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Ukrainian leader votes 'to avoid Moscow's tug of war'

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USSR: Ukraine

KIEV — The Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk yesterday dropped his folded ballot into a large red box stamped with the symbol of the Soviet Union and promptly declared Ukraine must fight for its sovereignty, writes Susan Viets.

"Moscow leaders and Kremlin leaders have starting talking not about a union, but rather about a union state. These are two different things. I'm voting for a strong union in which republics pass reforms that would satisfy the interests of their own people, but if the vote is for a union state then the stronger the centre is, the weaker the republics will be. That would be a tug of war between the centre and the republics, but what

we want is to create our own sovereign state in "Ukraine first," Mr Kravchuk said.

Large professionally printed posters decorating the courtyards of Kiev urged Ukrainians to vote against political union and for economic union.

West Ukrainians also voted yesterday on a third ballot asking whether Ukraine should be "a free and independent state."

About 2,000 people rallied in the central October Revolution Square to hear the radical opposition Inter Party Assembly demand the boycott of the referendum, despite a law saying that such agitation on election day could be punished with five years in prison.

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