rival

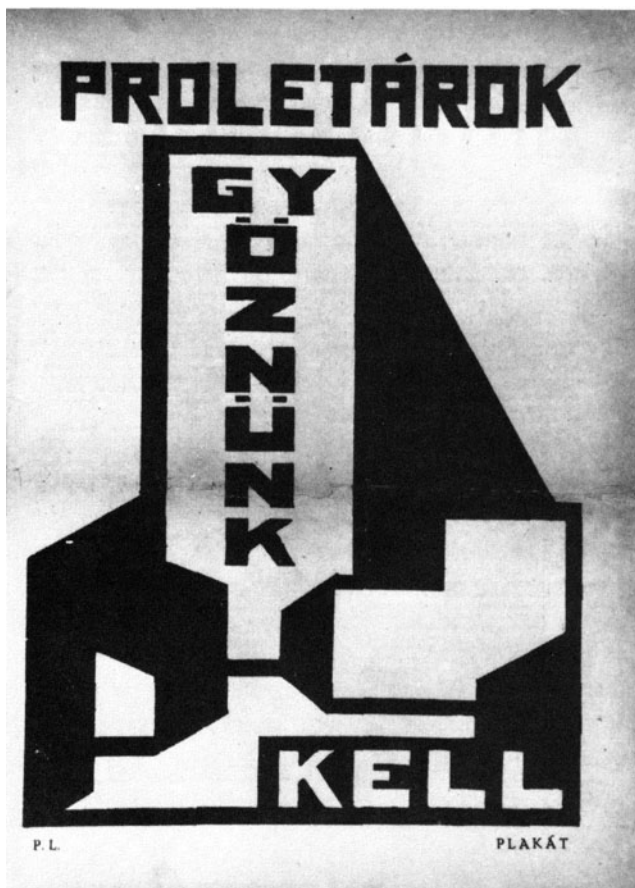


FIG. 10 László Péri, *Proletarians—We Must Win*, poster design (Ilnocut), reproduced in *Egység* (Berlin), no. 4 (February 10, 1923): 9.

journals had made the decision to submit their artistic autonomy to the authority of the Party, which insisted on the practice of what they called “Proletcult.” The Marxist literary historian György Szabó, writing in Budapest shortly after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, commented on this decision: “[*Egység*’s] peculiar Proletcult, despite its ideological errors, exaggerations and vulgarization, was . . . able to dissolve the contradiction between avant-gardism and ‘*Tendenzkunst*’ in favor of the latter, while—whether they liked it or not—forcing its followers to keep only those devices of [the avant-garde] that assisted in the completion of agitational assignments.”<sup>59</sup> Szabó seems anxious to formulate an apologia for what he had to recognize was a degradation of art deriving from the ideologically “correct” course of events. In this chilling statement, he alludes to the “peculiarity” of *Egység*’s version of Proletcult, but fails to mention that this “Proletcult” or *Tendenzkunst* was the equivalent of Soviet Russian “Proletarian Art,” that is, the imagery that the Party happened to require at any moment, and thus was based not on aesthetic or political theory, but exclusively on political need. This policy towards art was most confusing to avant-garde artists who wished to work for the proletariat, but who assumed they had the right to theorize. The Party proscribed both Bogdanovian Proletcult and the avant-garde because they

claimed autonomy from the state; the former was severely restricted in its operations as early as December 1920, and both were eliminated in 1932.

Kassák, who had been intoxicated with the desire for cultural control during the Hungarian Soviet of 1919, but who also experienced its repression, resisted such efforts afterwards. He did so most notably in 1949, when after a brief period of real cultural influence in Hungary, he (and Kállai) chose internal exile rather than cooperate with the imposition of Stalinist policy. His former associates Gyula Hevesi, Bernáth, Révai, and Bortnyik (among others) assumed leading roles in this process. Those artists and writers who persisted in following the dictates of the Party either perished in the Gulag as did Barta (Uitz nearly did), or ended up producing propaganda, effectively ruining their creative careers. For them, the “pleasant mirage-projected land” led to the all too “stark puszta,” either of the Gulag, or the service of the totalitarian state that maintained it.

#### Notes

Translations in this article are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

1. Aurél Bernáth, writing of his experiences among Hungarian emigré avant-gardists in the early twenties, in *Utak Pannóniából* [Roads from Pannonia] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1960), 379.
2. The Activist artists and writers were the principal grouping of the Hungarian avant-garde of the time. The term “Activist” appeared in November 1918, when some writers around the avant-garde journal *Ma* [Today] joined in forming the Anti-Nationalist Activist Group of Communist Writers; Sándor Márai, “Irk Tanácsa” [Writers’ Council], *Vörös Lobogó* [Red flag] (March 28, 1919). Other members of the circle around *Ma* began to use the name “Activist” starting about February 1919, when that word was first introduced into *Ma*’s subtitle. Lajos Kassák delivered his “Aktivizmus” lecture on February 20, 1919 (it was published in the April 10 issue of *Ma*), and the formation of the “Activists’ Group” was announced in the March 20 issue of *Ma*. The terms “Ma-csoport” [Ma-group] and “Maisták” [Maists] were used before 1919, and continued to be used after the introduction of “Activist.” For background information on the Hungarian avant-garde, see *The Hungarian Avant-Garde: The Eight and the Activists*, exh. cat. (London: Arts Council, 1980); and S. A. Mansbach, ed., *Standing in the Tempest: Painters of the Hungarian Avant-Garde, 1908–1930*, exh. cat. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1991).
3. Contributors to the Activist journal *Ma*, “Állásfoglalás a ‘Haladó Művészek’ düsseldorfi első kongresszusához” [Standpoint taken for the first congress of “Progressive Artists” at Düsseldorf], *Ma* 8, no. 8 (August 30, 1922): 64.
4. The Hungarians’ concept of “Proletcult” was equivalent to what was known in Soviet Russia as “Proletarian Art,” i.e., art in the service of the Communist Party. “Proletarian Art” was not only separate from Proletcult, an autonomous movement founded by Aleksandr Bogdanov and others to encourage artistic production among workers, but was promoted by the Party in opposition to it. See Jaroslav Andel, “The Constructivist Entanglement: Art into Politics, Politics into Art,” in Jaroslav Andel et al., *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914–1932*, exh. cat. (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 228–30.
5. On the relationship between the Russian and Hungarian avant-gardes, see Oliver A. I. Botar, “Constructivism, International Constructivism, and the Hungarian Emigration,” in John Kish, ed., *The Hungarian Avant-Garde, 1914–1933*, exh. cat. (Storrs, Conn.: William Benton Museum of Art, 1987), 90–97; Hubertus Gassner, “‘Ersehnte Einheit’ oder ‘erpresste Versöhnung’: Zur Kontinuität und Diskontinuität ungarischer Konstruktivismus-Konzeption,” in Hubertus Gassner, ed., *Wechselwirkungen: Ungarische Avantgarde in der Weimarer Republik* (Marburg: Jonas, 1986), 183–220; and Krisztina Passuth, “Contacts between the Hungarian and Russian Avant-Gardes in the 1920s,” in *The First Russian Show*, exh. cat. (London: Annelly Juda Fine Art, 1983), 48–66.
6. Umansky’s lecture may have been the first public presentation of Russian avant-garde art in Western Europe after the war. See Béla Uitz, “Jegyzetek a ‘Ma’ orosz estélyéhez” [Notes on *Ma*’s Russian evening], *Ma* 6, no. 4 (February 15, 1921): 52; and Gassner, “‘Ersehnte Einheit,’” 196.
7. Éva Bajkay, *Uitz Béla* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1974), 188–89; Sándor Ék, *Mába éró tegnapi* [Yesterdays extending into today] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1968), 100–106; and letter from Uitz (Paris) to István Genthon (Budapest), August 19, 1925, Hungarian National Gallery Archive, inv. no. 5247/1354.

8. For the dates and names surrounding the OBMOkHu exhibition, see Christina Lodder, "The Transition to Constructivism," in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Gardes, 1915–1932*, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1992), 267–68.
9. Gassner, "Ersehnte Einheit," 197; Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 236; Krisztina Passuth, "Le Rôle de l'avant-garde hongroise (Moholy-Nagy, Kassák, Péri) dans le développement des mouvements d'avant-garde est-ouest (1909–1926)," Ph.D. diss. (Paris: Sorbonne, 1987), 289–91; and Jolán Szilágyi, "Emlékezés Kemény Alfrédra" [Remembrance of Alfréd Kemény], *Művészet* [Art] 4, no. 7 (July 1963): 24.
10. Dezső Jász, *Tanácsmagyarországtól a Pireneusokig* [From Soviet Hungary to the Pyrenees] (Budapest: Magvető, 1969), 75.
11. Lajos Kassák, *Az izmusok története* [History of the isms] (Budapest: Magvető, 1972), 267.
12. On the formation of the *Egység* group, see Irén Komját, *Egy költői életmű gyökerei* [The roots of a poetic oeuvre] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1981), 63; and idem, *Az idők sodrában* [In time's currents] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1964), 26–27.
13. The Editors, "Az *Egység* útja és munkaprogramja" [The road and program of *Egység*], *Egység*, no. 3 (September 16, 1922): 1. For a German translation, see Gassner, ed., *Wechselwirkungen*, 234. See also György Szabó, "Az 'Egység' elméleti platformja" [The theoretical platform of *Egység*], in Miklós Szabolcsi and Lajos Illés, eds., *Tanulmányok a magyar szocialista irodalom történetéből* [Studies on the history of Hungarian socialist literature] (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1962), 116–17. *Egység's* explicit ties to the KMP and the Austrian Communists are referred to by Uitz, cited in Bajkay, *Uitz Béla* (1974), 124.
14. Andor Rosinger, "A 'Ma' forradalmi ideológiája" [The "revolutionary" ideology of *Ma*], *Egység*, no. 2 (June 30, 1922): 14–16.
15. Lajos Kassák, "Válasz sokfelé, és álláspont" [A response in many directions, and a position], *Ma* 7, no. 8 (August 30, 1922): 54.
16. See Ferenc Csaplár, ed., *Magam törvénye szerint* [According to my own laws] (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum and Muzsák, 1986), 149–50, 156–59. I have discussed this at greater length in "Kassák, Hungarian Activism and Politics: The Untold Story," a paper presented at the conference of the Universities Art Association of Canada, held in Victoria in November 1992. I plan to publish the paper in the near future.
17. On *Képzarchitektúra*, see Lajos Kassák, "Képzarchitektúra," *Ma* 7, no. 4 (March 15, 1922): 52–54; and idem, "Bildarchitektur," *Ma* 8, no. 1 (October 15, 1923): n.p. See also Éva Körner, "Kassák the Painter—In Theory and Practice," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 8, no. 28 (1967): 107–12; and Oliver A. I. Botar, "Constructed Reliefs in the Art of the Hungarian Avant-Garde: Kassák, Bortnyik, Uitz and Moholy-Nagy, 1921–1926," *The Structurist*, nos. 25–26 (1985–86): 87–95. A revision by Botar of George Cushing's English translation of the manifesto is on pages 96–98.
18. The Contributors to *Egység*, "Válasz a 'Ma'-nak" [Answer to *Ma*], *Egység*, no. 3 (September 16, 1922): 16.
19. Iván Hevesy, "A négyzetesített világnézet" [The squared *Weltanschauung*], *Egység*, no. 3 (September 16, 1922): 13–14.
20. Kliun's work, published in *Egység* as by "the UNOVIS group," has been identified by Passuth, "Contacts between the Hungarian and Russian Avant-Gardes in the 1920s," 58.
21. Passuth, "Le Rôle de l'avant-garde hongroise," 334.
22. Uitz, "Jegyzetek a 'Ma' orosz estélyéhez," 52.
23. On Uitz's art of 1921–22, see Éva Bajkay, *Uitz Béla* (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Kiadó, 1987), 54–56; and Botar, "Constructed Reliefs in the Art of the Hungarian Avant-Garde," 87–95.
24. Béla Uitz, "Az orosz művészet helyzete 1921-ben" [The condition of Russian art in 1921], *Egység*, no. 2 (June 30, 1922): 3–4. The Constructivists were pointedly omitted from this list.
25. *Ibid.*, 4.
26. Andor Rosinger, "Forradalom és kultúra" [Revolution and culture], *Egység*, no. 1 (May 10, 1922): 9.
27. Despite Irén Komját's implication that the reasons for *Egység's* cessation in 1922 were solely financial (Komját, *Egy költői életmű gyökerei*, 64), there is evidence that KMP officials were displeased with the journal's avant-garde content. In a brief article published in *Vörös Újság* [Red journal], the central organ of the KMP recently moved to Berlin, an unidentified critic wrote ominously of "the confusion which some of those puny literary rags [irodalmi lapocskák] that are supposed to 'sympathize' with us spread through their drivel, proclaimed to be . . . 'communist politics,' etc., in the heads of the workers . . ." ("Az elvtársakhoz!" [To the comrades!], *Vörös Újság* 5, no. 4 [September 1922]: 8). The use of the plural ("rags") suggests that this was directed at both *Egység* and *Ma*. Such criticism, combined with *Egység's* internal tensions and financial problems and the recent move of the KMP's head office from Vienna to Berlin, must have contributed to the publication's suspension.
28. After the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet of 1919, Mácza had returned to Kassa in his native upper Hungary (a city by then in the new state of Czecho-Slovakia and known as Košice), where he played a major role in the remarkable flowering of a local version of "Proletcult." See Júlia Szabó, afterword to János Mácza, *Legendák és tények* [Legends and facts] (Budapest: Corvina, 1972), 194–211.
29. János Mácza and Béla Uitz, manuscript plan for "Kritika," Mácza Papers, inv. no. V.3525/13/1–2, Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Béla Uitz, "Kísérlet az ideológiai forma felé" [Experiment towards the ideological form], *Ék* [Wedge], no. 1 (March 20, 1923): 6–7. See also Bajkay, *Uitz Béla* (1987), 120–25.
32. See Zoltán Nagy, "The Luddite Etchings of Béla Uitz," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 13, no. 48 (1972): 182–85.
33. Sándor Barta, "Felhívás" [Call], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): back cover.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Sándor Barta, "Als Manifest" [As a manifesto], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 1–2.
36. Sándor Barta, "Magasabbrendű koncentrációk felé" [Towards concentrations of a higher order], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 3–4.
37. *Ibid.*, 4.
38. Sándor Barta, "Kulturreform vagy kulturföradalom?" [Cultural reform or cultural revolution?], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 7.
39. Sándor Barta, "Jegyzet a festészet mai formáiról" [Notes on today's forms of painting], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 9. See also idem, "Az ige 'halálára'" [On the "death" of the word], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 12.
40. George Grosz and John Heartfield, "Manifestum" [Manifesto], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 10; originally published as "Der Kunststump" [The art scoundrel], *Der Gegner* 1, nos. 10–12 (October 1920): 48–56, and translated by Beth Irwin Lewis in her "Grosz/Heartfield: The Artist as Social Critic," in *Grosz/Heartfield: The Artist as Social Critic*, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: University Gallery, University of Minnesota, 1980), 27. For the controversy surrounding the original article, see the discussion in *Der Ararat* 1, nos. 9–10 (October 1920): 118–19. Barta would have had access to *Der Ararat*.
41. Ivan Goll, "A polgári dadaistákról" [On the bourgeois Dadaists], in the column "Figyelő" [The observer], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 10.
42. "Figyelő" [The observer], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 3–4 (December 20, 1922): 15.
43. *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 1–2 (November 1, 1922): 5.
44. See, e.g., Anne Rorimer, "Photography—Language—Context: Prelude to the 1980s," in Catherine Gudis, ed., *A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1989), esp. 139–43. My thanks to Gerti Fietzek for this reference.
45. László Moholy-Nagy, "Az új tartalom és az új forma problémájáról" [On the problem of the new content and the new form], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 3–4 (December 20, 1922): 3–4; and Ernő Kállai, "Konstruktív forma és szociális tartalom" [Constructive form and social content], *Akaszott Ember*, nos. 3–4 (December 20, 1922): 4–5.
46. Sándor Bortnyik, "Művészet és proletárföradalom" [Art and proletarian revolution], *Akaszott Ember*, no. 5 (February 15, 1923): 6–7.
47. "Az összes homogén erők koncentrációjáért!" [For the concentration of all homogeneous forces!], *Akaszott Ember*, no. 5 (February 15, 1923): 8.
48. Manuscript, undated, Mácza Papers, inv. no. V.3525/18/4, Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest.
49. The Editorial Board of *Egység*, "Szempontok egy nemzetközi proletár kultúrservezet megteremtéséhez" [Points of view towards the creation of an international proletarian cultural organization], *Egység*, no. 4 (February 10, 1923): 12.
50. Komját, *Az idők sodrában*, 40.
51. Bernáth, *Utak Pannoniából*, 363.
52. Ernő Kállai, Alfréd Kemény, László Moholy-Nagy, and László Péri, "Nyilatkozat" [Declaration], *Egység*, no. 4 (February 10, 1923): 15. (For an English translation, see Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1985], 288–89.)
53. *Ibid.*
54. On Moholy and Kemény's concept of a "dynamic-constructive system of forces," see, e.g., Gassner, "Ersehnte Einheit," 198–99.
55. Kállai et al., "Nyilatkozat," 15. The italics are in the original.
56. The Editorial Board of *Egység*, "Szempontok," 12. An editorial footnote in *Egység* to Kállai et al., "Nyilatkozat," also expressed reservations.
57. The Editorial Board of *Egység*, "Nyilatkozat" [Declaration], *Egység*, no. 5 (May 1, 1923): 8.
58. Two more issues of *Egység* appeared in Berlin and five more of *Ék* in Vienna. In September 1924, the two editorial boards joined forces to publish a final joint issue of *Egység* in Vienna.
59. Szabó, "Az 'Egység' elméleti platformja," 141.

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