

1. HUNGARIAN PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS LEAD TO POLITICAL CRISIS

Comment on:



Hungarian Communist leaders are facing a major political crisis brought on by demands of party moderates and an aroused public that Hungary follow Poland's lead in asserting greater independence from the Kremlin. An emergency meeting of the central committee of the party has been called to deal with the situation.

Demonstrations by thousands of Hungarian university students, workers and off-duty soldiers on 23 October, demanding a new government headed by Imre Nagy and the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, ended in violence. Police fired on demonstrators attempting to seize the Budapest radio station and to destroy a Stalin monument. At least one person was reported killed. Telephone communications with the West were cut off during the evening of 23 October and normal radio broadcasts were replaced by music programs.

The demonstrators, who throughout the afternoon were apparently orderly, may have been sparked to violence by a speech party leader Gero made shortly after his return from a visit to Belgrade.

Gero criticized the demonstrations as "chauvinist incitement" and "nationalism" in an uncompromising statement of continuing loyalty to the Soviet Union, ironically using the terminology of the charges under which Nagy had been expelled from office in 1955.

Gero, by his attempt to discredit the demonstrations, stands in marked contrast to those in the party leadership who actually endorsed such demonstrations in order to illustrate the close solidarity of the Hungarian party with the Polish party and its latest moves. Hungarian party moderates--who now appear to be dominant in the party--are presumably exerting great pressure on Gero to resign, planning subsequently to declare, in effect, their "independence" of the Soviet Union along the lines of the Polish declaration last week end.



Approved for [redacted]  
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