

Ukraine students see off their PM

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From Susan Viets
in Kiev

BOWING to five demands from impatient students who had taken to the streets, the Ukraine parliament yesterday passed a remarkable decree demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister, Vitaly Masol, and a referendum on a vote of confidence in parliament.

The decree falls short of the new elections demanded by the students, calling instead for a "referendum in 1991 on confidence in the Ukrainian President and, according to its results, address the question of holding new elections before the end of the year."

Earlier in the day the President, Leonide Kravchuk, told MPs that Mr Masol "will resign" but did not say when. Mr Masol was Prime Minister under the leadership of the hardline communist chief Vladimir Shcherbitski and is unpopular for having delayed economic reforms in the Ukraine.

Tens of thousands of rowdy flag-waving youths marched to parliament for the third day running despite Mr Kravchuk's announcement. They carried banners with messages of support from Kiev's factories. Cadets dressed in uniform broke away from the march to form a human chain between students and the police cordons guarding parliament. All dem-

onstrations have passed without incident. The decree states parliament will pass a law for Ukrainian conscripts to serve only on Ukrainian soil by 31 December 1990. It is soft on the nationalisation of Communist Party property, calling only for the formation of a parliamentary committee to discuss the matter, but clearly states, as demanded by the students, that the Ukraine will not enter into a new union treaty before a new constitution creating a sovereign Ukraine is drafted.

Students barricaded inside the Kiev polytechnic on the sixth day of a city-wide student strike let out a loud cheer when their local MP came to relay the information. "We'll stop the strike and demonstrations. We'll gather our forces and keep an eye on parliament and then decide our next step," said Markiyani Ivanyshyn, a student leader.

Today's decision marks a turnaround for the Communist-dominated Ukrainian parliament which two weeks ago blocked a motion for a vote of no confidence in Mr Masol. The decree

was signed by the leader of the group of 239, the hardline Communist faction, Stanislav Gurenko, and was overwhelmingly passed in parliament by a vote of 314 to 24.

Student protests were sparked by hunger strikers in tent camps in the central October Revolution Square and at the steps of parliament. Oles Doniy, a hunger striker and student leader, wryly commented that "for now the strike is over".

Trust in the Communist-dominated parliament and government is at an all time low. In a recent poll in the liberal daily *Vecherni Kiev*, two thirds of people living in Kiev and surrounding villages said they did not have confidence in the present parliament.

With food shortages blighting the Ukraine, parliament's popularity will fall and its dissolution is likely following the 1991 referendum.

Parliament will draft a law for the registration of political parties in this session. Unofficial parties including the Social Democrats, the Republican Party and the Peasants Democratic Party already exist. An opposition umbrella movement, Rukh, due to hold its second congress next week, is already registered and has members in parliament.

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