

LUKÁCS IN 1919

by

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I

Lukács's activities in 1919 have provoked many arguments, due in part to his controversial ideological evolution and his somewhat unexpected decisions, and in part to his actions and the views he held. The counter-revolution vilified him and all the policies of the Council Republic. Gusztáv Gratz, Jenő Szathmári, or Cecile Tormay¹ considered the cultural programmes of the dictatorship of the proletariat to have been anti-national, Jewish or obtuse avant-garde experimentation on the part of a narrow-minded intelligentsia. Praise from the bourgeois radical Oszkár Jászi did not mean true recognition either. He maintained that the cultural policy supported by Lukács "was directed at the creation of a new public spirit, a mass creed and a mass morality. This was the aspect of the Council Republic which brought out the most appealing features of the new order. There was undoubtedly something grand and almost comforting in the seriousness and enthusiasm with which the dictatorship of the proletariat grappled with cultural affairs. All the evangelical fanaticism was restricted to a small elite, and their new religious mission was to propagate the sciences and the arts; of course, only in the socialist, Marxist, historical-materialist tradition. Other approaches would at the very best only have been tolerated in the higher reaches of the universities. Their aim was the creation of a new state religion."² As can be seen, Utopianism, religion and fanaticism—this was Jászi's opinion.

Bourgeois historiography in the main continues these two schools of thought to this day. The counter-revolutionary propagandist Victor Zitta,

¹ Gratz Gusztáv: *A bolsevizmus Magyarországon* (Bolshevism in Hungary). Budapest, 1921; Szathmári, Jenő: *Das rote Ungarn* (Red Hungary), Leipzig, 1920; Tormay, Cecile: *An Outlaw's Diary: The Commune*. McBride, New York, 1924. 233 pp.

² Jászi, Oszkár: *Magyar kálvária, magyar föltámadás*. Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1920. p. 137. — [German edition: *Magyariens Schuld, Ungarns Sübne. Revolution und Gegenrevolution in Ungarn. Übers.: Andreas Sas. Verlag für Kulturpolitik, München, 1923. XV, 249 pp.* — English version: *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*. King, London, 1924, XXIII, 239 pp.]

wrote in his book, which came out in 1964, during Lukács's lifetime; "His measures, inconceivable under normal circumstances, were capable of being hidden only in the mind of an intellectual and moral delinquent with exotic and extravagantly grotesque tastes"³. The author falsifies Lukács's relations with the scientific and artistic world, identifies his programme which served the cultural enrichment of the masses with that of Hitlerism and accuses him of having provided circuses instead of bread.

D. Kettler, who in his book entitled *Marxismus und Kultur* investigates the views of Mannheim and Lukács in 1918–19, is closer to Jászi. He presents the affinity between the two in their views on culture and the cultural crisis, but recognizes that while the first only approached the problem from the cultural side, Lukács was also aware of the economic and social factors involved in the cultural crisis. At the same time he too reverses the thesis, alleging that for the Lukács of 1919 everything occurred in cultural categories and was only seen in a cultural context—even the political sphere lacked an autonomous character. But the author considers it a merit of Lukács that—in contrast even to Mannheim—he tried to carry out his views on culture in practice. "We see a complex attempt to demonstrate the relationship between the revolutionary process and the cultural crisis. His experiment has no millenarian features, he does not expect any miraculous and immediate change. He does not expect the rapid flourishing of a new culture."⁴ He therefore recognizes Lukács's sense of reality and to a certain extent goes further even than Jászi.

Michael Lówy's book entitled "On the Sociology of Revolutionary Intellectuals", was published in Paris in 1976. Its sub-title is: "Lukács's Critical Evolution from 1919 to 1929". The author tries to reconstruct the path taken by the Hungarian philosopher on the basis of thorough documentation and with reference to writings by Lukács so far little known in the West. He rejects openly reactionary distortions. Nevertheless, he does not consider Lukács's espousal of communism to be the result of a scientific analysis, but as "an act of ethical and political faith," and here again we are back with Jászi.⁵ "In 1919 Lukács was nearer to the ethics of conviction than to the ethics of responsibility, i.e. he was more strongly exercised by the correlation between his own practice with political moral principles than by the effects of his own actions on objective reality." He claims that "as people's commissar he carried out his tasks like somebody who in his

³ V. Zitta: *Georg Lukács' Marxism, Alienation, Dialectics, Revolution*. The Hague, 1964, pp. 98/99.

⁴ D. Kettler: *Marxismus und Kultur*. Berlin, 1967, p. 49.

⁵ ... "le passage au communisme relève chez lui d'un acte de foi éthico-politique." M. Lówy: *Pour une sociologie des intellectuels révolutionnaires*. Paris, 1976, p. 168.

thoughts is constantly confronted by the great inquisitor," i.e. Dostoievsky's ethical problems. Lówy deals little with Lukács's actual cultural and political activities in 1919, which he squeezes in their entirety into the category of leftist ethics. He recognizes however that "the experience of wielding power exercised a great influence on Lukács. His political thinking became richer, often more concrete, he began to outgrow the leftist ethic and—regretfully—to recognize the inevitability of compromise."⁶

I have not only quoted these views in order to pick arguments with them, but also to show what a lot Hungarian historiography still has to do to analyse the 1919 Council Republic and to make it properly understood internationally. Here I shall only describe Lukács's views and actions concerning the theory and practice of culture. I cannot undertake to examine these activities from the point-of-view of his whole ideological evolution or of the Hungarian Republic of Councils as a whole.

2

Lukács was already a well-known aesthetician and literary critic when at the end of 1918 he joined the Communist Party of Hungary, which was formed on the initiative of Béla Kun and former prisoners of war who were full of enthusiasm for the ideas of the Russian Revolution.

In 1969, in his volume published under the title "My Road to Marx," Lukács recalls his intellectual (largely philosophical) evolution of that period as follows: "My philosophical starting-point was the examination of the problems concerning the connection between ethics and aesthetics. As I have already explained several times, the foundation of this evolutionary stage was my seething dissatisfaction with the way Hungarian life was becoming capitalized and gentrified. This was also the foundation of my unconditional devotion to Ady, without of course ever seeing the way out of this situation in the importing of Western civilization as the leading ideologists of the Hungarian left did. It would of course hardly have been possible then to call me a socialist—with the exception of French radical syndicalism I had a very negative attitude towards the socialist theoreticians whom I knew then. However, for all my theoretical confusion, I still saw the only way out of the cultural contradictions of the time in the revolutionary abolition of the status quo."⁷

⁶ Op. cit. p. 177.

⁷ Lukács, György: *Utam Marxhoz. Válogatott Filozófiai Tanulmányok (My Road to Marx. Selected Essays on Philosophy)*. Budapest, 1971, vol. I, pp. 11–12.

In respect of aesthetics and ethics he was primarily under the influence of Kant, but tried to shed this influence early on to go on and accept Hegel's philosophy of history. Hegelian philosophy did not satisfy him from the ethical point-of-view since Lukács never considered the idea of compatibility with reality to be valid, i.e. the view according to which moral imperatives lead to the actual needs of existing society. Inspired by Kierkegaard, by medieval Christian heretics and by oriental ethical philosophy, he attempted to lay the philosophical foundations for an ethic which surpasses the limitations of morality and law. This view gave rise to his interest in Dostoevsky, who raises ethical questions in the most stimulating and most radical literary form.

However, the political and social problems of the period induced him to examine the problems of the labour movement. Although he had read Marx, he was attracted in the beginning by the ideas of Georges Sorel and by the anarcho-syndicalistic Marx-interpretation propagated by Ervin Szabó. During the war he became acquainted with some of the writings of Rosa Luxemburg. He only read Lenin, particularly his "State and Revolution," in 1918.

In the postscript to the new edition of "History and Class Consciousness," and elsewhere too, Lukács emphasizes the contradictory nature of his development in this period, it represented a mixture of leftist ethics and an idealistic view of history. But he also points out that the Russian Revolution brought a transcendence of these contradictions.⁸ However, this new recognition only gradually changed his thinking.

In December 1918 he published an article entitled "Bolshevism as a Moral Problem," in which he finds that there are two trends in Marxian theory, one of which is the sociological, which explains the past through class struggles, and the other a philosophy of history which "makes the proletariat the carrier of the social redemption of mankind, the messianistic class of world history." The dilemma which arises is the following: should the dictatorship of the proletariat be erected immediately, in the hope of creating the classless society and consequently the development of democracy, or should one wait for the new world order to come about, wait for the long time it would take for the majority of mankind to approve of the radical transformation of society. Lukács's opinion was the following: "Bolshevism relies on the metaphysical assumption that good can come from evil, that it is possible—as Razumikhin says in 'Crime and Punishment'—to lie our way through to the truth. The writer of these lines is not able to share this belief, and therefore sees an insoluble moral dilemma

⁸ Lukács, György: *History and Class Consciousness*. Merlin Press, London, 1971 pp. IX-XXXVIII

at the root of the Bolshevik stand, while democracy—in his belief—only demands superhuman resignation and self-sacrifice from those who want to carry it through consciously and honestly. But this, even though perhaps it demands superhuman strength, is not an essentially insoluble question, as is the moral problem of Bolshevism.”⁹

He changed this opinion after a few weeks which became clear from an article entitled “Tactics and Ethics,” which was published in May 1919, but written before the proclamation of the Council Republic. In this article he points out that for a socialist the ethical problem is always strictly bound up with the given situation of the philosophy of history.

“The class interests which will bring socialism about and the class-consciousness in which they find expression signify a world historical mission—and hence, too, the objective possibility mentioned above implies the question: has the historical moment already arrived which leads—or rather leaps—from the stage of steady approach to that of true realization?” Science is unable to predict whether the moment has indeed arrived, and ethics cannot provide recipes for correct action.

“... ethical self-awareness makes in quite clear that there are situations—tragic situations—in which it is impossible to act without burdening oneself with guilt. But at the same time it teaches that even faced with the choice of two ways of incurring guilt, we should still find that there is a standard attaching to correct and incorrect action. This standard we call sacrifice.” As can be seen, Lukács accepts the idea of the purely moral action, which so occupied Russian anarchists at the beginning of the century, and then he makes concrete reference to a novel by Boris Savinkov, where the writer explains this idea as follows:

“... only he who acknowledges unflinchingly and without any reservations that murder is under no circumstances to be sanctioned can commit the murderous deed that is truly—and tragically—moral”.¹⁰

Lukács finally adopted the cause of the revolution, which of necessity meant for him the dictatorship of the proletariat, the dictatorship which must bring about the classless society by one historic leap the latter not being an end in itself but a means of moving towards communism. His joining the revolutionary cause implied the acceptance of the substance of Marxism, but with a particular, individual interpretation, primarily as concerns the political and ethical aspects.

⁹ Lukács György: A bolsevizmus mint erkölcsi probléma (Bolshevism as a Moral Problem). In: Szabad gondolat (Free Thought), December 1918. Re-published in: Történelem és osztálytudat (History and Class Consciousness). Budapest, 1971, pp. 11–17.

¹⁰ György Lukács: Tactics and Ethics, in *Tactics and Ethics, Political Writings, 1919–1929* NLB London 1972, pp. 9–11.

In the Council Republic György Lukács was a Deputy Commissar for Education, and then Commissar. For some time he was also the political commissar of one of the armies sent against the Czech interventionists. Action by itself did not satisfy him, he also attempted to formulate the fundamental problems of the new society on a theoretical level, taking the practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat into consideration.

On the 13th April 1919 he published an article with the telling title "The Moral Foundations of Communism." In this article he declared that at the given stage of development the principle behind every action is the class struggle, since the achievements of the struggle of the proletariat are threatened by the enemy. In spite of the pressures of the moment the question arises concerning the future: what will the characteristic features of the new society be, what will life be like for those living in it? Lukács asserts that we can only receive an answer to this question by looking at the ethical side. "The radical extirpation of class differences only makes sense if it has removed everything that separated people from each other: all ire and all hate, all envy and all arrogance. In a word: if the classless society is the society of mutual love and understanding. But the transformation of social and economic life can only lay the foundations for such a society, they can only create the opportunity; in order for it to be put into reality the people themselves must be transformed."¹¹ This change is to be promoted by culture and primarily by education, whereby education must always reflect the principle of full equality in spite of the implacable class struggle conducted at any given moment.

In an article published on 20th April 1919 he analyses the characteristics of revolutionary action, pointing out that the measure of this is the preference of the interest of the totality, i.e. the community over individual or group interests. The rule of the totality over the minorities carries in itself the concept of sacrifice. "All real strength is determined by the degree of willingness to make sacrifices. He who is ready to sacrifice everything, is invincible."¹²

Lukács's optimism was nourished not only by the domestic experience but mainly by his hopes for the world revolution. He believed, as he explains in his article entitled "The Tactics of the Victorious Proletariat," that the world would be polarized and that the struggle would be fought

¹¹ Lukács, György: A kommunizmus erkölcsi alapja (The Moral Foundation of Communism). In: "Az ifjú proletár" (The Young Proletarian). 13th April 1919. — Re-published in: Történelem és osztálytudat (History and Class Consciousness). Budapest, 1971, pp. 18–21.

¹² Lukács, György: Mi a forradalmi cselekvés? (What is Revolutionary Action?). In: Vörös Ujság (Red Daily), 20th April 1919.

by the international bourgeoisie and the international proletariat. The international proletariat would be victorious and would introduce its dictatorship everywhere in the world. What was true in Hungarian conditions, would be true elsewhere too. "Dictatorship offers the possibility and the pledge for the final victory. But the victory itself will in reality be only achieved by the clear class-consciousness and the conscious class struggle of the proletariat in the future."¹³

In the practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat he attributed great importance to the relationship between the Party and the class. In his opinion the party structure was the first active step of the proletarian movement after the period of mere opposition; it was the first attempt at the transformation of the whole of society. Lukács points out that in Hungary the merger of the socialists and the communists was realized by the proletariat itself, and that thereafter the Party in the old sense of the word ceased to exist and only the unified proletariat existed. "The Party today is the expression of the united will of the united proletariat: it is the executive organ of the will which prevails in the new society and which is composed of the new forces."¹⁴

Since he attributed a very important role to class consciousness, he began to examine the role of historical materialism, and in one of his last articles—published in July 1919—he deals with the changes in the function of historical materialism. Surveying the historical evolution of Marxism he finds that historical materialism is valid insofar as the new society is still a mixture of the old and the new, and consequently the sociological interpretations of the old society can be applied to it. At the same time, what was the superstructure in capitalist society will become the base in the new society, and the base of capitalist society will become the superstructure. "The essence of the transition to socialism, of socialist construction can be summarized in the following way: the ideological elements, the human idea, the idea of the liberation and changing of man will become the dominating idea of constructive work and the economy will become merely a tool, a simple function of this idea."¹⁵ Dialectical materialism ceases to be a sociological theory, and in the new society becomes the method of scientific research.

As we can see, Lukács exaggerated the role of subjective factors in histori-

¹³ Lukács, György: *A győzelmes proletariátus taktikája* (The Tactics of the Victorious Proletariat). *Népszava*, 15th April 1919.

¹⁴ Lukács, György: *Párt és osztály* (Party and Class). Published in: "Mindenki újakra készül..." ("Everybody Prepares for New Things..."). Edited by Farkas József, vol. 4. (from here on: MUK), Budapest, 1967, pp. 223–229.

¹⁵ György Lukács: The changing function of historical materialism, in: *History and Class Consciousness*, Merlin Press, London, 1971, pp. 223–253.

cal evolution, idealized the function of the working class, underestimated the importance of organization, but at the same time accepted the principle of the class struggle and of the historical mission of the proletariat, as well as the necessity of the revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We have quoted Lukács's ideas, because these also formed the ideological and political basis of his cultural and educational policy concepts.

4

It is impossible for us to understand the cultural concept professed by Lukács at the time of the Council Republic unless we look at the debates which took place during the war in Hungarian intellectual circles. In the Sunday Circle, whose members included Lukács, Karl Mannheim, Arnold Hauser, Béla Fogarasi, Lajos Fülep, and others, culture was considered the only way out of the intellectual and moral crisis of capitalist society.¹⁶ (In 1918 Mannheim published a study entitled "Soul and Culture", in which he explained this view, one also shared by Lukács.)

At the time of the Council Republic Lukács was of the opinion that the revolution was an instrument to bring about the rule of culture. He accepted Alfred Weber's theory, which differentiated between the concept of civilization and culture. In June 1919 he published an essay entitled "Old Culture and New Culture," in which he expounded his view on this distinction. In his opinion "the concept of culture (as opposed to civilization) includes all those valuable products and activities unnecessary for the direct preservation of life." Capitalist society is unable to ensure the evolution of culture in this direction, since the economy dominates the whole of life, man becomes subordinate to production, ideology and production contradict each other. In a communist society the planned and organized economy will terminate things being ends in themselves, since the social processes in which they operate are influenced by economic factors. Man's external and internal life will be dominated by human and non-economic factors. This functional change will pave the way for the new culture, which will lead to man's internal domination over his environment, whereas civilization only brought the external domination over nature. "Human autotelism is the sociological precondition of culture."¹⁷

In his article entitled "The Factual Taking into Possession of Culture,"

¹⁶ Cf.: Novák, Zoltán: A Vasárnap Társaság (The Sunday Circle). In: A magyar filozófiai gondolkodás a századelőn (Hungarian Philosophical Thought at the Beginning of the Century). Budapest, 1977, pp. 300-376. A more extended version has since been published under the same title by Kossuth, Budapest, 1979. 306 pp. On the Sunday Circle see NHQ 47, on Arnold Hauser see NHQ 58.

¹⁷ Lukács, György: Régi kultúra és új kultúra (Old Culture and New Culture). Internationale, 15th June 1919. — MUK pp. 470-480.

published on April 20, 1919 he states that the seizure of power by the proletariat and the nationalization of cultural institutions are only the first steps. "The placing of art treasures, theatres, schools, etc. in the hands of the proletariat is only the precondition for the creation of the new culture, for its real acquisition, for the era when all the products of culture will become the inner property of all workers. It is this true acquisition that education must bring about. "The process of interiorization will lead to the disappearance of the difference between physical and intellectual work . . . It should be open for any person at any time, in accordance with the external and internal development of his life, to find employment in society either as a physical or as an intellectual worker."¹⁸ Thus culture is the main instrument for the radical transformation not only of society but of man in general.

This view helped bring about one of the most important aims of the dictatorship of the proletariat: the democratization of culture. A movement was started to eliminate illiteracy, the eight-year primary school was established. A workers' university was founded. All cultural institutions—libraries, museums, theatres—were opened to the people, concerts were arranged for the workers. It was chiefly this democracy that characterizes the cultural policy which was carried out so enthusiastically by the Hungarian intelligentsia, and of which Lukács was the principal spokesman.

Lukács tried to win the support of the most outstanding representatives of the creative intelligentsia for this policy. He asked the most outstanding writers, including non-communists such as the novelist Zsigmond Móricz and the poet Mihály Babits to guide literary life. Béla Balázs helped in the reorganization of the theatre. He—as we know—was later to become one of the world's most outstanding theoreticians of the film as an art form. Among the members of the music "directorium" we find Béla Bartók, Ernő Dohnányi and Zoltán Kodály.

In order to ensure the success of his policy he tries to create the proper economic and institutional foundations. In establishing the institutional system he took both questions of expertise and democratic principles into account—of course on the basis of the policies of the Council Republic. A unique institutional system was established which tried to draw on the experience of the French Commune, the Soviet state and some of the organizations of Hungarian progressive movements. The Council Republic—even in the difficult circumstances that obtained—provided considerable financial support for scholars, writers and artists.

As far as ideological and artistic developments are concerned he conducted

¹⁸ Lukács, György: *A kultúra tényleges birtokbavétele* (The Factual taking into possession of Culture). In: *Fáklya* (Torch), 20th April 1919 — MUK pp. 205–206.

an open policy. The Commissariat of Public Education was accused by some right-wing social democrats of giving preference to artistic trends alien to the proletariat, especially to the expressionist Lajos Kassák and his periodical, *Ma* (Today).¹⁹ Lukács published a statement giving his opinion on this question: "The Commissar for Public Education will not officially support the literature of any particular school or party. The communist cultural programme only differentiates between good and bad literature, and is not prepared to discard either Shakespeare or Goethe because they were not socialist writers. But neither is it willing to lay art open to dilettantism under the pretext of it being socialist. Communist cultural policy is to provide the proletariat with the best and purest art, and will not permit its taste to be corrupted by editorial politics, reduced to being no more than a political instrument. Politics is only the means, culture is the goal." It was very difficult to put this tolerant approach into practice in the conditions which were becoming more and more tense. In the same statement Lukács also recognizes the primacy of politics in cultural questions, but rejects the formation of artistic monopolies. "The political aspect will continue to be a *selective* aspect for a long time, but it cannot dictate the direction of literary production. It should only be a filter, not the sole source! The Commissariat for Public Education has not yet interfered with literary life: in the last resort it will entrust guidance to the organization of the writers."²⁰ And from a statement by Béla Balázs we learn that the writers themselves (they receive a commission from the Directorate of Writers for a period of six months) wish to exercise censorship, which they consider a necessity in view of the given situation.²¹

Lukács's tolerant but principled policy was considered by some influential leaders of the Council Republic to be an extension of the rigorous principles of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the area of culture and that it could be detrimental as a result. At the Party Congress in June 1919 the Commissar for Public Education, Zsigmond Kunfi, raised the question of intellectual freedom under the dictatorship and, opposing Béla Kun, declared that freedom could not be restricted in this area and that its absence had already paralysed intellectual activity.²² Lukács answered very vigorously.

¹⁹ Göndör, Ferenc: Who are those who want to dictate proletarian literature? *Népszava*, 16th April, 1919. — MUK pp. 171-174. On Kassák and *Ma* see NHQ 67.

²⁰ Lukács, György: Felvilágosításul (By Way of Enlightenment). *Vörös Ujság* (Red Daily), 18th April 1919 — MUK pp. 196-198.

²¹ A Közoktatásügyi Népbiztosság irodalmi programja (Literary Programme of the Commissariat for Public Education). A statement by Béla Balázs. In: *Magyarország* (Hungary), 19th April 1919. — MUK pp. 199-201.

²² Address by Zsigmond Kunfi on the first day of the National Party Congress. In: *Népszava*, 13th June 1919. — MUK pp. 460-461.

He declared that although the dictatorship of the proletariat was the rule of a minority, this minority was that of "the conscious, organized workers," who were acting in the interests of all workers. In this dictatorship criticism is needed, but criticism directed at the whole must be opposed, criticism "capable of arousing counter-revolutionary feelings in less conscious souls." Lukács continues: "There is no need to fear for the sciences and the arts. But it is impermissible for the organisations of bourgeois intellectual oppression in education and the press, to preserve their freedom. These must be transformed into proletarian organizations and we cannot tolerate viewpoints other than those of the proletariat being advanced in them."²³ In his reply Béla Kun took the same stand, adding that decadence in intellectual life was limited exclusively to those areas of culture which stand in the service of the bourgeoisie. And then he continued: "A new intellectual life, a new culture must come from the proletariat itself and I have faith in the creative power of the proletariat, and in the creative power which destroyed institutions and created new institutions in their place, I have no doubt that proletarian culture will flourish as well."²⁴ On this occasion Kun identified the avant-garde trend represented by Kassák and his group with bourgeois decadence.

Kassák publicly protested against this accusation and defended the autonomy of art against politics. Lukács himself took no stand in this argument, but we know that he was not in favour of the avant-garde.²⁵ His standpoint is explained by his philosophical views, his classical tastes, but also by the reaction of the working-class. Taking a stand in the polemics surrounding Kassák, the *Ifjú Proletár* (Young Proletarian) advises young workers to read Ady and Dostoevsky rather than the works of the avant-garde.²⁶ But there were workers who defended Kassák. All this proves that the debate on this question was open-ended and that there were different views on the orientation of the new literature and art among followers of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the other hand, the relative freedom of literary expression—with the exception of the most reactionary—was

²³ Address by György Lukács on the second day of the National Party Congress. In: *Vörös Ujság* (Red Daily), 14th June 1919. — MUK pp. 461-462.

²⁴ (Reply by Béla Kun on the second day of the National Party Congress. In: *Vörös Ujság* (Red Daily), 14th June 1919. — MUK pp. 462-463.

²⁵ Kassák, Lajos: *Levél Kun Bélához a művészet nevében* (Letter to Béla Kun in the name of art). In: *Ma* (Today) 15th June. — MUK pp. 463-468.

Cf.: Hermann, István: *Lukács György gondolatvilága* (The World of Ideas of György Lukács). Budapest, 1974, pp. 120-122. See also József, Farkas: *Proletárforradalom, avantgarde és tömegkultúra* (Proletarian Revolution, Avantgarde and Mass Culture). In: *Vár egy új világ* (A New World Awaits Us). Budapest, 1975, pp. 10-29.

²⁶ *Aktivizmus, avagy a kultúrájában forradalmasított ember* (Activism, or man revolutionized in his culture). In: *Ifjú Proletár* (Young Proletarian), 20th July 1919.

a fact, and here Lukács carried out well-founded and principled policies, which even went beyond his individual taste.

Lukács was to return to the question of his cultural policies in 1919 many times. In 1952 he emphasized their openness, at the same time stressing that he opposed both rightist social democratic writers and Kassák and his circle who, he maintained, wanted to declare their ideas as the "official art" of the dictatorship. "The Commissariat tried to wage a struggle on two fronts, but it was not always able to carry out this fundamentally correct line properly and consistently."²⁷ He explains this by the weakness of the Party. He claims however that the assertion of the communist concept was successful in spite of social democratic attacks.

In 1969 he drew attention to the theoretical weaknesses of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, pointing out that the leaders of the dictatorship were only acquainted with a few of Lenin's writings. He expressed the opinion that cultural policy then had a very "broad popular base." "If the dictatorship of the proletariat has a cultural influence and tradition which can be built on, then it is precisely this popular base. By popular I mean that it united the country's best and most progressive forces while trying to preserve excellence—one only has to think of Bartók and other outstanding personalities—and to avoid everything that could lead to the bureaucratic administration of culture."²⁸ He confirms that the Council Republic enabled all artistic trends to develop, allowing none a monopolistic position.

It is open to argument how well thought out the cultural policy of the Council Republic was from the theoretical point-of-view, and by what strata it was supported. It remains, however, a fact that in this area the dictatorship of the proletariat achieved great things. Lukács's theoretical and administrative activities in 1919 are an important element in this not only from the Hungarian point-of-view, but also from that of the international labour movement, and even if we admit its idealistic features, we must consider it as a precedent for what we are doing today. Incidentally, Lukács's idealism came more to the fore in theory than in practice. In practical matters Lukács was much more realistic. The Lukács of 1919 can only be analysed if we remember that social reality, action and theoretical thought are all closely interrelated. The principles of the democratization of culture, of keeping the sciences and arts abreast of modern developments, of the freedom of literature and art, of relying on the best creative forces in the intelligentsia—all these principles are still valid today.

²⁷ A Tanácsköztársaság kultúrpolitikája (The cultural policy of the Council Republic). In: *Irodalmi Újság* (Literary Magazine), 27th March 1952, p. 5.

²⁸ Nyilatkozat a Tanácsköztársaságról (Statement on the Council Republic). In: *Társadalmi Szemle* (Social Review), 1963, No. 3, pp. 15-17.