

# Ukraine opposition prepares for power

6.3.90 pg 9

Susan Viets in Kiev

**G**ATHERED around a large oak table and surrounded by lavish rococo decor, Ivan Drach and his colleagues of the Ukrainian Popular Movement (Rukh) opposition yesterday reaffirmed their commitment to private property, private enterprise, and a separate Ukrainian currency.

Those goals seemed less fanciful yesterday as preliminary results came in following Sunday's election.

The initial results listed only one first-round winner in Kiev but Mr Drach was confident: "Rukh will win 25-30 per cent of the vote, though everything may still hinge on the second round of elections on March 18."

Mr Drach, who heads Rukh, and two of his associates, Mykhaylo Horyn and Voloymar Yavorivsky, won overwhelming victories in their constituencies in the radical west Ukraine. Their organisation forms part of a larger umbrella group, the Democratic Bloc, and fielded candidates in 130 districts while the Bloc as a whole contested 200 of the 450 parliamentary seats.

Mr Horyn, who wants full independence for the Ukraine, said: "Independent republics create better conditions for stability" in the Soviet Union. Mr Drach, who is "standing on the platform to make Rukh a separate party", also favours independence but yesterday con-

ceded that in Sunday's poll "not everybody voted for the idea of independence, people mostly voted Rukh to vote against the system".

Rukh headquarters used to be in Mr Drach's office in the splendid Writers' Union building where yesterday's post-election meeting of Rukh leaders was held. But they recently moved down the hill. A climb up the battered stairway leads into a maze of corridors and to the doorway of the election office.

On the streets photo-copied election leaflets are glued in clusters near bus stops. The black and white photos and uninspiring text have not helped to displace apathy in Kiev, home to 3 million Ukrainians.

The remaining 50 million, many concentrated in the West, will however make politics in this republic lively. Rukh's leaders say their organisation is similar to the Baltic national movements of a year and a half ago. One spokesman, however, drew attention to the size and economic importance of the Ukraine, calling the republic "a very great force" which the Kremlin "must take into consideration".

Rukh leaders expect this election to represent the transition from "propagandistic activity" to "state activity". They have already promised to switch ministers and to inject some fresh Rukh blood into the Ukrainian parliament.

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