

Ukrainians call for independence

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Susan Viets in Kiev

THE Ukrainian Popular Movement, Rukh, yesterday declared its intention to become the republic's first full-fledged opposition party to campaign for independence from the Soviet Union.

Collective farmers and workers in the Donbass pressed for independence following the organisation's success in last weekend's elections. However, the move is not supported by the entire Rukh leadership, and must be decided by a national congress in the spring.

Ivan Drach, the head of

Rukh, and its secretary, Mykhaylo Horyn, huddled together early yesterday in their makeshift office to draft a declaration to be signed by 15 of the party's leaders. It is to be published soon.

The declaration calls for political pluralism, democratisation and "real final independence for the Ukraine". "This of course means leaving the Soviet Union," Mr Drach said.

The draft declaration also demands that the Ukrainian Communist Party take full responsibility for the 1932 famine, the politics of "Russification", and the liquidation of the Ukrainian intelligentsia

One-fifth of the 1,120 delegates at the founding Rukh Congress last September were Communist Party members. Mr Drach, a member himself, said the Ukrainian Communist Party is fractured, dominated by conservatives, and incapable of regenerating political life in the Ukraine.

Nearly 30 Rukh candidates have already been elected to the Ukrainian Parliament, and according to results available from half of the republic, Rukh candidates made it to the second round of the elections in one-third of the constituencies.

Many of the victors are former political prisoners. Mr

Horyn, now a deputy, spent 12 years in prison for anti-Soviet activities. He was released in 1987 and is not yet rehabilitated.

Yesterday afternoon, Mr Horyn supported a demonstration by 300 students outside the city council demanding the release of 19 students jailed last month following widespread strikes.

The students originally had demanded the abolition of ideology courses and party cells at the universities.

Yesterday, they wore bright red gags and carried placards demanding simply, "freedom to students".

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