

# ENSU Trade Union Newsletter

March 2024

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[ENSU public media policy](#)

## *In this issue*

Welcome to the March 2024 issue of the trade union newsletter of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine (ENSU). In it we ask the vital questions: Is the trade union movement in Europe doing enough to support Ukraine, its workers and their trade unions at a time when the situation on the military front is stalled? What else can they do?

We also feature the ongoing struggles of Ukraine's working women, students and pensioners, as well as of communities who mobilise to pressure their local governments to increase support to the armed forces.



*London, February 24. The Public and Commercial Service Union contingent with Ukraine*

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## **Feature: What must our trade unions do to help Ukraine?**

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### **1. Open letter from ENSU trade union coordinator Alfons Bech**

*Source: ENSU Google group “Trade Union Solidarity with Ukraine and its Workers”  
(March 26, 2024)*

Dear colleagues,

The situation in Ukraine is becoming increasingly difficult. The [March 22 appeal of our KVPU brothers and sisters](#) shows how the repeated Russian attacks are affecting all areas of the country. Putin’s regime is trying to create a situation where life becomes untenable for working people and Ukraine’s citizens in general.

Putin’s so-called “election victory”, with its aftermath of crimes and internal repression—to which can now be added the use of lies targeting Ukraine as involved in the March 23 Moscow terrorist attack—confirm the extent to which Ukrainian workers and their trade unions are facing an untenable situation.

For all these reasons I consider that [the appeal adopted jointly by FPU and KVPU](#) at the last international trade union conference, on February 22 in Kyiv, and the recent declaration of the KVPU, deserve to be discussed by our trade union organisations, national and international.

In it both unions call on the international trade union community to put pressure on our governments to deliver the promised aid in every sense, from humanitarian to military support, and to increase sanctions against and isolation of those who support the occupation and aggression against Ukraine.

I believe that European trade unionism cannot avoid this debate and must review those aspects of its present position that today do not allow us to respond to the demands of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters.

Together, Ukrainian, European and international trade union organisations need to build a more effective response in line with the necessary defence of Ukraine and its workers in the very difficult times they are going through.

At the same time, in addition to political pressure, let us review our capacity to send direct humanitarian aid in this urgent situation, especially in those materials that can be most useful: generators, water purification equipment, emergency medical equipment and other essential items.

With fraternal greetings and solidarity,

*Alfons Bech, trade union coordinator of ENSU*

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## 2. Russia Launches Massive Attacks to Destroy Homes, Workplaces, Energy, and Economy of Ukraine

*Source: Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU)*

*(March 24)* The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine, an affiliated organisation of the ITUC and ETUC, calls upon the international trade union community and the governments of democratic countries to strengthen support for Ukraine at a time when Russia is causing large-scale destruction of residential buildings, civil and energy infrastructure, and purposefully destroying the economy and workplaces.

On March 21-22, 2024, the Russian army carried out the largest attacks on Ukrainian cities and towns, targeting energy infrastructure, while continuing attempts to attack and occupy more Ukrainian territories.

During the night of March 21, Russian troops fired 31 rockets at residential areas of the capital Kyiv and other cities. According to experts' estimates, Russia spent \$390 million on this massive attack. On the same day, the Russian Armed Forces attacked a civilian enterprise in Kharkiv, resulting in the deaths of three men and two women.

On March 22, Russia continued its missile terrorism, launching 60 UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicle] and 90 missiles of various types, targeting energy facilities and residential areas of cities.

Explosions were heard in at least ten regions: Khmelnytskyi, Lviv, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kirovohrad, Sumy, and Vinnytsia regions. The Russian Armed Forces launched twelve missile strikes on Zaporizhzhia today.



### ***Consequence of Russian attacks on March 22, 2024–Khmelnyskyi***

As a result of this Russian troops' attack, Ukraine's largest hydroelectric power station (HPP), the Dniprovsk HPP, was damaged. Additionally, during the massive missile attack on Ukraine at 5:10

a.m., the PL-750kV Dniprovsk external overhead line, that is connecting the temporarily occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) with the unified energy system of Ukraine, was disconnected. Currently, the Zaporizhzhia NPP is connected to the Ukrainian power system by a power transmission line that was repaired by Ukrainian energy workers just last week after another Russian shelling.

Russia's actions resulted in blackouts, communication and water supply problems in various cities and regions of Ukraine, including Kharkiv, Sumy, Lviv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, Poltava, Kirovohrad, Odesa, and others. The big industrial city Kharkiv is without power today. This poses risks for lives of workers, hospital patients, evacuees from front-line areas and settlements under constant shelling. Additionally, the population cannot access bank services, ATMs, supermarkets, pharmacies etc.



According to the Independent Trade Union of Mineworkers of Ukraine, more than 1000 workers of mining enterprises in the Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk regions are in danger underground due to the power outage. Rescue operations are currently underway to bring these miners to the surface. Additionally, several sections of the Ukrainian railway were de-energised today, resulting in 14 trains being delayed. This situation hampers the evacuation of civilians.

We emphasise that Russia is causing civilian casualties, including workers at their workplaces, and is actively destroying Ukraine's economy and energy industry on a daily basis. It is important to note that Russian troops employ the tactic of double missile strikes, targeting rescuers and medical workers who arrive at the scene of shelling to aid victims for a second time. In violation of the international humanitarian law, Russian troops have killed medics and rescue workers during their work.

We address the international democratic community with the following appeals:

- To continue providing economic and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.
- To contribute to the supply of the military aid aimed at protecting Ukraine and its population.
- To intensify sanctions against the terrorist regime of Russia, as this measure can significantly limit the financial resources and technology exports essential for sustaining the ongoing bloody war.
- To ensure the possibility of utilizing frozen Russian assets by directing them towards assisting Ukraine.
- To isolate and remove Russian political, public, and trade union figures from participating in international organisations as representatives of a country engaged in terrorist activities against the sovereign and independent nation of Ukraine and its citizens.

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### 3. Troop-Starved Ukrainian Brigades Turn to Marketing to Attract Recruits

*Source: New York Times*

*(March 30)* Many units, which say the official conscription system is dysfunctional and unwieldy, have started their own recruitment campaigns to fill ranks depleted in the war with Russia.

[Read on here](#)



***A man hanging a portrait of Dmytro Kotsiubailo, better known by his call sign, Da Vinci, one of Ukraine's best-known fighters and a battalion commander, who was killed near Bakhmut last year (Credit: New York Times)***

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## 4. 'Could Putin still finance his war against Ukraine without the billions he owes to the Swiss commodities trade?'

**Speech by Jo Lang, Zurich, 24 February 2024**

*Source: Comité Ukraine Suisse*

*To mark the second anniversary of Russia's war of aggression, a number of demonstrations in solidarity with Ukraine took place in Switzerland. In Zurich, an alliance of left-wing groups marched from the National Museum to Helvetiaplatz. Among the speakers was historian and former Green National Councillor Jo Lang (pictured) from Zug. Here is the text of his speech, in which he attacked Switzerland's "economic Putinism".*

Dear anti-imperialists, dear peace activists,

There are two kinds of Swiss solidarity with Ukraine: the cheap model and the expensive, and therefore the genuine, model. The cheap model ignores the most important issue: Switzerland's rearmament of Putin. The genuine one, on the other hand, asks questions like: could Putin still finance his war against Ukraine without the billions he owes to the Swiss commodities trade and its local oligarchs? Could Putin's bombers and missiles still take off without the special machinery produced by Swiss companies?

### **Funds and goods for the Russian war machine**

For years, the Russian war machine has been fuelled by funds and goods from Switzerland. Nearly 60 percent of Russia's trade in raw materials passed through Switzerland. And the feeding continues, albeit on a reduced scale. Of the 150 billion dollars held by the oligarchs, only eight billion have been sanctioned. And the Swiss dual-use machines delivered to Russian arms factories before the war are in any case beyond the reach of sanctions.

Swiss fossil and financial capitalism and Russian mafia capitalism are closely linked, through some 2000 companies and banks controlled by Russians in Switzerland, such as Gazprom, Nordstream and Sberbank. And through the oligarchs, 85 of whom have "golden visas". And thanks to the many other companies and banks that have served Putin. These include Glencore, Trafigura and the big Swiss banks. When the Russian state's coffers were drained by the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Glencore and its main individual shareholder, Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, stepped in. They injected \$11 billion into state-owned oil giant Rosneft at the end of 2016.

### **The Centre and economic Putinism**

Putin would not have been able to take such massive advantage of the Swiss economy without political support. Let's take three examples from the fields of raw materials, oligarchs and machinery. In the spring of 2006, we, the alternative Greens of Zug, denounced two Russian gas pipeline companies that were waging a natural gas war against Ukraine on behalf of Putin. We called them the "Eastern mafias". The president of the cantonal Christian Democratic Party (CVP), Gerhard Pfister, also took a critical stance. But he was also critical of us. Against our accusations,



he stubbornly, even vehemently, defended the “Zug model of success”, with its many Russian companies and oligarchs.

Why do most of the oligarchs’ billions remain at Putin’s disposal? Because the Money Laundering Act did not include legal advisers and lawyers! The two lawyers and lobbyists from the canton of Valais, State Councillor Beat Rieder from [The Centre](#) and National Councillor Philipp Bregy from the same party, are the main culprits. Putin’s war chest is one of the main beneficiaries of the hole dug by The Centre in Valais.

Incidentally, The Centre, which is always presented as particularly supportive of Ukraine, rejected the Foreign Policy Committee’s proposal for a €5 billion aid package for Ukraine last June—along with the [Free Democratic Party](#) (FDP) and the [Swiss People’s Party](#) (SVP), which makes no secret of its lack of solidarity with Ukraine.

### **Liberal-Radical pro-Putin powerplay**

Why can Putin, thanks to Swiss machines, massacre the Ukrainian civilian population - with missiles or bullets as in Bucha? After the annexation of Crimea, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) decided to stop supplying dual-use machines to Russia because they were being used in war production. Against this measure, which for once was the right one, the machinery industry and the FDP installed a massive pro-Putin power-play.

In December 2015, State Councillor Karin Keller-Suter demanded a liberalisation of export policy towards Russia. In March 2016, Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Amman told SECO: “No ideological control criteria”. This justification is reminiscent of the old [Bergier report](#) and calls for a new one. Of course, the [PLR \(Liberals\)](#) prides itself on being a pro-Ukrainian party. The proof: it is primarily responsible for the fact that Switzerland is still not participating in the REPO (Russian Elites, Proxies and Oligarchs) sanctions task force.

### **Switzerland owes a special debt**

This brings me to the most important demands:

- Immediate confiscation of the assets of the oligarchs in favour of humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of Ukraine. Article 72 of the Criminal Code on the Mafia can be used to achieve this.
- Introduction of a tax on war profits - primarily for the benefit of Ukraine - for raw materials companies which, in 2023, made significantly higher profits than before the war; for companies which directly or indirectly produce war material; for the pharmaceutical industry which has massively increased its exports to Russia over the last two years.
- Systematic application of sanctions. Creation of a supervisory authority for the raw materials market similar to the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (Finma) for the financial markets.
- Plugging the disastrous Rieder/Bregy hole in the Money Laundering Act.

Finally, the same circles that gave their political support to Putin’s rearmament are now taking advantage of its consequences to rearm Switzerland. Switzerland would make better use of the billions it spends on armaments by investing in the reconstruction of Ukraine. Putin is also destroying Ukraine with money and goods from Switzerland. That’s why our country owes Ukraine a special debt.

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## 5. Demand the Weapons to Win!

### **Put Ukrainian Freedom Before Profits For Arms Sales**

Source: Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (England and Wales)



(March 17, 2024) At the start of this year the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU), issued an [appeal for solidarity](#) to the international trade union movement to call on governments to take decisive measures to protect Ukraine and speed up the provision of military aid.

In response to this appeal with the assistance of Labour MPs Clive Lewis and John McDonnell, we are calling for the provision of a significant package of military aid to Ukraine which is readily available and would otherwise be sold off by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). This is set out in an [Early Day Motion \(tanks-vehicles-and-aircraft-for-ukraine\)](#).

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***‘Our positions are 100 metres away from the enemy. We are being bombarded by everything: cluster bombs, phosphorus, artillery. The ratio of our fire to that of the enemy is approximately 1 to 50. We need everything we can.’***

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These words from a Ukrainian woman soldier fighting on the frontlines against Russian forces in Donetsk Oblast show the desperate situation facing the Ukrainian armed forces two years into Russia’s full-scale invasion – and the urgent need for the UK to meet its promises to Ukraine.

The clock is also ticking internationally, the elections for the European Union Parliament and US President could see increased far-right influence and a revanchist Trump presidency. With both forces intent on further undermining aid to Ukraine, the fall of the city of Avdiivka is evidence of what this will mean.

The Kremlin is seeking to exploit this situation to weaken belief in continued international support, whilst imperiously reiterating its objectives to expand its occupation of Ukraine.

Ukraine is at a crossroads and with it the fate of this key battle for democracy with the new authoritarianism.

There is a significant package of military aid available in the arsenal of the UK which if released could potentially have a major impact in ending the current malaise. These resources have been

confirmed by parliamentary disclosures to questions raised by Clive Lewis MP and John McDonnell MP to the Secretary of State for Defence.



***Destroyed city of Avdiivka, occupied by Russia due to obstruction of western aid to Ukraine***

Their questions have revealed the extent to which the MoD has been disposing of military vehicles and aircraft, selling and auctioning off military hardware that could instead be donated to our allies in Ukraine.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it can now be revealed that the MoD has sold off over one-thousand military vehicles. The sell-off includes 74 Bulldog armoured personnel carriers, 134 CVRT combat reconnaissance vehicles, and 63 MAN Support Vehicles, 48 Pinzgauer Trucks, and an array of other trucks, logistics vehicles, trailers, transporters, and quad bikes, as well as 46 fixed-wing aircraft, including attack aircraft and various transport planes.

All military equipment that could be donated to fighting Russians on the frontline, rather than filling up sales and auctions lists.

MPs calling for greater military assistance for Ukraine have condemned the ways in which the MoD is selling off its hardware, rather than donate it to the war effort. Labour MP Clive Lewis tabled a motion to Parliament last year, demanding all such equipment to be offered to Ukraine. It was raised again by Nadia Whittome MP during a debate on Ukraine on the first anniversary of the invasion. But rather than take action on the issue, the government feigned ignorance.

One example revealed by Lewis and McDonnell is the selling-off of FV107 Scimitar reconnaissance vehicles, a battle-hardened light tank used in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Early on in the conflict, the UK promised to donate 23 Scimitar tanks to Ukraine, but so far has failed to send any to our allies. In contrast, 18 have already been sold off to undisclosed buyers via the Defence Equipment Sales Agency.

Campaigning groups such as the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and many other volunteers, have been raising money to buy vehicles and drive them over 1000 km to Ukraine. Whilst all along the MoD sold 182 military Land Rovers similar to those we fundraise for and deliver to a war zone.

Of course, the UK has contributed large amounts of military aid since the start of the full-scale invasion. But it has never been enough. But as the war continues, and right-wing forces in Europe

and the US threaten to withdraw their support for Ukraine, there is so much more the UK could and should be doing.

Last January, the UK donated 14 challenger tanks – now, with the MoD planning to upgrade 148 of its 213 Challenger 2 tanks, will the remaining 63 be sold off or sent to protect soldiers on Ukraine’s front lines? Of the 83 Scimitar tanks still available after the MoD sale, will we see these donated to help Ukraine?

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***‘We need a radical break from providing just enough aid to resist Russia, to enough to win the war’--Christopher Ford, Secretary, USC***

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The UK has trained Ukrainian pilots, but what about sending planes? The Parliamentary disclosure shows that the UK is more than capable of donating Typhoon combat aircraft – with 30 currently on the register, of these 26 will leave service by March next year. And yet, the Secretary of State for Defence has confirmed there are no plans to donate fixed wing aircraft to Ukraine. Instead these Typhoons will be stripped of useable spare parts. Similarly, nine Chinook helicopters set to be retired from the UK armed forces could be donated to Ukraine – if not, why not?

The questions asked by Lewis and McDonnell reveal a worrying trend of the MoD and the UK Government choosing to sell off its military hardware rather than redeploy it to help the resistance in Ukraine fight Russian Imperialism. This reveals a self-limiting approach to the conflict that not only harms Ukrainian soldiers struggling on the frontlines, it endangers us all.

Back on the frontlines, and an officer known as Phoenix told me how *“the availability of these types of weapons and equipment, both at the tactical and operational-strategic levels, will make it possible to have an advantage on the battlefield and, in the end, to win faster than without it, avoiding greater costs than we will have relying only on ourselves. And we must remember, that by doing so we are saving Europe from further Russian invasion.”*

We now need a radical break from the practice of providing just enough aid to resist Russia, to providing enough to win the war and liberate their country as whole. That starts with donating our military hardware, not selling it off to the highest bidder.

#### **What You Can Do to Help Ukraine Win:**

- Contact your Member of Parliament – you can find via the link here: [FindYourMP](#)
- Ask them to sign the Early Day Motion 501 tabled on 12 March 2024
- Ask your MP to contact Grant Shapps Secretary of State for Defence and request all the equipment listed be sent to Ukraine ASAP.

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## **Worker struggles in Ukraine**

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# **#WomenHoldTheLine: Ukrainian women workers fight for peace**



**HOLD THE LINE!  
WOMEN  
FIGHTING FOR  
DEMOCRACY**

**Victoria Sirenko**  
PROFBUD woman trade union leader



BWI • IBB • ICM • BHI • BTI  
[www.bwint.org](http://www.bwint.org)

*Source: Building Workers International*

(March 6, 2024) As part of this year's celebration of International Women's Month, BWI narrates the story of Victoria Sirenko, a 43-year-old Ukrainian woman worker, and a PROFBUD trade union activist. Born in Lithuania, Victoria worked at the Kryvyi Rih Cement Plant as the head of the health centre. When Ukraine was invaded by Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces, Victoria served in the 7th Arei Assault Battalion, a well-known battalion in Kryvyi Rih. She is currently a platoon medic of a fire support unit.

“I personally believe that the war concerns each of us, both women and men, and each of us contributes as much as we can to bring victory closer. There are women in the army who work in the kitchen, there are women doctors, there are volunteers, and in general, we all make our own contribution to the everyday affairs of war. Of course, it is very difficult for women to adapt to the conditions of war – to bunkers, trenches, but we do what we can,” Victoria said.

“I really started to appreciate life, to enjoy every new day, every little thing. Before, I didn’t pay attention to such things, but being at war changed my perception. Sometimes people say that war makes us more cruel, but it’s not true; we become kinder to other people. I want to return to my job after the war; I want to work again with the people I used to work with; I want to come back to my trade union,” Victoria continued.

Victoria explained that because of the war, women in Ukraine have become stronger and more determined to fight for their democratic future. Even the attitude towards International Women’s Day has changed. This year, the general disposition of Ukrainian women workers is to fight for peace.

“Women’s active position is very important for the development of democracy in society. Women and men in Ukraine should have equal rights in terms of wages, care work, access to education and employment, and other issues. And this is possible only in a state built on democratic principles and respect for human rights. I want a peaceful and democratic future for Ukraine,” Victoria said.

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## **Threat of strike by KATP-1628 workers**

Source: <https://suspilne.media/715186-strajk-pracivnikiv-katp-1628-ci-ocikuvati-robotnikam-premij/>

(March 28, 2024) Some of the employees of the municipal enterprise KATP-1628 signed a collective appeal in which they said that their salaries and bonuses are insufficient. The management of the company and the unions will discuss this request for an increase in salaries or bonuses for employees from the budget of the city of Potlava or the region.

In March, employees of KATP-1628 warned the management and the city council about a possible strike and signed a corresponding appeal. One of the complaints was about increased work volumes. Workers are also not satisfied with the new working conditions, with increased control over fuel consumption, Oleksandr Maksymenko said.

In addition, trade unions will submit a collective application to local self-government bodies with a request for compensation in the form of bonuses from the city or regional budget.

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## **Poland: Persistent obstruction of Ukrainian journalists’ work**

Source: *International Federation of Journalists*

(March 14) Since the beginning of 2024, [Ukrainian journalists investigating Poland’s economic ties with Russia and Belarus](#) have faced deliberate obstruction of their activities by Polish law enforcement officers. From vehicle searches to confiscation of equipment, leading to arrests and deportations, the work of the Ukrainian journalists from online newspaper *Ukrainska Pravda* and the news agency Rayon.in.ua has been seriously hindered. The International and the European Federations of Journalists (IFJ-EFJ) urge the Polish authorities to conduct an independent and

thorough investigation into these serious attacks on journalists and to reconsider their deportation from the territory.

On February 27, journalist Mykhailo Tkach, working from news portal *Ukrainska Pravda* along with his cameraman Yaroslav Bondarenko, were among the first journalists [to be detained](#) while reporting on the transit of goods between Poland, Russia, and Belarus. That day, ten agents began searching the journalist's car, seizing phones, confidential documents and damaging memory cards from the cameras.



“It was clear that the Polish special services representatives were scared. They started asking me who else knew, whether the Ukrainian authorities and the Ukrainian government knew. They asked us who our sources were, how we had found out about it and how long we had been working on it”, said Tkach, who was held for at least four

hours before being released after the intervention of the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland. Throughout their detention, the journalists were not permitted to contact anyone. The Polish police [denied](#) having detained the journalists.

On March 7, a similar incident occurred with the editor of the news agency Rayon.in.ua. Yury Konkevych and his cameraman Oleksandr Pilyuk were also [detained](#) by six police officers in Braniewo city for investigating cargo transportation. The car and their working and personal equipment have been confiscated as well. According to the journalists, the officers even deleted some recorded evidence and refused the journalists' request to contact the consul, editorial staff or relatives.

The hostility escalated further when Yuriy Konkevych and Oleksandr Pilyuk were banned from entering Schengen zone countries for five years. They returned to Ukraine at night on March 9. The editorial office of Rayon.in.ua has started the process of appealing the deportation, in addition to seeking the return of their confiscated equipment.

“The fact that Polish law enforcement officers ignore the status of journalists and detain and search media workers is infuriating,” [said](#) the president of the IFJ-EFJ affiliated National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU), Sergiy Tomilenko.

The IFJ and the EFJ are alarmed by such persistent obstruction of the work of Ukrainian journalists in Poland that poses serious threats to the safety of journalists and the press freedom itself. Additionally, the federations call upon Polish authorities to take immediate steps to protect the journalists, including the cancellation of the deportation of Yury Konkevych and Oleksandr Pilyuk.

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## **More than 400 former Rocket employees, who have still not been paid, have launched a collective appeal**

*Source: Patrick Le Tréhindat (translated from <https://dev.ua/>)*

*(March 15, 2024)* Former employees of food delivery service Rocket, which closed in 2022, have published a new collective appeal in which they point out that the startup's founders have still not repaid their debts.

The appeal appeared on Rocket's LinkedIn page, which has more than 4000 users. "As some may remember, Rocket Delivery was unfortunately faced with the question of closure in early 2022. Now, more than two years later, we deem it necessary to shed light on the disturbing situation related to Rocket's founders, Oleksiy Yukhymchuk and Stanislav Dmytryk," reads the message, which claims that more than 400 former employees, "hundreds of couriers and dozens of partner restaurants" have yet to receive "significant sums of money" from Rocket.

They note that Rocket's founders now hold senior positions at YARD Delivery Inc. and "manage other business projects in Ukraine".

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## Community struggles in Ukraine

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### Evictions and Repression in Mariupol

Source: Mariupol, the Resistance (<https://t.me/mrplSprotyv/37046>), via French Network of Solidarity with Ukraine (member of ENSU)

(20 March 2024) The residents of the house at 75 Mira Avenue and the house at 82 Nakhimova Avenue, which have been evicted and where mortgage housing has been built, have taken legal action.



A “public session” is due to be held today. The residents have come to court. They were not allowed to enter the court, as a “public session” in Russia is slightly different from a public session in Ukraine. Riot police came to disperse the residents. Events are actively developing. Everything will end as planned, but the fact that the rally took place at all is remarkable.

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### Cherkasy against the increase in water charges



Source: French Network of Solidarity with Ukraine (member of ENSU)

On March 18, half a hundred residents demonstrated against the increase in water rates (100%!!). On March 19, the executive committee will examine the proposed rates for 2024 at a meeting of the city council, said Tatiana Chernysh. She is one of those opposed to the tariff increase. She said there have been water

problems in the city since 1977. “Whoever has money buys water, but I can’t afford it. I spent a lot of money on the medicines themselves,” added Mrs Tetyana. According to Olga Kazantseva, who has lived here for 36 years, the increase in rates will put people even further into debt: “People can’t afford to pay these rates at the moment. We’re demanding that the authorities don’t raise them. That’s our only demand.”

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## **Cherkasy: People are outraged by the actions of the authorities**



*Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat*

In Cherkasy, on March 16, participants in the “Money for the Armed Forces” action (pictured) gathered under the city council building. For some time, Saturday rallies did not take place, but the population was outraged by the actions of the city authorities. About half a hundred people gathered in the square.

People were outraged by the municipality’s purchase of medical equipment from a Russian-linked company, said Artem Kivak, one of the co-organisers of the action: “After that, we wrote a petition. After that, there was information somewhere that Anatoly Vasyliovych [Bondarenko, mayor of Cherkasy] wanted to fire one of the officials, but there is still no reaction.”

Ivan Podolyan: “The goal of our actions is money for the armed forces. We must move in this direction without being distracted by anything else. Our task is to control the hands of people who manage the money of the Cherkasy community. It is important to see the movement of funds in the right direction” For Lyubov Maiboroda: “Each of you reads Facebook and reads the appeals asking to donate to the army. Added to this is the Cherkasy city council, which does not properly fulfil its obligations to provide for the needs of the armed forces.”

According to her, there has been no reaction to the petition drawn up by the activists. She therefore proposes to require the convening of a session during which the petition will be examined.

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## **Ukraine: Chernobyl pensioners demonstrate**

*Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat*

On March 6, Chernobyl pensioners came to the city council to protest against the reduction of their pensions. A fight broke out with police at the gathering and an ambulance was called to the scene. “People are outraged. But we as a city council don’t understand why people are appealing to us, because local government has no influence on pensions or supplements. But people don’t hear what we say to them, they are overwhelmed by emotions,” declared Nataliya Chizhevskaya from the town hall. “The police stood at the door of the municipal council. The deputy mayor came out to the people and told them that the mayor would come to them. But for some reason people were outraged that the mayor did not come, and they themselves began to break into the city council.

When they broke into the city council, there was a fight. They reported an injured woman there, the police immediately called an ambulance for this woman,” said a law enforcement officer. Subsequently, the protesters blocked the Kiev-Kovel-Yagodin road, continuously passing across the pedestrian crossing.

[Video of the demonstration](#)

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## Kryvyi Rih: ‘After two years on the front line, let them return’



“36 months of service are a death sentence for the military”: the wives and mothers of the defenders of Kryvyi Rih have demonstrated for demobilisation.

On March 3 at 11 a.m., in the 95th block, the eighth all-Ukrainian rally in favour of the demobilisation of servicemen took place. Public opinion and those close to the defenders are demanding the return of the men who have been on the front line for two years. With the call of “Equal Rights for All,”

relatives of service members marched peacefully around the ring road on the 95th block, reached the flower clock and returned to the flagpole at Heroes Park.

“We demand demobilisation because our defenders need to recover, both morally and physically. At least for those who have been at ground zero [the front line] for two years! If this is not done, the boys will die morally, and not only that,” say the participants in the rally.

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## Student struggles in Ukraine

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### Direct Action: 'From the army to the school benches - let's destroy sexism and patriarchy'

Source: Priama Diia (Direct Action)

(March 7) March 8 is not about cuddles and flowers, it's about fighting for rights. The best way to celebrate this day is to draw attention to the problems of gender inequality and sexism that continue to exist in Ukrainian educational establishments.

On this occasion, International Women's Rights Day, we call on concerned students to join the action against the oppression of women in all aspects of public life!

This Friday, March 8, at 12.00 noon in Kiev, near the Ministry of Education and Science (at 6 Khreshchatyk Street), a demonstration dedicated to the fight against sexism and misogyny in education, the workplace, the army and other public spheres will begin.

The main demands of the initiators of the mobilisation are the introduction of sex education and human rights courses in educational establishments, as well as the introduction of appropriate training programs for civil servants.

It is only through active action that we will be able to stand up together against inequality.

Join us!

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### Medical Students Fight for their Rights

Source: Priama Diia (Direct Action)



(April 1, 2024) The student community is being rocked by a new anti-social reform: after the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health has begun to promote an equally scandalous innovation. On March 11, a draft of a new reform was published, which provides for changes in the distribution and

registration of work placements. In particular, students will not be able to choose where they want to do their work placements; the state will determine "where they are needed". The innovations will apply not only to new entrants, but also to students who have already studied for one to four years.

Unsurprisingly, medical students did not want to accept this restriction of their right to choose. In Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv, students protested against this anti-social project.

Direct Action expresses its full support for the students in their fight for their rights and supports the demands to overturn the reform. The state should not impose on students the location of their internship, everyone has the right to choose for themselves.



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## **Women Workers in the Struggle for their Rights**

*Source: Social Movement*

*(March 6)* March 8 is the International Day of Solidarity of Women Workers in the Struggle for Their Rights. This year, the Social Movement celebrates this date with a panel discussion on the theme “Women’s Experience in Trade Unions”.

More than ever, the war has exacerbated gender contradictions in Ukrainian society. When most men are in the military, the burden of women, in addition to domestic work and day-to-day care, is also added to the need to maintain the war economy in the rear. Coupled with the Ukrainian government’s attack on workers’ rights and guarantees, a difficult crisis situation has emerged, one possible way out of which is to unite in trade unions and collectively defend one’s rights. Thus, the participation of women in the trade union struggle is becoming extremely important today.

This challenge is accepted with dignity by trade union activists from different sectors of the economy. With them, we will discuss the difficulties and challenges faced by trade unions in times of war, as well as the role of women in the construction and operation of trade unions.

The speakers:

- *Oksana – Ukrainian Medical Movement Be Like Nina*
- *Liliya – Union of Crane Workers of Lviv Region*
- *Kateryna – Independent Student Union Direct Action.*

Date: March 16

From 1600

Address: Lviv, Kushevich Street 1, Palace of Culture.

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## Other Ukraine news and analysis

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### State of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU), 2023 report

(March 27, 2024) The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU), the largest Ukrainian trade union peak body, has just published a situation on its members ([see this PowerPoint presentation](#)).

In summary

#### 1/ Membership

2021	2022	2023	2024
4,023,300	3,461,860	2,928,710	2,738,690
	-16%	-18%	-7%

That is -31% since 2021 or almost one union member in three less.

Regarding the downward trend since the start of the war, slowing down in 2024, it must be emphasised that serious factors are affecting the Ukrainian trade union movement today and... tomorrow:

- Six million Ukrainians fled abroad, six million people are displaced
- Commitment of trade unionists to armed resistance: trade unionists die each day with weapons in their hands or are injured
- In the occupied territories, trade union organisations were closed down

#### 2/ Sectors of activity

Union coverage by sector:

Education and science: 1.08 million, 39%

Health: 368,800, 13.5%

Civil service: 140,800.5%

Metalworkers and miners: 133,700, 4.8%

The distribution of the remainder is not given

#### 3/ Organisations

The FPU has:

31,838 “rank-and-file” organisations with 2180 permanent staff

489 regional organisations with 1078 permanent staff

622 territorial organisations with 567 permanent staff

Between 2021 and 2024, “rank-and-file” organisations decreased from 46,776 to 31,838, i.e. -31%

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## The blacklist of companies that do not pay workers' wages

Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat

*(March 9, 2024) Since the start of the large-scale war, many workers Ukrainians have not received their wages for one or two months or even more. Wage debts accumulate. However, in certain sectors the unions have won, despite the difficulties of union action under martial law, recovery of these unpaid wages. In December 2023,*



*the Kryvyi Rih Regional Court recognised as illegal, following a lawsuit filed by the railway workers' union (KVPU), the partial suspension of salary payments by the Ukrainian Railways Ukrzaliznytsya. This decision concerns more than 300,000 workers who, following the court decision, received their entire salary.*

*On the eve of the New Year, healthcare workers in the town of Oleksandria, in the Kirovohrad oblast, managed to obtain, with the support of the Be Like Nina union, the payment of several months of salary arrears. Its total amount was approximately four million hryvnias (€97,000). The medical staff at Oleksandria Hospital (150 employees) had been facing salary delays since September 2023.*

*More recently, labour lawyer Vitaliy Dudin published this note on the current situation of back wages.*

### **Who owes Ukrainian workers the most?**

The National Labor Service of Ukraine has published data from the register of wage debtors. Since the start of the large-scale invasion, corresponding statistics have not been published. In my opinion, this is an inappropriate and irresponsible step, because hiding the problem clearly does not help solve it. Below is the data on the ten most problematic employers.

### **What conclusions do you draw from this?**

1. The main offenders are state-owned industrial facilities that could bolster defence capabilities. Unfortunately, the government does not give them enough orders for them to fully exploit their potential.
2. Wage arrears are measured in billions, and the top ten debtors alone have not paid 1.8 billion UAH [€430,000]. Among them, there is only one bankrupt company—the Kharkiv National Air Transport Company.

However, the situation is not desperate. It allows unions to prove themselves by showing their ability to pressure the government to repay debts and pass laws that will strengthen guarantees of on-time payment.

Fight and you will win!

**List of companies as of January 1, 2024 (extract, companies with more than 4000 employees, out of the 5326 listed with wage debt: total 554,297 employees)**

Company Name	The number of employees who are owed a salary	Total amount of debt, hryvnias
State enterprise "PERVOMAYSKVUHILLYA"	4046	40,600,000
Sumy Scientific and Industrial Association of Mechanical Engineering (Pty Ltd)	4705	226,443,000
Kharkiv State Aviation Production Enterprise	4647	279 870 200

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## **Who has won from the deregulation of labour relations during the war?**

*Source. Vitaly Dudin PowerPoint presentation*

See here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wNX5S3EY7OSah3dUKZTgNrIWjRpsm2jx/view?usp=sharing>

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## Solidarity with Ukraine's workers and unions

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### 'Russia is committing genocide'

*(March 18, 2024) Intervention of Katarina Malyuta-Osaulova (Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine, STESU) at the Congress of France's National Union of Secondary School Teachers (SNES-FSU)*

*In English with French translation.*

[YouTube here](#)

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## Ukraine medical workers appeal – help get to £15,000!

*Source: Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Britain)*

*(March 15)* A branch of the Free Trade Union of Medical Workers of Ukraine in a mining region of western Ukraine is appealing for humanitarian aid for its hospital, to help it cope with the extensive consequences of the war—at the same time as campaigning vigorously to defend the health system against neoliberal “reforms” (cuts).

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (USC) has so far raised £13,186.67 for the appeal, donated by unions / union branches, trade unionists and other supporters of Ukraine. We are trying to reach £15,000 by March 31.



As well as donating and sharing, please ask your union branch or other organisation to donate.

The UK civil service trade union PCS, which works closely with us, has donated £10,000 of aid to an appeal by the Free Trade Union of

Medical Workers nationally – we are trying to match that and more in the local appeal. Please help us!

**Donate Here:** <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/ukraine-medical-appeal-final>

Please also let us know if you can help procure equipment.

The union in Ukraine is seeking to procure a system of continuous passive joint movement (knee, ankle, foot, elbow, radial and wrist), strength training equipment for rehabilitation, functional beds, bedside functional tables for meals, monitors to monitor the cardiovascular system, bedside toilets, trolleys for food distribution, and computers.

**For more information or if you'd like to help:** [info@ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org](mailto:info@ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org)

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## **Welsh TV coverage of National Union of Miners' delegation to Ukraine**

See: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=770396141729359>

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## **Worker struggles in Belarus**

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### **Belarus: Trial begins of Olga Brytikova, former president of independent trade union at Naftan**

Source: [Labour solidarity](#)

On March 11, the Vitebsk Regional Court will open the trial of the former head of the Navopolatsk independent trade union at [Naftan](#), political prisoner Olga Brytikova, behind closed doors. The activist is accused of inciting social enmity in accordance with Part 1 of Art. 130 of the Criminal Code.

Judge Galina Bondal, known for her convictions against political prisoners Yaroslav Kazakevich, Robert Kuznyatsov and others, was assigned to handle the case.



Olga Brytikova was arrested in the first half of August 2023.

Olga Brytikova worked at the Nafton company for 16 years but was fired due to her union activities. Previously, she had been arrested several times for denouncing the war and distributing “extremist” materials. In 2022, she spent 105 days in prison, 75 of them in a row.

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### **Using Belarusian medical students to tackle staff shortages**

Source: [Salidarnast](#)

(*March 27, 2024*) Stanislaw Szalavej (pictured over), a physician and an activist of the independent healthcare workers’ union shared a short comment with [Salidarnast](#) on the Government’s “extra work project” for students of medical universities.

This summer, medical university students are to go to the towns of Polatsk and Navapolatsk to work there as part of the labour project “Medicus”. From July 1 till August 26, the students will work as orderlies, nurses, and physicians. There are even plans to send regular workers of the healthcare institutions involved on holidays during this “labour campaign”.

How much do Belarusian students need such a “labour project”? [Salidarnast](#) has discussed this issue with a Belarusian medical doctor who is an activist of the independent healthcare workers’ union.

“Here we have a somewhat ambiguously presented news; I mean students are supposed to work as orderlies, nurses, and physicians. Generally speaking, medical students do have the right to work as



nurses after three years at the university and an internship as a nurse. Many students do that to make some extra money as their scholarships are low,” says the doctor in his comment to *Salidarnast*. “So, an opportunity for students to earn some money is rather a good thing in our situation.”

“In a way, it’s great that the students will have this extra work because it’s a good opportunity for them to learn things. But in practical terms it’s all about plugging holes that have appeared as a result of poor working conditions and low pay.”

The doctor also points out that this extra work for students should have been organised in such a way as to have no negative effect on their university studies.

“According to their curriculum, medical students have their internships in July: after the third year as a nurse, after the fourth year as a doctor in a clinic, and after the fifth as a doctor in a hospital. So, it turns out that the students involved in this labour project will have to complete their internships before July; normally, they would be given this option if they are expected to work in the university admissions committee in summer. In this case, they would complete their internships in a hurried manner in May, combining it with their studies.

“So, the Ministry of Health aims to kill two birds with one stone: on the one hand, they will use the students to plug the staffing holes, while on the other, those same students would graduate to become good specialists. But there’s also one other side to this matter as the students stand to lose in terms of the proper completion of their internships.

“As it is, they are given an opportunity to work as an orderly or a nurse to replace their internship as a doctor. But these are different things. If you, as an intern, go around with a doctor you get to see much more because nursing tasks do not distract you. It ultimately means that the quality of learning suffers.

“So,” sums up our interlocutor, “the only problems I see in this project are the loss of proper internship and the low wages.

“They openly claim that paying a person \$US250 a month is OK. A person, mind you, who is responsible for their patients’ health and life. And the corresponding attitude follows. Look, they’ve even rigged regular workers’ holiday schedules. We all agree that people do need their holidays, but here they will be just patching staffing gaps with cheap labour.”

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## Belavia lays off important specialists on political grounds

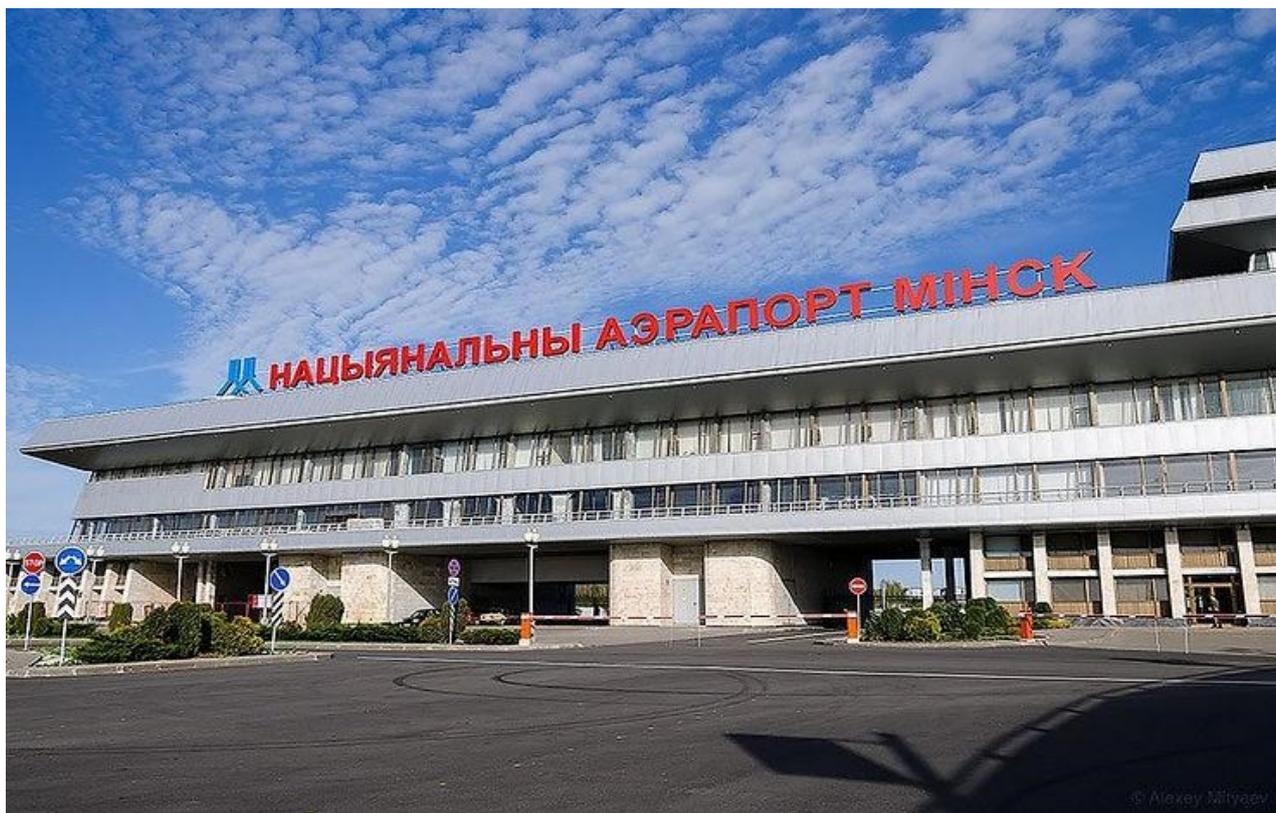
*Starting from 2021, the Belarusian airline Belavia has engaged in massive dismissals of employees on political grounds.*

*Source: Solidarnast*

*(March 13) What has been going on in the company in the recent years and how the repressions impact flight safety was the subject of an interview [The Mirror](#) had with an informed source.*

### **‘Those fired were among the best’**

According to *The Mirror*’s source, starting from 2021, Belavia has been regularly laying people off because of their political views. The redundancies involved pilots, expert technicians, flight attendants. Some of them were detained to spend a day behind bars.



**Minsk National Airport (Credit: adt.by)**

“It all started in 2021, when a KGB operative by the name of Oleg Gavrilik turned up in Belavia”, says our interlocutor. “He took the position of Deputy Manager for safety, security, and staff matters. If I remember correctly, in the summer of 2021 one of our female flight attendants was detained for 15 days. Upon release, she immediately left Belarus. But the repressions did not become massive before 2022. Then, another female flight attendant was detained. As far as I know, she had a rough time in the slammer, like almost sleeping on the bare floor in her cell. Upon her release, the company instantly fired her. In the autumn, they refused to renew employment contracts with those pilots who had taken part in the protests. This move affected people whose contracts were about to expire. People with longer term contracts would be put behind bars for a day. One day, they detained two male flight attendants. There were rumours that some lists had been handed

down from up on high, containing the names of those slated for dismissal. I needn't explain to you that rank-and-file employees never saw those lists. But I was told that the names were many. The listed employees would be summoned by the management and informed that their contracts were not going to be renewed. By way of explanation, they would offer something like "your participation in the protests was recorded, we have no complaints regarding your performance at work, but you understand how things are, right?"

"In 2023, the repressions continued", says the interlocutor. "One female flight attendant was sentenced to three years of labour at a hazardous chemicals plant. Several people were fired - pilots, second pilots, and even captains among them."

"I'd like to stress that some of the best got the sack", says the source. "Belavia always had a shortage of such people, top professionals with many years in the industry under their belt. But they were shown the door anyway. All services of the airline have lost many good specialists. There were those among them who'd been summoned for a "talk" with the KGB operative. I don't know exactly what they talked about but, ultimately, they were all sacked."

### **'Some colleagues would go to the protests together'**

The redundancies affected mostly those airline employees who had taken active part in the protests of the summer and autumn 2020. *The Mirror's* source says that many of his colleagues were vocal then, protesting against the rigged elections and the violence of the police and security forces. Even the[official] Belavia Workers' Union supported the company employees.

"When the protests were just unfolding, everyone harboured big hopes", says the interlocutor. "Many would come to work wearing white or red-and-white bracelets. No objections came from the management. At the time, the Belavia CEO was Anatoly Gusarov, now deceased (in early 2021, Igor Cherginets was appointed Head of Belavia – Editor's Note). The announcements board on the premises even featured a statement from the union demanding to stop the violence (a photo of the statement is available at the Editor's Office — Editor's Note). The management would say that employees were free to take to the streets and voice their positions as long as they didn't wear the Belavia uniform. Some colleagues — flight attendants, technicians, pilots — would form groups and go to the protests together."

The airline employees seriously considered going on strike. According to the source, even some pilots were prepared to join. But the workforce never managed to get organised.

"Different sentiments were brewing at the time", remembers the source. "There were rumours that the BELAZ and MAZ auto works would go on strike any day now. And we were talking among ourselves about whether we should probably do the same—even despite provisions in the law which allegedly said that workers in the critical industries (railway workers, aviation specialists, etc.) had no right to go on strike.

Many people thought that a stoppage in a company like Belavia would have a country-wide effect. Some were scared, they would say "how come, this is against the law". But what law was there to consider when people were being killed right there in the streets? I know that many would have agreed to go on strike.

This was discussed with the maintenance people and some of the pilots. The problem was that an airline is not a factory where people come to work on the same shop floor and can somehow agree on things and group together. Here, employees fly different planes, see but a handful of colleagues during their shifts. So, the big unification of struggle around the idea of a strike never materialised.

It should be noted that hundreds of workers were dismissed all over the country for taking part in strike actions and being members of the strike committees which sprang up massively at a large number of enterprises during the 2020 protests. For the last three years demonstrative detentions of workers at their workplaces have continued. Currently, the country's prisons hold around half a hundred activists and leaders of democratic trade unions.