

Chernobyl fears cause strike

10/8/90

From Susan Viets
in Kiev

WORKERS from up to 38 factories in Kiev yesterday held a two hour unsanctioned warning strike to press for the immediate closing of the Chernobyl nuclear power-station and for drastically improved health care measures against radiation.

The head of the newly formed Kiev strike committee, Mikhail Ratushny, said reports from 12 of the 38 factories which pledged to strike indicated that at least half of all the workers in each enterprise participated.

The Ukrainian parliament last week passed a decree to close Chernobyl and ordered the government to work out a plan of action by December. According to

Mr Ratushny, however, "parliament's decision was not enough. The citizens of Kiev have waited for more than four years for something to be done and have lived with lies and silence about the after effects of Chernobyl."

Demands include the immediate conversion of party *dachas* and hotels into temporary accommodation and schools for families with children from the 19-mile radiation danger zone. The strikers called for compensation ranging from 50-100 roubles per month for people living in a contaminated

zone they say extends well beyond the 93 miles separating Chernobyl from Kiev. They moved to create citizen committees to monitor the clean-up of the danger zone and demanded that a nuclear reactor located in a Kiev research institute be moved outside the city.

Despite the city prosecutor's official warning not to strike and his criticism of the strike committee for "resorting to methods which will destabilise an already tense situation" the protests passed off peacefully. Most workers spent the two hours off the job attending Chernobyl protest meetings on the factory floor.

Yaroslav Hoshko, a worker at a medical instruments factory in

Kiev and the head of its strike committee, said "With the exception of one section, the entire factory stopped work. For once people weren't afraid of the managers and they believed in us. Today they got off their knees and maybe tomorrow they'll be up on their feet."

According to Mr Ratushny, still waiting for final participation figures, the strike was a success. He says the Kiev strike committee plans to co-ordinate with committees already established in the Ukraine's eastern Donetsk mining region and the radical western Ukraine to organise a republic-wide strike in the autumn against Mr Gorbachev's union treaty.