

Women in the Interwar Populist Movement: The Szeged Youth

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In August of 1933 a photography exhibit opened in the provincial Hungarian city of Szeged. The title: „Fifteen kilometers from City to Farm.” In the stark puritanical style of the Bauhaus School, Judit Kárász’s photographs documented the dichotomy between peasant and city life with startling power: barefoot peasant laborer contraposed against well-fed priest; peasant baby wrapped in newspaper nest to a lace trimmed baby carriage; village children in a muddy pathing pond by the up-to-date city swimming pool. In presenting the social reality which she perceived, the physical and mental oppression of peasant life contrasted against the light-hearted prosperity of the city, Kárász sought to disturb, to arouse the indignation – and the sympathy of her viewers.

Judit Kárász, a pioneer in photo journalism and political radical, was an example of the „new generation” of Hungarian youth and one of the small number of exceptional women who took part in the populist youth movements in interwar Hungary. Small groups of marginalized young intellectuals in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s came to believe that their future was inextricably tied to the future of the Hungarian peasantry. They resembled populist and peasantist leaders of Eastern Europe in their belief in the innate spiritual and national values of the peasantry. Like the Russian narodniks of the nineteenth century, they urged intellectual youth to take up the mission to help the people. They placed their faith in the potential of the small peasant land owner to form a new rural middle class, and worked for the reconstruction of society in which a new leadership from the peasantry would merge with young intellectuals to create a stronger self-confident Hungarian nation.

Who were these women? How did „young gentlewomen” in Hungary’s status conscious society become involved with the peasantry? What role did they play in the youth movements which prepared the intellectual climate for the populist writers of the latter 1930’s? There is little known about them. The few works which have been published on the youth movements barely mention their names. In his trailblazing work, *Populist Sociology*, Dénes Némédi explains that the term „youth” as it was used in Hungary during the interwar period referred only to the intelligentsia, excluding peasants and workers.¹ It does not occur to him to point out that youth referred only to men. In the study of youth movements as it has developed, the very concept of „youth,” with its connotations of activity and radicalism, has precluded the examination of women.

In my presentation today I will focus on the three women members of the Szeged Youth group, the most influential populist youth group within the borders of truncated Hungary. The careers of the three women, Erzsébet Árvay, Judit Kárász, and Viola Tomori, illustrate both the opportunities available to young women and the limitations on women intellectuals in the interwar period. Árvay and Tomori, both refugees from Transylvania, were active in the Szeged movement throughout its ten years of activity. Kárász, daughter of a prominent Jewish family in Szeged, was involved during the most radical

¹ Dénes Némédi, *A népi szociográfia: 1930-1939* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1985) 25.

stage of the movement in 1932 and 1933. In my study of Hungarian youth movements I was fortunate to meet Árvay and Tomori, who were active in the group from its beginning. This presentation, which is a spin-off from my dissertation research, was made possible by interviews with the two women in the summers of 1989 and 1990. Balancing their recollections with fragments of information from articles, newspaper accounts, and letters, I will attempt to assess their role in the movement as a first tentative contribution toward the creation of a documentary base for further study.

Among the first generation of Hungarian women to have relatively free access to a university education, they shared the generational struggle of their male colleagues to make a place for themselves in truncated Hungary with its diminished career opportunities. They were not consciously feminists. Like the Russian women populists of the nineteenth century they were not concerned with women's issues as such.² In the post World War I period women's legal and social status had been greatly improved and opportunities for women intellectuals expanded. Their priorities were similar to those of their male counterparts, who believed that the crucial issue was the future of Hungary and the need to restructure its semi-feudal hierarchical society.

These women belonged to the generation shaped by the Treaty of Trianon. The fragmentation of the nation dramatically affected the course of their lives. Erzsébet Árvay and Viola Tomori were uprooted Transylvanian Hungarians, among the approximately 426,000 refugees who fled to rump Hungary after the dismemberment of the former kingdom.³ Árvay was a child of seven when her family fled their village at the time of the Romanian occupation in 1918. Her father received a teaching position in a small village in Transdanubia, and at ten Árvay was sent to live with a great aunt in Ujpest to attend the Dorottya Kanizsai Girls Gymnasium.

Tomori and her mother left Kolozsvár in 1921 when her father, a railroad supervisor, was imprisoned for transporting Hungarian newspapers into Romania. They settled in Szeged where she attended a conservative Catholic girls school. Tomori, who maintained a strong sense of her Transylvanian Protestant identity, was not accepted by her classmates in the Árpád-házi Szt. Erzsébet Gymnasium. The child of older parents, she lived within the protective environment of her family circle.

Judit Kárász was born to an established, prosperous Jewish family in Szeged, but family cohesion was disrupted by scandal when her father was arrested for war-profiteering in 1916. She and her mother lived away from Szeged in Budapest, returning only in 1927.⁴ As soon as she completed secondary school in 1930, Kárász left Hungary. Like many other young Hungarian intellectuals, she took advantage of the opportunity to study in the West, enrolling in the Bauhaus School in Dessau.⁵

The effects of Trianon exerted a determining influence on their educational plans. Along with other women among the impoverished middle classes, they found it necessary

² See the discussion of women in Russian populism in Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 1983) and *Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978)

³ For estimates on numbers of Hungarian refugees, see István E. Mocsy, *The Effects of World War I: The Uprooted* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 10-12.

⁴ Interview with András Lengyel, literary historian. 6/22/90, Móra Ferenc Múzeum, Szeged.

⁵ Information on Kárász' life is taken primarily from Ferenc Csaplár, „Kárász Judit szociófotói,” *Tiszatáj* (Szeged, 1970/7) 656-658, and Pál Miklós, „A magyar szociófotó egyik úttörője: Kárász Judit (1912-1977)” *Fotóművészet* (1988. XXXI. 1.sz.) 11-16.

to prepare themselves for practical careers. The three women, born in 1911 and 1912, were among those encouraged by the reform of women's education in 1926 under Minister of Religion and Public Education Count Kuno Klebelsberg, which liberalized the access of women to the universities and greatly expanded their career choices.⁶ Although prime consideration was still given to qualified male students, women were now able to enroll in some faculties from which they had previously been excluded.⁷ The percentage of women enrolled in universities and other schools of higher education increased every year in the period after the war, going from 9% in 1923 to 13.6% in 1930.⁸ In 1929, of the 15,497 students enrolled in universities and other schools of higher education, 2,067 were women.⁹

Hungarian women's enrollment still ranked relatively low in a comparison of twelve European countries in 1930. Hungary was one of the five countries in which the percentage of women was under 20%, including Czech-Slovakia, Germany, Italy and Sweden. One explanation was that other countries tended to allow women in all faculties except for law, while Hungary admission of women was still the exception. In 1930 the highest proportion of women were in the Faculty of Philosophy with almost 50%, while pharmacy had 37.4%, and economic sciences 14.7%.

Although it broadened women's access to higher education, the reform of 1926 also made clear women's secondary position. Prime consideration was still given to providing places for qualified male students. Limitations on women's enrollment can be compared to those placed on Jewish students by the so-called „*numerus clausus*,” which restricted the number of Jewish students in departments with full enrollment. Numbers of women were not only limited, but women were totally excluded from certain departments. After 1926 women could enroll in limited numbers in the university faculties of Reformed and Lutheran Theology, Medicine, Philosophy, Philology and History, Math and Natural Sciences. They were excluded from the Faculty of Roman Catholic Theology of the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Women were not admitted to the engineering departments of the Royal Joseph Technical University, except as guest students, with the exception of the department of architecture, since the quota was not always filled by men. In the Faculty of Economic Sciences women were admitted to the departments of agriculture and commerce without any limitation but were excluded from departments of economics, administration, and foreign affairs. They could be enrolled in the teachers training de-

⁶ Women had first been admitted to universities in Hungary in 1895, but only in the faculties of philosophy, medicine, and pharmacy, and there „with certain limitations.”

⁷ Women had first been admitted to the university in 1895 in the faculties of philosophy, medicine, and pharmacy. After the reform of 1926 women in limited numbers could also enroll in the Faculties of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Reformed and Lutheran Theology, Agriculture and Commerce, architecture, and as special students in the engineering departments. Women were still excluded from certain departments, including Law and Political Science, Economics, Administration, Foreign Affairs, and Roman Catholic Theology.

(Julius Kornis, *Education in Hungary*, New York: Columbia University, 1932. 142-143.)

⁸ Unless otherwise noted statistics have been taken from „A főiskolai hallgatók száma és megoszlása az 1925/26-1930/31 tanévekben.” *Magyar statisztikai közlemények* (88. kötet, 1930/31)

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, statistics have been taken from „A főiskolai hallgatók száma és megoszlása az 1925/26-1930/31 tanévekben.” *Magyar statisztikai közlemények* (88. kötet, 1930/31)

partment of commercial subjects within certain limits, and were admitted to School of Pharmacy – evidently a subject not popular with the men – without any reservations.¹⁰

These young women were part of the generation of youth seen by the older generation as those who would „resurrect” Hungary. Under Minister of Religion and Public Education Count Kuno Klebelsberg’s reform of higher education, a new generation of highly trained professionals were to prove Hungary’s right to reclaim the former Hungarian Kingdom to the Western Powers. Young intellectuals, many from petty bourgeois and even peasant families, flocked to the universities, encouraged by the more open admission policies and the promise of a leading role in Hungarian society. Yet, upon graduation they faced the prospect of joining a growing surplus of intellectuals. It was not that Hungary had proportionally more graduates than other European countries. The problem was rather that existing positions in traditional careers, the civil service, government, education, churches, were monopolized by the older generation, swollen by the influx of civil servant from the successor states into truncated Hungary after Trianon.¹¹ Every year 2500 graduates left the universities, but positions were not available for even half this number.¹²

In the first half of the 1920’s, there had been hope that the government would make provisions for the new university graduates, but by the late 1920’s the new generation had become disillusioned. The ranks of those still considered to be „youth” continued to expand to include men and a much smaller number of women in their 20’s, 30’s, and even early 40’s. The age-category became so broad that the prominent Hungarian historian, Gyula Szekfű, divided „youth” into two cohorts: those in their 30’s who had begun to find places for themselves within the system, and those in their 20’s, the self-styled „new generation,” who had become increasingly alienated. This new generation had come to condemn everything which the older generation had created since Trianon, rejecting the gentry ideology as well.¹³ It was this group who became increasingly aware of the pressing economic and social misery building up in the countryside with the economic crisis in agriculture beginning in 1928. The sense that the older generation had misused the trust of the nation was expressed by the leader of the Szeged Youth, György Buday, expressed youth’s accusation of misuse of the trust of the nation. He called on university youth to forge solidarity with the peasantry:

Only the new generation is able and qualified to do this, for they are not guilty and have not participated in the mistakes, the hatred, of the recent decades of Hungarian politics and social life...¹⁴

¹⁰ Julius Kornis, *Education in Hungary*. Teachers College, Columbia University (New York: 1932) 142-143.

¹¹ Approximately 426,000 refugees from the lost territories had fled to Hungary, the majority from the broad middle level of the social structure: the gentry/bourgeois, and all those who had been employed in some manner by the state – including the myriad minor officials, teachers, railroad and postal workers. The Bethlen regime which derived much of its support from the gentry/middle-class found it essential to provide places for the refugees within the state administration.

¹² Csaplár, 167.

¹³ Szekfű, 446.

¹⁴ György Buday, *A szegedi tanya problémái*. A M.Kir. Ferenc József Tudományegyetem Sajtótudományi Tanfolyamából. Szeged 1930. 7.

Erzsébet Árvay and Viola Tomori, both Transylvanian refugees, enrolled at the Royal Hungarian Francis Joseph University in Szeged at a time when changes were taking place in the student population which were to be instrumental in the later composition of the Szeged Youth. In 1928 Árvay became one of the first women to enroll in the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, one of ten women among one hundred eleven students. When Tomori joined her the next year there were already more than twenty women in her entering class.¹⁵ Árvay had been refused admission to the overcrowded university in Budapest, but enrollment in Szeged was still low. The Transylvanian university from Kolozsvár had been transplanted after the Romanian occupation and re-established in the provincial city of Szeged in 1921 as part of the plan to decentralize higher education. Despite a reputation for excellence, it had remained a small university throughout the 1920's with a large enrollment of refugee students from Transylvania.¹⁶ Standards were high and it appears that the two women, who were serious students, were accepted on their own merits without discrimination. Both received the government and Rockefeller scholarships reserved for excellent students. Tomori and Árvay were to become life-long friends, forming a „sisterhood” of two in their activities with peasantry.

Although Szeged became the second largest city in Hungary after Trianon, it still retained a predominantly agricultural character. The newly built university complex in the inner city with its well-designed broad avenues offered a startling contrast to the habitations of the field-workers and tenant farmers who rented out much of the city's land which spread out over approximately 101,268 acres. More than half of the city's 120,000 inhabitants were occupied in agriculture.¹⁷ Students from other parts of the country were not attracted to Szeged but naturally gravitated to Budapest, the cultural and political center of the country.

The peripheral location of the university in an agrarian city was instrumental in the emergence of the radical group of students, later to be known as the Szeged Youth. Far removed from central control in Budapest it was possible to evade the stifling political orthodoxy demanded by the regime. The talented group of university students were characterized by their marginality. The social diversity of the members, the extreme differences in social position. unusual at any time, was striking in interwar Hungary's hierarchical society. Of the fifteen members three were women at a time when women rarely took part in public life. The core members were Protestant refugees from Transylvania. Four of the most artistically talented were Jewish. The best known under the later Communist regime was Ferenc Erdei of peasant background and Ortutay, a Catholic: their intense awareness of social tensions undoubtedly made them more sensitive to the social injustice toward the agrarian population. More than half of the city's inhabitants were field workers and tenant farmers. They lived on the outskirts of the city in quarters with

¹⁵ Statistics on women's enrollment taken from interviews with Viola Tomori and Erzsébet Árvay. Statistics on departmental and total enrollment from „A Magyar Királyi Ferencz-József Tudományegyetem Beszámoló, 1927-1929, 1929-1930.”

¹⁶ In the first half of the 1920's more than 40% came from the cut-off territories. In 1927, the year in which György Buday became head of the Bethlen Gábor Circle, there were still 30% from the territories.

András Hegyi, ed. *Haladó ifjúsági mozgalmak Csongrád megyében.* (Szeged: KISZ Csongrád Megyei Bizottsága Politikai Képzési Központja, 1982.)

¹⁷ 141,775 H. 1 hold = 1.4 acres. *Tanyai ügyek: újság-cikkek a „Délmagyarország” c. szegedi napilapból.* „Szeged mint földesúr,” (Szeged, 1930) 9-19.

dirt floors, no running water, and no sewer system. the young women first became aware of the economic and social problems in the countryside as members of a Transylvanian student organization, the Gábor Bethlen Circle. The co-ed Protestant group was of the small „self-improvement circles” at the university, differentiated from the popular „fraternal organizations” by its emphasis on Calvinist precepts of social responsibility and social action.¹⁸ Outsiders in Szeged, the refugee students were especially sensitive to the social and economic inequalities between poor peasant and wealthy landowner which in Transylvania had not been so extreme.

The student group had been mobilized by a lecture challenging them to take up the cause of the peasantry of the Great Plain. In post-Trianon Hungary, preoccupied with concern for the survival of the Hungarian people, this population, often referred to as „pure Hungarian,” had gained new prominence. Their isolation on the scattered small homesteads known as „tanya” had fostered the development of a unique local culture, though to be the repository of the „true” Hungarian national character. Isolation had also fostered shocking living conditions, resulting in illiteracy, ignorance, and an appalling state of health.¹⁹ The question of the survival of this Hungarian population became a crucial one for the students who had been forced to leave their home in Transylvania, considered by many to be the „heartland of the Hungarian nation.” A small group within the Gábor Bethlen Circle resolved to study the conditions of the tanya population and work for the renewal of the nation.

Árvay was one of the first to join the „Agrarian Settlement Movement.” In her gymnasium in Újpest she had received an unusually liberal education which had acquainted her with the social problems of the time. Her mathematics teacher had introduced his students to the controversial writings of the poet, Endre Ady, and taken them to visit the social welfare settlement. In the Protestant student association, Pro Christo, she had been encouraged to relate Christian principles to social problems. When György Buday, the leader of the Gábor Bethlen Circle, announced plans to study the „tanya” situation to her Bible class, she felt compelled to participate.

When Viola Tomori joined the group in 1929, she found a new world within the Gábor Bethlen Circle, which had come to include an unusually diverse group of students, some from the peasantry, some from the prosperous Jewish community. for the first time Tomori found a group of friends who accepted her for her own sake and who were sensitive as she was to the social inequalities in the society of the Great Plain. At home and in school she had been raised as a „young lady” (úri leány) and taught that nice girls did not read the realistic contemporary literature on the peasantry. Under Buday’s tutelage, she read books by Zsigmond Móricz, Dezső Szabó, and Endre Ady which had been forbidden. She described the effect of their trips to the tanya when she viewed at first hand the misery of the poor peasantry: „Here we saw confirmed with our own eyes everything that we read by Ady, Móricz and Dezső Szabó... and felt that we were right. That here were our true ancestors and real brothers.”²⁰

¹⁸ Ferenc Bárány, „A szegedi egyetemisták szervezetei, 1921-1929,” *Fejezetek hat évtized történetéből* (Szeged, 1982) 94-95.

¹⁹ Though the farms were nominally attached to a village or a town administration, many were more than fifteen or twenty miles away from a village, church, or school. Ferenc Erdei, *Tanya világ* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976) 7-13.

²⁰ András Lengyel. Interview with Váró Györgyné Tomori Viola.

The two women soon became part of the small core group who carried out systematic analyses of conditions in the countryside. The members divided up the homestead world among themselves, each choosing a village or group of homesteads which they visited weekly. The women adopted the settlement of Tape with a population of over four thousand, the majority landless laborers or dwarf-holders who eked out an existence by weaving bulrushes. Despite the ridicule of their classmates, they hiked the six kilometers from Szeged to Tape every Sunday, sometimes trudging through mud so deep that it came in over the tops of their boots.

While some of their male colleagues experienced difficulties in making contact with the peasantry who were suspicious of all outsiders, Tomori and Árvay were quickly able to establish good relations. Tomori explained how their „womanly methods” enabled them to become close to the peasant women and through them to the whole village:

We collected remnants of material from shops, or bought cheap yard goods, and sewed clothes for the Tape children, or joined the Tape women on their mending afternoon. Meanwhile we read them, or, when a few of the men gathered in the back of the room we explained political affairs. There were minor and major affairs to be taken care of which we voluntarily assumed.²¹

Later they were often called on to advise the men with official matters or explain legal affairs. Their gender worked to their advantage enabling them to gain the villagers trust.

The two young women derived real personal satisfaction from their work. Like their male colleagues they believed it was their mission as privileged young intellectuals to raise the economic and cultural level of the „people.” Yet the kinds of activities to which they devoted themselves suggests a difference in attitude. Whereas the men excelled at organization, the women became involved in the lives of the people. The male members, Buday, Ferenc Erdei, Gyula Ortutay, organized educational programs, carried out sociological research, collected folk art and ballads for their own professional work. The women devoted themselves to performing needed social services. They found affirmation of their own worth as human beings in helping individuals. As Tomori explained later: „One can find oneself most easily when one is helping others. We turned to the peasantry because they needed our help.”²²

Géza Féja, the populist writer who was assisted by the Szeged Youth in collecting material for his work „Viharsarok” attested to the respect accorded to Tomori by her villagers:

I am going [to Tápé] with Viola Tomory and the other members of the ‘Agrarian Settlement’ (There aren’t many of them!) Viola, above all, is beloved here. She holds all the secrets of the village. They break out in joy when she comes: ‘The Almighty God has brought our little lady.’ The peasant women run to her, kiss her on the hand, and then the cheek.²³

²¹ „Mint pattogó labda... – Váróné Tomori Viola szabálytalan emlékiratai” *Szeged megyei városi tanács közlönyének várospolitikai melléklete* (1989,5).

²² Interview with Viola Tomori. Debrecen. 5/30/88.

²³ Féja Géza, „Nincs Szegeden boszorkány” *Magyarország* (March 10, 1934) quoted in András Lengyel, *Féja Géza és a Szegedi Fiatalok* (Szeged, 1989) 413.

By 1932 Tomori had emerged as spokeswoman for Szeged Youth. Her public role was unusual for a woman, but not unprecedented at a time in which women were able to serve in municipal councils and as Parliamentary representatives. She was the only woman to speak at the first meeting of the National Hungarian Student Parliament in March of 1932.²⁴ She urged the assembled young intellectuals to take up the cause of the Hungarian peasantry: „a vital, culturally and economically valuable reservoir for the renewal for the Hungarian nation.”²⁵ In April she convinced the students at the University in Debrecen to organize „village seminars” and work with the problems of the surrounding settlements and villages.²⁶

The group had become radicalized during the deepening economic crisis of the Great Depression. The original support which they had received from official circles had been withdrawn, and the movement came under heavy criticism. Government fear of potential peasant unrest led to harassment by the police and gendarmes. The educational lecture series, which emphasized contemporary writers such as Zsigmond Móricz and Áron Tamási, was cancelled on the grounds that they were inciting the peasantry to rebellion.²⁷ By the summer of 1931 political harassment had effectively blocked all of the group’s activities except the women’s „story-telling afternoons.”²⁸ At this time the men ceased their regular visits to the tanya, but the women continued their weekly trips to Tape al through their university years.

In winter of 1931 several of their Marxist members introduced them to the activities at the Szeged Worker’s Home. Under cover of officially sanctioned choral reading groups, they held lectures for the worker youth and contributed to the worker newspaper. As Erzsébet Árvay remembers: „We were all Marxists then.” They were influenced by the Marxist ideology of students who had studied in the West, including Judit Kárász who joined the group during summer vacations which she spent in Szeged with her mother.

Kárász, who had joined the Communist Party in Germany, proposed a photography series on „the capitalist city – the exploited village,” which may have been inspired by her colleague and friend at the Bauhaus, Irén Bluh.²⁹ Bluh had participated in a similar exhibit with the Sarló youth group in Czechoslovakia.³⁰ With the assistance of Béla Reitzer and Ferenc Erdei, who accompanied her on trips to the villages, Kárász began preparing the photographs for the sociological study presented in the exhibit in August of 1933.

The period of radical activity among the workers was short lived. In the spring of 1932, Buday and two other members were arrested in conjunction with a government roundup of communist suspects. Although they were released soon afterwards, the experience was a sobering one and activities at the Worker’s Home stopped. Unemployment

²⁴ *Magyar Egyetemi Híradó* VI. evf. 5.sz. (April 15, 1932) 4-5.

²⁵ Dr. Viola Tomori, „Youth Works for Rural Communities in Central Europe” *I.S.S. Bulletin* (Geneva: May, 1938) 10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁷ György Buday, „Az agrársettlement mozgalom útja” *Nyugat* (1933) 32-36.

²⁸ Letter from György Buday to Béla Jancsó (Szeged. June 19, 1931) Ferenc Móra Múzeum Archives, Szeged.

²⁹ Letter from Béla Reitzer to Ferenc Erdei, (Szeged, August 17, 1932) Erdei Ferenc Correspondence #16, Sociology Department, ELTE, Budapest.

³⁰ „A fotóművészet megjelenés előtti kézírata.” Albertini Béla beszélgetése Bluh Irénnel, 1984. 14-15.

among young intellectuals was high and each of the intellectual proletariat, they would not risk their careers through political adventurism.

Tensions and splits developed within the group as members completed their university studies. Árvay became less active after she received her degree in 1933 and married the promising mathematician, László Kalmár. At this time, when others were concentrating on their careers, Tomori turned down an assistantship in the Math Department to intensify her study of the peasantry. She began work for a second doctorate, becoming the first Hungarian to take up the new study of social psychology. She travelled the countryside, searching out isolated peasant communities to study in preparation for her dissertation: „The Development of the Peasant's World View.” After publishing the dissertation, Tomori went on to study in Berlin in 1936/37 on a Humboldt Fellowship.

It was Tomori who organized the last public event held by the Szeged Youth, a conference of international scholars in summer of 1937. Yet it was characteristic that she did not assume the position of leadership. Only at the last moment when Buday was unable to attend did Tomori become director of the sociographic study. In 1938 the Szeged Youth was officially dissolved, its members scattered by the onset of war. Judit Kárász, forced to leave Germany in 1935, went into hiding Denmark. Árvay remained in Szeged. Tomori returned to Transylvania as a political sociologist working with the peasantry in the Székelyföld.

In the immediate postwar years, there was initial promise that the objectives of the young women might be realized, both for an independent, politically empowered peasantry, and for their personal careers. Árvay received a teaching position in mathematics at the university. Tomori became director of a technical school in Romania. Kárász was persuaded to return to Hungary, promised a suitable position by Ortutay, then minister of culture. Yet the change in political climate cut short their career prospects. By the time Kárász returned in 1949, her Western contacts had become suspect. She found work in the Industrial Arts Museum in Budapest. Árvay left teaching for a less exposed position as bookkeeper in the math library. Tomori was removed from her position as director for political reasons.

In retrospect it would seem that the interwar period was not an unpropitious time for pioneering women intellectuals such as Árvay, Tomori, and Kárász. Accepted on their scholarly merits at the university, they participated on an equal basis with their male colleagues in the populist youth movement. They shared the men's mission to work for improved social and economic conditions for the peasantry. Yet they carried out the mission with a dedication that the men lacked, addressing the particular needs of peasant families and becoming involved in their lives. Although the limited nature of my materials does not allow for more sweeping conclusions, it would appear that the contributions of young women intellectuals to the reform movements of the interwar period are well worthy of further investigation.