

# Minsk strike ended

**MINSK** — Belorussian workers halted their general strike yesterday when they won a promise by government officials to negotiate, writes *Susan Viets*. Their victory came after a second day in which the main square in Minsk was packed by tens of thousands of Belorussian protesters.

The strikers were provoked by two- to three-fold price increases to call for higher wages but have expanded their demands. Yesterday they called for the resignation of President Gorbachev, the dismissal of both the Soviet and Belorussian parliaments, new elections and higher wages.

The strike was a sign that the Soviet Union's economic crisis had snapped even the patience of the traditionally conservative and

placid republic of Belorussia. "When the prices went up it was the last straw," said Grigor Vozdik, a member of the Minsk strike committee. "We feel a great strength now in the people. We are stopping for talks but the workers are prepared at any moment to resume the strike," said Mr Vozdik, who will now return to his job as a driver. "People understand that now is the time to fight for their rights," said Mr Vozdik.

The Belorussian Prime Minister, Vyahislav Pebich, finally gave in yesterday and told the workers that he would negotiate with them. He was, however, greeted with jeers and placards saying: "The leaders of the Communist Party should be sent to the Chernobyl power station."

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