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Endre Ady's Summons to National Regeneration in Hungary, 1900–1919

In 1896 Hungarians celebrated the one thousandth anniversary of their conquest of the Central European Plains. Intoxicated with the heady wine of nationalism, they seemed almost to believe that their millennium prefigured the thousand-year reign of Christ prophesied in the book of Revelation. Public officials loudly proclaimed Hungary to be the best of all possible worlds and extolled the virtues of patriotism in the most extravagant terms. Publicists eulogized the Hungarian national genius and lamented that all of Eastern Europe was not ruled by Magyars. The most enthusiastic patriots confidently predicted yet another thousand years of national glory.

Such self-congratulation contrasted strikingly with reality; for *fin de siècle* Hungary, far from being the kingdom of God on earth, was a political and cultural wasteland. The reform program advocated with such energy by Count István Széchenyi (1791–1860)¹ had been only partially implemented and had therefore failed to effect the “moral regeneration of Hungary”² for which the great aristocrat yearned. Any lingering hope that a new Hungary might be created died in the 1870s with Ferenc Deák and József Eötvös, the liberal architects of the *Ausgleich*. While cynically praising the wisdom of Deák and Eötvös, Hungary's ruling classes, the magnates and the gentry (or lesser nobility), led the country into an era of reaction. Rather than ennobling themselves morally by promoting the reform of social injustices, as Széchenyi had urged, the Magyar magnates became even more indifferent to the commonweal, leaving the administration of the nation's political affairs to the gentry. Under the latter's leadership, the government (supported by the powerful Roman Catholic Church) removed political and social reform from its agenda and attempted systematically to “Magyarize” Hungary's non-Magyar nationalities, in flagrant violation of the liberal Nationalities Law of 1868.³

1. For an outstanding study of Széchenyi see George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism, 1791–1841* (Princeton, 1968).

2. C. A. Macartney, *Hungary: A Short History* (Chicago, 1962), p. 136.

3. The Nationalities Law of December 1, 1868, had been sponsored by Deák and Eötvös. While the law emphasized the indivisibility of the Hungarian state and identified

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It remained for the members of the remarkable generation of Hungarians that came of age after the turn of the twentieth century to raise the banner of revolt against the world their elders revered.⁴ Their opposition was originally defined in cultural terms, for by 1900 the ruling classes had successfully enlisted Hungarian literature, music, and art in the service of a semiofficial ideology, the twin pillars of which were Christianity and Magyar nationalism. Because piety and patriotism were esteemed more than creativity, Magyar culture produced few figures of European standing during the last half of the nineteenth century.⁵

Rejecting this lifeless "official" culture, the new generation created a "counterculture" that reinvigorated Hungary's national life.⁶ In the pages of the literary journal *Nyugat* (*West*) and the sociological journal *Huszadik Század* (*Twentieth Century*), the principal forums for this counterculture, the Hungarian intelligentsia was introduced to major trends in Western thought.⁷ Complementing the work of these two journals was the extraordinary revolu-

Magyar as the official language of government and administration, it made significant concessions to the non-Magyar nationalities, particularly with regard to the use of non-Magyar languages. For the complete text of this law (1868: XLIV) see G. Gábor Kemény, ed., *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez Magyarországon a dualizmus korában, I: 1867–1892* (Budapest, 1952), pp. 162–67. For an English translation see Scotus Viator [R. W. Seton-Watson], *Racial Problems in Hungary* (London, 1908), pp. 429–33.

4. Members of that generation included Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, Sándor Ferenczi, György (Georg) Lukács, Béla Balázs, Arnold Hauser, Karl Mannheim, Karl and Michael Polányi, and Oszkár Jászi.

5. Because Hungary's lyricists had been traditionally the pride of the nation, the sterility of Hungarian poetry at this time was particularly conspicuous. According to the perceptive critic and literary historian Aladár Schöpflin (1872–1950), "the manner of our great classical poets became conventional in [*fin de siècle*] patriotic poetry. Generally, there was more patriotism . . . than poetry in this work." See *A magyar irodalom története a XX. században* (Budapest, 1937), p. 57. Yet despite the decline of Hungarian literary life, Zsolt Beöthy (professor of aesthetics and Hungarian literature at Budapest University) and other official ideologists clung resolutely to the belief that Western literature was inimical to the Magyar spirit.

6. By "counterculture" I do not mean an anarchistic life-style; the so-called American counterculture is essentially an *anticultural* movement. In contrast to its contemporary misuse, "counterculture" is the appropriate term for the work of the rebel Hungarian intelligentsia. In support of my contention that two cultures, one official and one unofficial, existed side by side in early twentieth-century Hungary, I should point out that until the revolutions of 1918–19, members of the counterculture were ignored by official cultural organizations and denied appointment to the faculty of Budapest University. The only book to treat the counterculture as a whole is Zoltán Horváth, *Magyar századforduló: A második reformnemzedék története (1896–1914)* (Budapest, 1961). For a slightly abridged German translation of this work see *Die Jahrhundertwende in Ungarn: Geschichte der zweiten Reformgeneration (1896–1914)*, trans. Géza Engl (Neuwied am Rhein, 1966).

7. Because sociology was not a recognized academic discipline at Budapest University, the editors of *Huszadik Század* organized a Sociological Society and a Free School to promote the scientific study of society.

tion in music led by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály.⁸ Appalled by the shallowness of contemporary composition and convinced that gypsy music (to which the gentry was addicted) was not the true expression of the Magyar folk, these scholar-composers collected authentic folk songs and integrated them into consciously modern compositions, transforming local dialects into a universal musical language.⁹

In art, two antiestablishment groups, the "Circle of Hungarian Impressionists and Naturalists" and "The Eight," succeeded in their efforts to dispel the notion that painting must be representational and ideological and to introduce their countrymen to a broader range of artistic expression.¹⁰ The countercultural movement was strengthened further when the young György Lukács, together with Marcell Benedek and Sándor Hevesi, founded the Thália Theater in 1904. Thália's aim, according to its by-laws, was "the presentation of those dramatic or other performable works of art, old and new, which are not included in the repertoire of Budapest's theaters, but which nevertheless possess great artistic or cultural value and interest."¹¹

The achievements of the counterculture, then, were undeniably formidable. Yet as Széchenyi had recognized in the nineteenth century, Hungary was not only culturally backward but socially and morally bankrupt. Soon the cultural revolt broadened into a determined attack on every institution of the existing order—political, social, and economic. This increasing radicalism was, however, neither inevitable nor fortuitous; rather, it was a response to a compelling summons to national regeneration from Endre Ady.

Ady was the greatest Hungarian poet of the twentieth century and the

8. These great composers consciously identified themselves with the broader cultural revival; Kodály, for example, frequently contributed music criticism to *Nyugat*.

9. The music establishment took a dim view of the Bartók-Kodály revolt and pointedly ignored the work of the young composers. Frustrated by this official antagonism, Bartók and Kodály formed a countercultural organization of composers and musicians to promote their "new music." Bartók recalled the experiment in an autobiographical essay he wrote in 1921: "Our latest orchestral works were performed imperfectly, without a sympathetic conductor or a capable orchestra. As the struggle [for the new music] intensified, several young musicians, including Kodály and myself, tried to establish a New Hungarian Music Association (in 1911). The principal aim of the venture was to organize an independent concert orchestra which would perform all music, traditional, modern, and even contemporary, in an honest manner." Béla Bartók, *Levelek, Fényképek, Kéziratok, Kották*, ed. János Demény (Budapest, 1948), p. 99.

10. Hungarian art reflected the official ideology no less than Hungarian literature and music. Paintings of the Holy Family and portrayals of glorious historical events proliferated. The Fine Arts Society attacked Western painters, in particular the French impressionists, for their "decadence," and applauded Hungarian painters like Gyula Benczur (1844–1920), a competent draftsman whose work was unambiguously representational. For a good introduction to the revival in art see Krisztina Passuth, *A Nyolcok festészete* (Budapest, 1967).

11. Cited in Ferenc Katona and Tibor Dénes, *A Thália története (1904–1908)* (Budapest, 1954), p. 5.

leading advocate of his country's national rebirth.¹² In his poems and essays he declared war on Hungary's backward social life and challenged his countrymen to create a new, morally regenerated society—a society governed by moral principles rather than by class privilege. He celebrated ancient Hungarian virtues and rebellious Hungarian heroes, resurrecting a semimythological Hungary that was uncorrupted by the Roman Catholic Church and a decadent nobility. He did this in order to create in Hungarians a belief in the *possibility* of a new Hungary. "A great Hungary has existed," he seemed to say, "and therefore can exist again."

An entire generation of Hungarian intellectuals acknowledged Ady's spiritual authority, because he succeeded so completely in identifying himself with Hungary's historical experience. His personal joys and sorrows, his successes and failures, his strengths and weaknesses—all were those of Hungary, refracted through the prism of a poetic sensibility. As the poet's friend Oszkár Jászi prophetically observed in 1914: "Just as Petőfi, more clearly than Kossuth or any other political leader, symbolizes the entire range of sentiment and the objectives of the generation of 1848's revolutionary Magyarism, so the future historian will study Ady if he is seeking to understand the great spiritual crisis of twentieth-century Hungary."¹³ Indeed, to understand Ady is to understand the hope of national regeneration that animated Hungarian intellectual life during the years from the turn of the century to the end of the First World War.

Endre Ady was born November 22, 1877, in the ethnically mixed town of Érmindszent at the gateway to Transylvania.¹⁴ His father, Lőrinc, was the

12. The literature on Ady is enormous, but almost exclusively in Hungarian. Only the most important attempts to assess the poet's impact on Hungarian life can be mentioned here. Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* (Budapest, 1935), compares Ady unfavorably with István Tisza. Lajos Ady's *Ady Endre* (Budapest, 1923) is a memoir by Ady's conservative brother. György Bölöni, *Az igazi Ady* (Paris, 1934), emphasizes the revolutionary character of Ady's life and work. József Révai's *Ady* (Budapest, 1945) is the standard Marxist study. In Western languages see György Lukács, "The Importance and Influence of Ady," *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 10, no. 35 (1969): 56–63; Joseph Reményi, "Endre Ady, Apocalyptic Poet, 1877–1919," in *Hungarian Writers and Literature*, ed. August J. Molnar (New Brunswick, N.J., 1964), pp. 193–212; and André Karátson, *Le Symbolisme en Hongrie* (Paris, 1969). The only major collection of Ady's poems in English is *Endre Ady, Poems*, trans. Anton N. Nyerger (Buffalo, 1969).

13. Oszkár Jászi, "Egy verseskönyvről," *Világ*, Feb. 15, 1914, p. 1. Oszkár Jászi (1875–1957) was the editor of *Huszadik Század* and an indefatigable crusader for the new Hungary. Perhaps Anna Lesznai, Jászi's first wife, has described most clearly the relationship between the poet and the sociologist: "For many years they worked with different means for precisely the same goal. They never conflicted with each other. They progressed on their respective paths like parallel lines which converge in infinity." See Anna Lesznai, *Keszdetben volt a kert*, 2 vols. (Budapest, 1966), 2:465. Sándor Petőfi (1823–49) was the great poet-martyr of Hungary's 1848–49 revolution.

14. Because Érmindszent's eight hundred inhabitants included Rumanians and Germans

scion of a venerable but impoverished noble family whose members had worked their own land since the fifteenth century. His mother, Mária Pásztor, was descended from a long line of Calvinist ministers. Throughout his life, Ady regarded his father's family as "shiftless" and uninspired, but insisted that his maternal forebears were restless, tormented, even demented people, destined to bring forth a genius.¹⁵

Following a quarrel with Érmindszent's Calvinist authorities, Lőrinc Ady withdrew his son from the Calvinist elementary school and enrolled him in a Roman Catholic school to prepare for studies at the Piarist gymnasium at near-by Nagykároly. It was a fateful decision, for the elementary school's (and later the gymnasium's) spartan regimen and ultraconservatism weighed heavily on Ady's adventurous and incurably iconoclastic spirit. As a result of his school experiences, he developed an abiding hatred of Roman Catholic Christianity and a desire to taste life's forbidden fruits. His hopes of a less restrictive existence soared when, in 1892, his parents decided to send him to the Calvinist college at Zilah.

Although he compiled a creditable academic record at Zilah, Ady had little interest in formal studies. When he was not exercising his newly acquired freedom to drink and pursue women, he devoted most of his time and energy to editing a student newspaper; for he loved the excitement of the editorial office and reveled in the opportunities for self-expression that journalism afforded. He also began to write verse and was encouraged when his favorite teacher, the editor of a local paper, published a number of his poems. Henceforth, Ady never doubted his calling. A few years later he wrote: "What I am, I am because of those four years at Zilah. I cannot be any different. Every minute of those four years was a determining minute. Every minute fatefully marked out my path in life."¹⁶

But despite Ady's love of newspaper work and poetry, he enrolled in the law school at Debrecen in 1896 because his father had insisted that he prepare himself to be a county magistrate. After a year of carousing, he barely managed to pass his first year's examinations, and when the *Debrecen Morning News* offered him an editorial position, he eagerly accepted. On November 24, 1898, he wrote his mother to explain his decision to leave school: "I am twenty-one years old. I want to live and I must therefore lay my plans. I don't know why, but even in my childhood I judged men and events differently from the way my friends did. I was never content with the prospect of living the

as well as Hungarians, Ady was introduced to Hungary's nationalities problem early in life.

15. Endre Ady, *Költészet és forradalom* (cited hereafter as *KF*), ed. József Varga (Budapest, 1969), pp. 178–79. For this volume, Varga collected Ady's most important essays and articles.

16. Endre Ady, *Összes prózai művei*, vol. 4, ed. Gyula Földessy and István Király (Budapest, 1964), p. 182.

peaceful, undisturbed life of a simple magistrate or a chief constable. Oh, I always needed excitement, fame, and glory, for which there are no substitutes."¹⁷

Ady gained valuable editorial experience in Debrecen, where he performed every task from proofreader to lead-article writer. He also found time to write poetry and, in 1899, published a book of verse, which was of very uneven quality and went unnoticed by the critics. Ady's life-style, however, did not go unnoticed; his insatiable appetite for alcohol and women scandalized city burghers and embarrassed his friends. Soon depressed by Debrecen's small-town atmosphere, Ady accepted an editorial position in the more sophisticated city of Nagyvárád in January 1900.

After little more than a year in Nagyvárád, Ady became coeditor of the *Nagyvárád Journal*. While continuing to live a dissolute personal life, he launched an outspoken attack on Hungarian society, as if to proclaim that social and economic oppression were more authentic moral issues than drinking and wenching: "We believe and proclaim that contemporary social relationships are untenable. We believe and proclaim that Hungarian society . . . is underdeveloped, uncultured, superstitious, and sick. We believe and proclaim that almost every social relationship is inauthentic and dangerous. We believe and proclaim that in contemporary Hungarian society everything belongs to the priestly and worldly princes: they hold the millions of citizens in bondage to superstitious traditions. We believe and proclaim that the walls of militarism, clericalism, and feudalism must be leveled to the ground if we wish to live."¹⁸

At the height of Ady's campaign against official Hungary he contracted syphilis.¹⁹ The disease was then very difficult to treat (antibiotics were unknown), and Ady was to suffer for more than fifteen years from its degenerative effects before he finally succumbed. Yet his illness, precisely because it was so terrible in its demands, was of critical importance in Ady's transformation from a mediocre lyricist to Hungary's greatest poet. His physical disability served as a creative stimulus; constantly reminded of his own mortality, the poet concentrated on such universal themes as life and death, love and hatred, joy and sorrow, good and evil. Most important, he began to identify his personal tragedy with that of his country and to seek his own salvation in the struggle for Hungary's national regeneration.

This total identification with Hungary is the interpretive key to Ady's lifework. Yet, his illness might well have driven him to suicide rather than to

17. Endre Ady, *Válogatott levelei*, ed. György Belia (Budapest, 1956), p. 36.

18. Endre Ady, *A fekete lobogó*, ed. Gyula Földessy and István Király (Budapest, 1952), pp. 23–24.

19. Ady re-created the surrounding circumstances imaginatively in a short story entitled "Rozália Mihályi's Kiss." Endre Ady, *Összes novellái*, ed. Endre Bustya (Budapest, 1961), pp. 841–48.

creative genius, had it not been for Adél Brüll (Mrs. Ödön Diósy), the remarkable woman who was the great love of the poet's life. The daughter of a well-to-do Jewish family of Nagyvárad, Mrs. Diósy and her husband had lived in Paris for three years when, impressed by Ady's articles in the *Nagyvárad Journal*, she introduced herself to him on a visit to her family's home in 1903. She and Ady became lovers immediately, and he went with her to Paris in 1904.

In Paris, Mrs. Diósy introduced Ady to the latest currents in French cultural life. He was particularly fascinated by symbolist poetry and read eagerly the works of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Verlaine.²⁰ But although Ady recognized the poetic possibilities of symbols, he never became a mere epigone of the symbolists, because he did not approve of their predilection for unattached and hopelessly esoteric symbols. Rather, he believed that a symbol should be chosen for its vivid suggestion of a particular reality. Nor did Ady agree with the symbolists' emphasis on their unique personal feelings. These, he was convinced, could only be significant if they symbolized more general human experiences.

While earning a living as a foreign correspondent for several Budapest dailies, Ady began to experiment with the use of symbols in his poetry. Paris became a symbol of progress and culture,²¹ and "Léda" (Adél spelled backward and, in Greek mythology, Zeus's lover) became the symbol of the eternal woman. Most important, Ady began to use his own life as a symbol of the tragedies and strivings of the Hungarian people. Increasingly his poetry became autobiographical, almost self-obsessed. Yet for Ady self-revelation was always a means of awakening his countrymen to a fuller awareness of what it meant to be Hungarian.

At the threshold of a major poetic contribution, Ady experienced the first serious effects of his illness and sank into deep depression. But "Léda" (as Hungarian writers invariably refer to her) cared for him in her own apartment and encouraged him to continue his writing. When Ady's condition began to improve, he returned to Hungary (in January 1905) to take a position on the editorial staff of the *Budapest Journal*, a forum for young radical intellectuals, especially those of Jewish descent.

During the year and a half before he returned to Paris in June 1906, Ady wrote 340 signed and 100 unsigned articles for the *Budapest Journal* in addition to 87 poems and 71 novellas.²² But more impressive than the quantity was the

20. Bölöni, *Az igazi Ady*, p. 96.

21. Sándor Sík, *Gárdonyi, Ady, Prohászka: Lélek és forma a századforduló irodalmában* (Budapest, n.d.), p. 152; István Király, *Ady Endre*, 2 vols. (Budapest, 1970), 1:239.

22. József Varga, *Ady Endre: Pályakép-vázlat* (Budapest, 1966), p. 576.

unusually high quality of Ady's writing. In February 1906 he published his third collection of verse, *Új versek (New Verses)*, and, literally overnight, became a national celebrity and the voice of national regeneration.

"I am the son of Gog and Magog," Ady declared in the first of his *New Verses*, and as heir of the Magyars' legendary forebears, he claimed the right to speak for his people:

I came on Verecke's famous path,
Strains of ancient Magyar songs ringing in my ears,
May I at Dévény break the spell
With new songs for new times?²³

Such "new songs," Ady contended, would also be ancient songs, for the courage and spirit of the proto-Magyars would invigorate the progressive Western ideas of which he sang. With this assertion, Ady boldly challenged the Hungarian gentry on their own ideological ground. He, not they, was the true Magyar, the incarnation of that conquering people's noble traditions.²⁴ He, not they, possessed the authority to command the Magyar people, and he would exercise that authority to call them back to the ancient paganism that was the source of those traditions.

In the most powerful poetic cycle of the *New Verses*, "On the Magyar Wasteland," Ady compressed into a verbal picture the longing for a new Hungary that became the hallmark of his life. Introducing himself as "the poet of the Hortobágy,"²⁵ Ady wrote of his tortured soul and his fascination with wine, women, and death. In any other region of the world, he maintained, he would have been a singer of sacred songs, but in barren Hungary he could only utter curses (*ÖV*, p. 29). The poet had come to the banks of the Tisza,²⁶ from the banks of the Ganges (the presumed original homeland of the ancient Magyars), and his pagan soul, once proud and strong, had been tethered and then destroyed by evangelists, philosophers, and would-be Christs. That was what

23. Endre Ady, *Összes versei* (cited hereafter as *ÖV*), ed. Gyula Földessy (Budapest, 1967), p. 7. When the Hungarians occupied their present homeland in 896, they entered the territory by way of the Verecke Pass through the Carpathians. Dévény was Hungary's westernmost frontier township at the turn of the century.

24. The gentry castigated as "un-Magyar" any idea or activity that might undermine their social and political supremacy. For a list of "un-Magyar" ideas and activities compiled by a leading member of the counterculture see Ignóty, *Válogatott írásai*, selected by Aladár Komlós (Budapest, 1969), pp. 617-18.

25. The "Hortobágy" is the most celebrated and most representative region of the Great Hungarian Plain (*Alföld*). It is regarded by Hungarians as the heart of their homeland.

26. By the end of the nineteenth century the Tisza River (often called the "Magyar River" because it ran its course almost completely within Hungary's borders) had become a symbol of official Hungary's provincialism and backwardness. Király, *Ady Endre*, 1:176-77.

had happened to him at the “cemetery of souls.” That was life “on the Magyar wasteland” (*ÖV*, pp. 32, 34–35, 39).

The poet of the Hortobágy symbolized the Magyar people, conquering nomads from the Asian steppes who had ultimately settled on the Great Central European Plains. Too soon, Ady cried, these “peasant Apollos” (*ÖV*, p. 34) had been “civilized,” converted to Christianity,²⁷ and systematically stripped of their manhood. Like the ancient Romans, the Magyars had entered an era of decline (*KF*, pp. 29–30), their noble and liberal spirit crushed by Catholic magnates and a cynical ruling class of “Magyarized” Germans (*KF*, p. 173).²⁸ The Magyar soul no longer revealed itself in the fierce countenance of Árpád the conqueror, but in the cowardly face of István Werbőczy.²⁹

While members of the inchoate counterculture greeted the appearance of Ady’s *New Verses* with unrestrained praise and enthusiasm, defenders of the official culture recoiled in horror. The *Zilah Independent News*, for example, informed its readers, “That literary current of which Mr. Ady is a ‘mature representative’ is worthless and perverse, for it corrupts the soul of the high-minded.”³⁰ Perceiving a more sinister intent, the *Pest News* published a series of articles that accused Ady of fomenting social and political unrest. In his famous reply, Ady defiantly acknowledged the truth of the accusation: “I believe and proclaim that the revolutionary regeneration of Hungary is inevitable. The wondrous and holy tempest has already been heralded by sacred gulls. In politics and society there have been as yet only shouts of discontent, but in literature, art, and science the lightning bolts of certainty have already been seen” (*KF*, p. 152).

In his next two volumes of poetry, *Vér és arany* (*Blood and Gold*, 1907) and *Az Illés szekeerén* (*On Elijah’s Chariot*, 1908), Ady intensified his attack on official Hungary:

We wheel above the Lake of Death—
Fair, bold, and haughty birds;
And lazy, loathsome, hungry fish
With serpent heads emerge.
This reeking lake, this sombre curse
They give the name of Hungary.

27. In 1000 or 1001 King István I made Christianity the official religion of Hungary. For his acceptance and defense of the faith, István was canonized in 1083.

28. Many of official Hungary’s most militant “Magyarizers” were ethnically of German lineage.

29. Árpád (d. 907), the founder of Hungary’s first dynasty, united the nomadic Magyar tribes and led them into their European homeland. Werbőczy (1458–1541) compiled the *Tripartitum*, a codification of Hungarian common law (never formally promulgated, but universally regarded as authoritative) that proclaimed the complete legal equality of all nobles and reaffirmed the servitude of the peasantry.

30. Cited in Erzsébet Vezér, *Ady Endre, Arcok és vallomások* (Budapest, 1971), p. 86.

And all is vain, we all are drawn
Into the lake below.
In vain our love, our bursts of flame,
Our goodness, brain, and soul,
For we will never win or own
This Lake of Death, this Hungary.³¹

Those heroes of the past who had tried to redeem the Magyar people had suffered the fate of the Christ:

More bitter are their tears,
Different the griefs that try them.
A thousand times Messiahs
Are the Magyar Messiahs.

A thousand times they perish,
Unblest their crucifixion,
For vain was their affliction,
Oh, vain was their affliction.³²

To Ady, the quintessential "Magyar Messiah" was György Dózsa.³³ While the Magyar gentry had remade in their own image such national heroes as Kossuth and Petőfi, they had been unable to "reinterpret" Dózsa's life. Therefore, Ady believed that Dózsa's name would serve as a source of inspiration and a constant reminder of the seriousness of the struggle for a new Hungary (*KF*, pp. 141–43). On the four hundredth anniversary of Dózsa's jacquerie, Ady wrote his most impassioned paean to the great rebel's memory:

This land has flared in revolution once,
A revolution true and sworn,
Making a world of order,
And Dózsa
The hero of that haughty dawn,
Refused to bargain with the people's fate.

This land has known a little hope but once,
A hope, though small, of fire and blood.
We need a newer Dózsa.
He comes,
But, oh, I fear I shall not see him,
Or you, my brothers brooding on your lot.³⁴

31. Ady, *Poems*, trans. Nyerges, p. 172 (reprinted by permission of the translator).

32. *Ibid.*, p. 110. I have modified Nyerges's translation.

33. György Dózsa (1475–1514), a Szekler nobleman and professional soldier, led the most serious peasant rebellion in Hungary's history. Appointed in 1514 to organize a crusade against the Turks, he gathered a great peasant army. But the peasants hated the Magyar landlords more than they hated the Turks, and under Dózsa's able leadership they began a war of extermination against the nobility. For a time the rebels even threatened to take Buda. Finally, with the aid of foreign mercenaries, the authorities put down the revolt and took savage reprisals against Dózsa and his followers.

34. Ady, *Poems*, trans. Nyerges, p. 418 (reprinted by permission of the translator).

Ady concluded that if there were to be a new Dózsa and a new Hungary, *he* would have to rekindle the flame of hope in the hearts of his countrymen by providing them with a vision of the redeemed nation.³⁵ For that reason, the greatest number of his poems describe a semimythological “Endre Ady,” the symbol of Hungary regenerated. This mythological “Ady” possessed those attributes which, according to his creator, would necessarily define the new Hungary. In order to catch a glimpse of that Hungary, Magyars had only to view the symbolic “Ady.”³⁶

What manner of man, then, was this “Endre Ady”? Above all, he was a pagan, the antithesis of official Hungary’s Christian ideal. Ever since his years at the Piarist gymnasium at Nagykaroly, Ady had been sympathetic with those nineteenth-century thinkers who had led the frontal assault on Christianity. He was particularly impressed by Nietzsche, because the German had set new gods in place of the old.³⁷ He had given fresh impetus to the struggle of pagan-Hellenic gods against the Christian-Jewish God, a struggle that Ady believed would decide the destiny of millions of men.³⁸ Ady was convinced that a pagan victory was essential to Hungary’s salvation, for only then would the Magyars reclaim their ancient heroism and disavow their present-day cowardice (*ÖV*, p. 133). The symbolic “Ady” boasted of his “beautiful pagan soul” and celebrated a Dionysian existence of wine, women, and song. He described himself as a “pagan priest” and an “anti-Christ” (*ÖV*, pp. 97, 40, 341–42), deaf to the curses of the present and confident that he would be vindicated when paganism repaired the spiritual and social damage done by Christianity.³⁹

The “god” of Ady’s pagan faith was “Life, the Jehovah of Jehovahs” (*ÖV*, p. 345). Even before he contracted syphilis, Ady had insisted that nothing living should ever be denied (*Az új Hellász*, p. 48). Later, he maintained that it was a “sin not to love life,” because life was beautiful and profoundly good:

Oh, my life,
How deeply I love thee,
My life, oh my life,
Thou art the most lovely:
Life of lives.⁴⁰

35. Erzsébet Vezér, “Ismeretlen Ady-cikk: Az 1909-es Pester Lloydban,” *Magyar Nemzet*, Jan. 27, 1966, p. 4.

36. Consider the titles of two of Ady’s poetry collections: *I Would Like To Be Loved* (*Szeretném ha szeretnének*, 1909), and *Who Has Seen Me?* (*Ki látott engem?*, 1914).

37. Endre Ady, “Nietzsche és Zarathustra,” *Budapesti Napló*, Mar. 5, 1908, p. 2.

38. Endre Ády, *Az új Hellász* (Budapest, 1920), pp. 47–48.

39. Endre Ady, “Távol a csatatértől: Madarak és pogányok,” *Világ*, Aug. 15, 1915, p. 15.

40. Ady, *ÖV*, pp. 345, 920, 894, 529.

As Mihály Babits, the gifted poet and critic, once wrote, Ady was "the prophet of his own ecstatic life. . . . He loved culture, progress, and freedom, everything that can enrich, color, and invigorate Life. He hated oppression, poverty, and backwardness, everything that impedes or makes impossible an intensification of life."⁴¹ The presence in Hungary of Christianity's life-destroying forces, Ady argued in 1910, necessitated a revolution: "There has scarcely ever been an eruptive revolution in Hungary and perhaps this is the country's most terrible curse, for surely the revolution means the fullest Life" (*KF*, p. 237).

The symbolic "Ady" preached "Magyarism" just as forcefully as he preached paganism, but his Magyarism was the antithesis of the chauvinistic, obscurantist Magyarism that was the hallmark of the official ideology.⁴² He insisted that Hungary's predatory gentry had perverted the primal, unspoiled Magyarism that filled his soul (*ÖV*, pp. 191, 503–4), and he denounced official accusations that he (and the new Hungary that he symbolized) was "un-Magyar":

I AM NOT A MAGYAR?

The ancient Orient dreamed him
 As I am—
 Heroic, sombre, proudly extreme,
 Ruthless, but one who bleeds
 Pale at a thought.
 The ancient Orient dreamed him
 Bold and youthful,
 A noble, eternally big child;
 Sun-spirited, thirsty, melancholy.
 A restless warrior;
 The pain-fraught tested masterpiece
 Of a true unhappy god,
 The child of the Sun, a Magyar.
 (And for the drowsy and dirty,
 For the mongrel and gaudy,
 For the half-alive and frothy-mouthed,
 For the Magyarasters and fog-eaters,
 For the Hungarians come from Schwabs,⁴³
 I am not a Magyar?)⁴⁴

Ady attempted to define his Magyarism by celebrating the lives and exploits of authentic Magyar heroes. György Dózsa was, as we have seen,

41. Mihály Babits, "Tanulmány Adyról," *Nyugat*, 13 (1920): 140.

42. The official ideology became even more explicit during the interwar years. Admiral Horthy was said to rule over "Christian-National" Hungary.

43. A reference to the German ethnic origin of many of the proponents of Magyarization.

44. Ady, *Poems*, trans. Nyerges, p. 112 (reprinted by permission of the translator).

the most important of these heroes, but there were others. The *kurucok*⁴⁵ who fought with Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676–1735) against the Habsburgs in the early eighteenth century were spiritual children worthy of Dózsa (*ÖV*, pp. 668–69, 779–81, 945–46, 948). Mihály Táncsics (1799–1884), the “peasant Tribune” who advocated agrarian revolution in 1848, was a true “saint,” a man of great moral courage (p. 209). Even more important for Ady were the poets Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773–1805) and Sándor Petőfi. Of Csokonai, the leading poet of the Hungarian Enlightenment and an opponent of the ancien régime,⁴⁶ Ady wrote: “How Magyar you were, how Magyar. Oh, painfully Magyar.” Csokonai was truly Magyar, according to Ady, because he had revitalized the Magyar language: “He sang, and because his soul was rich and variegated, he tightened, tempered, enriched, and adorned the impoverished Magyar language and extended its indefinite and narrow boundaries. He was the most splendid language reformer, before whose memory everyone of us who clothes his thoughts and emotions in Magyar words must kneel with thanksgiving” (*KF*, p. 84). Ady proposed to further Csokonai’s work, for, as he once observed, the language of Budapest had become so promiscuous that any Magyar returning to the capital after a three-year absence would be unable to order bread and wine (*KF*, p. 272). The proto-Magyar language had degenerated into pseudo-Magyar—colorless, overly flexible, and diluted by a myriad of foreign words and expressions.

Ady attributed great importance to language not only because he was a poet, but also because he was convinced that words expressed most clearly a people’s essential character and primal experience. Thus for him linguistic revival was more than a literary responsibility; it was a sacred calling. (“Laugh if you will,” Ady once wrote, “language is life and holiness, even deity.”⁴⁷) Faithful to that calling, Ady forced the Magyar language to yield new meanings, and, in turn, he learned from it: “The word is opium for me,/From it I can breathe pagan secrets” (*ÖV*, p. 97). If, Ady reasoned, his Magyarizer opponents could not understand his poetry, they were admitting their ignorance of the proto-Magyar language and spirit that were central to his work.

Sándor Petőfi’s Magyarism was politically more radical than Csokonai’s. Although official Hungary repeatedly invoked Petőfi’s name,⁴⁸ Ady insisted

45. From the Latin *crux*—*crucifer* (crusader). In Hungary, *kuruc* meant “rebel,” because Dózsa’s “crusaders” had rebelled against the nobility.

46. For an excellent study of Csokonai and his era see George Barany, “Hoping Against Hope: The Enlightened Age in Hungary,” *American Historical Review*, 76, no. 2 (1971): 319–57.

47. Endre Ady, *As irodalomról*, ed. József Varga and Erzsébet Vezér (Budapest, 1961), p. 342.

48. In 1899 Ady wrote: “Those lords who now proudly ‘remember,’ who now make good use of the great Petőfi’s human capital, scorned the poor exalted man, the pale,

that the romantic poet "never compromised" with reaction (*KF*, pp. 245–72). To bolster his argument Ady published a selection of Petőfi's most revolutionary verses under the title *Petőfi the Revolutionary (A forradalmár Petőfi)*, 1910). In the introduction he proclaimed, "Petőfi does not belong to those who have been living off his good name since 1849, but to us who desire and fight for change, for regeneration, for revolution in Hungary" (*Az irodalomról*, p. 278).

For Ady the true Magyarism of these individual heroes was most completely exemplified by the historical experience of an entire region—Transylvania. From Paris, where he was able to gain new perspectives on his native land, Ady wrote in December 1904: "For some time now I have had a growing conviction . . . that only a resurrection of the spirit of Transylvania can make something of us modern, undistinguished Magyars. Only in Transylvania has a worthy, Magyar society developed. An authentic Magyarism has come only out of the bloody, mortal misery that the Turks and Germans inflicted on Transylvania. . . . Transylvania often experienced destitution and the shedding of blood, yet it *lived*; at times it succeeded in living its own life. Hence, any *possible* Magyar culture can be established only on Transylvanian foundations. We will only have a society, a literature, an art, an authentic and distinct Magyar life, if we endorse the Transylvanian legacy" (*KF*, p. 56).

Transylvania had certainly played an anomalous and independent role in the history of Hungary. When the Hungarian crown fell to the Habsburgs in 1526, the Transylvanian voivode, János Zápolyai, successfully asserted his independence. Pursuing a skillful policy of playing Turk against German, he and his successors were able to maintain their independence until the end of the seventeenth century, when Transylvania was united with Hungary proper. Indeed, during the century and a half of Turkish occupation that followed the fall of Buda to Suleiman the Magnificent (1541), Transylvania *was* Hungary.

Moreover, Transylvania was the "classical homeland of religious liberalism."⁴⁰ While most of Europe was engaging in fratricidal wars of religion, a Transylvanian Diet of 1572 recognized the Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and even Unitarian creeds as "established religions," whose followers were to enjoy complete freedom of worship and equal political rights. If the Orthodox faith of the Vlachs (Rumanians) was only "tolerated" (and thus not admitted to political equality), the settlement was nonetheless an important landmark in the history of European religious liberty. Transylvania's religious liberalism, Ady contended, was most perfectly represented by its Calvinist Church. Recalling the long line of ministers in his mother's family, he was persuaded that

impoverished poet, while he lived." *Válogatott cikkei és tanulmányai*, ed. Gyula Földessy (Budapest, 1954), p. 15.

49. Endre Ady, "Vallás és demokrácia," *Világ*, June 29, 1916, p. 9.

Calvinism had rediscovered the original, radical message of Christ. Hence, while Ady always associated Roman Catholicism with Magyar chauvinism, he maintained that true Magyar Protestantism (Transylvanian Calvinism) was “democratic, progressive, courageous, and humane.”

If Transylvania was historically the most authentically Magyar region in Hungary, it was also, according to Ady, the most international; for the Transylvanian people were the only Hungarians, except the Hungarian Jews, who had been educated in the European tradition and spirit. Their very existence was a constant reminder that Hungary would have to choose between a dead official culture and a truly European culture (*KF*, pp. 212, 215).

Thus besides commitment to traditions of independence and religious liberalism, Ady's identification of Transylvania as the true receptacle of Magyar culture and values meant a commitment to internationalism.⁵⁰ Ady was careful, however, to distinguish between “internationalism” and “cosmopolitanism,”⁵¹ because he recognized that the cosmopolitan, by cutting himself off from his native cultural roots, could never create great art. Such a man would be condemned to a sophisticated superficiality that could win him only ephemeral notoriety. The poet was profoundly aware that the internationalist, while never dissociating himself from his national heritage (the source of artistic creation), always respected the dignity and essential worth of peoples other than his own. He never attempted to take from them what he himself refused to surrender—loyalty to his own historical and cultural heritage.

Because of his dedication to internationalism and to “social regeneration” (*KF*, p. 150), Ady was attracted naturally to socialism. A frequent contributor to the socialist daily *Népszava* (*Voice of the People*), Ady found natural comrades in the socialist camp (*KF*, p. 302). As an observer of French political and intellectual life, he had been particularly impressed by the moral authority of Jean Jaurès and fascinated by the efforts of socially concerned writers such as Émile Zola and Anatole France to make literature the harbinger of social transformation. “Now or never,” he wrote in 1909, “we must cut ourselves loose [from the old order]. We will see if literature really presages and precedes social and political regeneration” (*KF*, p. 226).

In several occasional poems that appeared in *Népszava*, Ady attempted to place literature in more immediate relation to political events in order to hasten the coming of a new Hungary (see especially *ÖV*, pp. 215–16, 631–32,

50. To Ady, nationalism was Hungary's and Europe's most terrifying nightmare, the source of incalculable human misery: “How much historical perfidy there has been because of it; peoples set against peoples, enlightenment extinguished, liberty trampled upon. One wonders how mankind has come as far as it has.” *Összes prózai művei*, vol. 6, ed. Gyula Földessy and István Király (Budapest, 1966), p. 117.

51. Endre Ady, *Jóslások Magyarországról: Tanulmányok és jegyzetek a magyar sorskérdésekről*, ed. Géza Féja (Budapest, [1936]), p. 145.

and 634–35). Replying to friendly critics who feared that such poems signaled a prostitution of his genius, Ady declared that direct intervention in political battles was as morally incumbent upon him as charity was upon millionaires (*KF*, pp. 298–99).

Yet despite Ady's defense of these occasional political verses, they were not characteristic of his poetry. He generally reserved his criticism of particular social and political evils for his newspaper articles, which were always perceptive and often savagely eloquent. In his poems and his most important essays, Ady's mission, as we have seen, was to summon his countrymen to national regeneration and to present them with a vision of the new Hungary. His "socialism" must be viewed in this light. Ady never joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and was not interested in explicit socialist programs. Rather, he responded to socialism's uncompromising spirit of opposition to the old order and its "religion" of humanity. Ady became a "socialist" for precisely the same reason that he gave for Anatole France's conversion: because he had discovered in socialism a new religion, one which commanded men to believe in humanity and life on earth (*KF*, p. 134). Thus the symbolic "Ady's" socialism, as well as his paganism, Magyarism, and internationalism, defined the essence of a future, regenerated Hungary.

If Ady was twentieth-century Hungary's greatest poet, he was also her most perplexing (he has been claimed by both revolutionaries and conservatives); for at the very heart of his work lay a profound ambivalence. Although purportedly based on a pagan ethic, his vision of a new Hungary was not as divorced from Christian principles as Ady believed it to be. His attacks on Christianity, when carefully examined, generally turn out instead to be attacks on individual Christians who had failed to honor their profession of faith. While he detested the social and political conservatism of Hungary's Roman Catholic Church, he praised the liberal traditions of Transylvanian Calvinism. And if he called himself the "anti-Christ," he believed that he suffered like Christ for the sake of the Hungarian people. The favorite target of official Hungary's caricaturists and character assassins, Ady was misunderstood and criticized even by members of the counterculture, including those associated with *Nyugat*.

Ady was a major contributor and sometime-editor of *Nyugat* from its earliest days, and his name came to be closely associated with the journal. Yet, as Miksa Fenyő, one of *Nyugat*'s editors, later recalled, Ady "did not feel that *Nyugat* was an adequate expression of his character."⁵² Indeed, the journal could not have satisfied Ady, because its principal concern was for the autonomy of literature.⁵³ Its editors were "not prophets, but writers, who

52. Miksa Fenyő, *Följegyzések a 'Nyugat' folyóiratról és környékéről* (n.p., 1960), p. 65.

53. Schöpflin, *A magyar irodalom története*, p. 127.

esteem the mode of expression above everything else.”⁵⁴ Literary renewal, not national regeneration, was *Nyugat*'s aim, and Ady was therefore always something of an outsider. He once told Lajos Hatvany, his friend and Maecenas, that he could not write everything he wished in the journal, “because they censor me there as well.”⁵⁵ The poet always submitted his most obviously political verses and articles to *Népszava*, *Huszdik Század*, or the radical *Renaissance*.⁵⁶

The tendency of the *Nyugat* writers and editors to accept every new current in Western literature was another stumbling block for Ady. Although, as we have seen, he learned from the work of French poets such as Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Rimbaud, he was always careful to associate himself most unequivocally with the Magyar poetic tradition. In order, therefore, to dissociate himself from what he considered to be *Nyugat*'s excessive modernism, Ady published an article entitled “The Duk-Duk Affair” in the November 15, 1908, number of *Új Idők* (*New Times*), a forum for the literary establishment. In that remarkable and often misunderstood piece, the poet wrote:

I am not the emissary, president, or even a member of any kind of secret society. I have nothing in common with the so-called Hungarian modernists, and my alleged literary revolt is not a revolt. Crafty little men may hold on to me because I am forbearing and a bit impractical, but I am not to blame. In Melanesia there is a society called the Duk-Duk, a kind of primeval freemasonry in which the leader is seldom aware that he is the leader. Perhaps I may be such a leader at the same time that I, more than any other man, feel greatest fellowship with the time-honored Magyars who are of my breed. . . . I know nothing of the revolution that allegedly rages in my name. I do not regard myself as more modern than Balassa,⁵⁷ Csokonai, or Petőfi. . . . I do not acknowledge any common interest or fate with those who have neglected to learn Magyar. I have nothing to do with those who want to alter Magyar literature on the basis of having read some German books in cheap editions.⁵⁸

Reacting immediately to “Duk-Duk,” the *Nyugat* writers raised the cry of perfidious betrayal. Lajos Hatvany wrote privately to Ady: “No one, even

54. Lesznai, *Kezdetben volt a kert*, 2:251.

55. Cited in Varga, *Ady Endre*, p. 266.

56. *Renaissance* was a short-lived journal (1910–11) that was consciously designed to serve the national regeneration movement, as *Nyugat* served the counterculture. With Ady, Oszkár Jászi, and György Lukács as major contributors, the journal exercised considerable influence on the Hungarian intelligentsia before it expired because of a lack of funds.

57. Bálint Balassa (1854–94) was the first Hungarian lyric poet of European standing. A student of Western humanist literature, Balassa was inspired principally by Magyar folk poetry.

58. Ady, *KF*, p. 217.

if he be completely blind, can fail to see that your article is directed in the most ruthless manner possible against those who with the greatest sincerity and selflessness have written good things about you. . . . I shall never again in my life write a line about you. . . .⁵⁹ I cannot now withdraw two of my articles . . . which praise your merits. In these papers I present you as a revolutionary, [obviously] against your wish."⁶⁰ Gyula Juhász (1883–1937), himself a gifted poet, publicly lamented the “Duk-Duk affair” in an article that appeared in *Independent Hungary* on November 22. In a reply published in the same paper four days later Ady refused to ask anyone’s pardon, proudly boasting of the uniqueness and authenticity of his Magyar soul: “I never wanted to be anything other . . . than a new authentic man, Endre Ady.”⁶¹

The quarrel over Duk-Duk soon abated, and a reconciliation was effected between the poet and the journal, for in the war against official Hungary, each needed the other. But although Ady re-established friendly relations with *Nyugat*, he recognized that communion could never be fully restored. The pain of that recognition, like all of Ady’s personal tribulations, fired his poetic imagination. Increasingly he viewed himself as a “Magyar Messiah,” misunderstood and denied even by his own followers.

The evidence for Ady’s semiconscious identification with Christ is not, however, restricted to the poet’s awareness of his self-sacrifice and of his responsibility to preach national regeneration. He had always been fascinated by the person of Christ. Of course, he was not attracted by the Christ of the Church, but by a “good, new Jesus” (*KF*, p. 302):

This is the holy idea—a Jesus who was or may have been
The Christ and loved mankind.

.

He could be alive today. He is risen who is a Christ, a great,
Great Lord living justly in other form.

Walk among us, dear Man-God. It is spring, the weeds are
Growing, and the just man is rare.

You are as I pictured with a heart that is slightly ableed.
And still, my ego heart is yours.⁶²

When Ady gazed at Christ the moralist, the man who associated with publicans and sinners and yet remained innocent, the lover of mankind, he saw himself.

59. Hatvany subsequently changed his mind. Indeed, he is best known for his voluminous writings on Ady.

60. Published in Ady, *Válogatott levelei*, pp. 212–13.

61. Ady, *KF*, p. 220. In a letter to Hatvany dated November 24–26, 1908, Ady wrote: “I am not a Bohemian. I am—how painful it is to write such a banality—Endre Ady” (*Válogatott levelei*, p. 223).

62. Ady, *Poems*, trans. Nyerges, p. 445 (reprinted by permission of the translator).

Ady's identification with Christ became more complete after the outbreak of the First World War. For the poet the war was an unmitigated disaster, both national and personal. István Tisza ruled Hungary with dictatorial power,⁶³ nationalism was rampant, and the specter of death and destruction stalked the land. Furthermore, Ady's syphilitic condition steadily worsened, and he was in and out of sanitariums. His chronic insomnia denied him needed rest, and he had barely enough money to live. Convinced that all hope for Hungary's national regeneration had ended at Sarajevo, he believed that he would soon experience his own Calvary.

It is unlikely that Ady would have lived out the war without his "Csinszka,"⁶⁴ Berta Boncza. Csinszka began writing to Ady in the fall of 1911, but the poet took little note of her until after he had broken off his relationship with Léda in 1912.⁶⁵ Although there were several lovers after Léda, Csinszka's earnest love and refreshing innocence moved Ady most deeply. He wrote to her often and soon proposed marriage. Ironically, Csinszka's father was a prominent figure in official circles and a close friend of Tisza's. He was therefore horrified to learn of his daughter's involvement with Tisza's archenemy. In a daring attempt to secure Boncza's blessing, Ady wrote to Tisza to ask him to use his good offices to promote the marriage. The poet received a curt reply from the minister president's secretary describing the time-consuming burdens of public office. In the end, however, Csinszka triumphed over her father's objections, and she and Ady were married in the spring of 1915.

Throughout most of the war, Ady and Csinszka lived at the Boncza family castle at Csucs in Transylvania and at the Ady family home at Érmindszent. "Far from the battlefield,"⁶⁶ the poet mourned the destruction of his hopes for Hungary's national regeneration:

Everything we believed in is lost,
Lost, lost;
Fortunate and happy
Is he who is unhappy only for himself.⁶⁷

63. Having identified himself as the symbol of the new Hungary, Ady chose Tisza (1861–1918), unquestionably Hungary's most powerful and talented political leader in the first two decades of the twentieth century, as the symbol of the old. The poet described this strong-willed man (and thus, the old Hungary) as "dreary and gaunt," "a savage, callous lunatic," and "a warmongering firebrand" (*As írodalomról*, p. 343; *ÖV*, p. 634).

64. Ady called her *csacsi* ("little silly"), then "Csacsika" or "Csacsinszka," and finally "Csinszka" (Bölöni, *As igazi Ady*, p. 290).

65. Léda had become less patient with her lover's flagrant infidelities. Ady, in turn, seemed to need to reassert his independence and self-sufficiency.

66. Ady wrote a series of newspaper articles under this title.

67. At such a time, according to Ady, those whose unhappiness derived solely from personal difficulties were truly fortunate. *ÖV*, p. 805.

In poetry and prose Ady protested the war, and like many other European intellectuals, he was repaid with vilification. He suffered many insults in silence, but was enraged by charges of disloyalty leveled at him by Jenő Rákosi (1842–1928), the ultranationalist leader of the prowar faction in Hungarian literary circles. “For a long time now,” Ady replied, “I have not wished to discuss literature with him [Rákosi], but when this old German [Rákosi was a Magyarized German] corrects and criticizes my Magyar patriotism—that is monstrous” (*KF*, p. 314).

In the fall of 1918 Csinszka brought her husband to their Budapest apartment. His health had deteriorated so much that he rarely left his room. He became more and more despondent as it became obvious that Hungary had lost the war and soon would be at the mercy of the victors. Knowing full well that cries of revenge were already in the air, Ady pleaded with his country's conquerors not to “ride roughshod over our poor and beautiful heart.” The Magyars were “woeful and ill-starred” people upon whom evil men had forced the war:

We were the earth's fool,
 Poor vitiated Magyars,
 And now you conquerors, come!
 Greetings to the victor.⁶⁸

But seeing no glimmer of hope and tortured by unbearable physical pain, Ady believed that his day of “crucifixion” was at hand. His identification with Christ was now complete, and before tearing his beloved Bible to shreds,⁶⁹ he wrote with trembling hand on the inside cover: “Eli, Eli lama sabachthani. October 23, 1918.”⁷⁰ Ady died the morning of January 27, 1919, and was buried two days later after a memorial service in front of the National Museum. The two principal forums of the counterculture, *Nyugat* and *Huszadik Század*, published special numbers in honor of the poet's life and work. Of all the eulogies, Oszkár Jászi's “Ady and the Hungarian Future” was the most insightful: “Ady was not a prophet simply because he castigated the numerous sins of . . . gentry society—politicians, publicists, and sociologists had done that more thoroughly—but because, with his new cadences, symbols, and accents, he forged a spiritual unity out of all those who [desired a new Hungary, but who] would never have been capable of uniting on the basis of economic interest, class affinity, or political conviction.”⁷¹

68. Ady, *ÖV*, pp. 949–50.

69. Ady read in his Hungarian translation of the Bible daily and was thoroughly familiar with the ancient book's stories and language.

70. Loránt Hegedüs, *Ady és Tisza* (Budapest, [1940]), p. 91. See Matt. 27:46: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

71. Oszkár Jászi, “Ady és a magyar jövő,” *Huszadik Század*, August 1919 (“Ady-szám”), p. 2.

Jászi's judgment was sustained by the fast-moving events of November 1918–August 1919. During those months two successive governments attempted to build a new Hungary from the ruins of the old: the democratic republic of Count Mihály Károlyi and the soviet republic of Béla Kun. Despite significant differences, both Károlyi and Kun sought to cover themselves with the mantle of Endre Ady.⁷²

72. On November 19, 1918, Károlyi appointed a delegation to deliver official governmental greetings to Ady, then mortally ill. Drafted by Lajos Hatvany, the document concluded: “. . . it is our earnest wish, Endre Ady, our brother, our friend, our dear Bandi [a familiar form of ‘Endre’], that as soon as you are well, you will be able to join us on that path which you first broke. Then we, your faithful followers, can proceed joyfully, as in bygone days, in your footsteps, always in your footsteps alone.” See Lajos Hatvany, *Ady*, 2 vols. (Budapest, 1959), 1:309. Kun had been tutored by Ady when both were students at Zilah and had acknowledged the poet's influence in his prewar journalistic articles. See Rudolf L. Tökés, *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic* (New York, 1967), p. 53, and Bölöni, *Az igazi Ady*, p. 175.