

KIEV DECREE

Communist Party banned in Ukraine

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AFTER hours of tense discussions, Ukrainian leaders yesterday took the ground-breaking decision to ban the Ukrainian Communist Party.

A seven-point decree issued by the parliamentary presidium and signed by its head, Leonid Kravchuk, says: "The Communist Party is now considered dissolved." "Liquidation commissions" will be established. Within a week a list of all Communist Party members must be drawn up and their party cards collected and destroyed "through official channels". The decree guarantees alternative jobs for former party employees and states that city councils "must prevent any repression" against them.

While the central government and most republics have only gone as far as suspending party activities, Ukraine is at the forefront in actually placing a ban, although its decree does not prohibit the formation of a new Communist Party. It would, however, operate without privileges acquired over the past 70 years. Communists

would have to go through a rigorous registration process, find new buildings and collect funds, although rumours are rife that much party money is already stashed away in foreign bank accounts. The leader of the Communist faction in parliament, Oleksander Moroz, said on Monday a new party is expected to be formed in the autumn.

Earlier in the day the wily Mr Kravchuk, who claims to have resigned from the Communist Party as early as 19 August, said: "These men were my friends and colleagues. I cannot defend them and they should be punished for their criminal activities."

The investigatory commission, set up last Saturday when Ukraine declared independence, unearthed coded telegrams in the sealed-off Central Committee HQ. These prove that Ukrainian Communist Party leaders willingly implemented orders received from Moscow's Emergency Com-

mittee via the Soviet Communist Party.

While Party membership numbered 3 million last summer, the First Secretary, Stanislav Hurienko, recently announced it had lost 400,000 members since then. Mr Hurienko is now under investigation for his role in the failed coup. Laryssa Skoryk, an investigatory commission member, said yesterday: "The only ones left in the party are those who find it difficult to admit their treasonous act, people who on the strength of their not-particularly-high intelligence still think the situation can be reversed."

The huge granite statue of Lenin in the newly-christened Independence Square, flanked until last week by police guards whenever demonstrators approached, is now plastered with anti-Communist graffiti and swastikas. Scaffolding was erected around it yesterday. Signs posted there read: "Please excuse us for the in-

convenience. In accordance with the resolution of the Kiev city council, work is in preparation for demolition of the monument."

Workmen hung a new sign on the main entrance of parliament yesterday, reading simply "... Supreme Soviet of Ukraine", not "Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine". A small crowd watching, however, booed when they discovered it was still decorated with the hammer and sickle. "The hammer and sickle means famine and hunger," said an onlooker.

While Communists have not yet publicly responded to this week's onslaught, the banner hanging over the podium at a press conference given by editors of four suspended Communist Party newspapers said: "The junta began with closing down papers." They said they were the victims of "anti-constitutional" and "undemocratic" measures taken in the wake of last week's failed coup.

In a separate presidium decision yesterday, Ukrainian leaders voted for the creation of a 30,000-strong national guard.