

Reformers debate Hungary's future

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in Szeged, Hungary

FOUR hundred delegates of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party reform circles attended a one-day workshop in the southern town of Szeged at the weekend to decide the fate and direction of reform in the party. And yesterday, 1,000 people attended a mass rally to hear three reformist members of the party's nine-member politburo.

The reform circles were christened in the Hungarian town of Kecskesmet last month, when rumours were rife of a split in the party, although the reformers have clearly rejected this possibility.

"The Hungarian nation is a ship on a stormy sea," a politburo member, Mr Rezso Nyers, yesterday told the crowd assembled in a local sports stadium.

With backing by one third of the politburo, the reform wing is clearly strong, although it has not yet emerged as the

guiding force in party policy making.

A showdown may not be far off. The reform circles this weekend announced support for the political rehabilitation of Mr Imre Nagy, a former prime minister and head of the uprising in 1956 who was later executed.

While officials have given permission for Mr Nagy to be publicly reburied on June 16th, the issue of political rehabilitation is still highly controversial within the party.

The reformers claim they are the only viable bridge between the party, the opposition and the nation. This weekend they called for a party congress in the autumn instead of the previously announced party conference. They believe a congress will be more appropriate for setting out a new programme. How the party will receive these proposals remains to be seen. The General Secretary, Mr Karoly Grosz, criticised "anti-socialist elements" in the party, in the party newspaper.

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