We have to imagine these tiny groups, succeeding and turning against one another. Some had significant entourages, art magazines, and 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 pusztat [wasteland] remained. 1

As 1922 began, the Viennese Hungarian Activists were at the peak of their success. 2 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." 3 This was their last unified stand. May 1922 saw the publication 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." 5 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 co-writer Ernő (Ernst) Kállai and the dramatic theorist János (Ivan) Máčza. 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." 6 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. 5 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. 6 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. 7 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. 8 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, 9 and Uitz became an admirer of Malevich and Constructivism, collecting relevant texts and photographs, which he later published in Egység.
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 émigrés. There, as one eyewitness 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.”

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.

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)—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-

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.
gram...not a new direction, nor is it a "school with a manifesto." 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. 

The fine-arts policy of Egyseg, 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 ideologiája” [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 Máca 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. Kassák responded to this and other attacks with his “Válasz sokféle, és álláspont” [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.” 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. 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 ‘Ma’-nak” [Answer to Ma], by “The contributors to Egyseg,” and “A négyzsögészett világénézét” [The squared Weltanschauung], by Iván Hevesy, both appearing...
in the September 16 issue of *Egység*. In “Answer to Ma” Kassák was accused of appropriating *Képarchitektúra* [Picto-architecture] — a style of abstract geometric art developed by Bortnyik and Kassák in 1920–21— from “Bortnyik, Braque, Puni, and especially the Suprematists,” and what was even worse, of being counter-revolutionary. For his part, Hevesy attempted to demolish *Képarchitektúra* by labeling it “planar decoration,” mere *l’art pour l’art,* 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), 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 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.

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.” 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. 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).24 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.”25

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 Gesamtkunstle, the new construction,”226 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 Egyseg,” 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, Egyseg ceased publication, and the Komjáts, Rosinger, Friedbauer, Hevesi, and Varga moved to Berlin.27 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 Egyseg and Mácz’s break with Kassák around October 1922, Uitz and Mácz began to plan a new publication to replace Egyseg.28 “Kritika” [Critique] was intended to be an organ of “Communist culture” devoted to “Proletcult,” that is, the development of a socialist Weltanschauung among proletarians.29 Mácz 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.30 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.31 The artistic result was his Luddite Series depicting the story of Ned Ludd and his followers.32 “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 Egyseg 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. Bartá’s problems with Kassák had been indicated already in his article “Merre” [Whither], published in the July 1, 1922, issue of Ma; in this Bartá 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 Bartá did not join the Egyseg 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 Egyseg with visual art, together with the belief of its editors and contributors in the need for the political revolution to preclude the cultural one, must have precluded Bartá’s collaboration. Bartá 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.”33

Although Akaszott Ember was not labeled as Communist and Bartá 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.34 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 Egyseg. 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. Bartá 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
“Proletcult network.” In “Magasabbrendű koncentrációik felé” [Towards concentrations of a higher order], Barta outlined a program that included anarchist ideas such as the communization of family life and economy, the demolition of their patriarchal/matriarchal authority systems, and free love. 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.”

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 szemetesiában . . .” [The first meeting of lunatics in the garbage can . . .], with its inventive typography and intentionally juvenile figurative marginalia (fig. 7). In “Kulturreform vagy kulturföradalom?” [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 modernist culture 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 recreated.

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 formáirol” [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 the poster, agitational drawing, etc.”; and painted surfaces as parts of designs for buildings proposed for the coming socialist utopia, an idea
FIG. 7 Sándor Barta, First Meeting of Lunatics in the Garbage Can . . . , Akasztott Ember, nos. 3–4 (December 20, 1922): 13.
that echoed Rosinger's concept of "the new construction." Barta supported the position of the Productivists and Constructivists, who wished to subsume art to the needs of socialist construction. He believed, however, that such art would be retrograde when produced in a capitalist country. Thus, aesthetically, Barta agreed with the Russian Constructivists and Productivists as well as with the de Stijl and Bauhaus artists and with Kassák, all of whom were interested in the use of color in architecture, which they considered the ultimate art form. Politically, however, he considered only the production of agitprop permissible within capitalism.

As a result of this policy, there were no reproductions of art in Akasztott Ember, apart from caricatures and a drawing by George Grosz (fig. 8). In the first issue, Barta published "Der Kunstlump" [The art scoundrel], by John Heartfield and Grosz, which attacked Oskar Kokoschka's request that the street fighting in Dresden be moved away from the vicinity of the city's galleries, where a painting by Rubens had been damaged. Heartfield and Grosz expressed their "joyful welcome of bullets whistling into the galleries and palaces, into the masterwork of Rubens instead of the houses of the poor in the working sectors." Barta favoured this iconoclasm but distanced himself from the apolitical Dadaists through his publication of Ivan Goll's attack on the "bourgeois Dadaists" of Paris who think that "bourgeois society will go to ruin because of their antics," and of a critique (possibly by László Gibarti) of Theo van Doesburg's Dada journal *Mecano* as "petit-bourgeois."

Probably the most interesting aspect of Akasztott Ember from the point of view of the visual arts was Barta's text/image juxtapositions, in which photographs were supplied with ironic captions. While clearly related to Berlin Dada, and deriving from the ironically captioned photographs of capitalist society in left-wing illustrated journals, Barta's pieces did not employ photomontage as used by John Heartfield and were distinguished from layouts in Communist illustrated journals by their careful composition and isolation on the page. In one example published in the December 20 issue of Akasztott Ember, Barta juxtaposed on a black background the twice-repeated image of a young boy's naked and starved corpse with a photograph of an even younger dead child in the center, adding the caption: "Composition from beside the Volga. (Unusually satirical), artists and poets should look at it for at least five minutes straight." This work alluded to the contemporary famine in Russia, a subject discussed in Franz Jung's recent book on the subject, *Famine on the Volga*, excerpts from which were published in the same issue. In another instance, over the photograph of a battleship Barta placed the slogan "Long live machine art!" making an unmistakable reference to Grosz and Heartfield's placard inscribed "Art is Dead: Long Live the Machine Art of Tatlin" displayed at the First International Dada Fair in Berlin in June 1920 (fig. 9). Under the photograph, Barta printed:

Here is . . . the man who irresponsibly cries: Long live machine art! And he cries it in an age whose most typical machines are not made to nurture life, but to destroy it. And in this respect there is no difference between the multicedelled skyscraper and the tank turret. Both are monuments of the same unethical age. . . . We warmly recommend this to the Hungarian enthusiasts of machine art.

It is not clear whether Barta understood Grosz and Heartfield to have intended this sign as ironic (in which case he would have seen himself as chiming with their views), or not (in which case he was publishing a critique of their position in 1920). Though there is no evidence to suggest that Barta intended his image/text juxtapositions to be works of art, they most closely resemble the ironic, socially critical image/text art of the 1970s and 1980s, such as that of Hans Haacke and Barbara Kruger, and can be seen, along with illustrated journals, advertisements, and Berlin Dada works, as prefiguring this genre.

Bártá's anti-art philosophy elicited responses from Moholy-Nagy, Bortnyik, Kállai, and the former Activist painter Lajos Tihanyi, which appeared in a series entitled "Vita az új tartalom és az új forma problémájáról" [Discuss-
Bábjáték

A szín közepén egy mély háromszögbe vágott bányahullás
A nyílás közt kis harangozó, mellette vörösakász ég.
A fára megölelő jobboldalt keskeny szín fut végig a színen.
Baloldalt ablaktalan munkalakozik.
A nyílás fölött most vékony hangerő megsződáz a harang
Harang csak énekel.
Lépésekből minden nagyobbra nyílik a bánya szája
A bányahullás független őrzi kezdetek a hangok
A legfelsőbb csuklókat megfordítja a levődésben és hirtelen föl-
nyújtja a fejet
Az egész méret egy pálalmat szőfent megújul
Elől a legérebb énekelő kezd: A gyermekek egy... kettő... egy... kettő...
Ujra elindulnak.
Legfelsőbb vallára emeli a csuklókat
Melőkből ujra főírnak a hangok
Legérebb a harang mellett lámpa a nyakába akaszikja
A nyílás szája mindig kissé lezár a lassan elmenti őket
Jobboldalt nagy ostorember kis lemezeket állít a sín közepébe.
A lovasakk, fark mögött egy fekete verszettet tünt.
Lovasz a gazdagat el terelő.
Az emberi képzelet fogorág az ostor
Lovaszka földalján emelő meleg kövek gurulnak a földre
Emberek az érkezést hetlevonja a lovasak nyakába tűnő, azzal az ostromral egy éjszakát éget a házatra.
Lovaszka nyújtva a tárna mögő fút
Báfojthat kinyílnak a házak kapu
A küzdőben tájolt aszonyok ülnek nagy barna cseppfáziskák között az olóban. Néha szájukhoz emeli a fázisokat, de karjak farradásra válnak.
Az alsó ház kezdőben az asszony elöl gyermekek terdepelnek
Elsőgyerék magasban szája fölött emeli a fázisokat
Műsőgyerék kezével lófej tettő magzatoló
Elsőgyerék: mama... mamacsam... én... jó voltam...
Anya: más, a gyerekek újra a szülőjükra rakják az ajtó elé fektetik őket, aztán az üres fáziskákkal a falu fél répül.
A második házban egy öregasszony vizsgálja az ágvet, az udvaron által készített és a ház téjére rakja
Jobbo: Mielőtt a tárna látsza mögött két kamusz csusznak elő
Előszakasz: a szín közepén hirtelen elnyulnak:
Merre?
Műsőszakasz: egy percre ő is összeküldik aztán felütkan: JATSZANNI!

Lovaszka műr harmadszorut elő el a tárna mögül, hosszan látját-
masan fügyerült
Elsőszakasz: javaslatosan meggondolja a fejtő
Kicsoda jelentősen meggondolja a fejtő
Kicsoda készen fogor az ostor, forog, forog
Lovaszka: ak a tetőt ugyan ezt emelni és elindul
A nyílás fölépi megsződák a kis harang
A legkisebb asszonyok kis független cseppfázisok a házakból
A bánya szája földelik
Emberek jöttek karjakban a legfelsőbb munkalakozók.
Az utakon asszonyok röplénnek.
Legfelsőbb munkalakok a földre fogyatkoznak.
Egyik asszony elávulódik a hába előtt
A hálók közé meg esik, gőzöld.
MIERT!!

Aztán énszerűen visszaesik.
A többek csak állnak, szajuk hagyalattal mozog
Valaki lassan templomi énekleke kezd.
A kicsi megjelenik a lovaszak.
Hakoll az üres szerkezet emléke és jól látható a szintől
A munkalakok ujra vissznasznak a bárba
Az asszonyok elindulnak a házak fele
Csak a halott feleségén jutott fel. Néha a középen.

Páris ég

A csípőcsök emelkednek a felül.

Város címerei megjelennek.

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.
Taking exception to Barta’s anti-art rhetoric, Moholy-Nagy and Kallai 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. 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.” One can discern in the text elements of Barta’s attack on avant-garde technomania, Kallai 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,” 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” 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 Kallai—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 Egyseg. At best, Komját and his associates saw Constructivism as transitional from bourgeois to proletarian art; 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 Egyseg appeared on May Day 1923, just as it had in Vienna the previous September. Consequently, the first Berlin issue of Egyseg 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 Kallai, however, because they had published in “bourgeois” journals. Since Péri and Moholy had done the same, they were excluded by implication. Egyseg’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.

Thus, by March 1923, those associated with Ma’s rival
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." 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
Translusions in this article are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.
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 Nárai, "Tóth Taslásca" [Writers' Council], Nóvös Lobogó [Red Flag] (March 20, 1919). Other members of the circle around Ma began to use the name "Activists" starting about February 1919, when that word was first introduced into Ma's subtitle. Lajos Kassák delivered his "Aktivismus" 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 "Máisták" [Máists] 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: Art 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, "Allatfoglalás a 'Haladó Művészek' díszdíjelfordó és kongresszusánál," [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), 226–30.
6. Umanzki'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 estélyhez" [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: Goodall, 1974), 188–89; Sándor Ék, Máta tró tegnapok [Yesterday extending into today] (Budapest: Kosuth, 1968), 100–106; and letter from Uitz (Paris) to István Genthon (Budapest), August 19, 1925, Hungarian National Gallery Archive, inv. no. M6417/354.


18. The Contributors to Egyseg, "Válasz a 'Mája' [Answer to Ma]," *Egyseg*, no. 3 (September 16, 1922): 16.