

Victorious Kiev students return to their classes

THE INDEPENDENT

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USSR

WITH THE smell of victory in the air, Ukrainian students yesterday rolled up their tents and headed back to classes.

"They've given us more than we hoped for," said Sergei Barkov, a student hunger striker who was busy sweeping up the litter from the tent city in Kiev's central October Revolution Square.

The blue and yellow national flag perched precariously on top of Shevchenko University disappeared after students barricaded inside left to drink vodka at a celebration with friends in the square. Both the Kiev student strike and hunger strike finished late on Wednesday when parliament gave in, after repeated demonstrations by tens of thousands of young Kievites, to five student demands.

Top of the list was the resignation of Vitaly Masol, the elderly prime minister, now promised by Leonid Kravchuk, the president of the republic. A student leader, Oleg Kyzyma, called the long-serving Mr Masol "the head of a marionette government under the Brezhnev years".

A decree, overwhelmingly adopted in an emotional parliamentary session, has scheduled a referendum on confidence in parliament for next year. The six-month-old parliament will decide, based on the outcome of the referendum, whether to dissolve itself and call new elections in 1991.

The decree will also create a committee to look into the nationalisation of Communist Party property, and says a law ordering Ukrainian conscripts to serve only



on Ukrainian territory will be passed by the end of the year.

The latter will undoubtedly worry President Gorbachev, as Ukraine, the second largest Soviet republic, provides the army's annual call-up with 700,000 draftees.

Ukraine's move towards sovereignty is also strengthened by the decree. It states the republic will not enter into a new union treaty until a new constitution is drafted for a sovereign Ukraine. The current constitution contradicts the radical declaration of sovereignty adopted in July on most points.

Despite a call on television earlier in the week from a member of parliament's hardline communist majority Group of 239 for "tanks to clear the squares", Ukrainian communist leaders rejected a "Tiananmen Square" solution in Kiev. All demonstrations and marches by bands of students throughout the city over two days have passed peacefully. Smiling policemen guarding parliament helped students from a tent camp

outside the building to load their gear on to a bus after the vote.

Sergei Odarych, acting head of the secretariat of the opposition movement, Rukh, said yesterday: "This is a temporary period... the future is very difficult to predict as everything in parliament is changing, but maybe parliament can now function normally."

Earlier this month the Group of 239 blocked attempts by Narodna Rada, the opposition parliamentary faction holding a quarter of the 450 seats, to amend the constitution in keeping with the sovereignty declaration. Last week it prevented a vote of no confidence in Mr Masol, leading to frustration and anger among students.

The sea of young faces — schoolchildren and university students — with placards reading "Shame on the communists" — was visible from the windows of parliament and forced hardliners to take reform demands seriously. Stanislav Gurienko, head of the Group of 239, sat on a committee negotiating with the students and signed the parliamentary decree.

At a closing rally in October Revolution Square early yesterday morning, thousands heard the former political prisoner and Rukh leader, Mykhailo Horyn, tell students: "Your heroic act will be one of the brightest pages in the history of the Ukrainian liberation". Mr Horyn added: "Students of Ukraine, as students in other East European countries, have at

last shown their political strength."

Kiev student leaders succeeded where opposition politicians have so far failed. While the radical western Ukraine has already sent Rukh deputies to parliament, it was students who brought the people of Kiev, the sleepy and politically turgid capital city, on to the streets. Oles Doniy, a student leader, said: "For now we are satisfied but we'll keep an eye on parliament." If parliament does not press ahead with reform, students will once again resort to street politics to force change.

■ MOSCOW — The Soviet Union, facing widespread public unrest due to serious food shortages, had a record grain crop this year but tremendous losses occurred during harvesting, government estimates released on Wednesday showed, **Reuter reports**.

An official at the State Statistics Committee put the harvest at 240m tons, about three million more than the previous record in 1978. The harvest was achieved despite bad weather and shortages of labour and transportation. Officials called out students, factory workers and even KGB forces to help bring in the grain.

But losses still occurred. A senior Soviet agriculture official, speaking on television last month, said there was about 300 million tons of grain in the fields at the start of the harvest.

The Soviet Union, the world's biggest grain importer, has been counting on a big crop to reduce its purchases on the world market.