

Ukraine to vote on sweeping changes

Russia ~~Plains~~ Ukraine

From Susan Viets

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THE UKRAINIAN parliament will vote today on a radical sovereignty declaration affirming Ukrainian independence in foreign affairs and giving the republic its own army.

In a protracted two-week debate to draft the 10-point declaration, parliament voted by a narrow majority to include in the declaration that Ukrainian soldiers in the Soviet army will now serve only on Ukrainian territory and participate in military exercises outside the Ukraine only with the republic's permission. The declaration would give the Ukraine independent police and security forces to replace those now controlled through Moscow.

Last week parliament moved to create a separate Ukrainian banking system. Under the new provisions the republic can issue its own currency, although there are no immediate plans to do so. And in keeping with measures adopted by other republics, the Ukraine insists that its laws take precedence over Soviet ones. The Ukraine, however — like the Russian Republic — is not seeking outright independence. One deputy, Mykola Porovski, proposed annulling the 1922 Union Treaty which incorporated the independent Ukrainian People's Republic into the Soviet Union but this was not taken up by parliament.

The second-in-command of the opposition movement, Rukh Sergei Konev, said: "It's the beginning of independence. Sovereignty is more useful . . . the first result of such declarations will be [that] the Soviet ministries will die, there will be direct economic relations between the republics . . . Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania — we're helping one another."

Bystanders who had gathered in the square outside parliament cheered opposition MPs on Friday. One man told his MP: "I want independence for the Ukraine now." The Ukraine has a 52 million people and contributes on average 20 per cent to the Soviet gross domestic product.

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