



Kyiv, July 8: Medical and emergency workers rescue an injured woman from the rubble of the National Children's Specialised Hospital Okhmatdyt, struck by a Russian missile

In this issue

Welcome to the June-July 2024 issue of ENSU's trade union newsletter. We feature the trade union reaction to the criminal Russian missile attack on Kyiv's National Children's Specialised Hospital Okhmatdyt and ask: isn't it time the international trade union movement demanded that the International Labour Organisation sever all ties with the murderous Putin regime and its official "trade union", the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), as Ukraine's trade union movement has been insisting? If not now, when?

Besides our usual coverage of worker and community struggles, this issue also covers the crisis of unpaid wages in the coal industry, women's growing importance in Ukraine's work force and advances won by the struggles of the country's LGBTI+ community.

We also report on the important victory of the Belgian anti-war movement in winning a ban on the transshipment of Russian LNG through the port of Zeebrugge, and on the new solidarity initiatives of Italy's Giuditta Rescue Team.

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Editorial

The crucial role of trade unions in wins for democracy and peace

The result of the July 7 second-round legislative election in France has shown one thing above all: the rise of the extreme right can be stopped, and democratic freedoms and social rights can be defended. The important thing is to react, not to fall into fatalism and to build the broadest possible unity, without sectarianism.

Much remains to be done to overturn the anti-social policies of past and recent French governments, which have been the basis of the growing despair of many parts of the working class. By exploiting the negative impact of these policies, the extreme right has worked to sew division among working people.

Nonetheless, the combined response of the French trade unions has formed, from the beginning, the glue that has allowed different political forces to unite in a common front aimed at defending the social gains and democratic rights of France's working people, threatened by both the Rassemblement National of Marine Le Pen and the neo-liberal "centre" of President Macron.

The united struggles of France's cross-union *Intersyndicale*—initially against the increase in the retirement age and then in defence of Ukraine—were important steps along the road to the mobilisation behind the New Popular Front that relegated the far right to third place on July 7.

¡No pasarán! Fighting the danger of fascism in Europe has many fronts. The cruellest and most vicious is on the front line in Ukraine, but the danger there concerns all countries. The reorganisation of the extreme right in Europe, with Hungarian leader Orbán, France's Le Pen, Spain's VOX and others coming together in the pro-Putin European parliamentary group "Patriots for Europe" shows two things: that the national struggles against the extreme right are increasingly connected and that the tie with Russia's authoritarian regime is common to all the parties and governments that show traits of fascism.

The Kremlin feeds them propagandistically, sustains them economically and promotes their international alliances. As in the nineteenth century Russia is once again the most reactionary and aggressive great power of our times. To hope this threat will just go away—or should even be appeased—would be as suicidal as when European democracies closed their eyes in the 1930s to Hitler's expansionism

Editorial group

Alfons Bech, Trade Union Coordinator, ENSU, member, Workers Commissions of Catalonia (CCOO)

Vasyl Andreyev, President of Construction Union of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU)

Maksim Pazniakou, Acting Chairman of Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP)

Luca Cirigliano, Head of International Affairs, Swiss Trade Union Confederation (SGB/USS)

Cati Llibre, International Secretary, General Workers Union (UGT), Catalonia

Colin Long, Just Transitions Officer, Victorian Trades Hall Council, Australia

John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, Public and Commercial Services Union, United Kingdom

André Frappier, former President, Montreal local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Martin Gaillie, Delegate for the University of Quebec Academics Union to the Metropolitan Montreal

Central Council of the National Unions Confederation (CSN)

Patrick Le Tréhondat, member of Union Syndicale Solidaires, France

Dick Nichols, ENSU Coordination Group, member, Journalists Union of Catalonia (SPC)

Patricio Paris, ENSU, former enterprise delegate for the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), France

Examples, positive and negative

The French success, due to applying an approach of united resistance and mobilisation, shows how the role of the trade unions is critical to building confidence and fighting morale in the organised working class and to creating a pole of attraction for millions of less organised or even completely unorganised workers.

By sad contrast, a narrow and pessimistic view within union leaderships can mean that battles are evaded for fear of losing them. This was the case at the 113th Session of the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), [covered in issue number 10 of this Newsletter](#). There the leadership of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) shrank from standing up to Putinism, thinking that many unions and countries of the so-called Global South would vote in favour of maintaining the Kremlin's compliant "trade union", the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), on the ILO's Governing Body. They put pressure on the Ukrainian unions not to contest what was regarded as the "FNPR's spot".

But then it turned out that this apparatus and its Chinese counterpart (the All-China Federation of Trade Unions), both openly supportive of anti-democratic, dictatorial and anti-worker regimes, got the worst votes in their history, with the FNPR representative scraping home by one vote. The representative of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) could have been elected to the ILO Governing Body as a full delegate if he had not been advised not to stand.

Take stock of wins and losses

Our movement needs to take stock of the price we pay for such neutrality and half-heartedness, for allowing important opportunities to slip through the cracks, dodging the head-on fight against those who are an integral component of authoritarian regimes.

The role now played by the French trade unions and the positive result obtained show that what is needed is a sort of "French turn" adapted, of course, to the peculiarities of each different country. Our international trade union institutions must embrace this shift.

The needs of working people are more pressing than ever. Wages lose value every day in the face of inflation. Food prices are rising, and the cost of housing is skyrocketing. Education, health and services are increasingly degraded, understaffed or underpaid. Behind all this, big capital, especially the finance sector, is lining its pockets as never before, while the environment continues to be degraded because the just ecological transition that all humanity needs is stalled. The global prospect is one of fear, chaos and instability.

In Ukraine, this grim prospect is aggravated by the war and atrocities like the July 8 missile strike on the children's hospital in Kyiv. The Ukrainian trade unions struggle to withstand attacks on living standards and working conditions, due partly to the war but largely to government determination to implement radical market-driven "reforms". Wage debts accumulate, hours worked increase and abusive conditions of work become more common.

Speaking at the Frederick Ebert Foundation's June 10 Side Event to the June 11-12 Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin, Mykhailo Volynets, chairperson of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine denounced in front of the Ukrainian Minister of Economy her government's violation of 22 international labour conventions in 50 recent pieces of Ukrainian legislation ([see moment 1:31:30 of this video of the event](#)).

The more Ukraine's democratic rights and social welfare are endangered, the greater the conviction and commitment needed to defend the country. This is the message of the Ukrainian trade unions in all economic and social forums, *and it is one that we must support*. We need to strengthen the vigilance, the power of trade unions. That is the best guarantee for society's resilience in the face of the invader. The stronger and more organised the Ukrainian working class is, the less the occupying Russian troops and their "trade union" will be able to get away with. Helping to strengthen the role and power of trade unions in Ukraine is a vital task for class unionism everywhere.

Trade unionism must also be supported and strengthened in the countries around Ukraine, especially in Russia and Belarus. Helping to dismantle Putin's and Lukashenko's authoritarian regimes is not only done from outside—such as keeping up the pressure for our governments to supply Ukraine with the weaponry it needs. It is also done by supporting and encouraging those who oppose these regimes from within, by helping and publicising their genuine trade unions, often operating underground, that organise resistance in companies, cities and services.

This *Newsletter* aims to give growing space to expressions of trade union struggle in these countries, even if they are just beginning. From these small seeds future ties of solidarity between working peoples in all countries can emerge and grow.

NOTE: The exchange rate of Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH) against the euro used in this number of the *Newsletter* is that applying on July 12, 2024.

Social media of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

Web site: www.ukraine-solidarity.eu

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeUkraineSolidarity/>

The missile attack on children's hospital in Kyiv

Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine: Russia is deliberately launching missile strikes on children, patients, and workers



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

(July 8, 2024) The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU), a member organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), calls on the international community, the ITUC, the ETUC, and their member organisations, as well as the governments of democratic states, to strengthen their support for Ukraine. This appeal comes as Russia continues its terrorist attacks and genocidal war in Ukraine.

Today, July 8, 2024, the Russian troops launched massive combined attacks throughout the night, morning, and day on several cities in Ukraine, including Kyiv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, Slov'yansk, Kramatorsk, and Pokrovsk. During these attacks, Russia fired 40 missiles of various types, aiming to kill as many civilians as possible and intimidate the Ukrainian people who are fighting for freedom and democracy.

Russian forces targeted the attack on Monday morning when workers were commuting to their workplaces, when they were at work meetings, and while patients were either heading to medical facilities or receiving treatment.

Only in Kyiv, 17 people were killed, and at least 41 were injured as a result of the July 8 attack.

Today, during a Russian combined rocket attack in Kyiv, the city's oldest and the main children's hospital Okhmatdyt where seriously ill children from across Ukraine were being treated, came under attack. As a result of the strike on the hospital, there are casualties, and there may still be children, parents, and medical personnel trapped under the rubble, which is currently being cleared. This hospital was visited by the ITUC Mission on May 16, 2024, when global unions leaders had an opportunity to meet with hospital management, trade union members and parents of children injured during the Russian attacks.

On the same day, another medical facility in the Dnipro district of Kyiv was damaged during a missile attack at noon. Four people were killed. Debris clearance and search operations are still ongoing.



On July 8, Russia also launched a massive missile attack on Kryvyi Rih and the Dnipro. In particular, a Russian missile hit the administrative building of the Northern Mining and Processing Plant in Kryvyi Rih. As of 1230, 10 people were killed and more than 30 injured.

On July 8, three more civilians were killed due to a rocket attack by Russian troops on the city of Pokrovsk, Donetsk region. As a result of the attack, the office of the local organisation of the Independent Trade Union of Mineworkers of Ukraine in the city of Myrnohrad and Pokrovsky district was damaged.

Today, as a result of the missiles attack on Ukraine, in addition to workplaces and hospitals, residential buildings and transport infrastructure were damaged.

We emphasise that the Russian forces carry out drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian cities every day.

Russia continues to purposefully target energy facilities to deprive Ukrainian civilians of electricity, communications, and medical services, and to halt Ukraine's economy. Currently, in Ukraine all thermal power plants have already been destroyed, and hydroelectric power stations have been damaged by Russian forces. As a result, Ukraine is experiencing permanent power outages.

Today, Russia once again cynically violated international humanitarian law, further confirming its goal to destroy Ukraine and its brave people.

Today, Ukrainian workers, trade unionists, and the entire population of Ukraine resist the Russian aggressor and fight for the liberation of the occupied territories, where terror reigns and human rights are not guaranteed. Today, we appeal to the international democratic community with a call:

- Continue to provide economic and humanitarian aid to Ukraine;
- Support the provision of military aid to Ukraine to protect the population, energy infrastructure, workplaces, and the country;
- Strengthen sanctions against the terrorist regime of Russia and those who support and finance it, as this can significantly limit the financial resources and export of technologies necessary for the continuation of the bloody war;
- Ensure the possibility of using frozen Russian assets and direct them to help Ukraine;

- Isolate and remove from positions in international organisations Russian political, public, and trade union figures, as representatives of a country that carries out terrorist activities against sovereign, independent Ukraine and its citizens, and who are trying to undermine the unity of the international democratic trade union movement.

Peak bodies of public service unions condemn abominable Russian strike on Children’s Hospital, call for union solidarity

Source: *Public Services International (PSI)*

(July 9, 2024) In a clear breach of the laws of war, Russia has yet again targeted civilian infrastructure and killed 38 people—four of whom were children—in an attack on Ukraine’s largest children’s health facility.

As of now, 38 people have been reported dead, including four children, in an attack on Ukraine’s largest children’s health facility.

PSI General Secretary Daniel Bertossa said:

“Targeting a children’s hospital and public service workers is a criminal act that must be condemned in the strongest terms. The bombing of civilians, public services and vital infrastructure is never acceptable – whether in Ukraine, Gaza or anywhere else.”

Our colleagues from the Kyiv Medical Trade Union, part of PSI affiliate Ukraine Health Workers Union, have described for how, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, staff at the National Children’s Specialised Hospital Okhmatdyt have come to the rescue of all Ukrainians, saying: “As a result of this missile attack, unfortunately, our colleagues, trade unionists, hospital workers and small children died; medical buildings, equipment, workplaces, etc. were destroyed. Today the members of the community and the staff of the Okhmatdyt need help, both individually targeted and in general for recovery. We ask everyone who cares to contribute to the provision of financial assistance if possible.”



‘For us, solidarity is as important as a cup of hot tea for someone who is freezing, a ray of sunlight for those hiding in a basement’ (Yuri Pizhuk, State Employees Union)

condemns the Russian attack on hospitals and other public service infrastructures in Ukraine. Targeting hospitals is a war crime according to the Geneva convention. Many people lost their lives, and several EPSU member health workers were injured. EPSU has been standing together with the workers in Ukraine since the first day of the invasion and will continue to support our affiliates in providing vital services for society.”

Many health workers have already been killed in such attacks. As the global union federation representing health sector workers PSI is reaching out to Ukrainian comrades to determine how we can redouble global union solidarity to support their vital life saving work amidst these horrific circumstances.

Attacks on civilians and non-military infrastructure are illegal under international human rights law. All governments and actors have an obligation under the Geneva Conventions to protect civilians, especially those providing lifesaving services in conflict zones. Making human rights law optional or context-dependent sends a dangerous message, endangers public service workers and undermines the rights of us all.

European Public Service Union (EPSU) General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan said: “EPSU

PSI-affiliated members in Ukraine continue to save lives despite horrific circumstances and have even helped prevent a nuclear meltdown. When the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant was bombed, members of PSI-affiliate Atomprfspilka put out the flames. As Atomprfspilka's international officer Lesia Seminiaka points out "any explosion, any fire, any strike could provoke a big tragedy, another ecological disaster."

The deplorable Russian tactic of "double shelling" represents a clear attack on our comrades in Ukraine's emergency services who seek to rescue the injured and are targeted by follow-up strikes as a result.

On a [call PSI organised](#) with Ukrainian unionists, Yuri Pizhuk of the State Employees Union told us, "This war is not only about territory. It is about the right to a free life, to decent work, democracy and freedom of choice... one can blow up a school or maternity clinic or burn down a building... but that will not break us. For us, solidarity is as important as a cup of hot tea for someone who is freezing, a ray of sunlight for those hiding in a basement."

PSI and EPSU reiterate our calls for unions around the world to provide support Ukrainian comrades through our [joint solidarity fund](#).

Any unions interested in setting up a solidarity call with members Ukrainians affiliates to share stories with members and ideas for further solidarity actions should contact leo.hyde@world-psi.org and ckaya@epsu.org

Ukraine: ITUC condemns Russian attack on children's hospital

Source: ITUC

(July 8, 2024) The ITUC strongly condemns the Russian missile strike on Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kyiv. Attacks across Ukraine have killed at least 27 people and injured dozens more, targeting civilian infrastructure and residential buildings.

ITUC General Secretary Luc Triangle said: "Targeting a children's hospital like this is monstrous. It is a heinous act that violates all norms of humanity and international law.

"I visited Okhmatdyt hospital in May. I saw the cost of this war on the lives of the children there and the incredible work and commitment of the medical staff. It is horrifying to think of what they are going through after this latest bombing.

"Attacks like this on civilian infrastructure and public services are never justified, whether in Ukraine or anywhere else. This kind of brutality against innocent children and civilians must not go unpunished. The international community must hold Russia accountable for these war crimes."

Luc Triangle spoke today to the Presidents of the ITUC's Ukrainian affiliates, the FPU and the KVPU, and expressed the solidarity of the global union movement with the people of Ukraine and condemned again Russia's unjustifiable, brutal and illegal invasion."



See also: [Joint statement of the leadership of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the parliamentary factions and groups of the Ukrainian parliament regarding the terrorist attack of the Russian Federation against Ukraine](#)

Worker struggles in Ukraine—coal miners

First work stoppages in the Lviv mines

Source: KVPVU

[NOTE: Two Lviv miners died in a cave-in before this article was written.]

(July 9, 2024) On Thursday July 4, a meeting was held under the authority of the first deputy head of the Lviv regional military administration, Andriy Godyk, at the state enterprise Lvivvugillia, where miners have not received their full wages for five months and are owed UAH 470 million [€10.472 million, at July 12, 2024, as are all following conversions].

The meeting was attended by Bohdan Keivan, Director of the Lviv Department of Energy Efficiency, the leaders of the Lviv State Coal Enterprise and its



subordinate mines, and representatives of the main trade union organisations at the production units, in particular the leaders of the primary trade unions of the Independent Miners' Union of Ukraine, which are part of the NPSU's regional association, Chervonograda.

The arrival of senior officials from the regional military administration at the company was prompted by a tense situation among the work force. On Monday, July 1, meetings were held in all the mines, where the miners decided whether to continue working or to stop extracting coal and demand payment of what they were earning. As the decision was not unanimous, some mines temporarily stopped working, while others continued to operate. But everyone agreed that this week it was worth going to Lviv to protest to the regional military administration.

Having learned that a meeting at Cabinet of Ministers level is scheduled for Wednesday, July 3, in Kiev to discuss the problems of the national coal mining industry, the miners from the Lviv region decided to postpone the planned action and wait for news from the capital.

The miners in the Lviv region have decided to believe and wait once again, but not for long...

The Ukrainian Coal Workers' Union insists on the urgent need to examine the issue of wage payments to miners!

Source: Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU)

(July 9, 2024) Regarding enterprises carrying out non-payment of miners' wages, the president of the Ukrainian Coal Industry Workers Union (FPU), Andrii Zimin, has sent an appeal to the Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmyhal, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, the Minister of Economy of Ukraine Yulia Svyridenko and the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Oleksandr Litvinenko.

The appeals point out that, to date, the wage debt for 2024 alone amounts to more than UAH 740 million [€16.487 million].

The biggest wage arrears are due to the lack of long-term guidelines for the shipment of coal products from public enterprises and their accumulation in warehouse stockpiles, which have formed since February in enterprises, especially State Enterprise (SE) Lvivvugilya—more than 420 million UAH [€9.358 million]— and SE Dobropillyavugilya—more than 160 million UAH [€3.565 million].

In general, all state coal companies have a debt of over 2.1 billion UAH [€46.788 million]. It is systemic in nature and requires immediate review at government level.

Despite the fact that the Ministry of Energy is taking comprehensive measures to solve the energy problems, the situation regarding the sale of coal products remains extremely tense and unresolved.

Tension in the workers' collectives has reached a critical limit.

In order to avoid a destabilisation of the situation in mining collectives, uncontrolled strikes, etc., during the stable autumn-winter period, the Union demands that the government urgently examine the following issues:

1. Payments to miners for coal products shipped and invoiced by state-owned enterprises to state-owned enterprises.
2. Purchases and placement in thermal production warehouses of coal-based products, which are located in the companies' emergency warehouses, with a view to the urgent repayment of wage arrears, the payment of current wages, and the stable transition to the autumn-winter period of 2024-2025.
3. Taking steps to ensure that the government considers the draft law of Ukraine "On amending certain laws of Ukraine concerning debt repayment by state-owned coal mining enterprises by means of a one-off contribution to compulsory state social insurance and financial sanctions (penalties and fines)", developed by the Ministry of Energy.

The union hopes to solve the problem raised.

Miners need back pay, not promises

Source: KVPU

(June 28, 2024) The miners of the Lviv region and their trade union organisations, in particular the Chervonograd Regional Association of the Independent Miners' Trade Union of Ukraine, have repeatedly appealed to representatives of all levels of the Ukrainian government about the situation at the LvivCoal state mine, due to the fact that the state enterprise [Ukrvugilya](#) has not been paid for coal shipped from February to April to the amount of UAH 426 million [€9.491 million].

This has led to the non-payment of workers' wages for February-May and has therefore created social tensions not only in the mining work collectives, but also in more than 6000 miners' families, who are on the brink of survival.

In order to get paid, the miners are prepared to take radical action—stopping coal extraction from July 1, with their wives taking spontaneous protest action.

A trade union appeal notes that the LvivCoal team is constantly fulfilling and exceeding the planned coal mining tasks. The company has shipped products worth more than UAH 400 million to Ukrvugilya but has not received the necessary funds. As a result, the miners and their families have been left without a livelihood, as they have not received their wages since February this year.

The miners also warn that the situation is critical and could lead to massive, spontaneous and uncontrollable consequences.

Miners in the Lviv region demand their back pay

Source: KVPU

(June 18, 2024) The Chervonograd regional organisation of the Independent Miners' Trade Union of Ukraine [NGPU, affiliated to the KVPU] and the territorial organisation of the Coal Industry Workers of

Ukraine (PRUD, affiliated to the FPU) have sent a joint letter to representatives of the authorities demanding the payment of funds earned by miners at the Lviv State Coal Company (LvivCoal).

The unions point out that in the context of the Russian Federation's large-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, while the enemy is constantly bombing energy facilities and destroying coal mining enterprises in eastern Ukraine, the LvivCoal mine (pictured) has been working steadily and supplying coal.

However, the state company [Ukrvugilya](#) failed to pay LvivCoal for the coal shipped in February-April this year and owes the company UAH 426 million [€9.491 million]. This has led to the non-payment of employee salaries for the period February-May 2024 to the amount of UAH 470 million [€10.471 million].

“Unpaid wages not only aggravate the financial difficulties of the mining families, but also negatively affect the moral and psychological state of the employees and increase social tensions in the production teams and in the region, and also deprive the possibility of helping more than 800 employees of the company who are in the Ukrainian armed forces and provide them with everything necessary (ammunition, drones, cars, etc.),” the letter states.



The mining unions are asking for help in resolving the issue of the earliest possible repayment of the debt owed by the Ukrvugilya state enterprise to the LvivCoal state enterprise for products shipped, in order to avoid a complete shutdown of the company's mines and leaving almost 6000 mining families without a livelihood.

In order to avoid spontaneous demonstrations, the miners are setting June 25 as the limit for when measures be taken to settle with the company for the coal it ships and to pay the wages owed to the employees of LvivCoal.

Other worker struggles in Ukraine

No to wage dumping on the Ukrainian labour market! Workers from other countries should be paid the same as Ukrainians

Source: *Vasyl Andreyev (pictured), President of the FPU construction union*

(July 9, 2024) In Andreyev's view, this problem has taken on a new colour because information has started to emerge about the involvement of workers from Asian countries in our labour market.

Yes, migrant workers are coming, they can work in our market, especially in the current situation where there is a shortage of construction workers. But trade unions around the world are saying that we shouldn't divide people up according to their country of origin.

“But there is a big ‘but’: they should be paid the same as Ukrainian workers for equal work. Wage levels have risen over the past year in the Ukrainian construction sector and in other sectors of the economy. At the same time, workers from Bangladesh, for example, who now work in the construction sector, receive a salary of \$US450 at full rate, the most highly qualified, \$US650. This undermines the very idea of restoring the Ukrainian economy”, stressed Vasyl Andreyev.

The condition must be that the wages of workers from these countries must be on a par with those of Ukrainian workers.

“The trade unions will exercise public control over this issue and inform their members, as well as society as a whole, about how migrant workers are participating in the restoration of Ukraine”, added Vasyl Andreyev.



Glovo management humiliates its couriers (again)

Source: *Glovo couriers' collective*



(July 9, 2024) The frogs and vipers at the Glovo office decided they hadn't done enough to humiliate couriers, and so decided to humiliate them again. Now, the Glovo app has introduced a lottery called “guess which asshole we're going to throw you at”, which means that the courier will only be able to see the customer's address after receiving the order.

We'd like to hope that this bullshit is a short-term consequence of temporary mental disturbance on the part of the company's management, but our reserve of naïveté long ago ran out. It's likely that this idiotic innovation will live forever in our memories...

[NOTE: The Glovo workers' collective has led several struggles, including strikes, in the past, just like the Bolt collective struggles reported in previous issues of this *Newsletter*].

‘We demand to be given the opportunity to work as before’

Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat



(June 29, 2024) The staff at the ambulance station in the town of Kremenchouk are asking for the support of the people of the town and the whole of the Poltava region. The management is planning to reorganise the field teams: instead of two doctors, only one should be on call. The team is categorically opposed to this: in their view, it will primarily affect the quality of the medical care provided.

On Saturday June 29, almost all the field team staff at the Kremenchouk emergency station (pictured) met to address the community of Kremenchouk and the entire Poltava region.

On behalf of the entire team, Oksana Svyntarenko, a paramedic at the Poltava emergency medical centre and head of the newly-formed trade union organisation “Free Health Workers of Ukraine”, addressed the public:

“Our team has got together to appeal to the citizens of the Poltava region to help us. Because our management, the management of the regional centre, in violation of all legal requirements, is planning the departure of ‘ambulance brigades made up of a single medical staff. And this violates government resolution number 1114 of November 21, 2012. [...]”

“Staff departures have become more frequent. This is because we have low wages and difficult working conditions. As a result, people are simply forced to look for another part-time job or resign and look for another job. In addition, many doctors are now joining the ranks of the Ukrainian armed forces.”

The workers are calling on the regional and local management to listen to them and allow them to work as “before”.

The station has also been affected by a staff reduction or, as it is now called, “staff optimisation”.

In the last two months alone, May and June, seven employees have been made redundant. Last year, around 20 workers were made redundant, including medical and administrative staff and care assistants.

An ambulance driver currently receives around 10,800 hryvnias [€240.62] a month.

Doctors are a little better off, receiving around 16,000 [€356.48] a month.

The health workers in Kremenchouk say that they will not leave things as they are. Nor will they remain silent.

A nurse in Zaporizhzhia cries out in despair



Source: *Be like Nina*

(June 22, 2024) Hello! The staff of Maternity Ward 9 of Zaporizhzhia City Council are speaking to you. From February 2024 to the present day, we have not received our wages. Repeated appeals have been made to the city authorities. Over the past two weeks, we have been promised payment of all arrears.

At present, the amount due appears in the accounts of the maternity ward of the Ukrainian State Treasury Department in the Khortytsia district of the city of Zaporizhzhia. However, no payments are made. The employees of this service refer to the absence of authorisation from Kyiv. Maternity workers are in survival mode.

Chostka: children's hospital in danger

Source: *Be like Nina*

(June 20, 2024) In the town of Chostka, in the Sumy region, medical staff at a children's hospital are facing a salary backlog. To solve this problem, the local authorities want to reduce the number of nurses, but at the same time plan to continue with the costly renovation of the establishment. Olga Turochka, a doctor-surgeon (pictured), president of an independent trade union and Be like Nina activist, spoke out against this proposal at the Chostka town council meeting.

“For whom are we doing the repairs that cost UAH 47 million [€1.069 million]? Why aren't we being paid? And now, a fortnight ago, a redundancy order has been issued. There is already a shortage of healthcare staff. This won't solve the problem. If we cut 10 people, as the order says, we will save UAH 80,000 to 100,000. Dear parents, if this reduction goes through, then at best we will have one service. There will no longer be a hospital,” stressed the doctor.

Mayor Mykola Noga started talking to her and said that it would not be the doctors who would be made redundant, but the nurses. And in his opinion, the costly renovation of the hospital should be continued, as it will save on heating costs. This approach, in which the government sees fit to invest money in infrastructure and instead ignores care staff, has been described by researchers into women's work. Unfortunately, this is not just typical of Ukraine. For its part, Be like Nina insists that it is impossible to provide medical care without a sufficient number of nurses and medical staff. In the case of Chostka, this is a particularly painful issue as it is a children's hospital.



Community struggles in Ukraine

In Zhytomyr, in support of Ukrainian prisoners of war and missing persons

Source: French Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

(July 7, 2024) On the afternoon of July 6, around 200 people from several regions gathered on Korolev Square and went to the centre of Zhytomyr with placards to remind people once again of the situation of soldiers taken prisoner or missing during the hostilities.



“We are not attached to any particular brigade. We have relatives of soldiers from the Mariupol garrison, from the 95th brigade and from other brigades. This action is dedicated not only to the prisoners of war, but also to the missing”, said the action’s co-organiser, Tetyana Hoidyk, “We want to remind people that we cannot and do not have the right to live in peace here, while our soldiers are being held in Russian torture camps, we have not forgotten them and we will never forget them.”

Participants wore soldiers’ berets to show that although the soldiers are not physically here now, they are still present, and they are remembered. Children held doves in their hands as a sign of Ukrainians’ struggle for life in a peaceful and independent Ukraine.

Tetyana herself is from the Zhytomyr region and now lives in Irpin. Her brother Oleg Gurko, who fought in the 95th brigade, disappeared on January 15, 2023 during one of the assaults near Kreminnaya, in the Luhansk region. To date, there is no information about him.



Conflict at the Kyiv Centre for the Disabled

Source: Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement)

(July 2, 2023) Conflict is breaking out at the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centre for the Disabled (picture) in Kyiv’s Darnytskyi district, due to the unjustified withholding of extra bonuses and the humiliation of employees by the Centre’s director, Lyudmila Matveykina. Tomorrow, something will happen to stop the wave of economic and psychological pressure.

Since 2023, those who raise their voices in defence have been dismissed, subjected to farcical internal investigations and insulted in front of their colleagues and relatives. The head of the psychological and educational rehabilitation department, Iryna Gangalyuk, went against the system and obtained an internal investigation into harassment by the director! Tomorrow, a meeting of the relevant commission will be held at the Darnytsia district state administration (room 209).

Iryna, who has 40 years' experience in teaching and has been re-educating disabled children in recent years, has courageously denounced the unbearable working conditions. Her courage and professionalism deserve our support.

Please support Mrs Gangalyuk and ensure that the staff at the centre are treated humanely!

We call on anyone who cares to come to the Darnytsia district state administration (11 Oleksandr Koshytsia St., Kyiv) on 3 July at 8.45am to facilitate a fair investigation into the bullying by the tyrannical director!

Kyiv: against construction of the National Military Cemetery

Source: French Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

(July 3, 2024) On the morning of July 2, in the centre of Kyiv, near the Institute of National Memory, a demonstration took place against the construction of the National Military Cemetery. The participants said that the authorities were not communicating with them to find a common solution.

The demonstrators said they lived in the village of Markhalivka, near Kyiv, where construction of the cemetery has begun.

They held up placards reading “Don't bury heroes in the swamp”, “No graves in the water” and “STOP ecocide”.

“We're going round in circles, we're not being heard, we don't see any change. That's why we've come to fight for our constitutional rights”, said Nadiya Kovalenko, one of the most active participants. And she added that this was not the first time that demonstrators had gathered here.



Women's struggles in Ukraine

Ukraine's women replacing men at work

Source: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/06/24/ukraine-s-women-replace-men-at-work_6675568_4.html

By Thomas d'Istria Photos: Rafael Yaghobzadeh, for *Le Monde*

(June 24, 2024) To cope with its labour shortage, Ukrainian women have begun working in typically male-dominated fields, like in steel factories, supermarkets, and for public transport, to try and make up for the absence of their male employees on the frontlines.

Tetyana Vorotilova (pictured below) would never have dreamed of becoming a security guard. However, the 37-year-old has been working as one for just over three months in a Silpo store, a major Ukrainian supermarket chain. The mother of a 17-year-old daughter, she now spends her days watching over customers and incoming goods. It's a far cry from her previous life as a nurse in a hospital in the town of Kostiantynivka, in the Donetsk region, which she fled at the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022.



“The job of a security guard was previously held by men,” admitted Nastya Liesnick, the young woman in charge of human resources at Silpo, who was present on Tuesday, June 11, in the store where Vorotilova works. Vorotilova is not a special case. Store manager Anna Kraïka said she has observed a radical change in the composition of her teams. Before the war, “we had a lot of male employees,” she said. “But many have left since then.” The former security guard “probably left” to avoid being drafted, she added wearily.



Between the men drafted into the army and those who fear they may one day be drafted and remain at their post, the supermarket chain is suffering from a staff shortage that is forcing it to diversify its recruiting efforts. Kraïka now hires students who work part-time, women with a variety of professional backgrounds and, in some cases, retirees. Some of these new recruits are holding jobs historically held by men.

Public transportation affected

This situation is not limited to the supermarket. It concerns all Ukrainian economic players, who have been severely tested since the start of the Russian invasion, in steel factories, supermarkets, agriculture, transport, and more.

Furthermore, the more skilled the jobs, the harder it is for companies to find replacements. The effects are already being felt in some sectors. At the end of May, the capital's public transport company finally decided to announce longer intervals between subway trains, due to a “shortage” of electric train drivers and electromechanics. The same applies to Mykolaiv, a city in the south of the country, where bus and streetcar traffic was reduced due to the mobilisation of certain employees.

“Being able to keep and retain our staff is the number-one problem for all Ukrainian companies,” said Hakan Jyde, director general of the Ukrainian branch of Swedish truck manufacturer Scania, over the phone. Added to the difficulties of mobilizing for the war effort is the departure of several million men and women—“the lifeblood of the country,” according to the manager of the Silpo store—who have fled the conflict as refugees and are now scattered around the world. According to a study published by the Ukrainian Economy Ministry in 2023, the country is allegedly short 4.5 million people to rebuild and keep the economy running over the next 10 years.

Companies have no choice but to adapt and recruit more widely. In one of the warehouses of Fozzy Group, one of Ukraine’s major commercial and industrial groups, human resources manager Anastasia Melnikova listed 205 former employees who have become soldiers, out of a total of 820 employees. Many of them have been replaced by women, such as 32-year-old Janna Sedorenko and 34 year-old Olga Yatsuk (pictured right). Both left their respective jobs as sales assistants and accountants in private companies to work in the warehouse, where they prepare pallets of goods for stores across the country. They were attracted by the working conditions, flexible working hours and better wages.



Recruited a few months earlier, 30-year-old Anna Buryachovska (pictured below) occupies one of the most physically demanding jobs in the warehouse, as she has to lift goods with her arms. “It’s women like these who represent the future of our country,” said Melnikova with a mixture of pride and bitterness. “Today, if a man leaves the company, it’s almost certain that he’ll be replaced by a woman,” added Yulia Stoyanova, another of the company’s employees.

‘Very chaotic’

Companies that meet certain economic criteria and are considered essential can theoretically ask to “reserve” up to 50% of their employees. But in practice, according to Liesnick, Silpo’s human resources manager, “it happens that people we want to ‘reserve’ are mobilised anyway.” These dysfunctions in the rules have an impact on the recruitment process. Liesnick’s offers of employment, even for jobs eligible for exemption from mobilisation, are refused because men don’t trust the system.



Mobilisation is “very chaotic,” admitted Scania boss Jyde. In recent months, the legislative process has sped up, with several laws signed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky aimed at speeding up and broadening the process. The age limit for those eligible to enlist has been lowered from 27 to 25, and physical requirements have been reduced. All men aged between 18 and 60, who are forbidden to leave the country with very few exceptions, must also update their military documents at a recruitment centre. However, the authorities are having trouble convincing civilians.

“People are panicking,” said Jyde. “They’re afraid to go to work, they’re afraid to go out on the street,” for fear of being arrested by recruiting officers. “In this context,” continued the Scania boss, “it’s extremely difficult for us, as a transparent European company, to get anyone to work,” especially since companies are obliged to declare all their employees to the authorities. As a result, “many people refuse to come and work for us and for companies like us, because they think it’s better to go and work in a small garage workshop somewhere where they don’t pay taxes and certainly don’t report to the military authorities. So, the economy is being pushed into a grey or black zone, which is really unfortunate for Ukraine.”

Military royalty

At the same time, the country’s economy needs funds to finance the ever-growing war effort. On Wednesday, June 12, Ukrainian MPs introduced a bill that would allow companies to pay a military fee of 20,000 hryvnias (around €450) per month per employee, to exempt their workers from mobilisation. The percentage of employees who could benefit is still to be specified by the ministries. However, these measures, which have been under discussion for months, are provoking strong tensions among the population, who accuse the authorities of sending only the poor to war, while the better-off employees and, more generally, the elites would be spared.



Another model presented on June 12 by the president’s deputy chief of staff, Rostyslav Shurma, proposes that conscripts earning more than 35,000 hryvnias a month should not be drafted. Such a measure is justified by the high taxes these people pay. “We’re looking for a kind of balance, because there’s no front without a back, and there won’t be a back without a front. Without our economy, without taxes, there will be nothing to finance the front,” explained Oleksandr Zavitnevych, president of the parliamentary committee for national security, defense and intelligence, who was interviewed by the BBC’s Ukraine bureau.

In the meantime, and since the war is likely to last, companies are trying to train new employees as quickly as possible to keep their business going. In collaboration with the Swedish organisation Reskilling Ukraine, Scania’s Ukrainian branch, for example, is offering accelerated training courses for women wishing to become truck drivers. On Friday, June 14, eight of them completed a week’s practical training, including 35-year-old artist Olesya Yatsenko. “Ukraine needs workers like us today,” she explained, assuring us that she has already received offers of employment from several companies.

Student struggles in Ukraine

Municipal Academy: indifference to harassment

Source: Priama Diia (Direct Action)

On May 19 last year, Fidger, a student at the Kyiv Municipal Academy of Variety and Circus Arts (KMAECM), lodged a complaint about harassment by classmates. Fidger had been the victim of bullying during the school year, which was reported to the teachers on several occasions.

The teachers, in turn, did not follow up the call or report the situation to the victim's parents, providing the pupil with only "moral support". Ridicule of her work and her own opinions, jokes about her orientation, offensive nicknames, filming without consent for humiliating videos—these were examples of repeated harassment.

Assurances from teachers that the situation was improving did not help. The bullying intensified, prompting Fidger to attempt suicide, which took place on December 15.

On May 22 this year, the first bullying hearing took place, during which Fidger did not receive the support and understanding of the institution. He continued to hear taunts in the hallway as they queued for the meeting, which were ignored or denied by members of the commission.

On May 28, a second hearing took place, attended by the police. Fidger asked questions about the harassment to representatives of the law enforcement agencies. Without even examining all the evidence, on the same day, the victim was informed at the hearing itself that the situation was not recognised as bullying.

Parents and students do not agree with the commission's decision and are asking the public to support Fidger and spread the word.

Our union fully supports the victims. Harassment is a serious and widespread problem in many educational establishments and is not systematically combated. Often, the people concerned are afraid to talk about their problems because they do not expect an adequate response.

If you are a victim of discrimination at your university, we urge you not to remain silent and to contact us for help via the Google form.

No to harassment, yes to solidarity!

LGBTI+ struggles in Ukraine

Reduction in homophobia in Ukrainian society, but still a long way from equal rights

By Laurent Vogel

Source: Belgian Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

(June 24, 2024) The recent demonstration for equality and victory organised in Kyiv on June 16 by LGBT groups (pictured) reflects the development of a movement that is autonomous from the state and parliamentary parties, which are content with vague post-war promises. LGBT groups, and in particular the LGBT military organisation, which made a point of being highly visible at the demonstration, are demanding immediate legislative changes. They are aware that the future of Ukraine is shaped by the current mobilisation of popular movements.



More than 70% of Ukrainians believe that LGBTQ people should have the same rights as other citizens, an increase of almost 7% compared to 2022, according to a survey published by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) on June 18, 2024.

This is a relatively recent development. For the first twenty years of independent Ukraine, levels of homophobia were similar to those in Russia and other post-Soviet republics in Europe. According to a poll conducted by the European

Social Survey in 2010, only 28% of Ukrainians believed that “gays and lesbians should be free to live their lives as they choose”. This figure was the lowest of all the European countries covered by the survey, with the exception of Russia. Some research even pointed to an increase in homophobia in the early 2000s.

As Ukrainian society evolved independently of Russia, homophobia declined somewhat. But it would be wrong to mechanically link the two movements. Andrii Kravchuk[1], a gay activist, explained in 2014 that although many LGBT activists had supported Maidan, they had chosen not to make their participation visible. They didn’t want to provide arguments for pro-Russian propaganda. They feared confrontation with Ukrainian nationalist far-right groups. It seems that the very few placards in favour of LGBT rights were carried by pro-Russian provocateurs, only to be photographed and circulated on social networks. This hypothesis of provocation is supported by various accounts according to which in January 2014, people were paid to have their photos taken on Maidan Square waving rainbow flags with flags of the European Union and the United States. The majority of LGBT activists who took part in the rallies on Maidan Square opted for invisibility. Anna Dovgopol’s testimony speaks for itself:

“The other side might have wanted, in one way or another, to declare their presence as LGBT, but it was dangerous because of the large number of far-right activists (first Svoboda, then the Right Sector). At the first big demonstration after the student beatings on November 30, I was part of an LGBT group and we had several rainbow flags in our bags, which we didn’t dare take out because columns of Svoboda activists were marching alongside us, looking quite aggressive. In addition, later on, there were several cases of attacks by the far right against girls from the feminist and left-wing community who were

carrying posters on women's rights (very moderate posters, such as 'Europe = equal pay for women'), as well as against left-wing activists"[2].

It was only after Maidan that the mobilisation of LGBT people[3] gradually began to change the situation. These mobilisations were met with hostility and organised violence.

The three homophobic currents

Homophobia is based on a de facto convergence between three major currents in Ukrainian society in the first twenty years of the 21st century.

The first current was made up of pro-Russian and anti-Maidan forces who emphasised the fight against "Gayropa" and presented European anti-discrimination laws as "forced homosexualisation" of the Ukrainian population. Before 2022, the most outrageous bills against LGBT people were often tabled by MPs from the Party of the Regions, who were directly inspired by the repressive legislation adopted in Russia. While this movement virtually disappeared from free Ukraine after 2022, it is closely associated with power in the occupied regions. The persecution of LGBT people there has reached unprecedented levels of violence, with murders, the use of torture in filtration centres and the automatic association of any "sexual deviance" with the satanic enterprise of the global West. Whether in Crimea, the Donbass or the territories occupied after February 2022, the lives of LGBT people have turned into a living hell. The testimonies gathered by the NGO Projector in the Kherson district, which was occupied between March and November 2022, are chilling: humiliation, torture, rape, confiscation of retroviral HIV drugs. Some of the victims did not dare lodge a complaint after the district was liberated.

The various Christian churches (Orthodox, Greek-Catholic and Roman-Catholic) share a virulent homophobia in a very ecumenical way, even though they may differ considerably on everything else, and in particular on their links with the Patriarch of Moscow. The formation in 1996 of an All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations (known in English as UCCRO) provided a solid basis for anti-feminist and anti-LGBT lobbying. Traditional Christian churches joined forces with relatively new churches such as the Seventh Day Adventists, as well as Jewish and Muslim religious leaders. The first solemn declaration by the various religious currents against the prospect of marriage for all dates back to 2007. Since the start of the mass war, religious homophobia has found a new argument that goes beyond sacred texts: demography. In June 2023, the UCCRO explained that: "equating 'homosexual cohabitation' with marriage and the family would be 'extremely dangerous' in the 'demographic crisis'



caused by the invasion of Russia. Since February last year, Ukraine's permanent population has fallen from 43 million to 29 million, resulting in a 'lack of human resources' for post-war reconstruction". Exactly the same argument is used in Russia to justify anti-LGBT legislation.

Finally, the nationalist far-right (pictured protesting here) claims to have inherited the ideological legacy of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, according to which Ukraine's state-building must be based on

a "pure" ethno-linguistic foundation and the traditional patriarchal family is the basic unit of society. From this perspective, LGBT people are equated with a factor of disorder and racial degeneration. The Svoboda party, which sees itself as the ideological heir of Stepan Bandera, has made homophobia one of its battle banners and has not hesitated to use violence against LGBT gatherings.

The rest of the parliamentary political world oscillated between hostility and indifference towards the demands of LGBT people, sometimes out of conviction, sometimes out of electoral opportunism. The demand for marriage for all was rejected in the name of an article in the 1996 constitution that limits marriage to the union of a man and a woman. In 2014, the Democratic Alliance refused to accept the membership of Bogdan Globa, an LGBT activist. It is a moderate centre-right party, linked to Christian Democracy in Europe and recruiting many executives from pro-European NGOs. The party leader had made it clear that it was not so much Globa's sex life that posed a problem for him, but his political demand for the rights of LGBT people. The episode is interesting because, for the first time, most Ukrainian newspapers published articles that were rather favourable to Bogdan Globa.

In such a situation, the LGBT movement was gradually built around small nuclei of activists, often linked to feminist movements and the non-parliamentary left. They developed later and with greater difficulty in Western Ukraine. The first few years were particularly tough. The organisation Sphere, which has been carrying out community work in Kharkiv since 2017, recorded 30 attacks on its premises or gatherings between 2018 and 2022. Far-right commandos have attacked its premises on numerous occasions, often benefiting from the passivity of the police. Sphere's first public appearance took place in the following circumstances[4]:

“That day, eight feminist lesbians, wearing tulle and bright colours, took up position at the entrance to the marriage palace, the municipal building where heterosexual couples usually swear allegiance to each other until death. Suddenly 50 men arrived on foot, batons and tear gas canisters in hand. Yakiv, 17 at the time, was accompanying the lesbian wedding party with her boyfriend. “They surrounded us, called us perverted faggots and spat at us. One guy hit me in the jaw”. The assailants burned a rainbow flag, threw tear gas and clashed with 15 police officers. The fake brides ran away. Police officers helped them evacuate. Sphere filed a complaint for violence. Months later, the court dismissed the case. “Lack of evidence”. This unpunished offence was the first in a long list. On the padlock, sawn off by the police, is a logo: “Order and Tradition”. This is the name of an ultra-conservative far-right group founded in 2016. Christian. Anti-Roma. Anti-Russian. Homophobic. But above all, violent, armed and combat trained. One of its leaders, Ivan Pilipchuk, posts photos of *Mein Kampf* and himself performing the Nazi salute online.

Three levers: war, youth and Europe

In this particularly critical situation, LGBT activists have been able to draw on three factors.

The most surprising of all is the war. In 2018, Viktor Pylypenko, a gay activist who had joined an armed battalion of volunteers in the Donbass, set up the LGBT Military Union. The decision to make the presence of LGBT people visible in the ranks of the army and volunteer units was a bold gamble. It was made in parallel with the organisation of a photo exhibition by Anton Shebetko entitled “We were there”, in which military personnel agreed to be photographed claiming their LGBT identity. Some posed with their faces hidden, while others preferred to show their faces openly. The photos were complemented by testimonies recorded on video. The war, which was also used by the right to claim a heroic virilism, was therefore also an opportunity for the real integration of LGBT people into formations made up mainly of people from the working classes. In June 2019, the LGBT military union formed its own column of around thirty people in the Kyiv equality march. It was led by Viktor Pylypenko and Nastya Konfederat, a lesbian activist volunteering in the army. On this occasion, the independent media Hromadske published an interview with Pylypenko highlighting the responsibility of the military hierarchy for discrimination within the army:

When asked what it was like to be gay in the army, he replied that “it's uncomfortable because there are a lot of homophobes. It's because of the homophobes, particularly the homophobic commanders, that these people can't express themselves. These people are the same as us, but, unfortunately, they live in hiding. It's a shame, because they are fighting for the freedom of the people, for our rights, among other things.” On the subject of discrimination, Viktor said that he had been called a “faggot” online by people who call themselves nationalists but who have not been to war.

The presence of tens of thousands of LGBT people in the armed forces is made visible by badges featuring a unicorn[5], sometimes accompanied by a rainbow flag. It is a general feature of the Ukrainian army that soldiers are allowed to sew signs and symbols of their choice onto their uniforms. As early as

2014, a number of LGBT servicemen began to make their presence in the army visible by sewing a patch with a unicorn. At the time, it was said that there were no homosexuals in the army. Since then, the unicorn, a mythical animal that does not exist in nature, has become a powerful symbol. The use of the unicorn is doubly courageous. It displays an LGBT identity within the army, but it also implies an increased risk of inhumane treatment in the event of capture by Russian forces or their separatist collaborators.

However, we must be wary of idealising the situation. War also accelerates negative phenomena such as the brutalisation of human relations and the trivialisation of violence. So, there is a contradictory dynamic that we have been observing since 2014. The autonomy of LGBT groups is an important guarantee of emancipation. It also comes up against powerful obstacles, as evidenced by numerous episodes of homophobic violence.



A second factor is sociological. It concerns the rapid evolution of Ukrainian youth, which is becoming emancipated from the traditional values of the patriarchal family. Admittedly, there is also a section of young people attracted by the extreme right and its demonstrative masculine codes, but the testimony of many LGBT people indicates that there is a marked decline in homophobia among the new generations, particularly in schools and

universities. A film like Kateryna Gornostai's *Youth on borrowed time* reflects this trend[6]. This film, released in 2021, was the result of a long collaboration between the director and young people from Kyiv. It is a fictional film with a clear documentary dimension.

Finally, the prospect of accession to the European Union has acted as a lever for LGBT demands. Indeed, any accession process involves bringing national law into line with European law. This led to the adoption in November 2015 of a law against discrimination in the workplace, which prohibits and punishes discrimination based on sexual orientation. The passage of this law was only made possible by pressure from the European Union, which threatened not to abolish the visa requirement for Ukrainians if the law was not passed. Whereas in an initial vote on 5 November, only 117 out of 450 MPs voted in favour of the anti-discrimination amendment, a week later 234 MPs adopted it, more concerned about entry into the Schengen area than fundamental rights. This sudden turnaround was not a conversion to the cause of LGBT rights. Yuriy Lutsenko, leader of the parliamentary faction of President Poroshenko's party, justified the passing of the anti-discrimination law in the following terms: "Better a gay pride parade on the Kreschatyk than Russian tanks in the centre of Ukraine's capital". Most MPs made ambiguous statements to the effect that they were voting against discrimination on the grounds of "European membership" but that they would never, ever accept marriage for all.

Some on the left saw the use of European law as a form of homo-nationalism[7]. I find the very concept of homo-nationalism foggy. In some cases, it simply serves to condemn homo-internationalism, i.e. solidarity between LGBT movements in different parts of the world on the basis of shared basic demands. According to simplistic decolonial reasoning, there is an international LGBT movement described as dominated by "white middle-class men" who impose their ideas through NGOs in the countries of the "global South". This argument ignores the capacity of LGBT collectives in the South[8] to reappropriate global demands. It sees them as mere passive relays, sacrificing their autonomy in exchange for financial

aid or legal support. In the most serious cases[9], criticism of homo-nationalism conceals a hostility in principle to any emancipation of LGBT people in a fantasised South or among racialised minorities in the countries of the North. In reality, the strategy of LGBT groups in Ukraine is no different from that of trade unions and environmental organisations. They rely on European law to advance their own demands. Giving up this lever would weaken their action.

After the outbreak of large-scale war, pressure from LGBT movements was able to draw on the concrete experience of discrimination experienced by soldiers in the event of death, disappearance or capture. The partners of LGBT people have no rights in such cases. The hardships of war have prompted more and more people—soldiers and civilians alike—to come out, refusing to continue to put up with the prevailing homophobia. As an engineer from Kramatorsk, who was injured in a Russian bombardment, explains: “I’m gay but I didn’t tell anyone about it for a long time. But after the injury, I did a lot of thinking. I’m tired of being afraid, I want to be with the one I really love, not afraid to walk holding his hand. [10]”.

A petition was launched in June 2022 to support Bill 9103 on the institution of a civil union that would give LGBT people rights comparable to those derived from marriage. In just a few months, it was signed by 28,000 people. President Zelensky undertook to ask his prime minister to take action to advance the rights of LGBT people, but this promise has so far remained unfulfilled. A “wake-up call” came on June 1, 2023. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned Ukraine for having no legal status protecting same-sex couples[11]. In line with its case law, the European Court does not require marriage to be open to same-sex couples, but it does require a status conferring rights similar to those enjoyed by married couples.

Another important immediate demand is the adoption of Bill 5488, which will introduce into criminal law the concept of “hate crime” to punish various offences against individuals where hostility towards a discriminated group appears to be a specific motive. Among the discrimination factors considered are sexual orientation and gender identity. In this area, LGBT campaigners can also draw on a judgment of April 11, 2024 by the ECHR[12] which ruled that Ukraine had violated Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) combined with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights due to the ineffectiveness of the investigation into two verbal and physical assaults on the applicant, a gay man, involving homophobic insults. Following the first assault, the authorities failed to act on the applicant’s allegations of a hate crime and initially classified the assault as a robbery. The Court noted that the criminal classification chosen by the national authorities for the second assault as falling within the ordinary provisions of criminal law compromised their ability to uncover the alleged homophobic motive for the assault. In a context where the far right frequently uses violence against LGBT movements, a hate crime law should facilitate the judicial fight against such attacks.

The Kyiv march on 16 June was a reminder of this essential principle: victory against aggression and equal rights in society are inseparable.

NOTES

[1] Andrii Kravchuk, LGBT Ukrainians between two worlds: Russia and the European Union, Dialogai, 1 September 2014.

[2] Quoted in Tamara Martsenyuk (2015), Права людини для ЛГБТ спільноти і Євромайдан 2013-2014. Журнал соціальної критики Commons.

[3] For an overview of the early years of these mobilisations, see: Denys Lavrik, Гомофобія в Україні: тенденції постмайданного періоду, Spylne, 18 May 2015.

[4] This description is taken from: Michel Despratx, Ukraine : gays envers et contre tous, La Chronique d’Amnesty International, 22 June 2022.

[5] Maxime Birken, Guerre en Ukraine: ces soldats LGBT arborent une licorne en blason, et c’est plus qu’un symbole, Huffpost, 31 May 2022.

[6] This film can be seen with English subtitles (under its Ukrainian title “Stop Zemlia”) on the Tak Flix website: <https://takflix.com/en/films/stop-zemlia>

[7] This is Tamara Martsenyuk’s position in a 2015 article which is also an excellent source of information and analysis. The article claims the decolonial filiation of her critique of “homonationalism”. See Марценюк Т., Права людини для ЛГБТ спільноти і Євромайдан 2013-2014. Журнал соціальної критики Commons

[8] The example of South Africa shows how the alliance between that country's LGBT movements and international LGBT organisations has been an important factor of success that seems to me to disprove the decolonial hypothesis of homonationalism.

[9] This is the case of Houria Bouteldja, who admires the policy pursued by former president Ahmadinejad to eradicate LGBT people from Iranian society. See : Serge Halimi, Ahmadinejad, mon héros, Le Monde Diplomatique, August 2016.

[10] Mathilde Goanec, Ukraine: la guerre, “un puissant accélérateur” pour les droits LGBT+, Médiapart, 5 December 2022.

[11] ECHR, Judgment of 1 June 2023, “Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine”.

[12] ECHR, Judgment of 11 April 2024, “Karter v. Ukraine”.

Pride march in Kyiv: ‘HOMOPHOBIA, THAT’S rUSSIA!’ (photo)



Source: Belgian committee of the European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine

(June 17, 2024) On Sunday, June 16, a march for equality was organised by LGBT movements in Kyiv. It was the first LGBT march in the Ukrainian capital since the start of the mass invasion in February 2022. Despite threats from the nationalist far right and the unwillingness of the municipal authorities, the march was a success in mobilising for legislative changes in favour of equality.

Despite Russian missile threats, despite attempts by the nationalist far right to counter-demonstrate, despite the driving rain, the LGBT march for equality took place in a combative and enthusiastic atmosphere in Kyiv on Sunday, June 16. It was the first LGBT march since the massive Russian invasion of February 2022.

Half a thousand people marched through the streets of the city carrying flags and posters. There was a strong presence of soldiers and war veterans (pictured). The march's guest of honour was the LGBT military union. The demonstration gathered in the city centre, near Teatralna metro station. It was only able to cover a very short route, close to shelters to allow rapid evacuation in the event of an air-raid warning. The organising committee of the march for equality had tried to negotiate with the police the possibility of taking a longer route, with a larger number of demonstrators, but these negotiations failed. One of the options they proposed was to hold the march in the metro. This was refused by the Kyiv City Council. The place of concentration had to be kept secret and was made known at the last minute through contact groups on social networks made up of people who had registered to take part in the march.

A group of far-right activists concentrated at Khreshchatyk to defend “traditional values”. They tried to run towards the march venue to attack it but were blocked by the police. Some of the signs on the equality

march emphasised that “homophobia is Russia”, showing that the Ukrainian nationalist far right is partly based on reactionary ideologies that it shares with the Russian attackers. Two days before the march, a group from the nationalist far right had gathered outside Kiyv town hall to demand that the march be banned. Their slogans were simply the Ukrainian translation of the homophobic propaganda omnipresent in the Russian media (notably: “homosexuality is not an orientation, it’s a psychiatric disorder”).

“The Equality March is an opportunity to draw the world’s attention to the war in Ukraine. We need legal support. We are fighting on an equal footing with everyone else, but we don’t know what will happen to our loved ones. If something happens to them, if they end up in hospital or in captivity, we can’t visit them or look for them. We are people living with life problems. Up to 10% of the LGBTQ community is in the army”, said Dmytro, an activist and veteran.

Other Ukraine news and analysis

Kyiv: A third of workers are on the front line

Source: *Patrick Le Tréhondat*

(July 9, 2023) Since the start of the full-scale invasion, 27% of Kyiv City Council employees have joined the armed forces, so the organisation is currently suffering from a staff shortage. In particular, there is a shortage of electricians, engineers and machinists. The company is currently looking for specialists for various positions.

The capital's Metro (pictured) has also announced a shortage of staff. There are currently more than 15% of vacancies on the Metro, including locksmiths, turners, electricians and metro drivers.



Since June 3, intervals between trains have increased by one minute at off-peak times and by 45 seconds at peak times due to an “acute shortage” of workers.

There is also a 28-30% shortage of specialists in some of the capital's industrial companies. The greatest needs are for drivers, mechanics, machinists and painters.

In Dnipro, they want to privatise a prosthetics factory

Source: *French Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine*

(June 30, 2024) The Ukrainian State Property Fund has submitted the Dnipropetrovsk prosthetics and orthopaedics company for privatisation. The auction will take place on July 10.

The State is offering investors the chance to buy the company for around UAH 115 million [€2.562 million], thereby preserving its specialisation.

The State Property Fund also reports that the company is profitable. In 2023, it made a profit of UAH 2.5 million hryvnias [€55,700], and in the first five months of this year, it will have made a profit of over one million hryvnias [.

Director Antonina Kumka notes that privatising the company entails certain risks. The Dnipro prosthesis company is currently one of our strategic businesses for a number of reasons, including the fact that the State protects it from fluctuations and changes in the market,” she says. Secondly, there is a risk of losing a team of highly trained specialists.

Antonina Kumka points out that veterans and patients of the prosthetics company are currently writing appeals to the State Property Fund and the government to ask for the procedure to be suspended.

“Veteran patients are outraged and can't believe it,” she says.

About Constitution Day and its neoliberal enemies

Source: *Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement)*

(June 28, 2024) We hope that the Constitution will serve the interests of Ukrainian workers and prevent the oligarchy from achieving its narrow class goals. The Constitution is capable of consolidating the people against oppressors, both internal and external.

Unfortunately, the Basic Law has not prevented the corruption of power by wealthy clans: the objectives of building a sovereign and social state that it proclaims remain a political ideal. From the very first days of the large scale invasion, the authorities restricted the labour, social and civil rights enshrined in the

Constitution. As a result, it has become much more difficult for the Ukrainian people to resist the aggressor, and the contradictions between the working class and the elite that is parasitic upon it have grown considerably.

In order to curry favour with business, some politicians are openly hostile to the foundations of the constitutional order. For example, MP Galina Tretyakova, known for her anti-social statements, is extremely unhappy about the existence of provisions prohibiting the reduction of rights when adopting the new anti-labour laws she has drafted. At the same time, she is in favour of increasing the salaries of her assistants from UAH 88,000 [€2000] to UAH 132,000 [€3000] a month.

It is very revealing that in her recent speeches she indirectly accused the judges of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (CCU) of sympathising with socialism. There may be some truth in this accusation, because the Basic Law is drafted in such a way that the interests of an individual and of society as a whole are given a much higher value than considerations of profit and selfishness.

With the Constitution in its hands, the CCU has no choice but to declare Tretyakova's legislative work unconstitutional! The scandalous MP's criticism smacks of direct interference in the work of the judiciary (the fact that some of her laws are currently being examined by the CCU adds to the certainty). The Ombudsman has even filed a petition concerning the constitutionality of the provisions of Law 2136 that limit the right to rest leave. It should be remembered that Presidential Decree 64/2022 authorised restrictions on the right to work (Article 43 of the Constitution), but not on the right to rest (Article 45 of the Constitution) during martial law.

We believe that the struggle to uphold the Constitution must not stop, even in times of war. Otherwise, the burden of war will be transferred to the people, their rights will be arbitrarily restricted and, after victory, all the powers and resources of the country will be usurped by the representatives of acpital. On the contrary, we must strive to create a society based on social equality, participatory democracy and human dignity, in full accordance with the spirit of the Basic Law.

For a free, united and social Ukraine!



Ukraine: social workers in wartime

By Oleksandr Kitral

Source: [Commons](#). Translation: Patrick Le Tréhondat

June 14, 2024) There are people who, when their lives are in danger, think first of those who need help. There are many such people, including social workers. In recent years, there have been many examples of social workers continuing to distribute food and medicines to pensioners and disabled people under enemy fire and of delivering pensions. There were also people who, out of concern for the safety of the elderly, took them into their homes. The social workers explain that, in these situations, they were motivated not so much by the desire to keep their jobs, where they receive a rather modest salary, as by a sense of responsibility. In this article, we talk about the selfless work of social workers, whether their work is appreciated today, and interview the social workers themselves about the problems of social welfare in Ukraine.

The only one who agreed to work

Social workers are responsible for helping vulnerable people, particularly isolated pensioners and people with physical and psychological disabilities who need care, domestic and medical services. Their situation is often extreme, as these people are often unable to look after themselves properly in everyday life. Some members of staff, aware of this situation, did not leave their protégés, even when bombing began to get intense, putting themselves in mortal danger. This is the case of Lilia Blazhko, a social worker from the village of Pavlivka in the Sumy region, two kilometres from the Russian border. She explains that she entered the social sector by chance.

“When the war broke out, I was studying at school in Bilopillia, but I returned to Pavlivka almost immediately. At the time, the village was looking for a social worker. We needed to help ten inhabitants. But nobody wanted to do it—they were afraid. I was the only one who agreed to work,” Lilia tells *Commons*.



Despite the withdrawal of Russian troops from the region in spring 2022, it is still dangerous to live in Pavlivka. The village is regularly bombed, leaving only 160 of its 800-plus inhabitants. Recently, a shell hit a courtyard, damaging a house and its outbuildings. The owners were not injured as they were working in the garden when the shell hit. It should be noted that Pavlivka is a village with virtually only one street, stretching for 10 kilometres. Lilia Blazhko had to cover a considerable distance to get to the person in need of care, and she could only do so on foot, as she was unable to ride a bicycle.

During her stay in the village on the front line, she learnt to identify “exits” and “arrivals”. If there is heavy shelling, she goes down into the cellar with the people she is helping, or if she is caught on the road, she seeks shelter by the roadside. Lilia’s tasks include not only distributing pensions, food and medicines to people with reduced mobility, but also helping with household chores: washing, cooking, cleaning and helping in the garden. Among other things, Lilia can also carry out minor repairs, such as wallpapering. She says she has no problem with this, as she is a painter and plasterer by profession. Despite the dangerous working conditions, she receives UAH 6500 [€149] a month for her work.

Leaving people behind was out of the question

Vira Temchenko, a resident of Verkhnya Syrovatka in the Sumy region, has been helping 17 residents since the hostilities began, seven of them on her own initiative, because their relatives had left and there is no one to look after them. She recounts how the village was bombed from the very first days of the war. The social worker remembers when she first heard shells flying overhead.

“I remember I was on my bike delivering bread to a disabled man and his disabled mother. Suddenly, the bombing started. The air vibrated as a shell passed by. I decided to keep going, at a speed I’d never experienced before. The next time I went to collect pensions from the post office to give to people, I was delayed. Suddenly, shellfire started nearby. It turned out that the shooting took place, in particular, around the path that I was supposed to take beforehand,” recounts Vira Temchenko.

The woman says that her family tried several times to persuade her to leave her job, but she refused.

“I couldn’t leave people behind. Who would look after them then? It was because I and other social workers continued to help them despite the bombings that these people got through a difficult period, because they understood that they would not be abandoned. Throughout the period of the bombings, not a single social worker in our community left her job. And today, when there is a risk of a new invasion in our region, all the social workers in the community have declared that they will continue to work,” she said.

Speaking about the specifics of her work, Vira Temchenko sadly admits that her profession is not particularly popular in society. Vira only began to take pride in her profession a few years ago, when she started working as a social worker and realised the responsibility she had to shoulder. In her opinion, young people are reluctant to go into social work, and those who do often give up because they can’t stand the working conditions. They have to look after people with mental health problems or with lifestyles that are not very social.

“Nobody wants to look after these people. There are also travel problems. In summer, I ride my bike, which was given to me specially for this purpose, but in winter, I can’t really go round the village like that, I have to walk a lot. As for the working day, it often starts an hour earlier because I have to have time to buy the products that the pensioners ask me for, as they are used to buying them from certain vendors. As far as pay is concerned, we used to earn more because we had bonuses, but now the pay is lower, at UAH 6400 [€142.60] a month,” explains Vira Petrivna.

She believes that the state should promote the work of social workers in society, while improving their working conditions and raising their wages. However, despite the difficult working conditions and modest salary, the social worker assures us that she loves her job. She says she worries every time she sees an absent call from the elderly people she helps, and that if she can’t reach them for a long time, she worries about their health. “I think the elderly deserve more attention and respect today,” she concludes.

Natalia’s work has not diminished

We spoke to another social worker from Verkhnia Syrovatka, Natalia Zelenina (pictured at beginning of article). Since the start of the war, this social worker with seventeen years’ experience has helped eleven people. Among them was a 101-year-old resident, Kateryna Alekseevna, whom Natalia took into her home because she feared for her life: the old lady liked to sit by the window, where shrapnel could injure her in the event of an explosion. As there was no extra bed in Zelenina’s house, the social worker put the pensioner in her own bed, sleeping on the floor herself. A week after she moved in, a shell hit her grandmother’s yard, shattering the doors and windows.

Natalia Zelenina told us that from February 24 to March 26, when Russian troops were in Verkhnia Syrovatka, she hardly slept at all because she was afraid of being shot at. At the same time, she didn’t want to hide in the cellar and leave her grandmother alone in the house.

“There were days when the explosions were continuous, but I had to deliver food to people. So I asked my husband to drive me. If there were no explosions, I cycled. Of course, I was aware of all the risks, but how could I leave the people who were counting on my help?”

Since the end of hostilities in the region, Natalia Zelenina’s work has not diminished. Every day, she has to visit several people to whom she not only delivers food, but also helps with their household chores.

“Today, I visited four people. During the day, I washed clothes, prepared meals, bought medicines from the pharmacy, mowed the paths around the house for an old lady with a hand scythe and planted cucumbers. Sometimes, someone asks me to come and help them the next day, even though it’s their turn at the end of the week. I can’t refuse, because I understand that it’s gardening season and everyone wants to plant on time. How do I get everything done? You can still see very well until eight o’clock in the evening, so I often have to stay two or three hours longer at work. But I don’t have time to do anything at home,” explains the social worker.

Of all the social workers we spoke to, Natalia Zelenina is the only one to own an electric bike, given to her by her children. She says it saves her a lot of energy. Her husband is also a great help, as he takes some of the pensioners to the hospital in the regional centre, 12 kilometres from the village, on his own initiative.

Dangerous journeys

Natalia Adamenko, from the Chernihiv region, helps the inhabitants of three border villages: Pushkary, where she lives, and the neighbouring villages of Kovpynka and Kremsky Bugor. She sometimes has to travel long distances by bike, or even on foot. Since the hostilities began, Natalia has not left her job for a single day, even though the region is periodically bombarded by Grad rockets.

“Scary or not, I have to go. I was almost fired on once. I was supposed to go to Kremsky Bugor to visit an elderly man, but he called to tell me that he was in town and that I shouldn’t come. Sometime later, the village was bombed,” says Natalia.

Although the region is relatively calm today, the villages where Natalia has protégés are located 10-15 km from the border and are therefore regularly hit by shells. As a result, even the ambulances refuse to go to the villages. One of the peculiarities of the work of a social worker in the Chernihiv Oblast is the long distances involved.

“It’s eight kilometres one way from my house to one of my grandmothers in Kovpyntsi. I get there by bike. If it rains or snows, my husband drives me. But now the water has risen near the village for the second year in a row, and it’s impossible to get through, so I walk... Kremskyi Buhra is closer, but you have to go straight through the forest, which is dangerous because the dogs run around. We’ve seen wolves attacking domestic dogs,” she explains.

Natalia Adamenko’s work is similar to that of the other women we interviewed: delivering food and medicines, helping with household chores and gardening. Only recently, Natalia had to bring drinking water to one of the old ladies in the nearby town of Kovpynka, because the water in the wells of the pensioner and her neighbours, who live at the far end of the village, had dried up.

“I used to take a 20-litre container from home, fetch water from a public pump a kilometre and a half away and bring it to the pensioner. But after a report on television, the problem of the broken well pump was solved”, explains Natalia.

Natalia has been working as a social worker for 14 years and has no plans to leave the profession. She says she enjoys her work, although her salary is very modest, UAH 5500 [€126] a month. Natalia’s husband doesn’t work, so the family has to economise on everything.

A cornerstone of social support

In order to provide decent social support to the population, substantial funding is needed, as funds are not only used to pay the salaries of social workers but should also be used to finance benefits for the elderly, as the financial capacities of many categories of vulnerable citizens are extremely limited.

“In April, I went into town with a pensioner I look after, and she bought 2700 UAH [€60 euros] worth of medicines: five injections, a few pills and a loaf of bread. Many people with reduced mobility also spend a lot of money to get to the hospital in Novhorod-Siverskyi. Our village bus goes to town once a week, so it’s packed with passengers, and the poor pensioners with their walking sticks simply can’t get on. This is why many elderly people are forced to hire the services of a driver with their own means of transport. Such a journey costs between 800 and 900 UAH [€18-20 euros]”, the social worker tells us.

Vira Temchenko explains that many elderly people in her village are forced to economise on everything. Even well water, which is free for their personal use, is used sparingly, so that they don’t have to call in a lorry to pump out the sewage pit. Many elderly people would like to keep animals and poultry to avoid having to buy milk, eggs and meat, but they can’t because they need money for food. According to Vira, many pensioners remember the financial aid they received from the UN during the first year of the war. Today, they hardly receive any money at all.

“When you look at how these people live, you realise that old age shouldn’t be like this. People need to reach retirement age in good health, so that they are not left alone with themselves and their problems. That’s why, as a social worker, we try to support these people,” she adds.

It’s worth noting that there are many social workers in Ukraine who are prepared to do their work selflessly, even at the risk of their lives, but why do they receive such meagre pay for their work? Natalia

Lomonosova, sociologist and author of several studies on social services, answered this question for *Commons*. According to her, municipal social service providers are managed by local governments, and it is therefore they who have to pay the employees' salaries. To determine the salary, there is a price scale that constitutes the official salary. However, according to the sociologist, in general, the wages on the scale are low and need to be revised.

“Another problem is that since 2017, official wages have been linked to the subsistence minimum, rather than the minimum wage, as was previously the case. As a result, the lowest official wages are lower than the minimum wage, sometimes by several thousand UAH,” explains the sociologist.

According to Nataliia Lomonosova, if an employee's salary is below the minimum wage, the law obliges the employer to pay a supplement. As a result, some female social workers now earn a minimum wage, on which tax is also deducted.

Nataliia Lomonosova adds that, for their part, municipalities can introduce additional payments from the local budget, as well as improving working conditions, for example by providing social workers with electric bicycles and purchasing the vehicles needed for the social services centre. However, this depends on the priorities of the local authorities and, above all, on the community's own budget. After the decentralisation reform, the communities gained a large degree of autonomy, while their resources depend on the presence of large companies that are taxpayers.

Natalia Lomonosova also added that for the effective development of social policy and the provision of social services, it is necessary to develop a network of specialists in this field. At present, the number of social work specialists and social workers in the country is insufficient, while the need for such specialists is growing.

“Recently, the number of people in difficult situations has increased. What's more, the situation of elderly people in need of care has worsened, as many of their family members have moved abroad. And some social workers have also left their communities”, she points out.

The economic difficulties, the fighting and the destruction of infrastructure are making the situation even worse for vulnerable people. And despite all the obstacles and meagre salaries, the social workers continue to carry out their duties with integrity and courage.

However, quality support for vulnerable people should not rely on the dedication of individual workers and the resources of a single community. The fundamental needs and problems of people who, because of their age and physical disabilities, are unable to look after themselves properly must be addressed and resolved at a systemic level. Today, however, we can only conclude that the social support provided by the State is clearly insufficient.

At the same time, examples of the selfless work of women social workers in many parts of Ukraine show that people are trying to create better conditions for those in need, at least on an individual level. This means that there are many citizens in the country who clearly see the urgent need to improve people's quality of life, and who understand how important it is to do something about it. This is a step towards positive change.

Solidarity with Ukraine's workers and unions

Japan and Cambodia will jointly demine Ukraine

Source: French Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

(July 7, 2024) Japan, together with Cambodia, will be carrying out mine clearance work on Ukrainian territory. This was announced by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa during her visit to Phnom Penh.

As Kamikawa noted, a country that has lived through such experience will be able to make a significant contribution to demining Ukraine.

Cambodia is regarded as one of the world leaders in mine action technology. After 30 years of civil war, millions of mines remained in Cambodia.

Since 1998, the country has been working with Japan to clear its territory.

After 14 months of war, Ukraine has become the most heavily mined country in the world, surpassing Afghanistan and Syria (data from the international think tank Globsec). Almost a third of Ukraine's territory (174,000 square kilometres) is considered mined.



SEAPEAK STOP PROFITING FROM WAR!

THE FOSSIL INDUSTRY IS COMPLICIT

SEAPEAK is making money off war and bankrolling Putin, while destroying our planet and our futures!

Join us on 23 JULY at 10 AM outside the SEAPEAK office in Glasgow

STOP FUNDING RUSSIA'S WAR! REAL SANCTIONS NOW!

**TUESDAY, 23 JULY, 10 AM
144 ELLIOT ST, GLASGOW
G3 8EX**

Organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland



Urgent demo against a gas carrier for Putin!

Source: Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland

(July 5, 2024) Fossil fuels destroy our climate and fund war. Glasgow-based company Seapeak is enabling Putin's regime to continue to wage war on Ukraine and is profiting from Russia's lucrative gas trade.

Europe talks of sanctions against Russia but continues to buy its gas, supplied by British ships and ensured by British companies.

End the complicity! End the hypocrisy!

We demand the new Labour government ends loopholes that protect the fossil trade and effective sanctions NOW!

Seapeak, stop profiting from war

See also: [The critical cog in Putin's machine and how British firms help to keep Russian gas flowing into Europe](#)

Important victory for solidarity with Ukraine: EU's new sanctions package will ban the transshipment of Russian LNG

Source: Belgian Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

(July 3, 2024) For more than a year, a coalition of organisations in Belgium, led by Vredesactie, has been demanding an end to liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports and transshipments at the port of Zeebrugge.

After two months of bitter discussions, an agreement was reached on Thursday (20 June) among the 27 ambassadors to the European Union. The new sanctions had been under negotiation for a long time, but Hungary and Germany obstructed the process for a long time, preventing unanimity. Working with the European Commission, the Belgian Presidency of the Council put forward a new compromise proposal on Wednesday, which has now been accepted. In a sense, the timing was perfect from the point of view of Belgian politics: the New Flemish Alliance (NVA, right-wing nationalist party in Flanders) was opposed to sanctions concerning Russian LNG. A federal government led by an alliance of the NVA and French-speaking Reformist Movement (MR) would likely have blocked the issue.

In addition to energy sanctions, the Council would also approve measures to target Russia's phantom tanker fleet and punish third-country companies, including China, that have helped Russia circumvent previous trade restrictions.

The details of these measures are not yet known. The points of agreement still need to be legally formulated, and the agreement will be formally adopted by the European ministers meeting in the Foreign Affairs Council this Monday in Luxembourg.

In a message published on its X (ex-Twitter) account, the Belgian Presidency stated that "this package provides for new targeted measures and maximises the impact of existing sanctions by filling in the gaps". It should contain provisions to prevent certain companies from circumventing existing sanctions by using subsidiaries in third countries. Exports of dual-use civilian and military technological goods will also be targeted, and a hundred new names are expected to join the list of people and entities under sanctions.

Above all, for the first time since the start of the war, the EU Member States have agreed to target the Russian natural gas sector, and specifically the liquefied natural gas sector, with measures affecting imports and investments, and a ban on the transshipment of LNG in EU ports. While sanctions already exist against Russian coal and oil, gas has so far been spared. The EU has also decided to ban funding for the construction of Russian LNG terminals in the Baltic region and northern Russia.

Before the invasion, Moscow was the EU's leading supplier of methane, with Russian imports accounting for 40% of the Union's domestic consumption. This figure has fallen to 15% by 2023, divided between deliveries by pipeline (8%) and LNG transported by tanker (7%). Of the latter, around a fifth is re-exported to countries outside the EU, according to the American energy think-tank IEEFA, which believes that "the ban on these transshipments does not affect the EU's security of supply and will prevent Russia from using EU terminals for its own benefit".

Once in force, this measure is likely to particularly affect Fluxys' Zeebrugge terminal, which is one of the three main gateways for Russian liquefied natural gas into the EU—along with Bilbao in Spain and Montoir-de-Bretagne in France. In 2015, the Belgian natural gas transmission system operator signed a contract with the Russian company Yamal LNG, under which part of the Zeebrugge facilities would be used - a fifth 180,000 m³ tank has been built especially for this purpose - to unload Russian ice-breaking LNG carriers from the vast Yamal gas field in Siberia, before re-transshipping the gas on conventional LNG carriers bound for Asian markets.

According to the NGO [Bond Beter Leefmilieu](#), around 90% of the Russian LNG arriving at Zeebrugge is shipped elsewhere. The Yamal contract earns Fluxys €50 million a year. This represents almost 10% of the company's turnover. Given that the contract runs until 2039, a ban on transshipments would represent a loss of 750 million euros for the Group.

It is not yet known what the exact terms of this sanction will be, and in particular to what extent it can be used to unilaterally terminate contracts between European gas ports and their Russian customers, without having to pay them compensation. Fluxys says it is waiting to see the text of the agreement before reacting. “We want to analyse it first and see what impact it will have on our contracts,” says Fluxys spokesman Thierry Vervenne. “Of course, we will comply with it.”

ETUC stance on Ukraine

Source: <https://etuc.org/en/document/ensuring-security-new-impulse-peace-needed>

(Extract from resolution on peace, July 1, 2024) The ETUC reiterates its strong condemnation of the Russian war against Ukraine. Trade unions call for the withdrawal of Russian troops, reject war and are committed to restoring dialogue, cooperation between States and the social consensus essential for lasting peace. The ETUC calls on the EU and governments to partake in an international peace conference for the resolution of the war of aggression on Ukraine and a post-war international peace conference for the prosecution of the war-crimes. The ETUC also supports the Environmental Compact for Ukraine.

UNISON votes to support Ukraine

Source: *Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, Scotland*

(July 1, 2024) This week, the annual delegate conference of the UK’s largest trade union, Unison with 1.4m members, voted by a large majority to support Ukraine’s fight and to affiliate to the USC UK (see [Newsletter number 10](#) for details). This increases the total affiliated membership of USC sevenfold. The move within the union to affiliate was initiated and led by the South Lanarkshire Branch and members of the Scottish Council, both of which are already affiliated to USC Scotland. But this is just a first step. Affiliation is not a badge to display on our social media pages, but a means to mobilise union members at every level to bring concrete aid to our Ukrainian union brothers and sisters, under daily attack from Russian missiles. Congratulations!



Time to help Ukraine win

Source: Labour Hub

(June 29, 2024) *Christopher Ford, Secretary of Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and member of Walthamstow Constituency Labour Party, introduces a statement on Ukraine issued by six Labour MPs and a number of union leaders and campaigners.*

Ukraine is in the Danger Zone, caught between renewed Russia attacks and electoral changes that may bring far-right forces to power who threaten continued aid.

In the UK general election, Ukraine has only featured in relation to the views of the pound-shop Mosley, Nigel Farage. While all the parties except Reform UK declare their support for Ukraine, none explain what that will mean in terms of helping Ukraine win.

Yet the absence from the election agenda does not diminish the centrality of Ukraine to resisting the axis of reaction we face today. Six Labour MPs, alongside union leaders and Ukrainian campaigners have issued a clear statement calling on the new government to take robust steps to help win the war. Launched in Ukraine in the journal *Krytyka*, this is a radical call for Labour to show leadership in a situation where progressive change in the UK could be a beacon of hope amidst retrogression in parts of Europe and the USA.

Ukraine: General Election 2024: Time for Change to Help Ukraine Win

The General Election takes place at a time when Ukraine is at a crossroads and with it the fate of this key battle for democracy with the new authoritarianism. The war on Ukraine should be a key issue of the election, and **July 4 should be an opportunity for change to help Ukraine win and secure a just peace.**

We have seen new Russian offensives, increased attacks on civilians and infrastructure, a situation made worse by aid delay's due to obstruction by far-right forces such as Orban and Trump.

Recent advances by the far right in Europe, and risk of a Trump presidency pose a serious threat to Ukraine and democracy globally, they are reinforcing efforts by Putin to undermine continued international support for Ukraine.

As **Parliamentary Candidates and representatives of the Labour and Trade Union Movement**, we declare our continued solidarity with the Ukrainian people, including their trade unions, who against the odds are resisting Russian Imperialism.

We are calling for the new government to take the following key steps help Ukraine.

1. **Weapons to Win:** Ukraine has been made vulnerable by the fact just enough weapons have been provided to help *resist* Russia, but **not to defeat it**. The UK must play a leading role in achieving a change, that Ukraine be given all the weapons needed to enable Ukrainians to free the entire country and end the occupation.
2. **Stop Selling off Military Hardware:** It is a scandal that since the all-out invasion the Tory government sold off over 1044 military vehicles and 48 fixed-wing aircraft, this practice must stop. Equipment due to be replaced such as the Challenger 2 Tanks, Scimitar light tanks, Warrior vehicles and Typhoon aircraft should be gifted to Ukraine.
3. **Justice for War Crimes:** Russia, is waging an illegal war of aggression against a sovereign nation, unseen in Europe since 1945. Russian state forces have perpetrated war crimes and other atrocities on a horrifying scale, with over 108,904 recorded by Ukraine. Urgent steps should be taken to convene an international war crimes tribunal to hold the Russian leaders and military to account.
4. **Cancel Debt and Seize Russian Assets:** Ukraine's debts stand at \$100 billion, it is unjust that a nation fighting for survival should be expected to service debts, the debt should be cancelled. The new UK government must seize the frozen Russian individual and central bank assets and redistributed them to Ukraine. Whilst welcoming the \$50 billion of Russian financial assets in the West re-allocated to Ukraine, the total \$300 billion should be redistributed.
5. **Socially Progressive Reconstruction:** Ukraine deserves a just and socially progressive reconstruction in which trade unions and civil society can democratically participate. International support should help to restore and expand universal healthcare, education, rebuild affordable housing and public infrastructure, ensuring decent jobs and working conditions. No more advisors from the UK Government should be used to assist in retrogressive reforms of trade union and labour rights.

We call for renewed and expanded solidarity to help Ukraine win a just peace; on July 4 let us start making it a reality.

Clive Lewis, Former Labour MP for Norwich South, Parliamentary Candidate

Nadia Whittome, Former Labour MP for Nottingham East, Parliamentary Candidate

Rachel Maskell, Former Labour MP for York Central, Parliamentary Candidate

Kim Johnson, Former Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside, Parliamentary Candidate

John McDonnell, Former Labour MP for Hayes & Harlington. Parliamentary Candidate.

Ian Lavery, Former Labour MP for Wansbeck, Parliamentary Candidate.

Chris Kitchen, General Secretary of National Union of Mineworkers

John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, Public and Commercial Service Union, (personal capacity).

Simon Weller, Assistant General Secretary, ASLEF the train drivers union, (personal capacity)

Vicky Blake University and Colleges Union, National Executive and former President, (personal capacity).

Oksana Holota, representative of Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine

Yuliya Yurchenko, representative of *Sotsialny Rukh* (Social Movement) of Ukraine

Mariia Pastuk, Director CIC *Vsesvit*, Ukrainian solidarity collective London.
Christopher Ford, Secretary, Ukraine Solidarity Campaign.

Freedom Birds for Ukraine

Source: <https://www.freedombirds.help/>

(June 27, 2024) We are pleased to announce that, with your support, the fundraiser for a vehicle for the scouts of the 206th Separate Battalion of the AFU's Territorial Defense has been successfully completed! The majority of the funds were generously donated by an anonymous donor. We extend our heartfelt thanks to him and to everyone who contributed. Now, we move forward with the procurement process.



A reliable, all-terrain vehicle is crucial for front-line defenders—it is used to evacuate the wounded and transport essential equipment and is often subjected to shelling and damage. Thanks to your help, the heroic scouts will receive a much-needed replacement for their old, damaged vehicle!

Your help saves lives!



Solidarity Collectives: We have a new PayPal account for Humanitarian Aid

(June 28, 2024) Approximately every two months, our Solidarity Collectives team is headed on humanitarian missions to frontline territories. For people who have fled or even completely lost their homes due to the Russian army's shelling, we bring household appliances, bedding sets, dishes, hygiene products, and much more. All of this requires funding. Specifically for this purpose, we have separate account purely for humanitarian aid. However, PayPal decided it went against their guidelines and blocked it. Which rules have we violated? They never got back to us with an explanation.

Just as we were planning two humanitarian missions to the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, we discovered that the funds for these missions were blocked. Despite this setback, we managed to organize one of them. The team has just returned from a trip to Kupyansk and Druzhkivka, but new trips are also planned. That's why we'd like to announce a new humanitarian account and urge you to support the extremely important area of our work. After all, its cause is helping those who need it the most.

New PayPal: humanitarian.aid.solcol@gmail.com Monobank: 4441114457669701

Jar: <https://send.monobank.ua/jar/uiSZk8CmM>

Giuditta Rescue Team: a hand outstretched towards Ukraine

Source: MicroMega. Translation: Dick Nichols

(June 27, 2024) At the heart of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, a new force emerges from the union of a small but determined group of volunteers—the [Giuditta Rescue Team](#). This association was born from the inspiration and courage of [Ludovico Gualano](#), who decided to put the values of rescue and solidarity into practice by facing challenges directly in the field.

On Sunday, June 30, in [Segrate](#), there will take place, with all who stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and their resistance to invasion, a participatory and inclusive coming-together of various entities and organisations on the value of international solidarity and on the construction of aid networks (see poster).

Ludovico's journey began as a solo mission through the war zones of Ukraine carrying medicines, first-aid supplies and other necessities. From Lviv to Kyiv he distributed humanitarian aid, assisted in the reconstruction of liberated villages and rescued abandoned pets. This commitment turned into a network of collaborations that gave birth to the Giuditta Rescue Team, a group of volunteers working in close cooperation with local associations both in Italy and Ukraine. The mission of the Giuditta Rescue Team is distinguished by its ability to reach the most remote and conflict-torn areas, bringing concrete and immediate help to those most in need.



In cooperation with the Italy-Ukraine Friendship Association of [Cernusco sul Naviglio](#), the team has initiated numerous humanitarian support projects. One of these is the Solidarity Caravan to Ukraine, an initiative currently being prepared that aims to bring food, animal feed, medicine, medical and tactical material, work tools and energy devices such as power banks and generators to the population of the Ukrainian capital. The situation in Ukraine is dramatic, with residential buildings, public places and infrastructure severely damaged. While institutional projects are often unable to reach the most isolated areas, the intervention of volunteers from the Giuditta Rescue Team is crucial. Their presence in the field enables them to offer immediate and tangible support, making a difference to many lives.

The team does not stop at rescuing people. Another important aspect of their work is the rescue of domestic animals, often forgotten victims of the conflict. Frightened, hungry and sometimes injured, these animals find shelter thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Giuditta Rescue Team with Ukrainian associations. During the first mission, Ludovico collaborated with the Solidarity Collective in Kherson, helping to rescue animals affected by the flooding caused by the Nova Khakovka dam explosion.



In addition to the field work, the Giuditta Rescue Team launched several fundraising campaigns and materials. Through the “suspended shopping trolley” method [crowdfunding of a virtual shopping trolley of goods], anyone can donate medical and military-medical materials essential to ensure vital care for those who need it most. The team's appeals are not limited to basic necessities, but also include tools, work clothing and energy devices, all of which are crucial for sustaining daily life in the most affected areas.

The mission of the Giuditta Rescue Team continues thanks to the support of numerous volunteers and donors, united by the desire to make a difference at a time of great hardship for the Ukrainian people. With the Solidarity Caravan project in Ukraine, the team proves once again that solidarity knows no borders. Even in the darkest moments, when many turn away, the Giuditta Rescue Team offers hope and concrete help to a population that has been under siege for more than two years.

Social standards must be upheld in accession talks

Source: *European Trade Union Confederation*

(June 25, 2024) Trade unions are calling for the European Union's social and labour standards to be fully upheld in negotiations on the accession of Ukraine, Moldova and Montenegro.

Following a [decision](#) by the European Council in December to open accession negotiations, the first Conference of Accession for each of the three countries is being held today and tomorrow.



The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) says the right lessons must be learned from social and economic challenges which arose during previous accession processes.

The employers' organisation [SGI Europe has joined](#) the ETUC in calling for the EU to do more to help Ukraine make the significant advances needed on social policy for it to make progress towards membership.

Trade unions from Ukraine and Moldova joined the ETUC in 2022 as part of efforts to help the countries reach the social and labour standards needed for a successful accession to the EU.

ETUC Confederal Secretary Tea Jarc said:

“Trade unions want the accession of Ukraine, Moldova and Montenegro to be a success for working people in these countries themselves as well as for those in existing members of the European Union.

“That means the EU's social and labour standards must be fully upheld in accession talks, with no partial access to the single market until countries have reached the required standards.

“Coming from the western Balkans, I know that this will require trade unions to be involved in the accession process in a meaningful way. Not only on paper as in the past.

“In particular, unions must have a role in deciding how EU funds dedicated to facilitating the accession process should be spent.

“This would be an important first step towards normalising the system of social dialogue between unions, employers and policymakers that is fundamental to the EU's economy.

“We cannot make accession decisions solely on the degree of alignment of countries with the EU's foreign and security policies if we expect this process to be an economic or social success.”

University and College Union affiliates to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign but opposes military aid to Ukraine

Source: *Ukraine Solidarity Campaign*

By **Elizabeth Lawrence**

(June 20, 2024) *The University and College Union (UCU) has voted to affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign: we publish here an account of the conference debate.*

This all took place on Wednesday, May 29.

In the morning there was a challenge to the Congress Business Committee report to reinstate on the agenda the amendment from City and Islington College UCU. This was carried with 159 votes for, 76 against and 33 abstentions. This reinstated amendment took out the reference to “and military” in respect of aid and inserted a call for a ceasefire now.

The solidarity motion was moved by Gregory Schwartz of Bristol University and seconded by Alan Reeve of Oxford Brookes University.

The first amendment debated was from the Women Members' Standing Committee (WMSC). This was moved by Vicky Blake.

There had been some political confusion among the WMSC about working with Ukrainian trade unions, maybe related to Kremlin propaganda that free trade unions are CIA-linked or that Ukrainian trade unions should not be supported because they are "pro-war". So, there was a proposal to take this amendment in parts but it was defeated. This proposal had not been agreed in the WMSC. The amendment was carried.



There was a vote on the City and Islington amendment. This was carried with 141 votes for, 107 votes against and 14 abstentions.

During the debate on the motion two proposals were put to take the voting in parts. This was essentially a form of underhand amendment to knock out parts of the motion.

Grant Buttars, UCU National Executive Committee (NEC), proposed to take the vote separately on the sentence about affiliating to Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (USC). While it was agreed to take the vote separately, the vote on this part of the motion was carried, 115 for, 108 against, 29 abstentions. So, UCU has now voted to affiliate to USC.

The other proposal for voting in parts was to put point 7, the vote on supporting the appeal from the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU), separately. This part of the motion was also passed.

So where does this leave UCU? The one definite positive is that UCU has now agreed to affiliate to USC. This means we can ask for a stall and an official fringe meeting at UCU Congress 2025. It should also make it easier to get USC events advertised in the UCU Friday emailing to branch officers and activists. Maybe we could also invite UCU national officers on a delegation to Ukraine.

It has also endorsed the appeal from the Ukrainian trade unions, which does call for both military and humanitarian aid. Nonetheless the amendment from City and Islington College was carried which knocked out "and military" in the descriptor of the appeal in the text of the motion. There may therefore be scope for interpretation and argument about what we agreed here. So, in this sense UCU is still in a mess of having contradictory policy on Ukraine.

During the debate we were treated to some foolish or dishonest speeches from delegates who believed or claimed to be in solidarity with Ukrainians (we did not thankfully get any references to ordinary Ukrainians this year) while also arguing against military aid for Ukraine. We were also informed by one delegate that since we are not calling for weapons for Palestinians, we should not support weapons for Ukraine. There is a lack of understanding or refusal to recognise that humanitarian assistance without military cover, such as anti-aircraft defences, could be destroyed in bombing raids before reaching its intended recipients.

We need to consider in UCU Members for Ukraine how we use this motion to build Ukraine Solidarity work within UCU. The final text of the motion as amended is as follows:

Substantive motion

Congress declares its support for the right of the Ukrainian people to self-determination and self-defence.

It salutes the continuing resistance of the Ukrainian people, including their trade unions, to Russian imperialist invasion and occupation.

Congress resolves to build solidarity with Ukraine and its labour movement, including:

- 1. support for financial appeals for medical, educational and humanitarian projects*
- 2. support for Ukrainian refugees*
- 3. solidarity rallies and demonstrations*
- 4. holding webinars to educate ourselves about Ukraine*
- 5. encouraging twinning arrangements with Ukrainian universities and colleges*
- 6. demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory*
- 7. endorses the appeal of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine calling on the international trade union movement to call on governments to continue providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine*
- 8. to call for an immediate ceasefire*
- 9. UCU to join with Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine; and support COVAW-II project for full intersectional implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Ukraine. The conflict causes invisible and visible violence against women and children, lgbtq+ women, and women with disabilities including family separation, exploitation; gender-based violence, rape, lack of menstrual care, risk of physical harm and injury, lack of pregnancy (ante natal and post-natal) care and limited access to sexual and reproductive health*

Congress resolves to affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and to encourage branches and regions to invite USC speakers to their meetings.

Snap elections in France: Communiqué by the French Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

Paris, June 19, 2024

The arrival of Rassemblement National (RN) in government in France would be a major asset for Vladimir Putin, would play into his hands, would support Trump, and could have direct implications for the course of the war by aggravating or reviving the restrictions, hesitations and ambiguities of Western governments. The fate of the Ukrainian people resisting the Russian imperialist invasion and the fate of the French people faced with a major regime crisis offering the RN the possibility of governing, are today linked.

The French Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine affirms that the defence of Ukraine and the fight to prevent the RN from coming to power in France are tied together.

It notes that the programme of the New Popular Front is clear on Ukraine. Here is the passage that concerns it:

“To defend Ukraine and peace on the European continent.

“To defeat Vladimir Putin’s war of aggression and ensure that he answers for his crimes before international justice, we will unfailingly defend the sovereignty and freedom of the Ukraine’s people and the integrity of its borders, by delivering the necessary weapons, cancelling its foreign debt, seizing the assets of the oligarchs who contribute to the Russian war effort within the framework permitted by international law, and sending peacekeepers to secure the nuclear power



stations. In an international context of serious tensions and the return of war to the European continent, we must work for the return of peace.”

Consequently, ENSU’s French Committee calls for support for New Popular Front candidates in the French parliamentary elections, and, if necessary, for them to be reminded of their program, in order to defeat the country’s leading Putinist force, the RN.



‘Powerful moment of solidarity with Ukraine’ at EPSU congress

Source: *EPSU*

(June 19, 2024) See:

<https://x.com/EPSUnions/status/1803321634343797112>

Scottish Greens UK general election election manifesto

Source: <https://greens.scot/sites/default/files/SGP-Westminster-Manifesto-2024-web.pdf>

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in January 2022 was a brutal and unprovoked attack on an independent nation. Two years later it continues to have global implications. The invasion led to an immediate spike in energy and food prices, exacerbating the cost of living crisis and highlighting the fragility of the global economy. The horrific toll it has taken on the people of Ukraine goes far beyond these economic shocks however and the Scottish Greens are proud to continue offering our unwavering support to their struggle for freedom. It is for the people of Ukraine and their elected representatives to decide on the means by which they resist Russian aggression, in line with their obligations under international law.

Scottish Greens will continue to press for:

- Wider and more impactful sanctions against the Russian and Belarussian regimes, including state-backed businesses and organisations linked to Putin and his close associates.
- Tighter trade laws to tackle the means by which companies are currently circumventing sanctions to continue their trade with Russia, such as through the transfer of goods via third countries.
- Strengthened public procurement laws to disqualify those companies who have continued operating in Russia or cooperating with its public institutions since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
- Action against UK based companies which continue to enable Russian fossil fuel exports, including the option of their closure.
- International debt relief for Ukraine.

Worker struggles in Belarus

Belarus: women in cages

Source: Viasna Human Rights Centre

(25 June 2024) In the women's penal colony No. 4, numerous punishments humiliate human dignity. One of them is the placing of female political prisoners in a "cage" on public display.

This is a real cage, about a metre and a half long and about two metres wide. The cell is located between the residential and industrial areas, on the steps in front of the factory gate. It is a rectangular cage with metal bars, similar to those in which people are locked up during trials.

Often, the women are specially placed there during the winter, so that the punishment is felt more intensely. They usually stay there for between one and three hours, with some political prisoners saying up to four hours.

Political prisoner Kasia Budzko drew the "cage".

Challenges and difficulties of the Belarusian opposition: Conversation with Tatsiana Chulitskaya



Source: Meridiano 13. Translation; Dick Nichols

By Francesco Brusa

(June 19, 2024) With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the present and future of the small republic of Belarus also appears increasingly problematic and "in suspense". The repression of Aleksander Lukashenko, who has been in power for 30 years now, has intensified since the big protests of 2020 and shows no sign of stopping - despite international silence. Tens of thousands of people are moving abroad, both for economic reasons and to escape imprisonment and persecution, while troops of Putin's army as well as part of Moscow's nuclear arsenal have entered the country.

Formally, however, Belarus is not at war with Kyiv and indeed government rhetoric sometimes tries to present the Minsk executive as a possible mediator between the two sides. In practice, however, dependence on Russia seems to be deepening, and the fate of the two regimes appear increasingly linked together within a horizon of uncertainty.

In the meantime, the Belarusian opposition abroad---led by Svyatlana Cichanoŭskaja, but made up of numerous realities, associations and individuals---is discussing possible moves and actions to favour a transformation of the country, as well as carrying on a constant battle in favour of political prisoners (almost 1400, according to the human rights organisation Viasna96).

We spoke about this with activist and social science researcher Tatsiana Chulitskaya (pictured), who studies the Belarusian community's ability to mobilise from below and who was recently sentenced in absentia along with twenty other intellectuals and independent researchers by the Minsk Tribunal.

Let us start with the war in Ukraine, which has now entered its third year. How is this event influencing the Belarusian opposition's struggle?

De facto Belarus' is a co-aggressor country of Ukraine, beyond the nuances that separate it from Russia. This has clearly changed the attitude towards the country and towards Belarusian citizens.

Before 2022, cutting very much with a hatchet, the people of Belarus were perceived externally in two distinct ways: either they were basically unknown to most, or they were seen in a tendentially positive way, as a people courageously fighting against the authoritarianism of their government and against human rights violations. With the start of the invasion, there has always remained a segment of people who are unaware of what is happening, but on the other hand, a section of those who previously had a positive attitude has now become more critical, if not even aggressive (at least to a certain extent).

On a political level, Western governments in general seem to understand that a difference must be maintained between the Belarusian government and the Belarusian people who are fighting for their independence, their identity, and basically for their right to be free.

However, especially for governments in the north-east such as Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the changed situation in the region in terms of border security has led to a change of practical attitude towards the Belarusians. Many restrictions have been introduced at the legislative level, and people's attitudes have also changed: since the war broke out, it may have become more difficult for some Belarusians to rent a flat in Vilnius or Riga, etc. These are small but significant examples.

What is the situation for those within Belarus territory?

It is much more complicated. Those abroad still have to deal with a more or less free and democratic environment, where one can legally oppose unjust decisions and where a minimum of rights are guaranteed.

In Belarus, on the other hand, people find themselves caught in a kind of Catch-22 paradox: they live in an authoritarian country, in which under the current conditions you can really do very little (you cannot protest because you end up in prison, demonstrations of civic dissent are forbidden, only clandestinity remains, etc.), but at the same time you cannot even go abroad easily, because it is complicated to obtain a visa.

In addition, there is also an issue with respect to Russian propaganda that has grown recently within the country, and it is not only propaganda through the media but also in educational and religious terms (there is a certain commitment of the Orthodox Church in this regard).

Living in Belarus' today, from the point of view of ordinary people, really means being in a grey area, whether people are in favour of democratic change or not.

In one of your researches you state that there is a growing gap between Belarusian people outside and inside Belarus. How can this gap be bridged and why is it important to do so?

Unfortunately, or fortunately, Belarus situation is not unique globally. I am thinking of Turkey, Iran or Azerbaijan: authoritarian contexts in which a large section of the Belarusian democratic opposition has had to take refuge abroad.

In a way, for the Belarusian community the situation is complicated by the fact that we are facing the first real mass migration that has taken place in the 21st century. This is not the first time this has happened in history, if we think of the revolution in the tsarist empire or the Second World War, but it is new from the point of view of social memory. Coming to terms with this fact is a fundamental issue.

That is why, when we talk about the gap between those inside Belarus and those outside, I think it is important to try to draw lessons from what happened with other diasporas and not to consider the fact as something absolutely unprecedented.

At the same time, it is also important not to put everything in the same pot, to lump together Russians and Belarusians, for example, and try to develop similar measures. We need a more diversified approach. I think it is crucial for the Belarusians themselves to discuss and realise that we are all in the same boat, regardless of where someone is physically.

From a practical point of view?

There should be tailor-made approaches designed for pro-democracy and pro-civil change citizens who are still inside Belarus. Towards them there should be more support from the European side, from western funders to support bottom-up initiatives, community-building initiatives. We are talking about activities

that cannot reach an immediate political dimension, but the possibility of growing community-building even just through cultural initiatives is crucial.

As we know from the experience of other authoritarian nations and societies, trust and solidarity between people enable the creation and maintenance of networks that are then much easier to mobilise when a window of opportunity for social or political change opens.

Furthermore, steps should be taken to liberalise the issuing of visas for Belarusians. I understand all the concerns in terms of security, but a tailor-made approach is needed so that people can move around. This is not only about security, but also about diplomacy and diplomatic contacts: if Belarusians are isolated, I don't think this will bring any positive results. People in the country would only become more desperate than they are now, they would feel no support from their neighbours and the West.

The easiest way to make this support felt is just to maintain contact and make the process of crossing the border easier. For those outside the country, support from civil society is essential, as well as media support, to give voice to independent perspectives that are not just those of the official opposition. I am thinking of independent bloggers and discussion spaces from below.

From this point of view, how do you see the presence of Svjatlana Cichanoŭskaja's opposition government abroad? Also thinking about the fact that behind the common goal of democratic change there are different opinions and tendencies...

I think that the existence of an official Belarusian opposition abroad is important and necessary. At the moment Belarusian society is a transnational and cross-border society, because *de facto* a lot of organisations and activists are abroad.

But in parallel, repression, as far as we can observe, is also becoming transnational and cross-border: the Belarusian state and the Russian state are trying to follow their opponents and implement persecution against them (I can also say this from my personal point of view: I am under criminal prosecution in Belarus, judged *in absentia*). Therefore, having a government in exile becomes essential to provide a voice for the Belarusian community and Belarusian people. Cichanoŭskaja is doing a huge job in championing the cause and making it visible globally.

After that, there are differing opinions on what the situation is and how one should act. I think that at the moment nobody really knows what the right way is forward. There is no *a priori* winning strategy, there is no move that will solve all problems at once and restore democracy overnight.

In this sense, it is good that there are conflicts and debates within the Belarusian opposition. However, due to the lack of a culture of participation and communication, sometimes the discussion takes on heated and detrimental tones, which result in abuse.

When one is accustomed to a deeply hierarchical system and context, the search for consensus through persuasion and the elaboration of a convincing program often seems alien and with an unsuccessful dynamic: this is especially true for those who have been part of the state or power apparatus, such as the *siloviki*, but also for many businessmen. Nevertheless, perhaps even these difficulties and misunderstandings are part of a broader process of learning democratic attitudes on the part of the Belarusian community. All in all, I remain optimistic.

Further reading

- [Commotion and Margin of Opportunity: How COVID-19 and the War Have Affected the Position of Nurses in Ukraine \(Commons\)](#)
- [Angry Mavkas: the women leading the resistance in Russian-occupied Ukraine \(Valigie Blu\)](#)
- [Soutien à l'Ukraine Résistante \(Syllepse\)](#)
- [Ukrainian prisoners volunteer to join the frontline: 'It's not going to be a fairytale' \(Le Monde\)](#)
- [Beatings, electric shocks, dog attacks: Ukrainians recount hell of Russian prisons \(Le Monde\)](#)
- [Gaza vs Ukraine: A double standard that has broken the world order \(Open Democracy\)](#)