

L-230 CONT - THE HUNGARIAN POST DATES

Page

Budapest, November 8, 1962 (Hungarian Desk - Gyula Horvath)
 -- Gyula Illyes, perhaps the greatest living Hungarian poet,
 recently celebrated his 60th birthday. This famous poet, novelist,
 playwright and editor belongs among the most interesting personalities
 of contemporary Hungary.

He was born on 2 November 1902, at Racszeg, a little
 village in the western part of Hungary. His parents were farm
 laborers, and Illyes spent his childhood on a large estate. He
 was able to attend high school, where he took great interest in
 literature. Upon graduating from high school, he went to Budapest
 and joined the literary circles of the Hungarian capital. Later
 on, he was forced to leave Hungary because of political reasons
 and spent several years in France, where he was an intimate friend
 of many French writers, such as René Char, Tristan Tzara, André
 Breton, Cocteau, Eluard, Aragon, Marcel Schwab, etc. This stay
 gave him the impetus to write his book "Musok Parisban" ("The
 Poets in Paris"), which was not published until 1943. He returned
 to Hungary in 1928. On his return to Hungary, toward the end of
 the 20's, he made an immediate impression with his poems, which
 blended the national and popular traditions with a new, individual
 rhyme. According to Mihaly Babits, one of the greatest Hungarian
 poets and critics, Illyes poetry represented the 'intrusion into
 Hungarian literature of the spiritual trends of the hitherto
 despised and outcast masses; this meant a revolution, as the
 intrusion and acceptance of new classes is always tantamount to a
 revolution.' (Uj Lathatar, the Hungarian bi-monthly in its special
 issue devoted to Gyula Illyes' birthday.)

Illyes became a close collaborator of Mihaly Babits,
 assisted him in editing the leading literary review "Nyugat" ("West"),
 and, in this magazine, he had his poems and prose works published,
 including his second book, a brilliant biographical work on Sandor
 Petofi, the great Hungarian poet of the 19th century and hero of
 the Hungarian war of liberation of 1848/49. Illyes' first book
 appeared in 1934. It was the diary of his journey to Russia, where
 he was invited to attend the Soviet Writers' Congress. Besides
 attending the Congress, he made an extensive journey throughout the
 Soviet Union.

In the mid-thirties, Illyes became one of the leading
 personalities of the populist literary and political movement. His
 book "A paraszti nép" ("People of the Peasants"), which appeared in

(over) (1/2)

1937, was a masterpiece of the populist school of writing and of the village-explorer books. It gave a true picture of the life led by the poorest Hungarian peasants. It caused a literary and political sensation, was translated into German ["Fensterfolk"] and also into French.

Ilyes took part in the political movement of the populist writers, too. He belonged to the leading personalities of the "March Front" -- founded in 1937 -- whose aim was the democratization of Hungary, the fight against fascism, the improvement of the situation of the landless peasants. When the National Peasant Party was founded -- in 1939 -- Ilyes immediately joined it. During the war, he succeeded Mihaly Babits as editor of "Fyugat" and later, when "Fyugat" ceased to appear, Ilyes became the editor-in-chief of "Magyar Szillog", the successor to "Fyugat". At that time he edited a French Anthology in Hungarian translation, which was a great literary success. The subject of his book "Kora Tavasz" ["Early Spring"] is the 1918 Democratic revolution and the Communist coup d'etat in 1919. It draws a picture of the Hungarian village and peasant life during those stormy months and has many autobiographical aspects. From 1943 on he did not have anything published and lived mostly at his birthplace and in Tibany, on Lake Balaton.

After the war, he again appeared in Budapest, because one of the political leaders of the National Peasant Party, and later a member of parliament, but did not become involved in day-to-day politics. He had many poems and articles published. As editor-in-chief of the populist review "Valasz" ["Answer"], he organized the populist writers and the young poets, novelists, essayists, who sympathized with populist ideas. On his post-war journey to France, he wrote a very interesting diary, which appeared in the magazine "Valasz". He collected his new poems into a book entitled "Mind a rozsditas" ["Order Among the Ruins"]. His collected poems were later also published in a two-volume edition. In the first years after World War II, he fought for the rehabilitation of countless writers and poets, including Laszlo Kemeth, Lorinc Saszo and Jozsef Erdelyi. His authority in the literary field made it possible for him to help many writers whose non-Communist orientation was well-known in the whole country.

In 1949, Ilyes had to suspend publication of the review "Valasz", which had gained great political popularity due to the analytical essays of Istvan Biba, one of the best political thinkers of Hungary, who was during the October events a member of Kere Nagy's revolutionary cabinet. Ilyes retired, didn't take part in official literary life, but remained in the foreground, serving as window dressing for the Communist Regime. This position enabled

him to help those writers who were not allowed to write or have their works published.

In three years, Ilyes wrote some fine historical plays, for instance, "Csorai példák" ("The Example of Csora"), a dramatized version of his poem, "The Hussards of Csora"; then "Der Mann" on Petöfi and the Polish General Bem, "Doban" on the peasant war of 1914, and "Feklyaláng" ("Torchflame") on the Hungarian freedom fight of 1848/49.

In 1950 he wrote the famous poem "One Sentence on Tyranny" which was circulated secretly in Hungary after it was written.^(a) This poem was published only on 2 November 1954 -- during the Hungarian revolution -- in the "Irodalmi Újság" (Literary Gazette), the only issue of this paper to appear during the glorious October days.

Ilyes didn't take part in the literary debates prior to the 1956 revolution, but was always a spiritual inspirer of the young generation and of the fight for intellectual freedom and creative liberty. During the revolution, he became member of the leading board of the National Peasant Party, which he renamed the Petöfi Party.

After the revolution, he ceased writing, and was several times questioned by the police. He underwent a treatment in the Clinic for Nervous Diseases in Budapest, pretending that he suffered from nervous exhaustion. He again began to have his works published in the spring of 1960, after Dery and other writers were released from prison. Since then, he has published those of his poems written during the last few years under the title "Új versek" ("New Poems", 1961) and a volume of short stories and other writings "És a kesztélyben" ("Lorokeop in the Castle", 1962). His latest work is a play titled "A kegyenc" ("The Favorite"), which deals with the relationship between a Roman tyrant and his subjects.

(a) See appendix attached for text in English translation.

ONE SENTENCE OF TYRANNY

Gyula Illyes

Where, there's tyranny,
there's tyranny,
not only in the gun-barrel,
not only in the prison-cell,

not only in the torture-room
not only in the night,
in the voice of the shouting guard;
there's tyranny

not only in the speech of the
prosecutor, pouring like dark smoke,
in the confessions,
in the wall-tapping of prisoners,

not only in the judge's passionless
sentence: "Guilty!"
there's tyranny
not only in the partially

(cont)

cut "Attention!" and
"Fire!" and in the drum rolls,
and in the way the corpse
is thrust into a hole.

not only in the secretly
half-opened door,
in fearfully
whispered laws,
in the finger, dropping
in front of the lips, cautioning "Hush!"

There is tyranny
not only in the facial expression
firmly set like iron bars,
and in the stillborn
tormented cry of pain within these bars,

in the shower
of silent tears
adding to this silence,
in a glazed eyeball,

there's tyranny
not only cheers
of men upstanding
who cry "Hurrah!", and sing

where there's tyranny
there's tyranny
not only in the tirelessly
clapping palms,

in orchestras, operas,
in the braggart statues of tyrants
just as sensationally loud,
in colours, in picture galleries,

in each embracing fringe,
even in the painters' brush,
not only in the sound of the car
gliding softly in the night

and in the way
it stops at the doorway;

where there's tyranny, it's there
in actual presence
in everything,
in the way not even your God was in older times;

there's tyranny
in the nursery schools,
in paternal advice,
in the mother's smile,

in the way a child
replies to a stranger;

not only in the barbed wire,
not only in the bookellers' stands,
more than barbed wire
in the hypnotic slogans;

it is there
in the goodbye kiss,
in the way the wife says:
"When will you be home, dear?"

in the "how are you?"
repeated so automatically in the street,
in the loosening of the grip
to give a nonchalant handshake,

in the way suddenly
your lover's face becomes frozen,
because tyranny is there
in the amorous trysts.

not only in the questioning,
it is there in the declaration of love,
in the sweet frankness of words,
like a fly in the wine.

for not even in your dreams
are you alone,
it is there in the bridal bed,
and before it, in the dawnning desire,

because you only believe beautiful, what
once has already belonged to the tyrant;
you have slept with him
when you thought were making love to another;

in plate and in glass,
it is there, in your nose, your mouth,
in coldness and disease,
out of doors and in your room,
as if the windows were open
and the stink of corruption flooded in,
as if in the house
there was a smell of leaking gas;
if you talk to yourself,
it is tyranny that questions you,
even in your imagination
you are not free of it,

above you the Milky Way's different tones
frontier zone where the light seeps,
minefield; and the star is a spy-hole;

the crowded heavenly tent
is a single forced-labor camp
for tyranny speaks
out of fever, out of the song or bell,
out of the priest in the confessional
from the sermon,
church, parliament, torture-chamber
are all only a stage;

you open and close your eyes,
only this looks at you;
like an illness,
it accompanies you like misery,

in the trains' wheels you can hear it,
you're prisoner, you're prisoner,
that's what it repeats;
on a mountain or beside the ocean
this is what you breathe;

The lightening flashes flashes
it is this
that a present is every unexpected
noise and light,
in the missing heart-beat;

in tranquility,
in the boredom of the cheekless,
in the whisper of the rain,
in the bars that reach the sky,
falling of the snow
white like the prison-wall;
it looks at you,
out of your dog's eyes,

and because it's there in every ambition
it is in your tomorrow,
in your thought,
in every one of your gestures,
like river in its bed
you follow it and you create it;
you spy out of this circle?
it looks at you from the mirror,

it watches you, you would run in vain,
you're prisoner, and warder of the
same time,
into the tang of your tobacco,
into the fabric of your clothes,

it seeps in, stiches like acid
down to your marrow
you would like to look but you see
only what it creates like magic in front of you

you would like to think yet no idea
but it comes into your mind,
and already there is a circle of fire
a forest-fire made out of matchsticks
because when you dropped one,
you didn't crush it;
and thus it guards on now,
in the factory, in the field, in the home,

and you no longer feel the meaning of life,
what is meat and bread,
what it is to love, to desire,
with wide open arms,

thus the slave himself
forges and bears his own shackles;
when you eat you nourish it,
you begot your child for it;

where there's tyranny
everyone is a link of a chain;
it stinks and pours out of you,
you are tyranny yourself;

like Moles in the sunshine,
we walk dark
we fidget in our chamber
as if it were the Sahara;

because where there's tyranny
all is in vain
even the song, however faithful,
whatever the work to achieve,

for it stands,
in advance at your grave,
it tells you who you have been -
even your dust serves tyranny.

(1950)

END