

Hungarian workers bid last farewell to Kadar

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Susan Viets in Budapest

MORE than 100,000 people packed into the Kerepes Road cemetery yesterday to bid farewell to Janos Kadar, the general-secretary who ruled Hungary for 32 years after the 1956 uprising.

Black flags of mourning replaced the Stars and Stripes after President Bush left, and the central committee doors were opened to the public to pay tribute to Kadar.

Tens of thousands of mourners queued until 1am yesterday to pay their last respects. Some wiped away tears, others made the sign of the cross.

Tables in the hall were laden with bouquets and wreaths. Behind were the bier and a portrait of Kadar.

Kadar's "body will disappear in the grave, but his spirit will live on" said the party president and head of the four man praesidium, Mr Rezsó Nyers, in the main funeral address.

Mr Nyers praised Kadar's politics of compromise which steered Hungary through troubled times and prosperity. But, Mr Nyers noted, "at a certain point our convictions differed regarding the method and speed, though not the main direction of change".

Mr Imre Pozsgay and Mr Miklos Nemeth, both praesidium members, did not speak at the ceremony. The general-secretary and praesidium member, Mr Karoly Grosz, delivered a speech at the central committee building before Kadar's coffin was taken to the cemetery, laying claim to the heritage of Kadar. "We are carrying out his pure ideals and his fight for a Socialist Hungary."

Kadar's funeral is the first event to involve workers on a large scale since Mr Grosz replaced him as general-secretary 13 months ago.

Mr Pal Kollat, a shipbuilder, described Kadar as an honest man and "a leader whose lectures we could understand and whose lectures made sense".

The question now is whether the workers' respect for the party will be buried along with Kadar. The Mai Nap newspaper yesterday recalled popular indignation when Kadar was stripped of the presidency in May: Kadar "died on May 8 and was killed by his own party".

Mr Pozsgay's popularity in the praesidium appears to be waning. He was not seated at the head table with his three colleagues for Mr Bush's parliamentary dinner.

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