

Old-guard leader for Ukraine

1988 /
 THE UKRAINE put the brakes on a radical drive for sovereignty yesterday when its Communist-dominated parliament elected a hardliner as republic president.

Leonid Kravchuk, the Communist Party second secretary who, in the Brezhnev era, was the party's ideology chief, won in a five-candidate race with 244 votes out of 450. His closest competitor was Igor Yukhnovsky, head of the Democratic bloc in parliament and an ally of the pro-independence opposition movement, Rukh. 2 4 1111 1990

Professor Yukhnovsky won 140 votes in the first round and was due to face Mr Kravchuk in a run-off but withdrew. The vote arose after Vladimir Ivashko resigned as president to become deputy general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

From Susan Viets
 in Lvov

Mr Kravchuk, like so many Soviet Communist leaders, is trying to reform to meet popular demands for political change. He broke ranks with fellow Communists last week to vote in favour of a narrowly defeated decree that would have aided sovereignty by giving the Ukrainian parliament control over all matters affecting the republic.

He is, however, a man Mr Gorbachev will be able to work with. While the Ukrainian parliament's sovereignty declaration sent a clear message to Moscow that change is needed, Mr Kravchuk is more likely to use the declaration as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Moscow than as

a document to be implemented. He wants direct economic relations between the republics but within the framework of the Soviet Union. Mr Kravchuk has also vowed to begin drafting a new constitution, which both opposition and Communist MPs agree is a crucial step to sovereignty.

Nikolai Horyn, a Rukh deputy on the Lvov city council, yesterday said: "It is only natural that Kravchuk will be elected because he represents the Communist majority in parliament. He's more radical than Ivashko but less radical than Yukhnovsky."

When the winner was announced, one disappointed Rukh activist said: "We've lost but it doesn't matter. We already have sovereignty in Lvov and soon we'll drag the rest of the Ukraine along with us."

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 24 July 1990