

1 Berlin 38 Germany  
Schopenhauerstr. 72  
April 14, 1966

Dear Professor Lukács:

Several years ago a friend of mine, Professor David Kettler, had the good fortune to talk to you at some length about various problems in connection with his study of the work of Karl Mannheim. I recall from his letters at that time that, among other things, he had alluded to my my kindred interest in your own career and writings

To my great regret now — and this I say apologetically — I did not heed his suggestion that I take the initiative of writing to you soon thereafter. My failure to do so, however, was not a matter of oversight or reluctance, much less of indifference. The fact is that my work was interrupted at the time partly by illness and the pressure of personal problems. More important still was my realization that I had <sup>seen</sup> virtually all pertinent source materials available in the United States without having come any the closer to a resolution of numerous problems of a biographic and historical nature of which one must necessarily take account in writing a meaningful study of your status in the tradition of Marxist thought. And as you have yourself so often urged, a purely analytic approach to the work of a Thinker, divorced from the problems which confront him in the actual world of conflicting forces, is quite likely to be a sterile undertaking.

So long, then, as I had to depend on printed sources in the United States, my work had come to a dead end — and this for reasons which are easy to explain. All your major works are readily available in America, but Hungarian history in general and the details of the Hungarian labor movement and the evolution of Hungarian thought and letters in particular are almost terra incognita in my country, and this reflects itself in the wholly inadequate holdings even in the

best of our libraries. The largest single collection of sources bearing on my research interest - the Nachlass of Professor Oscar Jaszi - is, unfortunately, still unavailable for research purposes, and will remain so for some years to come under the terms of his will. What is just as crucial is that many of the most elementary facts concerning your own career are hard to trace <sup>in print</sup> and become garbled in the hands of ~~the~~ otherwise knowledgeable people, as is evidenced by the correction of errors which you were prompted to make in your letter to Der Monat this month and the report of Mr. Bahr of his interview with you. That this also leaves the field open to exploitation by charlatans, such as Zitta, goes without saying.

All of which is to say that I saw no way out of the problem other than <sup>in</sup> seeking your personal help. I am aware that you are now quite preoccupied with your work on ethics, aware too that the biographic details of your career may strike you as an unnecessary diversion from time better spent. My only reason for asking your indulgence is that I have no other recourse in the matter. May I ask, then, whether I may come to see you for a few hours to discuss these unresolved research problems? I plan to be in Budapest in any case sometime during the middle of May and, if I may do so, would suggest the afternoon of Sunday, May 15 (say 2 P.M.) as a time for our meeting. But in this, I am at your disposal and should you find a somewhat earlier or later date and time more convenient, I can plan my schedule accordingly.

MTA FIL. INT.  
Lukács Arch.

Sincerely yours,  
Morris Watnick

1 Berlin 38, Germany  
Schopenhauerstr. 72

U44645-1542/20  
30 April, 1966

Dear Professor Lukács:

I was most gratified to learn from your reply to my letter that you plan to be in Budapest in mid-May and can spare the time to see me. I appreciate your willingness to do so all the more, considering your misgivings about the place I assign to Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein in the context of your later writings.

MTA FIL. III.  
Lukács Arch.

You are, of course, quite right in saying that the most scrupulously verified data do not per se preclude errors of judgment and evaluation of a kind to vitiate an investigator's view of the problem with which he is dealing. Nevertheless, this does not give me license to ignore "the facts" or slight the importance of tracking them down as best as I can, particularly when I think they have a vital bearing on my conclusions. If these conclusions then turn out to be seriously distorted, I can at least take a charitable view of <sup>my</sup> research.

scholarship even it is no substitute for the other ingredients required in the writing of a good book.

It is for this more modest purpose, then, that I ask your indulgence, though it will be my pleasure to hear anything else you may wish to add. And as you suggest, I will come with questions prepared in advance so as to facilitate communication.

Once again, my utmost thanks for your kindness.

MTA FIL. INT.  
Lukács Arch.

Sincerely yours,  
Morris Watnick

1 Berlin 38  
Schopenhauerstrasse 72  
May 25, 1966

Dear Professor Lukács

Much as it is difficult to do so adequately in a mere letter, I should like to offer my very warm thanks for the perseverance, the good humor, and the willing memory with which you allowed yourself to be subjected to some three hours of questioning when I had the pleasure of visiting you slightly more than a week ago. There is little I can do in return for all this except, perhaps, to assure you that what you told me will be taken into scrupulous account in anything I may write hereafter pertaining to the subject of our conversation. For the rest, I can only repeat my willingness to be of service to you when I return to the United States (July 24), should you want to procure any books without delay.

For what it may be worth to you more immediately, I have consulted my notes to discover that the volume to which I alluded but misdated, containing a brief account by you of your early readings (pp. 166-168), was published in Budapest in ~~1918~~ 1918 - not 1928 - under the title, KÖNYVEK KÖNYVE, edited by Béla Kohalmi.

If your patience has not been worn thin, I should like to submit for your reply a scattering of questions I could not pursue after the very many I had asked in the three hours we spent together. Again I apologize for their purely routine biographic character and hope you will find the time and endurance to answer them in whatever detail you deem appropriate:

(1) Considering them in retrospect, which - if any - of your policies as Deputy Commissar of Education in 1919 would you now single out as ill-advised?

(2) Were there any major issues of policy on which you had strong differences of opinion with Béla Kun during the period of the Commune?

(3) What, briefly, was the nature of your activity when you returned to Hungary illegally in 1920 and again toward the end of the twenties?

(4) What were the major issues of policy that provoked the intra-party conflict between the Kun faction

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Lukács Arch.

in Moscow and your own group in Vienna, following the fall of the Hungarian Soviet? Did these bear primarily on matters of internal party organization and activity, or were they based on different ~~readings~~ views of the political future of Hungary and of the policies the party should pursue?

(5) - Why did you select the particular pseudonym "BLUM" in your criticism of party policy in the late twenties? Has the full text (including the first section) of the "Blum Theses" ever been published and, if so, where? If not and if you have a copy, would you be willing to let me borrow it on my assurance that it will be returned promptly and in good order?

(6) - Apart from his cursory remarks at the 5<sup>th</sup> Comintern Congress, did Bukharin ever publish any lengthy critique of Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein? If so, where?

(7) - Was your second marriage a result of your divorce from your first wife, or her death? By what means did you support yourself and your family during your period in Vienna?

(8) - What was your attitude toward the policy of the KPD in the two years preceding Hitler's advent to power?

(9) - What considerations were responsible for your decision to take refuge in the Soviet Union in 1933, rather than in some western country?

(10) - What is your view concerning the widespread impression that Thomas Mann had you in mind when he conceived the character, Naphta, for his novel, The Magic Mountain?

I need hardly add that if, for whatever reason, you choose not to answer any of these additional questions, I would still consider myself enormously in your debt for those to which you have already given so much of your time!

With utmost good wishes, I remain

MTA FIL. INT.  
Lukács Arch.

Sincerely yours,

Morris Watnick

21 July, 1966

144645-1542/7

Dear Professor Lukács:

A brief note of acknowledgment and appreciation for your letter of 15 June in reply to my follow-up questions. I am aware that your own work precludes a more detailed reply. Nevertheless, what you have said in your letter is very useful for my purposes in that it serves to focus my research efforts more effectively than would otherwise be the case.

With best wishes for the progress of your present writing, I remain

Very sincerely  
Morris Watnick

MTA FIL. INT.  
Lukács Arch.