

# Yeltsin signs historic pact in Kiev

USSR/RUSSIA

KIEV "Union my way" was the message the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, delivered to President Gorbachev after yesterday's signing in Kiev of an historic agreement between the Ukraine and Russia, writes Susan Viets.

"We must not have a union treaty but a treaty of sovereign states ... we are waiting for the impulse and we believe the impulse is the treaty signed today ... not initiated by order of the centre but through the parliament of the two republics," said Mr Yeltsin.

While not Russia's first such bilateral treaty, the economic and friendship agreement unites the Soviet Union's two largest republics — with a combined population of 200 million — which produce 80 per cent of total merchandise.

Mr Yeltsin, however, was careful to stave off criticism that he

was seeking power for himself and Russia, saying: "Russia doesn't want to have privileges or act as a superpower. The Russian people lost out from being a superpower and refused this role."

Under the agreement the two republics will co-operate on defence, foreign policy and emigration and will co-ordinate pricing policies. The pact advocates the creation of "common economic space", including joint supply of goods and services and payments. A standing inter-parliamentary commission between Russia and the Ukraine has been formed and plenipotentiary representatives will be exchanged.

The Ukrainian President, Leonid Kravchuk, used the occasion to pledge his commitment to Ukrainian sovereignty and to warn hardliners in the Ukrainian parliament: "We don't want political

games played with sovereignty ... those who don't understand this will reap unfavourable consequences."

Mr Yeltsin directed his criticism at proposals drawn up by Mr Gorbachev at the weekend, describing them as "hastily prepared ... without consultation with the sovereign republics". He said Mr Gorbachev's "intellectual potential is over" and that "to realise the programme of a government that lacks the people's trust is unrealistic".

Mr Yeltsin — who was greeted outside parliament by a crowd of enthusiastic supporters waving blue and yellow national flags — declined to comment on the arrest of the opposition leader, Stepan Khmara, at the weekend, saying the new treaty advocated non-interference in the republic's domestic affairs.