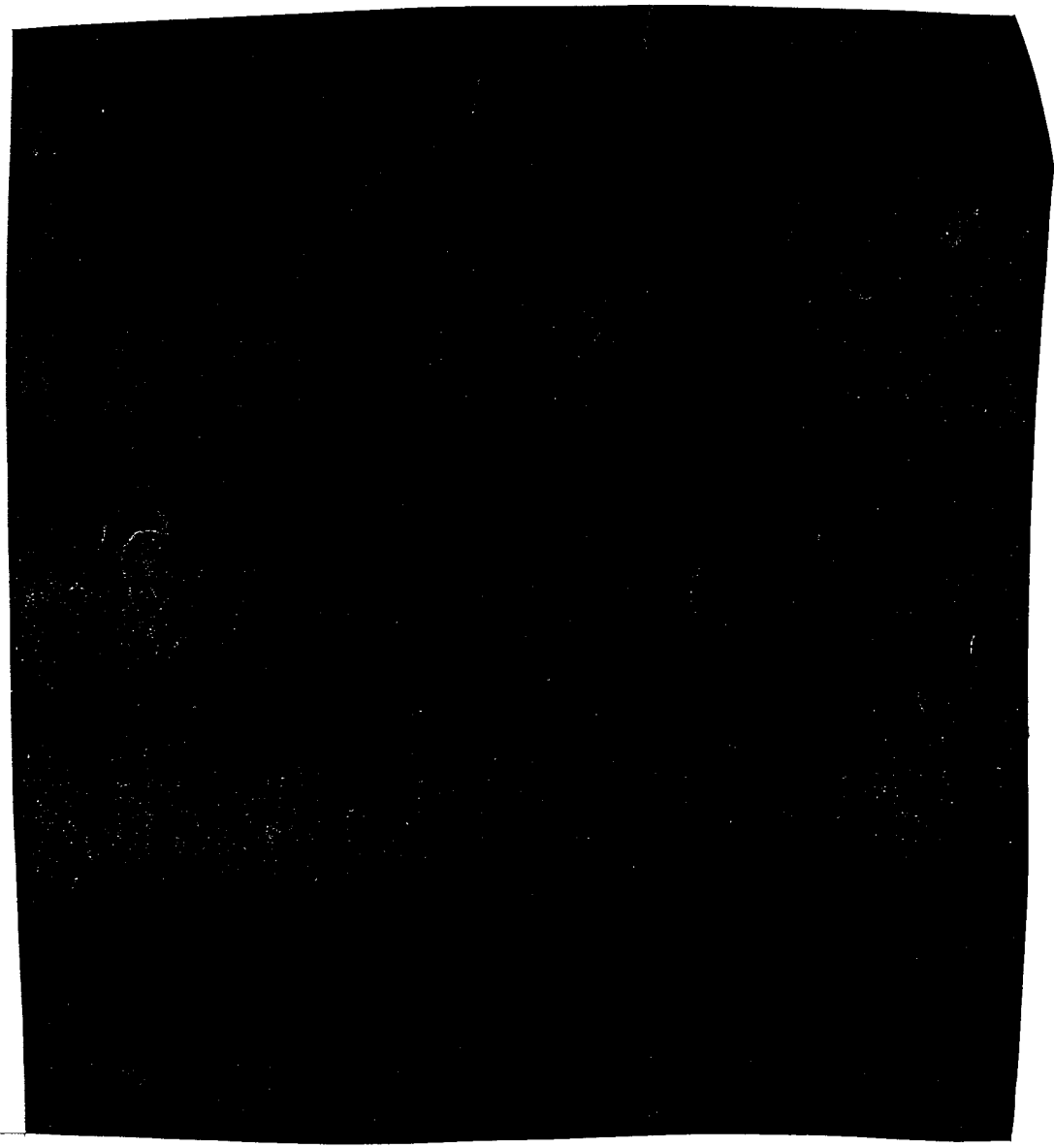


CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY REVIEW

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HUNGARIAN WRITERS DEMAND  
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Hungarian writers who have spearheaded the drive for moderate policies have resumed their offensive against the Communist regime, following a two-month period of relative restraint. They met in Budapest in mid-

September to rally support for their cause and to re-endorse as their leaders those individuals who have led them in their fight for freedom of expression. Although viewed with varying degrees of disapproval from

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within the regime, the writers' program is more apt to be met with compromise than with repression.

#### Renewed Attack

The uneasy cease-fire during the first weeks of the Gero regime between the government and the writers, who play a strong political role in Communist nations, was brought to a dramatic close on 8 September by Gyula Hay, a leading Hungarian Communist writer. Hay, in a magazine article, demanded complete freedom of expression for "both Marxists and non-Marxists, the right to believe in God or not to believe in God, the right to criticize anybody or anything, and to like or not to like any of Hungary's leaders." Hay's position was democratic in tone and concept and, in effect, represents a public denial of Communist omnipotence.

This attack, described by the American legation in Budapest as the clearest challenge to Communism yet publicized, set the stage for the general meeting of the Hungarian Writers' Association which opened on 17 September. Speaker after speaker, inspired by Hay's words and angered by two antagonistic Szabad Nep editorials on the eve of the meeting, indulged in defiant speeches against Hungarian regime policies and regime "reactionaries."

The writers, as a body, vigorously re-endorsed their leadership and also elected to high office in their association a number of members who had been censured for "anti-party" views during Rakosi's tenure in office. Hay was elected vice-president and several non-Communist writers were elected to the presidium.

The writers repeatedly asserted their unwillingness to compromise on any points. As one writer stated, "We cannot enter into a 'gentlemen's agreement' with anybody, we must go straight to our goal."

As a group, the writers appeared sensitive to the fact that some of their attitudes are known only in literary circles and hence do not have widespread popular support. To rectify this, one literary leader proposed that groups of writers visit factories to ensure that their point of view is received by working groups.

#### Party Reaction

Since Rakosi's ouster, the new party leadership, headed by doctrinaire party first secretary Gero but including a number of moderate Communists, has moved steadily toward moderate domestic policies, including a significantly more concessionary attitude toward the intellectuals. Reaction within the party, however, to the present sweeping demands of the writers will be mixed. The natural response of party first secretary Gero, who personifies the doctrinaires, presumably would be to resist. The regime as a whole, however, which includes a significant number of party moderates, appears to have little inclination to crack down on the writers for their beliefs at this time and may grant added concessions in an effort to appease the intelligentsia.

But the "moderate" forces in the party are not unanimous in their views. One group, including a significant number of party intellectuals and activists who support former premier Imre Nagy, is undoubtedly sympathetic to and active in support of the demands of the writers.

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But other "moderate" elements in the party who are willing to permit the natural development of political and intellectual endeavor within certain limits may object to at least some of Hay's demands.

Members of this group are sufficiently good Communists to reject proposals which pose a direct challenge to the principles of party discipline and, in effect, the primacy of the party in society. In addition, this group, which may include politburo members Szalai, Kovacs and Kadar, may be wary of a too rapid liberalization of policy lest the domestic situation get out of control and lead the Soviet Union to interfere.

Soviet Attitude

Soviet leaders undoubtedly recognize the risk involved in giving the Hungarian writers free rein to work out their own ideological standpoint and are aware that a mere "braking action" will not be enough to forestall demands for increasing freedom in other fields. Reliable Western observers in Budapest reported on 20 September that they felt Soviet action, of an unspecified nature, was likely in the near future. If there is no Soviet intervention at this time, it might indicate that the USSR has accepted a further gradual liberalization in Hungary and that the point has not yet been reached--nor been defined--where the USSR will attempt to call a halt in this readjustment.

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