

# Hungary's 1956 revolution finally comes into its own

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## Susan Viets in Budapest

**T**ENS of thousands squeezed into Budapest's Parliament Square yesterday to hear their interim president, Mr Mathas Szuros, declare: "Long live democracy! Long live the Hungarian Republic!"

Thirty three years to the day from when the first shots were fired in the Hungarian uprising, they were celebrating the abolition of the "People's Republic" — henceforth the country will be known simply as the Republic of Hungary.

"We regard this as a victory of '56, and accept the declaration of the Republic on October 23rd as an honourable gesture," said Mr Imre Mecs, one of those who in 1956 marched to Budapest's radio station and witnessed the uprising's first shots.

"The present government must cooperate with the opposition to take the people to free elections," he hoped.

Outside the radio building itself, in a separate opposition rally, the atmosphere was solemn. Other opposition groups marched from a technical university where the uprising started, and from a statue symbolising solidarity with Poland. And at Parliament, a huge crowd met under opposition banners for a candlelight rally.

But the emotion remained

with the noon proclamation, when the new republic was made welcome with tears and flowers.

Soldiers were on duty outside Parliament. But this time the rifle barrels were upturned in a ceremonial gesture, not pointing forward, with Hungarian flags strapped proudly to the bayonets.

Mr Janos Berecz, a hard-liner turned reformer, clasped hands with his wife and stood in behind the Cabinet, out of view but still a presence.

Mr Robert Ribanski (the man who calls 1956 a counter-revolution and heads a group claiming the communist heritage) scurried with his big cigar into a garden nearby the radio station — fenced off, but within earshot, of the opposition speeches.

At Parliament the crowd endorsed its new leaders, with cheers for Mr Szuros and a mob chasing the popular and outspoken opposition MP, Mr Zoltan Kiraly, around the building demanding autographs.

"Mr Kiraly should be our next president," one youth said.

In the early dusk candles flickered and a stark portrait of Mr Imre Nagy, the popular prime minister who appealed to the uprising and was executed afterward, stared encouragingly out towards his new generation of followers.

"We shall be an indepen-

dent state of people not only on paper but in reality," boomed the voice of one opposition leader over the parliamentary loudspeaker.

This year Hungary has created a constitutional court, a presidential post and a multi-party democracy. Parliament has abolished the notorious party army, the Workers' Militia, and has told the ruling Hungarian Socialist Party it can no longer practise politics at the workplace. These are opposition victories won, with the help of new state leaders, in the spirit of 1956.

The big election battle has yet to be fought but Hungary is on the right track. "We are the '56 people but we are also the '89 people who now must continue the great revolution but without blood, thank God," said Mr Mecs.

"It's a great joy that people can talk now, people who did not dare to do so," said Mr Belane Vekony, aged 70, outside the Corvin cinema, a major nerve-centre of 1956. "I do believe that some of our leaders have realised they were wrong."

In the narrow street outside the radio station, an old man said: "It was a very good feeling to come here. I was here with my family in 1956 too, but we left before the shooting."

But a woman in her 50s stood nearby with tears flowing.

"This came to late," she said. "They killed my father here."