

Jolt for Moscow as Ukrainian allies break away

USSR /
COURSING through the streets of Kiev late on Monday night, thousands of marchers shouted "Glory to the Ukraine". They were celebrating the radical sovereignty declaration by which the parliament of their republic, the Soviet Union's second-largest, declared that it had the right to its own armed forces, and asserted the priority of Ukrainian over Soviet law.

In a parliamentary press conference, Communist and opposition MPs vied with each other over who was happier with the sovereignty declaration, endorsed by an overwhelming majority vote. The

Parliament's Communist Speaker, Ivan Plyushch, said: "There's going to be some reaction from the centre - and it will be negative, because no one wants to give up undivided dominance. But we adopted this declaration, and we'll stick to it."

Many of the Communist MPs feel betrayed by their former party leader, and former President of the Ukraine, Vladimir Ivashko, who has just become deputy general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. "He's a traitor who left us at a crucial moment," said one MP. Ukrainian Communist MPs attending the recent party

From Susan Viets
in Kiev

congress in Moscow were recalled for the sovereignty debate to give parliament its quorum, but Mr Ivashko did not return.

Signs are that many of the Communist Party members are now shifting closer to the opposition movement group, Rukh, whose MPs hold almost one-third of the seats in parliament. The Prime Minister, Vitaly Masol, said yesterday that parliament should adopt measures for a market economy and economic indepen-

dence, including setting up a Ukrainian foreign bank.

A Rukh MP, Ivan Zayets, said in the government daily, *Radyanska Ukraina*: "We have to ensure that the declaration gains the same power as law, and its contents should be supported and developed by new documents."

The Chernobyl nuclear disaster gave Ukrainians a focus for political protest, and the sovereignty declaration calls for a nuclear-free Ukraine and "protection of the gene pool" of its people.

Nationalism, however, has long been confined to the western Ukraine (formerly a part of Po-

land, though with a large Ukrainian population, and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940). The republic has had a reputation as Moscow's safe ally, with its Russified east and its conservative Communist Party.

One student said yesterday that he thought Moscow would be taken aback by this week's sovereignty declaration because "they think of us as Russians. With the Baltics, it's different, everyone thinks of them as a separate nation but in Moscow they think we're Russians who just speak with a strange accent."

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