

THE streets of Kiev yesterday teemed with 15,000 Ukrainians who gathered at the sports stadium in support of today's opposition-organised general strike against the union treaty.

The republic-wide action is un-sanctioned; tension has been mounting since troops from the Soviet Interior Ministry and the army moved into the city late last week. Lorries carrying soldiers raced past the demonstrators as they marched through the city waving the national blue-and-yellow flag and shouting: "Glory to the Ukraine" and "Reds to the red book." Brigades of volunteers from the opposition umbrella movement, Rukh, kept order.

This is the first big test of power between Communists and the opposition since MPs from

'Awakening' Ukrainians rally to general-strike call

both sides voted in June to adopt the Ukraine's radical sovereignty decree. Oleg Shchevchenko, a leader of the radical Republican Party, which initiated the strike, said: "The mood among the Communist leadership is that they are afraid of the people's awakening . . . They've called the army in less than from fear that people will try to take over party buildings."

The main strike demand is "the refusal of the imposition of a new union treaty — the renewed form

From Susan Yiets
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of yoke." The Communist Party moved a step closer to the opposition last week when it decided it was too early for the Ukraine to enter into the new union treaty. The strikers also seek a curtailment in exports of Ukrainian food and goods to other republics, an end to the Soviet army draft of Ukrainian soldiers, the immediate closure of Chernobyl nuclear

power station, "destateification" of the economy, nationalisation of Communist property and fulfilment of miners' demands, issued in the June strike.

Strike committee spokesmen say western Ukraine, traditionally more radical and pro-independence than the Russified east, is giving full support to the strike. Yesterday 92 busloads of demonstrators arrived from Lvov for the rally. One contingent shouted out: "Kievites, wake up!"

The head of the Kiev strike

committee, Mikhailo Ratushny, said a quarter of Kiev enterprises had pledged their support. Many will limit time off work to two hours. Transport workers plan a six-minute walk-off.

The strike coincides with the opening of the second session of the Ukrainian parliament, which will debate terms for the union treaty. A decree recently adopted by the Communist-dominated parliament banned all rallies in a 1,000-yd zone around the building. Strike organisers said they would ignore it and plan to assemble strikers there early today.

Yesterday 5,000 people carrying Israeli and Ukrainian flags gathered at Babi Yar in Kiev for a public rally to commemorate the 100,000 Jews killed there by the Nazis 49 years ago.