

20 JULY 1960

## RFE EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS DEPARTMENT

Background Report  
 (Hungarian Research)  
 GHT

GYULA ILIYES SURVIVES AGAIN

Gyula Illyes's first positive response to the regime's many overtures since 1956 appears in the July 1960 issue of Kertars. Illyes's silence since revolution has, in turn, puzzled and infuriated Hungary's literary administrators. No lesser persons than Kadar and Deputy Premier Jallai have repeatedly made Illyes target of their attacks, although behind the official abuse it has never been difficult to detect a grudging admiration for the doyen of the nation's literary life. A populist and socialist by sentiment, Illyes always refused to allow himself to be too visibly tied to a regime he had castigated in his famous "On sentence on Tyranny", although he would, along with other non-Communist intellectuals, add his name to such obligatory regime documents as peace-circulars and international protests of various kinds.

For all the (possibly intentional) obscurity of the language in which his article is couched, Illyes has now come out of his shell and produced the pearl so much coveted by the Government.

It will be remembered that on 28.1.1956 Kadar made a point of publicly reminding Illyes that the Party had taken special steps to improve the lot of the people of the village in which Illyes was born. Here, he intimated, was something right up the streets of populist writer's field of interest - would Illyes stop walking in his literary corner, praise the living and stop scouring the dead? Illyes would not; in fact, until Kadar's release, evasions were the best the Government and the press could get from him. A sprinkling of poems - all strictly non-committal - have been published by him since April, but it is only now that he braced himself to his task publishing exactly, or almost exactly, what Kadar had asked him to do: a praise of socialist construction in his native village, Kacsereg. 33 villagers had been given new homes; 12 homes are the subject of Illyes's commendations. The praise and the poems attached to it are, to be sure, hedged

found with reservations, but praise they are none the less, what with such statements as "at that time (i.e. in the 1930s) the bread was hidden behind locked doors from the starving children; today each eats as much as he wants: then people were beaten, today a hand is held out to them..." For one who has carved his name into the story of Hungarian revolution with his strictures on oppression this marks the end (or is it the beginning?) of a tortuous new road.

That poetry is a means for the realization of a loftier, materialist "end" that for posterity verus is worthless unless it assumes the functions of a practical and productive "workshop" - such sentiments come dangerously close to the requirements of socialist realism.

For Stalin, writers were the engineers of the human soul; one can but wonder at the bitterness of the reappraisal that must have preceded Illyes's decision to proclaim, by implication at least, the rightness of that proposition. That a prize has here been paid for goods that are, as yet, not fully visible, is a guess that can be safely regarded. Whether the results will justify this lowering of Illyes's high moral position - this is a question to which only developments in the coming months will give the answer.

Follows: excerpts from article and from two poems.

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Cycle LISTED: THE KACOGRE NOTECOOK

...During the past 15 years the evening out of social levels has been one of the most encouraging things in the development of the life of our farmers.

During the past decades our people has gone through impenetrable. We suffered great losses: hundreds of thousands of people died young, homes were ransacked, innocent persons executed and imprisoned; blood and tears...

What would I have to say if I added to the description of life, the old farmsteads one so life there today? Then bread was hidden behind locked doors from the starving children; today each eats as much as he wants; then people were often beaten; today a hand is held out to them...

In early spring 1960 the pantries of Kacogre are so obviously full that it would have been unnecessary (and a journalistic tactlessness) for me to look around there...

Everyone has a pair of shoes and a change of underwear...

The inhabitants of Kacogre eat and dress adequately. Bath-tubs do not exist as yet, but in many of these diamond-shaped houses room has been left for them. There is no water supply either. An even greater shortcoming and a continuous topic for conversation is the lack of electricity. It would have to be brought in a from a distance of only five to six kilometers. The local shop is also primitive. There are no drink shops where people could talk over a glass of beer. People only have a chance to drink when the enthusiastic chairman of the cooperative obtains a load and distributes it after work in one of the small and dim rooms of the former castle. There is no theater or cinema in Kacogre. And a good many other things are also missing. I do not wish to put them down in writing because they will be obtained without a writer's intervention. But these shortcomings do not threaten the existence of a nation. This is basic difference between the shortcomings of the past and those of the present.

Together with the old buildings of the farmstead, naturally my house of birth too was pulled down, to the last

stone of its foundation... I am far from regretting the disappearance of these tumble-down old walls. I sincerely rejoice that the stupid material has been put to new use. It is a good feeling for me to know that the bricks of my native house are in the walls of good houses at a distance of half a kilometer and I am particularly glad that I do not know in which house these bricks were walled in. I believe that this is the way in which I too, have to construct new things from elements of the past.

Gyula JILYES; LE FORTE ESPRANÉ

Full translation of a poem.

"Let the poet be an expression of useful purpose" -  
L. Szabo

At Baszegere the writer is a respected person;  
a kind of appeal judge, they say.

When all words fail "The poem", they say, "the Muse  
may still help us", urging the writer to speak.

At Baszegere they have respect for poetry;  
poetry, they hope, will conjure up electricity in the  
village.

They expect great things from the poet and so keen is  
their expectation that they will even show respect for  
philology.

"We have written a dozen letters in this matter", they  
complain to the poet, "but if you, too, could add your  
voice to ours, Gyula..."

Verses or prose, harsh or smooth, or even a full-scale  
tragedy; anything will do.

Then we want a new road, and above all, electricity.  
For three years now we have been promised to get these  
things by the country authorities.

The whole country has them;  
we alone are left out in the cold.

Let the poet be an expression of useful purpose..."  
I look at my former schoolmates.

"It is a small thing for you to write about our troubles",  
they say, "but for us it may mean everything.

They are not worried about form or meter, as long as  
the verses get them what they want.

"Sixty timber props would do the trick", one says, "and  
what would we not have", a girl exclaims, "even a movie!"

"Could you put all this into verses?", they say, "so that our voice is heard up in Bucharest?"

"Let the poem be an expression of useful purpose...."  
Now, I think, the moment has arrived:

Glory, rewards, laurels -- I have long known what they  
mean! Verse is useless unless it is grounded in earth:

Unless it lets down roots and produces fruit --  
Let it, then produce it.

From: Evening

I would hate and throw to the wind  
all my vain writings  
were I not stilled by the thought  
that, like some revolutionary invention  
that comes to full use only in later times,  
my verses, too, will become live energy,  
to produce efficiently  
like a well run workshop...

End.