

## **Images of 1919: A Short Photo Essay**

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FIG. 1. Image courtesy of Fortepan/Frigyes Schoch

The 1919 May Day celebration was the Republic of Council's largest public holiday. Kigyó tér (present-day Ferenciek tere), was decorated with an elaborate gate celebrating proletarian revolutions in Hungary, Germany, and Russia (fig. 1). The gate conveniently covered statues of Péter Pázmány and István Werböczy, two of the leading personalities of the Catholic Reformation in Hungary. On the opposite side of the square stood busts of Vladimir Lenin and Karl Liebknecht (see fig. 2). The two photos demonstrate the ways in which the Republic of Councils prioritized the creation of a pantheon of revolutionary heroes to replace conservative symbols.



FIG. 2. Image courtesy of Fortepan/Frigyes Schoch

As the artists who supported the Republic of Councils attempted to forge connections between their avant-garde style and revolutionary politics, posters emerged as a particularly effective medium. Artists such as Mihály Biró, Róbert Berény, and Ödön Dankó, whose work can be seen in figure 3, created images that became a lasting part of the Republic's legacy.

Film star Béla Lugosi (fig. 4) supported the Republic of Councils in 1919 and remained committed to workplace organizing and trade unionism throughout his career. He became famous internationally for his cinematic portrayal of Count Dracula.

The Republic of Councils' efforts to influence Hungarian artistic culture and alter public spaces illustrate that a revolutionary transformation of Hungarian aesthetics was an important part of the regime's agenda. With the collapse of the Republic of Councils, public art in Hungary reversed course and embraced more traditional forms of representation.



FIG. 3 Image courtesy of Fortepan/László Péchy



FIG. 4. Courtesy of Fortepan/Noémi Saly