

Hungary's samizdat in open

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Susan Viets in Budapest

HUNGARY'S first public samizdat exhibition was held yesterday evening in Budapest's Jurta Theatre, an indication of the growing spirit of glasnost which has taken hold of the Hungarian press.

The evening, called *Liber-tas*, featured displays of the main underground journals, such as *Demokrata*, followed by public readings.

Representatives of the journals were on hand to discuss the history of samizdat.

In the country which is undertaking widespread reform of its political and economic system, freedom of the press is unprecedented

and a significant achievement.

The dividing line between official and unofficial publications is becoming increasingly obscure.

Taboos have been swept away and even topics as sensitive as the 1956 uprising are open for discussion.

There have been some rumbles of protest from the party.

In November, a politburo member, Mr Janos Berecz, said: "We all feel that a clear minority is abusing the power of the press, especially the radio."

These criticisms have had little impact on the media, whose operating rules will become press law later this year.

The unofficial press is currently redefining its role.

A meeting of samizdat editors earlier this month decided to establish an independent network of correspondents, and Hungary's largest alternative organisation, the Democratic Forum, has decided to publish an official journal.

A self-styled watchdog agency, the Glasnost Club, has set itself up as an unofficial press monitoring body.

Already its first case has come up for review: it is challenging competition results in *Reform*, one of the new independent magazines, which last week awarded the title *Reform Man of the Year* to Hungary's General Secretary, Mr Karoly Grosz.

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