



Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

Ukrainian students hunger strike and protest against government, 1990

- Soviet Bloc Independence Campaigns (1989-1991)

2 October

1990

to: 17 October

1990

Country: Ukraine

Location City/State/Province: Kiev

Location Description: Maidan Nezalezhnosti, meaning Independence Square

Goals:

Resignation of Prime Minister Masol, new multi-party elections, military service to be completed on Ukrainian land only, dissuade the formation of a new Union Treaty that would have strengthened the bonds with the USSR, and the nationalization of the Communist Party's property.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 062. Student strike
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 062. Student strike
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 062. Student strike
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 4th segment:

- 062. Student strike
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 5th segment:

- 062. Student strike
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 038. Marches
- 062. Student strike
- 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 162. Sit-in
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

Notes on Methods:

It was noted that Oles Doniy called for a sit-in at higher education institutions and that students had seized the University that day. However, it is not explicitly noted if the students seized the University as a result of the sit-in, but due to the placement of the sentences, it can be assumed.

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

National/Ethnic Identity

Group characterization:

- Ukrainian students
- pro-nationalists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

L'viv's Student Brotherhood, Kiev's Ukrainian Students Union

Partners:

Not known

External allies:

Traditionally pro-Communist workers from the Arsenal factory

Involvement of social elites:

Stepan Khmara, Mykhailo Horyn

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:**Groups in 2nd Segment:****Groups in 3rd Segment:****Groups in 4th Segment:**

- Mykhailo Horyn
- Stepan Khmara

Groups in 5th Segment:**Groups in 6th Segment:**

- Pro-Communist Arsenal factory workers

Segment Length: 3 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Prime Minister Masol, government of Ukraine, Soviet Union

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Not known

Repressive Violence:

Not known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Many of the demands of the students - such as the resignation of Masol and the abandonment of a Union Treaty - were met immediately at the end of the hunger strike. The other demands, such as multi-party elections and voluntary instead of compulsory military service outside the borders of Ukraine, were achieved within two years following the campaign.

The campaign organizations were still active by the end of the campaign, and it was only after the campaign that the pressure on the students involved began.

Both the leading organizations and the overall campaign gained momentum and members. Although the campaign started with a core of a few hundred students, thousands more came to protest and sympathize with those students. Also, notable social elites and originally pro-Communist workers joined the campaign.

Dissatisfied with lack of democracy and the Soviet Union's influence on their country, Ukrainian university students in L'viv established the Student Brotherhood in March of 1989. In December students in the capital city of Kiev formed the Ukrainian Students Union.

The two groups agreed on a list of demands for the Ukrainian government, including the resignation of Prime Minister Masol and the establishment of new multi-party elections. They also demanded that their military service be carried out on Ukrainian territory, the nationalization of Communist Party property, and the dropping of a proposed Union Treaty with the Soviet Union.

To demonstrate their commitment, the Students Union and the Student Brotherhood built a tent city encampment and on 2 October launched a hunger strike at the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti*, (Independence Square) in Kiev. The hunger strike was influenced by the example of the Chinese students' hunger strike in Tiananmen Square in 1989 (see [Chinese students campaign for democratic reform \(Tiananmen Square\), 1989](#) [5]).

Before the Ukrainian students organized their hunger strike, there had already been protests by others. On 30 September, 200,000 Ukrainians launched a demonstration in Kiev to coincide with the opening of the second session of the Supreme Court. A general strike followed on 1 October, but did not garner as much support.

The next day, 2 October 1990, the students began their hunger strike. They erected about fifty tents in the Independence Square. A core of about 150 to 200 students participated directly in the hunger strike while another 2,000 joined at the site. The strikers were joined every day by several thousand protestors, sympathizers, and onlookers from cities throughout Ukraine.

On 15 October, more students in Kiev carried out a demonstration in front of the Ukrainian Parliament building after a live television broadcast showed the efforts of the hunger-striking students in the Independence Square. 50,000 students were involved in this demonstration and one of the student leaders, Oles' Doniy, announced the students' demands before the parliament and also called on students to stage sit-ins in their respective institutions of higher education.

After hearing this call, the students successfully seized the University building that day. The students demonstrating at the Supreme Soviet broke up into smaller groups to march throughout the city to schools and factories passionately stating their demands. Some wore symbols, such as a blue and yellow Ukrainian flag.

The campaign gained significant partners and allies, including prominent activists such as Stepan Khmara -- a Ukrainian politician and human rights activist -- and Mykhailo Horyn -- an activist and politician.

Workers from the Arsenal factory in Kiev supported the students as well. The Arsenal factory had been memorialized since 1917 as a factory that had led to the victory of the Bolsheviks, a faction of the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Therefore, the support of these pro-Communist workers for the students protesting against the Communist dominion of Ukraine was seen as a symbolic turning point and victory for the campaign.

The authorities were largely blind-sided by the hunger strike and its success in garnering support from students all over the country, and the increasing amount of protests and demonstrations. In two weeks the government capitulated, agreeing to meet some of the students' demands on 17 October 1990. Military service would be restricted to Ukrainian territory except for volunteers; the proposed treaty for union with the Soviet Union would be dropped. As the months went by other demands were met: Prime Minister Masol resigned and the Supreme Soviet agreed to allow multi-party elections.

Research Notes

Influences:

The Ukrainian students were influenced by the hunger strikes by Chinese Students at Tiananmen Square. (see Chinese students campaign for democratic reform (Tiananmen Square), 1989)(1)

Sources:

Clines, Francis X. "EVOLUTION IN EUROPE; Militant Students in Ukraine Force the Party Into Retreat." The New York Times. N.p., 19 Oct. 1990. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

Cooperman, Alan. "Ukrainian Students Risked Another Tiananment, And Won." Associated Press. N.p., 22 Oct. 1990. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

Dobbs, Michael. "Ukraine Bows To Students -- Protestors Fold Tent City After Demands Are Met." The Seattle Times. N.p., n.d. 19 Oct. 1990. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

Diuk, Nadia M. "Ukraine: Land of Paradoxes." The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan: Youth, Politics, Identity, and Change. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. 37-41. Google EBook. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

Kuzio, Taras, and Andrew Wilson. "Stalemate and the Rise of National Communism (1990-1)." Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence. New York: St. Martin's, 1994. 152-54. Google EBook. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

Mycio, Mary. "Ukrainian SSR Government Bows to Students' Demands." Ukrainian Weekly [Kiev] 21 Oct. 1990: 1. Scribd. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

Roberts, Adam, and Ash Timothy. Garton. "Ukraine's 'Orange Revolution' of 2004: The Paradoxes of Negotiation." Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present. Oxford [England: Oxford UP, 2009. 337-39. Print.

Solchanyk, Roman. "Introduction." Ukraine, from Chernobyl' to Sovereignty: A Collection of Interviews. New York: St. Martin's, 1992. Xx. Google EBook. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

"Students Strike for Independence in Ukraine." Associated Press [Moscow] 15 Oct. 1990: 1. AP News Archive. Web. 14 Sept. 2012.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Yein Pyo, 14/09/2012

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

Copyright Swarthmore College.



Global Nonviolent Action Database is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/) .

Original website design and artwork created by [Daniel Hunter](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu> .

Registered users can [login](#) to the website.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/02/2020 - 19:24): <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/ukrainian-students-hunger-strike-and-protest-against-government-1990-0>

Links:

[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/wave-campaigns/soviet-bloc-independence-campaigns-1989-1991>

[2] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-student-participants>

[3] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/example-regime-change>

[4] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/included-participation-more-one-social-class>

[5] <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/chinese-students-campaign-democratic-reform-tiananmen-square-1989>