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THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

Published by the Ukrainian National Association Inc., a fraternal non-profit association

Vol. XCII

No. 2

THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 2024

\$2.00

Kyiv receives vows of support from allies, as Russian shells blast Ukrainian cities

RFE/RL

As Ukrainian leaders continue to express concerns about the fate of lasting aid from Western partners, two allies voiced strong backing on January 7, with Japan saying it was “determined to support” Kyiv while Sweden said its efforts to assist Ukraine will be its number one foreign policy goal in the coming years.

“Japan is determined to support Ukraine so that peace can return to Ukraine,” Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Yoko Kamikawa said during a surprise visit to Kyiv, becoming the first official foreign visitor for 2024.

“I can feel how tense the situation in Ukraine is now,” she told a news conference

– held in a shelter due to an air-raid alert in the capital at the time – alongside her Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba.

“I once again strongly condemn Russia’s missile and drone attacks, particularly on New Year’s Day,” she added, while also saying Japan would provide an additional \$37 million to a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) trust fund to help purchase drone-detection systems.

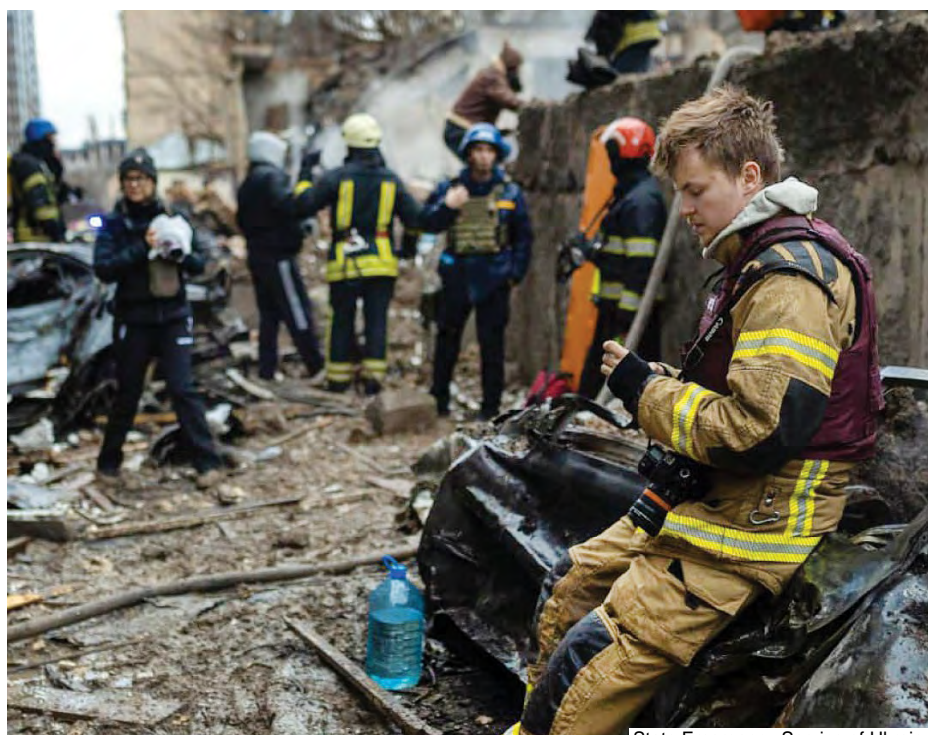
The Japanese diplomat also visited Bucha, the Kyiv suburb where Russian forces are blamed for a civilian massacre in 2022, stating she was “shocked” by what occurred there.

In a Telegram post, Ukrainian Prime

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Russian missile strike on city in Donetsk region kills 11

While Kyiv says it hit Russian positions in Crimea



State Emergency Service of Ukraine

Rescue workers and investigators work at the scene of a Russian missile strike that hit civilian infrastructure in January in Ukraine.

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Eleven people were killed on January 6 when Russian forces shelled the eastern Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk in the Donetsk region, the governor of the Ukrainian-controlled part of the region said.

Vadym Filashkin said five children were among those killed in the missile strike on Pokrovsk, a city in Ukrainian-held territory

about 80 kilometers northwest of Donetsk city, which lies in the Russian-held center of the region.

“The Russians hit the region with S-300 missiles, killing 11 people and wounding another eight,” Mr. Filashkin said on Telegram. The main strike hit Pokrovsk and nearby villages, he said, adding that the

(Continued on page 15)

Chicago drone warrior discusses efforts to aid Ukraine



Mark Raczkiewicz

Roman Zabolotovskyy, Help Heroes of Ukraine co-founder and director, holds a portrait of the fictitious Jedi master Yoda signed by Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, with reconnaissance and combat drones scattered throughout his office in Carol Stream, Ill., on January 9.

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CAROL STREAM, Ill. – Autographed items of gratitude from the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, chief of Ukraine’s defense intelligence and signed flags from some of Ukraine’s most decorated military units line the walls and tables of Roman Zabolotovskyy’s office.

Based on the premises of a trucking company owned by a Ukrainian American 33 miles west of Chicago is Help Heroes of

Ukraine, a non-profit group that was established the day after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

From here Mr. Zabolotovskyy, one of the organization’s four co-founders and its director, has sent security assistance and humanitarian aid to Ukraine estimated to be worth more than \$61 million, an amount raised in less than two years.

“Ultimately we want to see Ukraine win,

(Continued on page 10)

Zelenskyy's Baltic blitz: Ukrainian president warns 'pause' in war would only benefit Russia

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rejected the possibility of a cease-fire with Russia, saying it would not lead to substantive progress in the war and only favor Moscow by giving it time to boost supplies to its military as the conflict nears its second anniversary.

“A pause on the Ukrainian battlefield will not mean a pause in the war,” the Ukrainian leader said in Estonia’s capital, Tallinn, on January 11 during a tour of the three Baltic nations.

“Give Russia two to three years and it will simply run us over. We wouldn’t take that risk. ... There will be no pauses in favor of Russia,” he said. “A pause would play into

[Russia’s] hands. ... It might crush us afterward.”

Mr. Zelenskyy has pleaded with Ukraine’s allies to keep supplying it with weapons amid signs of donor fatigue in some countries and as Russia turns to countries such as Iran and North Korea for munitions.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies meeting in Brussels on January 10 tried to allay Kyiv’s concerns over supplies, saying they will continue to provide Ukraine with major military, economic and humanitarian aid. NATO allies have outlined plans to provide “billions of euros of further capabilities” in 2024 to Ukraine, the alliance said in a statement.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Russia enters third year of war diminished, degraded and joyless

by Pavel K. Baev
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On the night of December 29, Russia conducted a series of massive missile strikes on Ukrainian cities. This operation was meant to add weight to President Vladimir Putin's confident and unwavering words in a series of public events that concluded the year. It produced another failure, however, as most missiles were intercepted by Ukraine's air defenses (Meduza.io, December 29). As many as 35 innocent civilians were killed, though the missiles hit nothing of military significance. In contrast, the earlier Ukrainian missile strike on Feodosia on December 26 resulted in a spectacular explosion of the large Russian landing ship Novocherkassk (Svoboda.org, December 29). Despite putting on a strong front, Putin increasingly struggles to shield the failure to achieve any progress in Russia's most recent offensive from the domestic population and will likely be unable to avoid the prospect of even more failures in the coming year.

Putin insists on justifying his "special military operation" in the maximalist terms of regime change in Ukraine and the reduction of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement (Republic.ru, December 29). Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu admitted, perhaps unwittingly, that Moscow's overall goal for 2023 had been much more modest: maintaining defensive lines against the Ukrainian counteroffensive (Interfax, December 26). Following political orders to demonstrate the capacity for regaining the initiative on the battle-

field, Russian troops continue to try advancing on Ukraine's defenses, focusing particularly on devastated Avdiivka and throwing away hundreds of soldiers in senseless "human wave" assaults (Novaya-gazeta.eu, December 27). Ukraine's military leaders learned bitter lessons from the scant territorial gains from their counteroffensive and seek to adjust their strategy for a long war of attrition.

The repercussions of the war have put a greater strain on the Russian economy than official reporting shows (The Insider, December 30). Resilient economic strength looks to be the decisive factor for victory in this war. While implementing a huge increase in defense and security funding, the Russian military-industrial complex is operating at maximum capacity. The over-exploitation of its basic assets combined with growing labor shortages has led to setbacks in production and technical breakdowns, often manifested in explosions at defense production facilities (Moscow times, December 23). The Russian Ministry of Finance plans for a new high in war expenditures, though its estimates for incoming revenue are overly optimistic (RBC.ru, December 30). Putin continues to promote the message that money is not a problem. Still, even the most privileged business empires are forced to pay extra taxes and make "donations," especially at a time of war. Meanwhile, a further decline in real incomes for ordinary Russians looms on the horizon (Novayagazeta.eu, December 28).

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Lavrov asserts Russian success among 'global majority'

by Boris Bondarev
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On December 28, Russian state-owned news agency RIA Novosti conducted a comprehensive interview with Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov (Ministry of International Affairs of the Russian Federation, December 28). The ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the broader context of global politics have brought the need for a thorough reevaluation of the West's understanding and response to Russian actions and strategies into sharp focus. Analyzing Mr. Lavrov's recent statements provides critical insights into Russia's projected goals and perceived strengths. These insights reveal the necessity for the West to recalibrate its approach toward Russia and counter Moscow's aggressive revisionist narrative.

Mr. Lavrov's narrative is woven around themes that serve the Kremlin's strategic interests while undermining the Western response. His emphasis on "demilitarization and denazification" in Ukraine is a clear sign that Moscow's goals in the war against Ukraine have not changed. As Russia sees it, a free and independent Ukraine cannot exist. This reality must be fully understood by Western populations and politicians, who still seem to be falling for the false narratives that the war is a "local, regional land dispute" and that Russian President Vladimir Putin can somehow be satisfied with only a portion

of Ukrainian territory. The recent bombardment and air strikes on Ukrainian cities clearly show Moscow's resolve to eradicate whoever stands in the way of the Kremlin, including Putin and his loyal esquire Mr. Lavrov (CurrentTime, January 2; Kolezev, January 3). They will stop at nothing to get what they want: a total military victory over Ukraine and, consequently, the West itself.

Mr. Lavrov also discussed the expansion of the BRICS format (originally a loose grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). He mentioned that many countries, especially in the developing world, have yet to support Western policy toward Russia, specifically economic and personal sanctions. The foreign affairs minister presented this as a shared global perception of the situation that underlines a reluctance to align with the West against Russia.

In the interview, Mr. Lavrov used the term "World Majority" in reference to countries that have not "publicly declared [Russia] as an enemy" (Ministry of International Affairs, December 28). This marks a significant rhetorical shift. By framing the BRICS format as a representation of the global majority, Moscow hopes to project an image of widespread international support for its actions. This portrayal is a calculated move to counter the perception of Russia's global isolation and challenge the

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NEWSBRIEFS

Zelenskyy uses Baltic tour to tout success

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Ukraine has shown Russia's military is stoppable as he made a surprise visit to the Baltics to help ensure continued aid to his country amid a wave of massive Russian aerial barrages. Mr. Zelenskyy met with his Lithuanian counterpart Gitanas Nauseda on January 10 to discuss military aid, training and joint demining efforts during the previously unannounced trip, which was also take him to Estonia and Latvia. "We have proven that Russia can be stopped, that deterrence is possible," he said after talks with Mr. Nauseda on what is the Ukrainian leader's first foreign trip of 2024. "Today, Gitanas Nauseda and I focused on frontline developments. Weapons, equipment, personnel training and Lithuania's leadership in the demining coalition are all sources of strength for us," Mr. Zelenskyy later wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Lithuania has been a staunch ally of Ukraine since the start of Russia's unprovoked full-scale invasion, which will reach the two-year mark in February. Mr. Nauseda said European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member Lithuania will continue to provide military, political and economic support to Ukraine, and pointed to the Baltic country's approval last month of a 200-million-euro (\$219 million) long-term military aid package for Ukraine. Russia's invasion has turned Ukraine into one of the most mined countries in the world, generating one of the largest demining challenges since the end of World War II. "Lithuania is forming a demining coalition to mobilize military support for Ukraine as efficiently and quickly as possible," Mr. Nauseda said. "The Western world must understand that this is not just the struggle of Ukraine, it is the struggle of the whole of Europe and the democratic world for peace and freedom," Mr. Nauseda said. Ukraine has pleaded with its allies to keep supplying it with weapons amid signs of donor fatigue in some countries. There is continued disagreement between Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Congress on continuing military aid for Kyiv, while a 50-billion-euro (\$55 billion) aid package from the European Union

remains blocked due to a Hungarian veto. But a NATO allies meeting in Brussels on January 10 made it clear that they will continue to provide Ukraine with major military, economic and humanitarian aid. NATO allies have outlined plans to provide "billions of euros of further capabilities" in 2024 to Ukraine, the alliance said in a statement. Mr. Zelenskyy warned during the news conference with Mr. Nauseda that delays in Western aid to Kyiv would only embolden Moscow. "He [Russian President Vladimir Putin] is not going to stop. He wants to occupy us completely," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "And sometimes, the insecurity of partners regarding financial and military aid to Ukraine only increases Russia's courage and strength." Since the start of the year, Ukraine has been subjected to several massive waves of Russian missile and drone strikes that have caused civilian deaths and material damage. Mr. Zelenskyy said on January 10 that Ukraine badly needs advanced air defense systems. "In recent days, Russia hit Ukraine with a total of 500 devices: we destroyed 70 percent of them," Mr. Zelenskyy said. "Air defense systems are the number one item that we lack." Meanwhile, in Ukraine, an all-out air raid alert was declared on the morning of January 10, with authorities instructing citizens to take shelter due to an elevated danger of Russian missile strikes. "Missile-strike danger throughout the territory of Ukraine! [Russian] MiG-31Ks taking off from Savasleika airfield [in Russia's Nizhny Novgorod region]. Don't ignore the air raid alert!" the Ukrainian Air Force said in its warning message on Telegram. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by AFP and Reuters)

U.N.: 14.6 million Ukrainians will need aid

More than 14.6 million Ukrainians inside the country – roughly 40 percent of the total population – will require humanitarian assistance this year as the war triggered by Russia's unprovoked invasion continues to cause death and destruction, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has said. The current humanitarian situation is likely

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THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

FOUNDED 1933

An English-language newspaper published by the Ukrainian National Association Inc., a non-profit association, at 2200 Route 10, P.O. Box 280, Parsippany, NJ 07054.
Yearly subscription rate: \$90; for UNA members — \$80.

Periodicals postage paid at Caldwell, NJ 07006 and additional mailing offices.
(ISSN — 0273-9348)

The Weekly:
Tel: (973) 292-9800; Fax: (973) 644-9510

UNA:
Tel: (973) 292-9800; Fax: (973) 292-0900

Postmaster, send address changes to:
The Ukrainian Weekly
2200 Route 10
P.O. Box 280
Parsippany, NJ 07054

Editor-in-chief: Andrew Nynka
Editor: Matthew Dubas

e-mail: staff@ukrweekly.com

The Ukrainian Weekly Archive: www.ukrweekly.com

The Ukrainian Weekly, January 14, 2024, No. 2, Vol. XCII

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ADMINISTRATION OF THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY AND SVOBODA

Walter Honcharyk, administrator
and advertising manager

(973) 292-9800, ext. 3040
fax: (973) 644-9510
e-mail: advertising@ukrweekly.com

Subscription Department

(973) 292-9800, ext. 3040
e-mail: subscription@ukrweekly.com

Worldwide protests held in support of Ukraine as Russia ramps up attacks

Dozens in Chicago turn out to voice frustration over lack of Western aid

by Mark Raczkiewicz

CHICAGO – In 1994, Ukraine surrendered the world’s third-largest nuclear arsenal when it signed the Budapest Memorandum, which provided Kyiv security guarantees from Russia, Great Britain and the United States. In 1998 and 2005, it then gave Russia all of its long-range projectiles and planes that carried their payloads as well, some of which Moscow is using against the neighboring country it unjustifiably invaded in 2014.

Over the weekend of January 7, protests worldwide were held to remind the world of those actions and of wavering inaction on those security guarantees by signatories of the memorandum.

They are not being met, Chicago’s protesters said on January 7 as the U.S. Congress and European Union stall on pro-

viding billions of dollars of additional security assistance to Kyiv to withstand a full-blown invasion that is nearing its second year.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed on both sides as a result of Russia’s brutal war on Ukraine, along with billions of dollars worth of destruction and damage to civilian infrastructure.

Setting the stage at the Chicago rally was a World War I-era patriotic song called Chervona Kalyna (Red Viburnum) blared on loudspeakers that day at the Gothic-style Wrigley Building along Michigan Avenue. The singing was led by 23-year-old activist Tonya Dmytriv, while the rally was organized by the Illinois Division of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA).

“We want to reach out to as many Ukrainians who aren’t indifferent, and, of course, Congress” about Kyiv’s plight, she



Oleksandr of Kharkiv, a displaced Ukrainian, attends a pro-Kyiv rally in Chicago on January 7 draped in a Ukrainian flag.



A bridge over the Chicago River on Michigan Avenue in the third largest U.S. city includes a Ukrainian flag waving adjacent to an American flag on January 7.



Mark Raczkiewicz

Protesters at a pro-Ukraine rally hold a banner that reads “Silence Kills Ukrainian People,” a reference to Kyiv’s struggle to withstand Russia’s all-out invasion amid dwindling Western support.

told The Ukrainian Weekly.

Attended by dozens of people, the rally coincided with others in Cologne, Germany, Poland’s capital of Warsaw, Barcelona in Spain, Switzerland, Lisbon in Portugal, and other European capitals over the weekend.

“A strong message needs to be sent to Russia, one of the co-guarantors of Ukraine’s security guarantees, for the terrorist Kremlin regime that the international community will not turn a blind eye to the killing of civilians and destruction of critical infrastructure,” said Serhiy Kuledov, Ukraine’s General Consul in Chicago.

Speaking to the rallygoers on Michigan Avenue through a megaphone, Maria Korkatsch-Groszko, head of UCCA’s Illinois Division, said that “the free world allows” for Russia to further destroy Ukraine and receive weapons from third-party countries.

She called on “the West to arm Ukraine now. ... Ukraine still stands strong. ... Help us live!”

Rift in Ukrainian society

A growing detachment was noticed in

Ukrainian society and among those who live abroad at the demonstration when 22-year-old Stanislav Zoriy said that having “about 50 people attending a rally isn’t really effective.”

After the rally, he said that “Ukrainians should either wake up or surrender their Ukrainian passports” and “contribute more to the war effort.”

Mr. Zoriy is undergoing treatment after receiving a prosthetic leg from the Florida-based Revived Soldiers Ukraine following an artillery wound he suffered near Bakhmut in the easternmost region of Donetsk. The non-profit group also runs a rehabilitation center at the Kyiv suburb of Irpin.

He is currently still serving in the military and therefore couldn’t disclose more personal information.

“The people I met here in cafes and bars aren’t doing enough for Ukraine,” he said. “They need to step up.”

He said his “future plans are a secret” while ending positively by saying that “everything will be Ukraine.”

War and art unite: Jam Factory a beacon of resilience in Lviv arts scene

by Roman Tymotsko

LVIV – The Jam Factory art center in Lviv officially opened its doors to the public this past November. Situated within a former industrial building that served as a distillery and later as a fruit bottling plant (quite literally, a hub for jam production), Jam Factory is now a dynamic venue hosting contemporary and modern art exhibitions. Designed meticulously for creative endeavors, it also serves as a space for innovative art and music performances.

“By opening such a large institution, we are proving to everyone how strong Ukraine is and what it can achieve even in the most difficult conditions,” said Harald Binder, founder of the art center.

Jam Factory was originally due to open in 2022, but the official opening was on November 18. The opening of a large-scale exhibition, “Our Years, Our Words, Our Losses, Our Searches, Our Us,” was accompanied by musical performances and a historical exhibition.

The opening program aimed to convey real human states: strength, endurance and fragility, capturing inner experiences, personal and shared stories, showing today’s complex experiences and attempts to heal painful wounds.

“The opening of an art institution during

the war is a manifestation of resilience, a testament to the fact that we are alive and creating our future,” said Bozhena Pelenska, the facility’s program and executive director.

Ms. Pelenska is a seasoned art manager and producer, deeply engaged in the evolution of Jam Factory since the project’s inception in 2015. She aspired to establish a robust art organization that could thrive as a vibrant hub within the city.

The primary objective was to offer opportunities for Ukrainian artists and art professionals to flourish and gain visibility in the national and international art world. Her dream involved contributing a vital pillar to the emerging civil society in the country – a sustainable art institution. The institution plays a crucial role in supporting and cultivating culture, even in times of war.

“Due to the Russian invasion, we suspended construction for two months, postponed the opening, completely changed the concept of the first exhibition, and changed the program work, shifting the focus to helping displaced artists. The founder, Harald Binder, was aware of the risks. Of course, if Russian troops had advanced deeper, the project would have been under significant threat,” Mariia Shvets, Jam Factory Art Center’s communication officer, told a correspondent for The Ukrainian Weekly.



Courtesy of Jam Factory

The exterior of the Jam Factory Art Center, which opened to the public on November 18.

The genesis of the cultural hub dates back to 2015 when Mr. Binder, a philanthropist and historian, championed the cause of developing Jam Factory into a center for contemporary art.

The initiative sought to foster artistic expression and envisioned revitalizing the industrial building and its surroundings,

transforming them into a lively public space. Substantial funding was secured after thorough research and groundwork.

“Funding is 100 percent from the foundation of philanthropist Harald Binder. After the opening, we plan to partially

(Continued on page 8)

Ukrainian Chorus Dumka of New York dazzles packed house with bravura Christmas concert

by Nicholas Gordon

NEW YORK – The Ukrainian Chorus Dumka of New York is heading into its 75th anniversary year in top form. At a recent Christmas concert at the St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church in New York City with over 200 attendees, Chorus Dumka gave a soaring performance, filling the vast golden dome of the nave with harmonies as lush and radiant as the church's stained-

glass windows that ascend to the heavens in a burst of color.

Since forming in 1949, the chorus has been giving about seven concerts a year. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, however, the chorus has performed over 110 concerts in the past two years, including a guest appearance on Saturday Night Live and shows at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the U.S. Open and the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition.



Members of the Ukrainian Chorus Dumka of New York and Moloda Dumka, the group's youth choir, perform during a recent Christmas concert at the St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church in New York City



Vasyl Hrechynsky (right) receives the "Honored Artist of Ukraine" award from Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukraine's permanent representative to the United Nations.

Made up of over 50 volunteer singers, Dumka will celebrate its 75th anniversary with a special concert this fall. Together, the singers are shining their brightest at a moment when Ukraine needs them the most.

"Our group loves to sing and share our amazing Ukrainian choral music," said Vasyl Hrechynsky, who has been the conductor of Dumka for the last 32 years. "We're proud to do as many shows as we can and perform our music for new audiences. But it's also our duty and responsibility to support Ukraine now when it is in danger."

The Chorus Dumka dedicated their concert at St. George's to "the Armed Forces of Ukraine for so heroically defending our country."

Through its expanded performance schedule, Chorus Dumka has raised over \$3 million in aid for Ukraine.

While the non-profit chorus requires hours of dedication and hard work from its devoted members, it also provides them with meaning and a depth of community during wartime trauma.

"To join this chorus and come to rehearsal meant so much to me," said Rostyslav Kharevych, a 19-year-old singer who moved to the U.S. after the war started at age 17. "To be with people who love the same thing you do, it's a song from the soul."

Mr. Kharevych also plays the saxophone.

(Continued on page 5)

World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations marks 75th anniversary with jubilee celebration

WFUWO

PRZEMYSL, Poland – The 12th Congress of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations (WFUWO) and jubilee celebrations on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the organization's establishment took place on October 14-17 in the Ukrainian National Home in Przemyśl, Poland.

Within the framework of the Congress, the Second International Assembly "Ukraine in the World" was held, as well.

The slogan for all of the events, which were organized in partnership with the International Institute of Education,



Yaroslava Hortyani was elected president of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations during the organization's 12th Congress on October 14-17 in the Ukrainian National Home in Przemyśl, Poland.



Delegates and participants of the 12th Congress of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations gathered on October 14-17 in the Ukrainian National Home in Przemyśl, Poland.

Culture and Diaspora Relations (MIOK) of the Lviv Polytechnic National University, was "United by Love for Ukraine – for Victory and Restoration."

The city of Przemyśl and the Ukrainian National Home are both symbols of the indomitable Ukrainian spirit. The venue in Poland was also chosen as a sign of the respect and gratitude of Ukrainian women to Ukraine's neighbors, who, from the first minutes of the beginning of Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine, accepted millions of Ukrainian families and refugees from the brutal war into Poland.

Leaders and members of Ukrainian women's organizations and authoritative, professional, well-known figures from various spheres of Ukrainian life from throughout the world – more than 20 countries – and from numerous regions of Ukraine participated in the four-day program.

On October 14, the annual meeting of WFUWO was opened by the organization's acting president, Yevheniya Petrova. In keeping with long-standing tradition, the weekend's events began with a joint prayer, indicative of the deep spirituality of Ukrainian women throughout the world. Delegates heard the minutes from the previous annual meeting, the audit committee report, the financial report and other business-related matters. Reports of the heads/representatives of constituent organizations were also read.

On October 15, the work of the 12th WFUWO Congress and the Second International Assembly "Ukraine in the World" began in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist with a Divine Liturgy.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of WFUWO, congratulations were received from the heads of Ukrainian churches, the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oleksandra Matviychuk, honorary head of WFUWO Oksana Bryzgun-Sokolyk, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Kateryna Pavlichenko, rector of the Lviv Polytechnic, the ambassador of Ukraine to Poland, president of the UWC, Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), the Institute of Ukrainian Diaspora Studies in memory of Prof. Lubomyr Vynar of the National University Ostroh Academy, among others.

This year's international assembly continued the strategies established by MIOK and WFUWO in 2019 to develop a program concept and address topics related to current challenges. This year, the core theme was the large-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The focus was on Ukrainian woman,

(Continued on page 9)

On the ground, two years in, Polish volunteers labor to help Ukrainians cope with war

by Aleksander Palikot
RFE/RL

KHARKIV, Ukraine – A year ago, Grazyna Slawinska was helping to deliver humanitarian supplies to people remaining in Bakhmut, the eastern Ukrainian city that later fell to Russian forces after a brutal, monthslong assault.

A resident of the southern Polish city of Krakow, the 33-year-old was hit by shrapnel from a Russian artillery round in January 2023, evacuated and eventually had her right leg amputated.

After five months of recovery and physical therapy, and now fitted with a prosthetic leg, Ms. Slawinska returned to Ukraine. She now lives in its second-largest city, Kharkiv, where she logs long days and nights, helping people – the elderly, the disabled, the poor – who remain there despite the constant threats of Russian bombardment.

“After seeing all this tragedy, you cannot just go back to your previous life,” she said in a December interview at her apartment in the city’s Saltivka district.

Ms. Slawinska’s ordeal and her continued efforts are a small window into the community of Polish volunteers who have dedicated themselves to trying to help the plight of Ukrainians.

After Russia’s invasion in February 2022, Poland took in millions of Ukrainians, and Polish society saw an outpouring of charitable donations. The Polish government has been one of the most stalwart allies of Ukraine and supplied millions of dollars of weaponry and other military equipment.

That enthusiasm has waned in recent months, a reflection of wider impatience in the West amid the realization that the Russian war on Ukraine does not appear to be ending anytime soon.

Still, scores, hundreds, possibly thousands of Poles continue to dedicate themselves to helping Ukrainians, in and out of the country.

Ms. Slawinska is just one of them.

‘Something tangible’

For months, Polish truck drivers and farmers have been blocking the Polish-Ukrainian border, claiming unfair competition from their Ukrainian counterparts. The blockade, which heightened tensions at the border crossings, has become a thorny political issue that has tarnished the otherwise close support that Warsaw has provided to Kyiv.

Among those frustrated by the border issue is Mateusz Wodzinski, 37, who crossed into Ukraine in late December to deliver four cars to four Ukrainian military units. He’s made 70 similar trips over the months, delivering more than 200 cars to Ukrainian soldiers, braving sometimes a dangerous journey to help.

“I hate the border, but I couldn’t care less about politics,” he told RFE/RL during his December journey. “All I care about are the cars. There’s always pressure to get more of them and more quickly.”

In June 2022, four months after the Russian invasion, Mr. Wodzinski, a businessman who lives in Poland’s northeast, donated his own car to a Belarusian volun-



Aleksander Palikot

Grazyna Slawinska (center) lives in Kharkiv’s hard-hit Saltivka district, where she cares for people left behind.

teer unit. He then opened a crowdfunding campaign that lets people donate money to him to buy cars, refurbish them and drive them to the soldiers.

“It’s a zero-bulls--t approach. I personally give each car to a specific unit,” he said. “It’s something tangible anybody can do to make the likelihood of Ukrainian soldiers surviving higher.”

The effort has grown, as has his reputation within Poland. Frequently, other Poles – often donors – make the trip with him to escort the cars to the Ukrainian units. Some of his companions have included people such as Radoslaw Sikorski, the new Polish foreign affairs minister.

“On some level, it’s like a tourist agency that offers a chance to see the war with your own eyes in exchange for the support of the military,” Mr. Wodzinski said.

On one of his trips, soldiers to whom he gave a car let him fire a Polish-made howitzer at a Russian artillery position. “It’s highly likely I hit the target,” he claimed.

Months of life on the road have taken a toll on his personal life; his relationship with his former partner with whom he has a young daughter fell apart, he says.

Just two weeks after the trip in December, during which he brought four cars to soldiers in the town of Slovyansk and three other locations, Mr. Wodzinski learned that one of the soldiers who received the car died. Another one was wounded and was hospitalized.

“Do you remember him?” he asked, showing the picture of a young soldier smiling as he received the car in Slovyansk.

“He is no longer alive.”

‘Atamasha’

Before she started spending roughly half of her time in war-torn Ukraine, Olga Solarz, 48, lived in Przemysl, close to the Ukrainian border, and was a published scholar, with academic works on Ukrainian folklore and culture.

But she had a history with Ukrainian activists even before that: She participated in the 2004 Orange Revolution that blocked Viktor Yanukovych, a pro-Russian presidential candidate, from winning a dubious election. Ten years later she was in Kyiv for the Euro-Maidan protests that ultimately resulted in the ouster of Mr. Yanukovch, then the president, in February 2014.

She says that, over the year in 2023, she brought to Ukraine humanitarian aid and medicine worth \$260,000, as well as 10 cars for soldiers. All this was mostly bought with money donated by Polish citizens, much of it coming from the Ukrainian minority in Poland, she says.

For months now, she’s been adopted as an informal member of a territorial defense brigade fighting in the southern part of the Donetsk region. She spends half of her time living with soldiers in huts about 10 kilometers away from Russian positions. The soldiers have nicknamed her “Atamansha,” a Ukrainian word for a Cossack military leader.

Her academic background has also led her to a more unusual form of charitable work: preserving cultural heritage endan-

(Continued on page 10)



Mateusz Wodzinski (left) personally delivers every car to Ukrainian soldiers on the front line.

Ukrainian Chorus...

(Continued from page 4)

He graduated from a musical college in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, and now plans to study computer science at Baruch College in New York. His dream for the chorus, he said, is to go to Ukraine together when the war is over and sing with the Ukrainian National Capella. Several other members of Chorus Dumka are Ukrainian refugees who have moved to the U.S. since the war began.

Tanya Hrybok, a 27-year-old singer from Kyiv who moved to the U.S. five months ago, has found a measure of solace in the chorus even as she worries about her friends and family back home in Ukraine.

“Because the reality of the war is so depressing, it helps me emotionally to perform with the chorus,” Ms. Hrybok said.

She studied singing at the National Academy of Arts of Ukraine. As a member of Chorus Dumka, she said she’s now learning a lot about signing with a group, and how to read music.

As she juggles the challenges of living in a new country, Ms. Hrybok said she is “motivated by the chorus” and wants to continue performing and improving at her craft.

Time and again throughout their concert at St. George’s, which included over 20 songs, Chorus Dumka brought the audience to its feet for standing ovations.

The group was joined for several songs by Moloda Dumka, the group’s youth choir that was established six years ago to nurture young talent and develop future members of Chorus Dumka. Moloda Dumka has approximately 50 members, with singers ranging from age 6 to 18.

Mr. Hrechynsky said that, while the chorus is an amateur group and the singers have busy personal lives, they are determined to perform “at the highest level” and continue pursuing the international stage.

“We understand that it takes a lot of practice to perform our best, and we put in the time and effort to get there,” Mr. Hrechynsky said.

After Sunday’s concert, Mr. Hrechynsky received special recognition as an “Honored artist of Ukraine” for his venera-

ble commitment as conductor of the Chorus Dumka. The honor was awarded by presidential decree from Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

“This award means a lot to me as someone living so far from our fatherland,” Mr. Hrechynsky said. “It doesn’t happen often that a member of the diaspora receives it.”

The current president of Chorus Dumka, Oleg Lapkovskiy, said that Mr. Hrechynsky is “a complete professional” who is great at managing their large group of singers and inspiring the best quality of singing from them.

“We’re always improving and we have big dreams with Vasyl as our conductor,” Mr. Lapkovskiy said. “We’d like to do a tour of the U.S. someday, and a tour of Europe.”

Mr. Lapkovskiy, who also plays the accordion, studied musical education in his hometown of Lutsk, Ukraine, before moving to the U.S. six years ago. He’s been a member of Chorus Dumka for five years and was elected president in 2023.

Mr. Hrechynsky expressed gratitude for the chorus’s sponsors – Self Reliance New York Federal Credit Union and its president

and chief executive officer, Bohdan Kurczak – and for his chorus members and close supporters Natalka Demochko, Daria Drozdovska, Oleksii Holubov and Kvitka Semanyshyn, all of whom helped make his award possible, he said.

“75 years is a beautiful history of the Ukrainian Chorus Dumka,” Mr. Hrechynsky said. “I’m very proud of the chorus for keeping up the tradition all that time, and for all the generations and all the families that have made it possible for the chorus to work and perform.”

While Mr. Hrechynsky has seen many singers come and go in his lengthy tenure as conductor, he said the one thing that never changes is the spirit of the chorus and their love for the music.

“We want to bring the beauty of Ukraine to our audiences,” Mr. Hrechynsky said. “And we want to bring the message of peace for Ukraine. We need to do these concerts. We need to sing. It comes from our hearts.”

More information about the Ukrainian Chorus Dumka of New York and upcoming performances can be found on the group’s website at www.dumkachorus.org.

THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

Russia prepares a major offensive

In a chilling revelation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has warned the international community of Russia's plans to launch a military offensive in Ukraine ahead of the presidential election in March. This strategic move aims at securing "small tactical victories" before potentially unleashing a "global or massive" operation. As the situation on the front lines becomes increasingly complex, Mr. Zelenskyy's plea for Western support becomes even more urgent, and rightly so.

Addressing the gravity of the situation during a stop in Riga, Mr. Zelenskyy underscored the lack of adequate weaponry for Ukrainian forces, a critical gap that threatens the nation's ability to defend itself. The Ukrainian president's tour of the Baltic states sought not only to highlight the imminent threat but also to garner essential aid and solidarity from Ukraine's allies.

Mr. Zelenskyy's rejection of a ceasefire with Russia during his visit to Estonia reflects a clear-eyed understanding of the risks involved. A pause in the conflict, he argues, would only provide Russia with the opportunity to strengthen its military capabilities, potentially overwhelming Ukraine in the long term. The Ukrainian leader's firm stance emphasizes the need for continuous support rather than a temporary halt in hostilities.

Amid signs of donor fatigue and the shifting landscape of international alliances, Mr. Zelenskyy's plea resonates as a call to action. In Riga, he met with Latvian Prime Minister Evika Silina to discuss not only military aid but also tangible steps toward Ukraine's path to membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This diplomatic outreach is crucial in ensuring Ukraine receives the backing it needs on multiple fronts.

Despite the assurances from NATO allies in Brussels about continued military, economic and humanitarian aid, Mr. Zelenskyy's concerns are valid, and we share them. In Washington, there's a stark acknowledgment that U.S. assistance for Ukraine has stalled. While negotiations continue, the urgency of the situation demands swift action to reinforce Ukraine's defenses and deter further Russian aggression around the world.

Latvia and Estonia, however, have stepped up their commitment to supporting Ukraine. Latvia announced a comprehensive military aid package, including howitzers, ammunition, anti-tank weapons, anti-aircraft missiles and more. Estonia, displaying unwavering solidarity, pledged a substantial aid package totaling 1.2 billion euros until 2027. These gestures, while commendable, underscore the pressing need for a unified, international response.

The recent wave of Russian missile and drone strikes targeting Ukraine has resulted in civilian casualties and material damage, underscoring the severity of the threat. The latest attack on a hotel in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, is a grim reminder of the indiscriminate violence plaguing the region. The international community cannot stand idly by as innocent lives are lost and Ukrainian cities are ravaged.

As Ukraine faces this critical juncture, Western nations must redouble their efforts to provide immediate and substantial support. The commitment from NATO allies is a positive step, but it is imperative to ensure that bureaucratic hurdles do not impede the timely delivery of aid. The diplomatic channels between Ukraine and its allies must remain open and proactive to address the evolving nature of the conflict.

Furthermore, Mr. Zelenskyy's plea for enhanced weaponry and an expansion of the E.U. military industry's capabilities must be heeded. The speed at which Ukraine receives the support it needs can make a crucial difference in its ability to withstand potential offensives. The international community must recognize the urgency of the situation unfolding in Ukraine. The specter of a Russian offensive looms large, and only through robust and swift Western support can Ukraine hope to deter aggression and protect its sovereignty. The time to act is now, and the world must stand united in its commitment to a free and secure Ukraine.

Jan.
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Turning the pages back...

Two years ago, on January 19, 2022, during a press conference marking his first year in office, President Joe Biden speculated that Vladimir Putin would likely launch a military strike against Ukraine.

"I'm not so sure he is certain what he is going to do. My guess is he will move in. He has to do something," Mr. Biden said, adding that an attack on Ukraine by Russia would be a "disaster," exerting a tremendous human, economic and political toll on Moscow. Russia was expected to suffer "heavy" military combat losses.

"Our allies and partners are ready to impose severe costs and significant harm on Russia and the Russian economy," he said, highlighting proposed targeted sanctions on Russia's energy and banking sectors.

"This is not all just a cakewalk for Russia. ... Militarily, they have overwhelming superiority. And, as it relates to Ukraine, they'll pay a stiff price immediately, near term, medium term and long term if they do it," he said.

Mr. Biden supposed that Putin sought an escalation, but not a full-scale war, even though Russia had amassed 100,000 troops in occupied Crimea and near Ukraine's borders, which raised alarm bells in Western capitals regarding Moscow's intention for further military action against Ukraine.

Moscow continued to deny claims that it was preparing a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. However, the claim rang hollow in the face of Russia's military invasion of Crimea and the region's annexation by Russia in 2014, as well as Russia's use of proxy forces, private military companies and Russian regulars in its occupation of the Donbas region of Ukraine since 2014.

(Continued on page 12)

New Year brings greater censorship and repression in Russia

by Ksenia Kirillova
Eurasia Daily Monitor

In December, independent journalists and human rights activists prepared a prognosis of what awaits Russia in the near future. According to participants in the "Network Freedoms" project, Russian citizens should expect total censorship on the internet. The Russian authorities will begin to recognize popular public pages on social networks as "extremist" and will introduce penalties for subscribing to those channels. The mention of "undesirable organizations" and "foreign agents" will also face penalties (Holod.media, December 7). According to human rights activists, in place of YouTube and Telegram, the country will introduce an analog of the Chinese service WeChat, and access to the network will be possible only with a Russian passport and special visa. The state will monitor all user activity on the internet. Repression against Russian citizens who have left the country will only increase. For those wishing to leave, exit visas may be introduced, as was the case in the Soviet Union (Holod.media, December 7). These predictions reflect the Kremlin's increased paranoia of widespread instability at home as Russian forces continue to suffer heavy losses in Ukraine and domestic discontent is growing.

Much of what these commentators predicted has begun to occur in Russia. This past summer, Moscow started to amend the law "On Information, Information Technologies and Information Protection." The measure bans the dissemination of information about ways to bypass government blocks, and sites on which such information appears may be blocked (Mmdc.ru, August 14, 2023; Government of Russia, November 14). Recently, government officials began discussing options for tightening the circulation of SIM cards. In particular, some proposals called for Russian operators to activate SIM cards only after checking the subscribers' passport data with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Kommersant.ru, November 23).

Other official measures taken at the end of last year highlight the Kremlin's plan to increase repression at home. The number of political prisoners is growing rapidly, now comprising nearly 3,000 people (Ovd.info, November 13). Independent journalists note that the Russian Ministry of Justice and Roskomnadzor are issuing significant fines to "foreign agents" and manufacturing criminal charges against them.

According to current Russian laws, three administrative violations are sufficient to charge a person criminally "for failure to fulfill the duties of a foreign agent" (Roskomnadzor, July 14, 2022; Zona.media, December 5). The first criminal case on these grounds was initiated against the editor of the Tatar-Bashkir service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Alsu Kurmasheva, after her arrest in October (BBC-Russian service, October 19; Kommersant.ru, December 5). The Responsibility for Aiding Foreign Agents in Violation of the Law Act was introduced this past summer. The law criminalizes any action or inaction (conscious or unconscious) that enables a "foreign agent" to violate the restrictions imposed upon them (Mmdc.ru, August 4, 2023). Additionally, beginning on December 11, those Russian citizens prohibited from leaving the country are required to surrender their passports. The new measure also applies to conscripts (Official Publication of Legal Acts of the Russian Federation, November

22; Svoboda.org, December 11).

Some Russian officials have increasingly turned to threats against those citizens who already left the country. For example, State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin continues to threaten Russians who have left the country and supposedly "want victory for the Kyiv regime" that "Magadan" awaits them upon return – that is, exile to a labor colony (Belsat.eu, October 10). Mr. Volodin has also voiced his support for the confiscation of the property of "those who have left discrediting the country" (Izvestiya, February 6, 2023).

Other semi-official sources continue to feign that all is well at home and that the Russian population is consolidating around the war effort. The Telegram channel "Nezygar" (Незыгарь), connected to the Russian government, joyously reports that "the potential for the consolidation of Russian society based on the special military operation (SVO) and opposition to the collective West has not been exhausted."

Such declarations ring false due to the apparent apolitical stance of most Russians. Pro-Kremlin analysts draw this conclusion from the latest Levada Center survey data, in which 40 percent of Russians have had to collect money or items for SVO participants and their families over the past 12 months (Telegram.me/russia2, December 11, 2023). Commentators loyal to the Kremlin have remained silent on the development that, according to the same survey, the number of Russians favoring peaceful negotiations in November increased once again: 57 percent of respondents support peace talks, while 36 percent favor continuing the war. The share of those opposed to ending the war, even if Vladimir Putin himself decides to end it, decreased to 19 percent (Levada.ru, December 8).

The usual conformism of Russians and the desire to reflect the image of a "respectable citizen" may explain this combination of seemingly contradictory indicators. "Help SVO participants" has become a societal standard, a unique marker of loyalty to the state. Senators and other officials demand such behavior, and all state media publish reports on assistance to the military (Lenta.ru, October 1; RIA Novosti, December 13). Some propagandists have even created a special Telegram channel, "Dobro-Inform," that reports on "how Russians assist SVO troops" (Gpkorkino.ru, November 3; Telegram.me/DobroInform, accessed January 9).

Fear of becoming an "unreliable" citizen or even outright traitor dictates the necessity that most Russians prove their loyalty to Moscow. Such conduct makes it possible for the Russian people to create the illusion that they, too, can influence the situation at the front, move closer to victory and avoid the consequences of defeat, as occurs in the case of denunciation (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 3, 2023).

Even Russian sociologists loyal to the Kremlin indirectly recognize the motives for suppressing public anxieties. When citing data on "strong support for Putin in future elections," some admit that this can partially be explained by the tense domestic situation stemming from the heightened anxiety of the Russian people to prove they are "proud of their community" (Kommersant.ru, December 8).

Most Russian citizens will try to demonstrate their loyalty to Moscow in the new year. Even if the predictions come true and domestic repressions grow, many will likely

(Continued on page 12)

COMMENTARY

A letter of gratitude from Ukraine

by Roman Syrotych

In the spring of 2023, the Charitable Fund at St. John's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Newark, N.J., announced a matching fund drive. The readers of The Ukrainian Weekly took part in the project that raised \$6,625, which, when doubled, totalled \$13,250. The money was included in the general sum of St. John's Charitable Fund that was sent to Fr. Roman Syrotych in Kyiv, who leads the international relief organization Caritas in five different oblasts in Ukraine. The following is a letter written by Mr. Syrotych. It has been translated from Ukrainian.

Dear kind and compassionate Donors:

Please accept our sincere gratitude for your constant support of the people who are living through the horrors of war in Ukraine. Yes, the war continues. The wailing sirens every night give us no peace. People are forced to flee to bomb shelters to hide from enemy attacks. More and more people are fleeing the war zone and, to date, there are over 400,000 registered people who have fled to Kyiv alone, and this does not include those who have arrived in Kyiv looking for shelter and have not registered.

Of the 400,000 people, 60,000 are children – children who have been robbed of their childhood, whose friends have died and whose peace has been destroyed. They

have seen their buildings collapse, their favorite toys burned and their schools destroyed by the enemy. But what is worst, some of them have seen how Russian soldiers have killed their mothers, fathers, brothers or sisters, or how they have tortured those who were dear to them. These childhood traumas will never go away; nevertheless, we try to recreate their sense of childhood and to help in whatever way we can.

We continue to send help to the soldiers on the frontlines. Every day new wounded warriors are brought to the hospitals, which are already overfilled. Everywhere we look, someone is seeking our help and we are doing what we can to alleviate the fear, pain and hardships of the suffering Ukrainian people. We are tired and sometimes discouraged, but, to be honest, your constant support keeps us going. We see and understand that we are not alone and that there are kind people who are always thinking about us, praying for us and are always ready to help us in our struggle. Even though you are on the other side of the world, you are close to us. You radiate a warmth that we crave.

I would like to thank you for the many adult diapers, bed pads and medications, which you have sent numerous times. With your support, we were able to help bedridden elderly people, the handicapped and



Father Roman Syrotych (center) is joined by a team of Caritas volunteers.

seriously wounded soldiers who protect the Ukrainian people at the cost of their health or even their lives. Unfortunately, many will never again be able to stand up on their own legs, which they have lost in the war and some will never again be able to embrace their loved ones.

Thank you for the tourniquets that you have sent. They save the lives of the soldiers who are defending Ukraine. Thank you for the clothing and the sleeping bags – items that are desperately needed not only by our military but also by those who have lost their homes and everything that they own. We distribute these items to people who need them most. For example, some of the items that you have sent we brought to Kherson and other settlements that were flooded due to the destruction of the dam at the Kakhovsky Reservoir and Hydroelectric Power Station. We also thank you for the walkers, wheelchairs and crutches. Ukraine is now a country with the largest number of people with disabilities, people without legs, arms, people who are wounded and bedridden, people who will never be able to stand on their own two feet.

We also thank you for the funds that you send. Thanks to these generous donations, we were able to help people in the most difficult moments from the first days of the war. You have paid for aid in evacuating people from areas of danger to safer places, helped with supplying water, including in Kherson, helped with grocery supplies and food preparation, assistance with medical treatment and medication,

assistance with hygiene products, bedding and school materials. When the last surviving people in Bakhmut were brought to Kyiv in three buses, your help made a huge difference because these poor people lost absolutely everything – their homes and everything that they had. Some even lost relatives.

The war continues and we constantly meet people who struggle with physical and mental pain. We do everything that we can to lift the spirits of those who are suffering. This is a cruel, bloody and horrible war that takes human lives every day. It kills children and destroys entire villages and cities. A large part of Ukraine is on fire. Every day rockets fly to different parts of Ukraine. There is no longer any single region that has not seen rocket fire. The destruction is simply terrible and catastrophic. Some villages and towns have been destroyed and can never be rebuilt. It's impossible to estimate the level of all of the disasters because, in addition to the destruction, the country is littered with landmines that will continue to kill people for many years to come. Unfortunately, there is no end in sight to this terrible war.

But the worst in all of this is not the buildings destroyed, but the suffering of millions of people. It is impossible to count how many have been killed; there are very many wounded and no one knows how many have vanished to Russia without a trace. Also, many children were left without

(Continued on page 10)



A group of residents in Kherson, Ukraine, received bags of food from Caritas volunteers.

Russian missile...

(Continued from page 1)

Estonian President Alar Karis said after meeting Mr. Zelenskyy that his country will provide 1.2 billion euros (\$1.31 billion) in aid to Ukraine until 2027.

"Ukraine needs more and better weapons," Mr. Karis said at a joint news conference with Mr. Zelenskyy.

"The capabilities of the E.U. [European Union] military industry must be increased so that Ukraine gets what it needs, not tomorrow, but today. We should not place any restrictions on the supply of weapons to Ukraine," he added.

Estonia has so far provided military assistance to Ukraine worth nearly 500 million euros, or more than 1.4 percent of its gross domestic product, according to the Estonian Foreign Affairs Ministry.

In a separate message on X, formerly Twitter, Mr. Zelenskyy thanked Tallinn for its continued aid.

"Estonia's unwavering support for Ukraine, our people, and our defense is evident today, during my visit, and throughout



Estonia's President Alar Karis (right) holds talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Tallinn on January 11.

the war," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote. "I am grateful to Estonia for all [of] its support."

The Baltic countries have been staunch allies of Ukraine since the start of Russia's unprovoked invasion in February 2022.

On January 10, Mr. Zelenskyy held talks in Vilnius with Lithuanian counterpart,

Gitanas Nauseda.

"We have proven that Russia can be stopped, that deterrence is possible," he said after talks with Mr. Nauseda.

Ukraine has been subjected to several massive waves of Russian missile and drone strikes since the start of the year that have

caused civilian deaths and material damage.

In the latest such attack, a hotel in downtown Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, was struck by Russian missiles overnight on January 11. The strike injured 13 people, including Turkish journalists staying at the hotel, Kharkiv regional police chief Volodymyr Tymoshenko said.

Regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said that one of those injured was in serious condition. More than 30 civilians were inside the hotel at the time of the attack, Mr. Synyehubov said on Telegram.

Ukraine's emergency services said those hurt in the strike were "hotel staff and guests, one of whom is a foreign journalist," without giving details. Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said no military personnel were staying at the hotel.

(With reporting by AFP and Reuters)

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War and art...

(Continued from page 3)

cover the costs by raising funds from commercial activities and grants. The cost of investments is not disclosed," Ms. Shvets said.

In 2004, Mr. Binder created the Center for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, an independent research institution bringing together historians, sociologists, architects, art historians and cultural figures to document the area's many-layered history and support educational initiatives in Ukraine.

"I was encouraged to follow up on my first initiative, the urban research center, after I had experienced what potential lies in Ukraine and its people. Just as much as science, the arts constitute an important medium of profound reflection for society, especially in times of war," Mr. Binder said.

The Jam Factory's location was once a bustling industrial hub, situated in the Pidzamche ("area beneath the castle") district north of central Lviv. The building itself, commissioned by Jewish entrepreneur Josef Kronik in 1872, boasts distinctive crenellations and a neo-Gothic façade. Originally a successful distillery, it tragically saw the end of the Kronik family during World War II.

Post-war, the factory transitioned to importing wines from Moldova and other parts of the Soviet Union until 1970 when it transformed into a plant for bottling fruits and vegetables. Production ceased in the 1990s, and from 2008 onwards the building was intermittently used for cultural events like Contemporary Art Week, a theater festival and various artistic and community-engaged activities.

In 2015, the buildings were acquired, and the Austrian architectural firm Stefan Rindler, in collaboration with the Ukrainian office of the AVR development company, undertook the restoration and remodeling project. The overarching concept was



Courtesy of Jam Factory

Jam Factory is a continuous and flexible space around an open courtyard (seen here) and an extended alley, accommodating performances, installations and discussions.

establishing a multidisciplinary art center, providing a space for critical cultural reflection. Such institutions, acting as bridges between Ukraine and the global artistic community, remain scarce in the country.

The complex, comprising six distinct buildings, is strategically designed to reflect these aspirations. Jam Factory is a continuous and flexible space around an open courtyard and an extended alley, accommodating performances, installations and discussions. Notably, the larger territory includes the marked site of a former synagogue, serving as a poignant reminder rather than an erasure of Ukraine's tumultuous past.

"For eight years, the project has survived the COVID-19 epidemic, lockdown, full-scale invasion and power outages. And during all this time, we stopped construction for only two months. And the mission formed many years ago, having gone through a series of events and challenges, has not lost its relevance," said Tetiana Fedoruk, the center's operations and executive director.

The opening exhibition, "Our Years, Our Words, Our Losses, Our Searches, Our Us," features works by Ukrainian artists from

2022-2023 and a longer chronological perspective from the 19th century to the present. The exhibition is constructed on the principle of novellas and combines works on two distances – between the present and the past and between personal experiences and wartime experiences.

"We are building routes and gathering for several months to talk about the personal and the collective, memory and history, hoping that the stories will no longer be interrupted," said a statement by the team that curated the exhibit.

According to the Jam Factory's team, future exhibitions will include international artists. Still, the opening exhibition is a unique opportunity for Ukrainian artists to exhibit their work in Lviv during a time of war.

A new production will be staged in the theater space, providing an opportunity for Ukraine's playwrights, actors and stage designers to reflect on creating theater at a time of war.

Jam Factory's vision for the music program is to become a showcase of artistic expression. It aims to contribute to local and national music education and fuel research on the Ukrainian music scene by

cultivating new works and cross-genre collaborations.

Ms. Shvets, Jam Factory Art Center's communication officer, told The Weekly that the inaugural exhibition focuses on continuity, novels and losses.

"This is an exhibition about war as a long-lasting situation in which people find themselves and change. When did this war begin? In conversations, we often had to stop to refer to the part of the war that began on the night of February 24, 2022, calling it 'the moment of the full-scale invasion.' But this duration extends further back in time: from the occupation of Crimea and east of Ukraine to the division of the Black Sea Fleet in the 1990s and the previous struggle for freedom and self-determination that lasted for centuries," Ms. Shvets said.

The exhibition, she added, is structured as a series of novellas: each section of the route tells stories that may overlap and form a more complex narrative. The exhibition can be navigated in different ways, grounding oneself in the intersection of two scales, where the distance between history and personal experience is reduced.

"We can feel the distance between the present and history shrinking, and gaps are becoming visible: the empty spaces in the long 20th century are explained in research studies and the lived experiences of eyewitnesses and participants. That is why the exhibition includes older works and empty spaces of lost art," said Ms. Shvets, referring to an artistic technique where a space is left empty in the exhibition hall, and a signature is added to say that there could have been a significant Ukrainian painting if it or its creator had not been destroyed by Russia.

Along with the opening of the largest art center in Lviv, the whole area is changing. Over the past few decades, Pidzamche has been hibernating, and it has been waking up in recent years. The official opening of Jam Factory is the final awakening of Pidzamche and a significant contribution to the development of creative Lviv.

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STAND WITH UKRAINE

World Federation...

(Continued from page 4)

in particular their heroism, resilience and dedication to volunteerism.

Yevgeniya Petrova opened the event, stating, "I thank Ukraine, millions of Ukrainians who defend their native land and the protect the entire civilized world from Russia's imperial ambitions. I bow my head to the courage and strength of spirit of our compatriots, to the sacrifice and heroism of soldiers, to the resilience of those who every day in Ukraine take children to school, [who] work, give birth, create and in this way oppose the enemy, because this means that Ukraine is alive, Ukraine is strong, Ukraine is unconquered. On our behalf, I thank Poland, which from the first minutes accepted millions of Ukrainians fleeing the war, sheltered women, children and elderly people who were frightened by the horrors. That is why we chose Poland, Przemyśl, the Ukrainian National Home for our Congress and Assembly 'Ukrainian in the World' as a gesture of deep gratitude to the Polish people. Thanks, as well, to every country that sheltered our Ukrainians."

Iryna Klyuchkovska, director of MIOK, in her opening remarks said, "For 75 years, WFUWO defended women's rights and freedoms [and] together with members helped Ukraine to preserve its Ukrainian identity. The Ukrainian woman in the diaspora brought up, taught [and] nurtured the Ukrainian language, she was our voice in the world when the [Soviet] system made us mute, was strong when we were weak, reached out when we couldn't get up from our knees, helped to wring the slave out of us and [helped us] become free. And now she stands in solidarity with those who have been sheltered by dozens of countries around the world."

Kateryna Levchenko, Ukraine's commissioner for gender policy said, "I am proud that WFUWO became the first organization that united Ukrainian women who went abroad. The uniqueness of your organization lies in the fact that you combine activities in the field of ensuring women's rights with patriotic education, preservation of identity and popularization of Ukrainian culture in the world."

Speakers of the first panel of the assembly "WFUWO: 75 Years of Unity of Ukrainian Women for The International Advocacy of Ukrainian Interests" included

Ms Levchenko; Ms. Petrova; Natalia Pavlenko, president of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America (UNWLA); and Ms. Klyuchkovska. Panel moderator was Marianna Yevsyukova, co-founder and coordinator of the Ukrainian Women's Initiative in the United Arab Emirates.

Ms. Levchenko emphasized the importance of WFUWO's representation at the United Nations and work at the international level to advocate for the rights of Ukrainian women in the world.

Ms. Petrova spoke about the role of women's organizations, which are the voice of Ukrainian women in a complex global world.

Ms. Pavlenko focused on the priority areas of work of the UNWLA, which include advocacy, education, culture and public diplomacy.

Ms. Klyuchkovska emphasized the need for an in-depth study of the Ukrainian women's movement, as an integral part of the history of Ukraine, and the need to spread knowledge about this direction and about the activities of the Ukrainian women's movement in different environments of Ukraine.

The second panel, "Ukrainian Woman in The World: Heroism, Resilience, Volunteerism," was moderated by Oksana Pyatkovska, deputy director of MIOK, who emphasized the uniqueness of the Ukrainian woman who, when necessary, take up arms to defend their native land.

These points were emphasized by the panelists: Natalka Panchenko, leader of the organization "Euromaidan Warsaw" and co-founder of the "Stand with Ukraine" Foundation; Iryna Plakhtiy, chair and co-founder of the charitable fund "With An Angel On My Shoulder"; Maria Petrova-Matsyuk, head of the All-Ukrainian League of Ukrainian Women; Nataliya Poshyvaylo-Towler, a branch chair of the Ukrainian Women's Association in Melbourne, Australia, and a board member of the UWC; Olha Yuskevich, assistant to the head of the National Police of Ukraine, police major, member of the board of the Ukrainian Association of Law Enforcement Representatives.

Panelists, both typical of the strong women of the Ukrainian community and at the same time unique, spoke about their work on behalf of Ukraine in the world, of helping sick children, soldiers, women who returned from captivity, of support for soldiers at the front, and of the development

A look back: Establishment of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations

WFUWO

A landmark event in the history of the Ukrainian women's movement took place in Philadelphia on November 12-13, 1948. At the World Congress of Ukrainian Women, convened on the initiative of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America (UNWLA), the establishment of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations (WFUWO), an international coordination superstructure of Ukrainian women's organizations in the world, was announced.

The WFUWO consistently implements the principles declared 75 years ago, specifically to unify Ukrainian national consciousness and prepare organizations and individuals to be in a state of "constant readiness and effectiveness for the benefit of Ukraine."

The unifying process started by 10 women's organizations deepens every decade, as the federation expands its

network and responds to new challenges in Ukraine. The WFUWO effectively continues to coordinate the work of Ukrainian women's organizations of different countries in the area of gender and national issues, matters of child development and education, enlightenment of members as a basis for future work, and it helps the underprivileged both in Ukraine and in diaspora communities and supports Ukrainian refugees. Today, the WFUWO network operates in 33 countries.

A separate area of activity is cooperation with international structures. The WFUWO is a non-governmental organization accredited with the United Nations Department of Global Communications/Civil Society Unit, is in consultative status with the U.N. Economic and Social Council, has registered representatives with the Office of the United

(Continued on page 12)

of Ukrainian schooling abroad and the popularization of the Ukrainian language as a weapon for the protection of Ukrainian identity. Police Maj. Olha Yuskevich discussed the heroism of female police officers in wartime.

On October 16, those present honored the memory of members who passed away, particularly the memory of former WFUWO president Anna Kisil. Participants then listened to the five-year-report of the WFUWO acting president, Ms. Petrova. They also heard several video reports from those women who could not be present, including Marta Kebalo, Irena Yarozevych and Kateryna Bondar, WFUWO representatives at the U.N. in New York and Geneva.

The day's first roundtable, "Cooperation with Partners as a Guarantee of Joint Success," was moderated by Ms. Petrova. The speakers, who outlined priorities of future joint activities, included Ms. Levchenko, Ms. Klyuchkovska; Lyudmila Porohniak-Hanovska, head of the National Council of Women of Ukraine; Ms. Petrova-Matsyuk; and Orislava Sydorchuk, head of the All-Ukrainian Union of Ukrainian Women.

Tetyana Shvydchenko, founder of "Expertny Korpus"; Lyuba Lyubchuk, head of the Union of Ukrainian Women of France; and Ms. Pavlenko spoke at the second roundtable - "Decolonization in Different Spheres" - during which time the issue of the need for decolonization in various spheres of activity was raised, among them in Ukrainian educational institutions abroad whose programs are saturated with Russian influences, as well as in higher education in Eastern European studies and culture.

"We can oppose the ideology and strategy of 'Russkiy mir' [a Russian world] only with state policy and the active position of civil society in Ukraine and outside," Ms. Klyuchkovska said.

On the final day, October 17, the third roundtable, "The Newest Wave of Ukrainian Women Immigrants from Ukraine in the Diaspora - Challenges and Ways to Overcome Them," was moderated by Iryna Terletska, head of the Organization of Ukrainian Women in Great Britain. Speakers of the event were Iryna Yurchak, volunteer, general director of the law firm Ansatt; Oksana Kolomojets, member of the League of Ukrainians of Canada and a member of the Executive Committee of WFUWO; and Tamara Pozniakova, head of

the organization Lastivka and founder of the Persha Lastivka school.

After discussion in the working groups, Congress participants submitted proposals for resolutions. Among the proposals, the issue of Ukrainian schools abroad took priority. MIOK then offered to hold the Third International Forum of Ukrainian Studies Institutions Abroad. This initiative was enthusiastically supported by those attending the Congress. Also raised was the need for internal and external communication, the need to establish a mutually accessible database of Ukrainian women's organizations, as well as tools and guidelines to use safely and effectively, since the creation of such a resource requires substantial intellectual and financial effort to develop and secure.

The fourth roundtable, "Road Map of WFUWO For the Future," was moderated by Yaroslava Khortyani, a member of the European Congress of Ukrainians and a second vice president of the UWC. Speakers at the roundtable were Lyuba Kvasnytsia-Kai, member of the Board of Directors of WFUWO; head of the Union of Ukrainian Women of Australia, Ulyana Pidzametska, who is a doctoral student at the School of Pedagogy of the University of Glasgow; Liliya Ivanchenko, head of the Union of Ukrainian Women of Estonia; Maria Finiw, second vice president of the WFUWO; and Marianna Yevsyukova, co-founder of the organization Ukrainian Women's Initiative in the United Arab Emirates.

The final event of the Congress was the election of a new president, as well as members of the audit committee and board members based on recommendations of the Nomination Committee, which was chaired by Ms. Finiw. Ms. Khortyani was elected as the new president of WFUWO for the 2023-2028 term.

Established in 1948 in the United States, the WFUWO is an international coordinating structure of Ukrainian women's organizations in the Ukrainian diaspora worldwide. The body is a non-governmental organization accredited with the United Nations Department of Global Communications/Civil Society Unit, is in consultative status with the U.N. Economic and Social Council, has registered representatives with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva and membership in the U.N. Children's Fund. The WFUWO maintains a network of personnel in 33 countries.

FOR THE RECORD

Statement issued by 12th Congress of World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations

The following statement was issued by the 12th Congress of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations.

The 75th anniversary of the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations (WFUWO) is a testament to the dedication of generations of Ukrainian women whose goals were to sustain both the dignity of the Ukrainian woman, as well as the dignity of the Ukrainian nation. With members scattered throughout an international diaspora, WFUWO's first four decades were a struggle against a repressive Soviet regime determined to break Ukraine. During the past three decades, WFUWO has had the good fortune to work with women from a now independent and democratic Ukraine.

However, an evil has befallen Ukraine, an evil that weighs heavily on our souls. As we gather in Przemyśl, Poland, for our 12th Congress, Ukraine has been at war with Russia for nine years. Originally

invading in 2014, Russia intensified its invasion with a vicious brutality in February 2022. Millions of women and children have been forced to flee beyond Ukraine's borders to live as refugees. Millions of Ukrainians have been internally displaced. After decades of relative calm, prosperity and growth, Ukrainian women again are subjected to severe poverty and sex trafficking. Invading Russian soldiers violate Ukrainian women, men and children with rapacious violence; war reports document brutal rape and torture of women taken as Russian prisoners of war. Russia is kidnapping Ukraine's children and transporting [them] to Russia proper where children are being forcibly Russified. Russia's abduction of Ukrainian children is so blatant that the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir

(Continued on page 15)

On the ground...

(Continued from page 5)

gered by warfare.

Shortly before she met with RFE/RL in early November at the brigade's base, she took a statue she estimated was 1,000 years old out of the war zone. The large figure of a woman, she says, was created by a Turkic nomadic ethnic group called the Cumans, or Polovtsy, who lived in southern Ukraine.

Ms. Solarz says she was taking it to Lviv, in western Ukraine, to be renovated. "To me this war is a universal fight between civilization and barbarism," she said as she drove on a bumpy road in an old Toyota Land Cruiser.

Lost purpose

Ms. Slawinska's prosthetic leg slows her down as she delivers groceries to elderly people in Kharkiv, such as Zoya Karlova, a 91-year-old woman who had to relocate from the city of Luhansk and is now housed in a Kharkiv apartment.

On the day that Ms. Slawinska visits, Ms.

Karlova says Ms. Slawinska is the only person that makes her calm.

Before she moved to Ukraine, Ms. Slawinska worked in a special education department at a university in Krakow. Her humanitarian efforts are supported mainly by online crowdfunding coming from sympathetic Poles.

"The ultimate problem among the people affected by war is loss of purpose in life," she said. "It usually comes with loneliness."

Recalling the moment in Bakhmut on January 6, 2023, when she was caught in a mortar attack that ultimately led to her leg being amputated, she says she stayed unafraid.

"When I was lying on the street in Bakhmut convinced I was about to die, all I had in my mind were those I loved," she said.

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Chicago drone...

(Continued from page 1)

to save lives, otherwise there will be no Ukraine," he said while pointing to reconnaissance and attack drones that are getting ready for shipment to the war-torn country.

Although the charity group sends protective equipment and gear to specific military units, and works on separate humanitarian projects, sometimes "we don't know the ultimate recipients of our stuff. But when we see the results, this brings us satisfaction," the 31-year-old Lviv native said at his office on January 9.

To ensure the gear and other items Help Heroes of Ukraine sends arrive at their destinations, the group manages a warehouse in Lviv and still "struggles with customs authorities – sometimes they'll delay items for five days or more, whereas that time could be used to get stuff to the front and save lives," he said.

Mr. Zabolotovskyy tries visiting Ukraine every three to four months to personally oversee operations – "the last time I was there was in November," he said. "We take a structural approach to what we do."

Besides drones, the group has sent full sets of tactical gear, flak vests, IFAC medical kits that meet North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) standards, pickup

trucks, as well as thermal and night vision devices. On the humanitarian side, they've sent thousands of pallets of medical aid for hospitals and materials for reconstruction and are getting a huge shipment of toys for children ready.

There are plenty of signed items of gratitude from recipients displayed in the office, including from Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, as well as from Kyrylo Budanov, head of the Defense Ministry's defense intelligence.

Signed flags of military units, including from special operations forces, also line the office's walls.

"We recently started making drones and modernizing devices at a facility" at an undisclosed location in Ukraine, the group's director said.

The organization has also partnered with Illinois-based Trinity International University and Ukraine's National University of Ostroh Academy to educate military chaplains.

"They mostly act as psychologists and offer spiritual guidance to soldiers," Mr. Zabolotovskyy said of the chaplains' roles on the front line.

Asked what could be expected of Ukraine's military performance this year, he said "they'll go on the defensive. ... What Ukraine needs is a long-range plan ... and we witness that politics gets too much in the way of what the military does."

A letter...

(Continued from page 7)

parents – they became orphans due to the terrible aggression and mass murders, not to mention the terrible physical and psychological injuries of children and people as a result of brutal treatment and rape.

Irpın, Bucha, Mariupol, Borodyanka, Hostomel, Kharkiv, Chernihiv – these are cities about which the world has heard; unfortunately, they have become known because of the brutal physical and psychological trauma that happened there through death and mass graves. We assist

in various locations. We travel to different villages and cities where we meet with people who suffer due to the war – people who were injured, whose homes were destroyed, yet all they wanted was to live peacefully. It is devastating to see and hear the terrible stories of people suffering, about captivity, about murders of women and children, about life in basements without food and water.

I send a huge thank you to everyone who in any way joins the relief effort in Ukraine. Thanks to people like you, we, the volunteers on the ground in Ukraine can help those who need help the most, and there are so very many needy people.

Lavrov asserts...

(Continued from page 2)

legitimacy of Western responses to the Ukraine crisis. The term "World Majority" can become a substitute for "Global South," as it flatters the ambitions and self-assessments of many emerging economies and developing nations. These new rhetoric subtleties should not be overlooked.

Mr. Lavrov's discourse on expanding BRICS encapsulates a broader vision that the Kremlin promotes: a significant shift from a Western-dominated world order to a more multipolar global structure (Ministry of International Affairs, December 28.). Mr. Lavrov's remarks about BRICS and the global movement away from Western dominance reflect a strategic narrative aimed at challenging the current geopolitical status quo. In his view, BRICS represents an economic alliance and a geopolitical counterweight to Western influence. He perceives this group as a cornerstone of the emerging multipolar world, suggesting that the influence and dominance of Western countries are waning.

Mr. Lavrov's promotion of BRICS expansion connects to the broader goal of limiting Western economic dominance, particularly the global financial system's shift away from reliance on the U.S. dollar (Ministry of International Affairs, December 28). The Russian foreign affairs minister sees BRICS as a pivotal part of this shift, advocating for the development of alternative financial mechanisms and institutions that could counterbalance the Western-dominated global financial system. This push for "dedollarization" aligns with Russia's efforts to insulate itself from Western economic sanctions and encourage other nations to follow suit (see Ministry of International Affairs, September 27, December 13, 2022). This narrative resonates with countries that feel marginalized or constrained by the largely unipolar nature of the current global order, offering an alternative alignment that promises greater autonomy and influence. By framing BRICS as a champion for a more equitable global order, Russia positions itself as a leader in reshaping global power dynamics.

The discussion then turned to the direction of the war in Ukraine. Mr. Lavrov suggested a possible shift in Western tactics,

given that the goal of causing Russia's "strategic defeat" has failed in his mind. He insinuates that the West is looking for a face-saving way out of the conflict while still claiming a victory for Ukraine. Additionally, Mr. Lavrov mentioned the Copenhagen format, a diplomatic initiative excluding Russia that is aimed at rallying international support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace plan (Lenta.Ru, October 26, 2023). Mr. Lavrov dismisses this as unrealistic and indicative of the West's failed strategies.



Mr. Lavrov's confident assertion that the West's goal to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia has failed highlights a perceived weakness in Western policy. This perception stems from the lack of a clear, long-term strategic vision regarding Ukraine and broader Russian aggression. The absence of articulated strategic goals gives the impression of a tactical rather than strategic response, which Moscow interprets as a lack of Western resolve.

Given these insights, the West must adopt a more cohesive and strategic approach. This would involve moving beyond reactive measures such as sanctions and military support to develop a more cohesive long-term strategy. The renewed approach should articulate clear objectives, not only for the immediate resolution of the Ukraine conflict but also for a future European security framework that addresses the Kremlin's revisionist policies.

The lack of a convincing response to Putin's aggression will eventually lead many countries to seriously rethink their alliances with the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). They may also revive their interest in developing nuclear weapons, which seem to be the only working deterrent in today's global landscape.

The conflict in Ukraine and Russia's broader geopolitical maneuvers call for a reevaluation of Western strategy. At a minimum, a clear, well-defined strategy is necessary. In the words of Ancient Roman philosopher Seneca, "If a man knows not to which port he sails, no wind is favorable."

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Russia enters...

(Continued from page 2)

A severe shortage of investments is disrupting Russia's high-value oil and gas sector, which struggles to find new loopholes in the constantly tightening Western sanctions regime (Forbes.ru, December 21). The erratic behavior of Russian energy corporations on global oil markets complicates Moscow's relations with other producers in the OPEC+ format (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries members along with key partners, including Russia). Putin tried to explain away these tensions during his unexpected visit to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in early December 2023 (Forbes.ru, December 7). The secretive trip, however, demonstrated the sharp decline in Russia's ability to wield significant influence in international affairs.

Veteran pundits, such as Sergei Karaganov and Dmitry Trenin, seek to reconfigure Russia's acute ambitions for securing the status of a great power into the claim for leadership of the presumably anti-Western "global majority" (Kommersant, December 28). In reality, for most politically diverse and self-centric states in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, the experiences of interacting with Russia serve as a warning about the risks of aggressive autocracy to global development (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, December 24). Russia has little to offer to countries seeking to accelerate modernization. These countries are perfectly aware that Moscow is compelled to provide every natural resource and economic niche available to China. Beijing's claims of being an answer to aspirations in the Global South are far from convincing. Even so, countries in the Global South have every reason to take for granted Russia's readiness to follow the course set by Beijing and responsiveness to reservations expressed by Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping (Riddle, December 26).

Political elites categorically deny the apparent reduction in Russia's international status to that of a troublemaker, which inevitably narrows many of their perspectives and agendas (Moscow times, December 28). By some accounts, the preference of Russian public opinion for ending the war rather than striving to achieve victory seems to be growing steadily (Re-Eussia.net, December 12). Habitual hopes for a better year ahead are mixed with sour expectations of more of the same, leaving the season of festivities lacking joy (Republic.ru, December 28). Pretenses of

normalcy cannot camouflage the grim reality of an unwinnable war. As official discourse on traditional values departs further from the reality of social demoralization, it still determines the boundaries of acceptable behavior for the Kremlin (Novayagazeta.ru, December 30).

The apt symbol of Russia's current circumstances for the past year is the crash of the much-trumpeted Russian mission to the Moon, leading to a purge at state corporation Roscosmos (Izvestiya, December 14). This is in contrast to the successes of space programs in many other countries, from ambitious India to improbable North Korea. There was one "success" that defined the hidden disarray in Russia's domestic affairs: the suppression of the Wagner Group mutiny on June 23 and 24, 2023. Putin will avoid mentioning this victory by reciting fake triumphs, as the liquidation of Yevgeny Prigozhin cannot erase the Kremlin leader's personal responsibility for empowering the criminal entrepreneur (Meduza.io, December 30).

After the shocks of 2022, many Russians may find comfort in the perception of the gradual stabilization and normalization of the past 12 months, which they hope will continue in 2024. The reality is that stabilization will likely mean steady economic degradation and a mutation of Putin's autocracy into dictatorship. Normalization amounts to acceptance of the continued decay of the demoralized society, though the Russian population prefers not to openly acknowledge it.

The war in Ukraine continues to scar and traumatize Russia. Millions of its citizens who either opted to escape or are compelled to wait it out in internal migration find it increasingly difficult to understand their country. Russia's leaders, who inhabit the bubble of servile loyalty and self-deceiving propaganda, have an even more distorted understanding. One proposition that the Kremlin continues to mention now and again, but cannot possibly contemplate acting upon, is the call for a ceasefire and subsequent peace treaty. Ukraine will never agree to such a prospect so long as Russia occupies its sovereign territory. As a result, Ukrainian forces will have to endure more tragic losses and painful sacrifices in the new year before they break the Russian pattern of war-making and open the road to a renewed, stable peace in Europe.

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A look back...

(Continued from page 9)

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva and membership in the U.N. Children's Fund. International recognition strengthens the positive image of the WFUWO and makes the organization even more influential and authoritative in the countries where members reside, as well as in Ukraine.

In 1991, following Ukraine's independence, active cooperation began with representatives of both Ukrainian executive and legislative bodies, with numerous public organizations and scientific and educational institutions.

The war on Ukraine that Russia escalated by launching a full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, had a significant impact on the activities of the WFUWO. From the first days of the full-scale war, Ukrainian women's organizations in the diaspora, led by the WFUWO, stood in support of Ukraine by providing humanitarian aid and assistance to Ukraine's defenders to bring

victory closer.

These and other topical issues were at the epicenter of discussions at the 12th WFUWO Congress, which took place in October in Przemyśl, Poland.

The WFUWO is an important part of the history of the Ukrainian women's movement from the beginning of the 20th century, particularly during World War II, the period of statelessness of Ukraine and now during the country's revival and reformation. Today, the WFUWO shares the pain and suffering of the Ukrainian people who are fighting for global freedom. Amid the conviction that Ukraine will be freed from the crucible of war, the WFUWO will continue to support the country in its recovery and reconstruction.

On the occasion of its 75th anniversary, the WFUWO's newly-elected board of directors held its first meeting of the new term in November, on exactly the day of the federation's founding. The members honored the memory of the founders of the federation, and recalled the main milestones of its work, as well as the dedicated leaders of WFUWO.

New Year...

(Continued from page 6)

adhere to the new restrictions for fear of retribution for opposing the Putin regime. The possibility of protests depends in large part on how religious and other radical elements can lobby for norms that grossly interfere in the lives of ordinary Russians, such as the ban on abortion or censorship

of entertainment content (Meduza, December 4,10). Social stability will likely be further disrupted in 2024 and may lead to more widespread discontent, especially if the Kremlin dares to declare a new wave of mobilization.

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Turning...

(Continued from page 6)

"Russia will be held accountable if it invades, and it depends on what it does. It's one thing if it's a minor incursion and we [allies] end up having to fight about what to do and what not to do, et cetera," Mr. Biden said. "But if they actually do what they're capable of doing, ... it is going to be a disaster for Russia if they further invade Ukraine."

To clarify Mr. Biden's remarks about a "minor incursion," The White House press office issued a statement. "If any Russian military forces move across the Ukrainian border, that's a renewed invasion, and it will be met with a swift, severe and united response from the United States and our

allies."

Russia's diplomatic corps appeared to be working overtime in January, holding high-level talks with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], U.S. and European leaders, but most of the demands by Moscow showcased its belligerent rhetoric against the West.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken traveled to Kyiv on January 19 to promote a diplomatic path forward, and was scheduled to meet with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, on January 21 in Geneva, and hold a four-way talk with Great Britain, France and Germany on January 20 in Berlin.

Source: "Biden predicts Russia will 'move in' on Ukraine," (RFE/RL), The Ukrainian Weekly, January 23, 2022.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

1. Publication Title: The Ukrainian Weekly

2. Publication Number: 575-470

3. Filing Date: 01/08/2024

4. Issue Frequency: Weekly

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 52

6. Annual Subscription Price: \$65 (members), \$92 (nonmembers)

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): The Ukrainian Weekly, PO Box 280, 2200 Route 10, Parsippany, NJ 07054

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): Ukrainian National Association, PO Box 280, 2200 Route 10, Parsippany, NJ 07054

9. Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank): Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Ukrainian National Association, PO Box 280, 2200 Route 10, Parsippany, NJ 07054
Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Andrew Nykha, The Ukrainian Weekly, PO Box 280, 2200 Route 10, Parsippany, NJ 07054
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address):

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.): Full Name: Ukrainian National Association, Complete Mailing Address: PO Box 280, 2200 Route 10, Parsippany, NJ 07054

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box: [X] None

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one): [X] Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months [] Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 1 of 4 (see instructions page 4)) PSN: 7530-01-000-9031 PRIVACY NOTICE: See our privacy policy on www.usps.com

13. Publication Title: The Ukrainian Weekly

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 12/24/2023

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
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(2)	Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	0	0
(3)	Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS® (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	107	103
(4)	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	5	5
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15c (1), (2), (3), and (4))		2078	2053
d. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541			
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e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15c (1), (2), (3), and (4))		42	42
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		2120	2095
g. Copies not Distributed (See instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))		138	152
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		2258	2247
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		98.02	98.00

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	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies:	867	774
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	2945	2827
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)	2987	2869
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 15c x 100)	98.58	98.54

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership

[X] If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the 1/14/24 issue of this publication. [] Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: [Signature] Date: 01/10/2024

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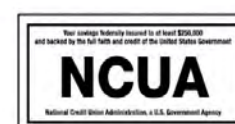
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BOOK REVIEW

Things will never be the same: Hanna Melnyczuk's "Don't Close Your Eyes" responds to Russia's war on Ukraine

"Don't Close Your Eyes," by Hanna Melnyczuk. Arrowsmith Press, 2023. 82 pp. ISBN: 9798987924105 (hardcover), \$30.

by Nataliya Shpylova-Saeed

The three rockets target the children whose bodies seem to be soaring over the rubble of what used to be a city. A sunflower is pierced by one of the missiles enveloped by the rain of sunflower seeds. The colors of the drawing are bright and crispy but their brightness unsettles: the sharp contrast of the colors brings out violence. The viewers are reminded that the targets and victims of wars are people who bear witness to the destruction and whose memory will carry the horrors of violence even after wars end. An actual fighting can come to an end, but the experience and memory of the aggression get woven into the very history of the land and the souls of its people.



Courtesy of Hanna Melnyczuk

They have no voice, only eyes that bear witness

The mixture of colors points to the details that might be overlooked at first glance. The blue and the yellow are colors of the Ukrainian flag, and the three rockets symbolize the tricolor flag of the Russian Federation that launched its unprovoked full-scale war against Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Worriedly following the rapid developments of what had turned into the largest military conflict in Europe since the World War II, Hanna Melnyczuk began to create a series of drawings that became the basis of the book "Don't Close Your Eyes." In a way, it documents the unfolding of the war against the country of her parents who left Ukraine in the wake of World War II. The drawings bring to the fore the value of life and they plead not to look away from the atrocities imposed on civilians.

An artist and a children's book author, Ms. Melnyczuk grew up in the U.S. She received a master of fine arts degree from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, and her work has appeared in many galleries and museums, including Art Space in Maynard, Mass., The Gallery at the Piano Factory, the Danforth Museum, Tufts Gallery, Brush Gallery, Fountain Street Gallery, among others.

Ms. Melnyczuk was raised in the U.S., but her parents shared their memories of the country they had to leave through its culture and language. In the 1990s, she lived in Ukraine for a few months and deepened her interest in and understanding of Ukraine and its people.

"Don't Close Your Eyes" includes more than 30 drawings that follow the chronology of the first days of the war and attempt to express and deliver the emotions of

those who witnessed firsthand the brutal slaughter.

Ms. Melnyczuk extensively works with colors and motifs traditional to Ukrainian culture. They yield a textured canvas for attempts to regain balance shattered by violence and destruction and process the traumas caused by the war raging in the heart of Europe in the 21st century.

A combination of blue and yellow, references to sunflowers and poppy flowers, wide fields of wheat, and small Ukrainian huts are intercepted by the realities of the destruction and atrocities amplified by modern weaponry. The air vulnerability of Ukraine prompted the plea "Close the Sky" that the Ukrainians had been addressing to the international community.

The drawings created during the first days of the war include figures of children who try to patch the sky. Captions and quotes accompanying the drawings help handle the thoughts and emotions that are hard to make sense of amid the chaos and horror of war: "Only the dead have seen the end of war," reads a quote from Plato that evokes the long-lasting traumatic consequences brought by wars on individuals and communities.

The first drawing is dated Day 6 and alludes to the expectations of the Kremlin that Kyiv would fall "within three days": "They expected to be home by Spring."



The drawings convey the fear, panic and despondency that overwhelmed many in and outside the country when the full-scale invasion broke out. The flames that abound in the collection render the destruction that wars bring and, at the same time, reproduce the shock and dismay that force many to leave their homes and country.

When the news about the invasion shocked the Ukrainians in the early hours of February 24, 2022, there was no time to process these emotions. At the same time, the album grasps something essential about the individual's spirit that is often revealed under very tragic circumstances – the desire to resist and withstand, readiness to shed love and empathy, and determination to survive and protect loved ones.

Russia's war against Ukraine caused one of the largest refugee crises in Europe since World War II. By the end of 2022, almost six million people from Ukraine were registered across Europe, and another six million were internally displaced. As of today, more than six million Ukrainians stay abroad because of the war and many do not know when they will be able to return to Ukraine.

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers are women and children. For many, there is no place to which they can come back – their houses have been razed to the

ground by Russian projectiles. Even knowing that they are returning to destroyed neighborhoods, the Ukrainians living outside the country might come back and they will have to rebuild their lives pierced and percolated by war.

The drawings of the initial stage of the full-scale assault center on the elders, women and children who find themselves on the road hoping to find safe places. In Ukraine, the railroad has turned into a symbol of departure and hope for life and rescue. Children are clinging to their mothers shielding their sons and daughters from the horrors of the war – an archetypal image of the mother protecting her family and the future of her children encapsulates the fears of millions caught up in the maelstrom of war:



The drawings give a prominent visibility to women. While this is an allusion to one of the traditional perceptions of Ukrainian families in which women are keepers of the hearth and family, women under the conditions of war have taken over the roles of men who now fight at the frontline. They become breadwinners and care providers. Many serve in the army, too. And above all, they do not want their children to be deprived of their motherly love and warmth, which might be the only remedy for the horrors of war and the pain of losing loved ones.

The drawing that portrays a woman holding her two children tightly to her side resembles a fiery vortex that is about to swallow the family that misses a father. At the same time, it evokes an image of a Ukrainian pysanka that symbolizes strength, resurrection and vitality. It suggests the idea of "writing" ("pysanka" is derived from "pysaty," i.e., "to write"), documenting and transmitting one's story to future generations. The drawings "write" the history of the people who appear at the epicenter of violence and they testify to the memory of the nation whose existence the Kremlin is determined to eliminate.

It is impossible today to identify the exact number of children who fell victim to Russia's ongoing assault against Ukraine. Territories that are currently occupied by Russia do not provide reliable information.



The official reports rely exclusively on the information that can be verified: 510 children are killed, 1143 wounded, 13 sexually abused, more than 19,000 forcibly deported to Russia. These numbers are most likely much higher.



There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child. Things never get back to the way they were.

– Dwight D. Eisenhower

The loss of life is the leading motif of Ms. Melnyczuk's album.



The Bucha massacre condenses the horrors of war crimes perpetrated by Russia in Ukraine. In March 2022, the world was shocked by the mass killings that the Ukrainian soldiers discovered as they liberated Bucha, a suburb of Kyiv, from Russian occupiers. Ms. Melnyczuk performs the drawing dedicated to Bucha victims in black-and-white, with dark shades prevailing and the rain alluding to sorrow and grief. The body of a man lying on the ground with his hands tied behind his back testifies to an execution amplified by the two bullet holes piercing his head and his back.

Mariupol is another place in Ukraine that will carry the memory of genocidal crimes committed by Russia. The Russian Armed Forces destroyed 90 percent of residential buildings in the city, and the estimated number of killed Ukrainians may

(Continued on page 18)

Russian missile...

(Continued from page 1)

attack showed that Russian forces were “trying to inflict as much grief as possible on our land.”

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy responded in his nightly video address, saying Russia must be made to feel the consequences of every such attack.

“The Russian strike targeted ordinary residential buildings and private houses,” Mr. Zelenskyy said. “Russia must feel – always feel – that no such strike will go without consequences for the terrorist state.”

Reports of the deaths in Pokrovsk came after the Ukrainian Air Force said it had destroyed a Russian command center at the Saky air base on the occupied Crimean Peninsula in an overnight attack.

“All targets have been shot down,” Air Force Commander Mykola Oleshchuk wrote on Telegram, adding that Russia lost “another command post in Crimea.”

Ukraine on January 5 said it carried out separate strikes on a Russian military command post and a military unit in Crimea, inflicting “serious damage” to Russia’s defense system.

Natalya Humenyuk, the spokeswoman for the Defense Forces of Southern Ukraine, said that “really powerful combat” operations took place earlier this week, hitting Russia’s military operations in Crimea especially hard.

“Not only one command post was affected,” she said in a rare detailing of Ukrainian operations.

Russia on January 6 claimed that its forces shot down four Ukrainian missiles in Crimea overnight.

The reports could not be independently verified.

Since Moscow’s brutal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukraine’s forces have conducted frequent strikes on Russian military targets in Crimea, which was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014.

The Saky airfield made headlines in September when Ukraine said its military hit the facility, causing “serious damage” to equipment at the site. Crimea’s Moscow-installed officials denied the claim.

The air base had also come under a Ukrainian strike in August the previous year, with Kyiv claiming that the attack destroyed at least nine military aircraft, including Su-30SM fighters and Su-24M bombers.

Both Ukraine and Russia have escalated attacks in recent days, as the military conflict drags on into nearly two years.

In Moscow, a top Russian official was quoted as saying that Russia plans to produce 32,500 drones each year by 2030, allocating \$7.66 billion for the project.

“This is almost three times higher than current production volumes,” First Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Belousov was quoted as saying by the TASS news agency on January 6.

Drones have been widely used both by Moscow and Kyiv since the war began. Russia mostly relies on the cheaply produced, Iranian-made Shahed drones in its aerial assaults on Ukrainian infrastructure

far beyond the front lines in the east and south of the country.

Ukraine, meanwhile, has intensively used first-person-view (FPV) drones – small drones originally meant for personal civilian use but modified for the battlefield.

Kyiv said last month that it planned to produce more than 11,000 medium- and long-range attack drones, as well as 1 million FPV drones in 2024.

Meanwhile, Russia’s Defense Ministry said on January 11 that four Ukrainian drones were intercepted and destroyed over the territory of the Rostov, Tula and Kaluga regions.

Kaluga Gov. Vladislav Shapsha said one drone exploded above a pumping station in Kaluga, damaging the building but causing no fire.

Russia’s Emergencies Ministry also said that two large-scale fires broke out in the Moscow region.

It said rescue workers were at work in the village of Obukhovo near Moscow, where a production facility and an administrative building were burning.

The ministry said there were no casualties.

Meanwhile, another Russian missile strike on a hotel in downtown Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, injured 11 people, including Turkish journalists staying at the hotel, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said early on January 11.

Mr. Synyehubov said that one of those injured was in serious condition.

More than 30 civilians were inside the hotel at the time of the attack, Mr. Synyehubov said on Telegram.

Ukraine’s emergency services said those hurt in the strike were “hotel staff and guests, one of whom is a foreign journalist,” without giving details.

Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said no military personnel were staying at the hotel.

The previous day, an air-raid alert was declared throughout Ukraine on the morning of January 10, with authorities instructing citizens to take shelter due to an elevated danger of Russian missile strikes.

“Missile-strike danger throughout the territory of Ukraine! [Russian] MiG-31Ks taking off from Savasleika airfield [in Russia’s Nizhny Novgorod region]. Don’t ignore the air-raid alert!” the Ukrainian Air Force said in its warning message on Telegram.

Since the start of the year, Ukraine was subjected to several massive waves of Russian missile and drone strikes that have caused civilian deaths and material damage.

(With reporting by AFP, dpa, Reuters, RFE/RL’s Ukrainian Service and Current Time)

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Kyiv receives...

(Continued from page 1)

Minister Denys Shmyhal thanked “Japan for its comprehensive support, as well as significant humanitarian and financial assistance.”

In particular, he cited Tokyo’s “decision to allocate \$1 billion for humanitarian projects and reconstruction with its readiness to increase this amount to \$4.5 billion through the mechanisms of international institutions.”

Meanwhile, Swedish Foreign Affairs Minister Tobias Billstrom told a Stockholm defense conference that the main goal of the country’s foreign policy efforts in the coming years will be to support Kyiv.

“Sweden’s military, political and economic support for Ukraine remains the Swedish government’s main foreign policy task in the coming years,” he posted on social media during the event.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking via video link, told the conference that the battlefield in his country was currently stable but that he remained confident Russia could be defeated.

“Even Russia can be brought back within the framework of international law. Its aggression can be defeated,” he said.

Ukraine’s much-anticipated counteroffensive last summer largely failed to shift the front line, giving confidence to the Kremlin’s forces, especially as further Western aid is in question.

Ukraine has pleaded with its Western allies to keep supplying it with air defense weapons, along with other weapons necessary to defeat the invasion that began in February 2022.

U.S. President Joe Biden has proposed a national-security spending bill that includes \$61 billion in aid for Ukraine, but it has been blocked by Republican lawmakers who insist that Mr. Biden and his fellow Democrats in Congress address border security.

Mr. Zelenskyy also urged fellow European nations to join Ukraine in developing joint weapons-production capabilities so that the continent is able to “preserve itself” in the face of any future crises.

“Two years of this war have proven that Europe needs its own sufficient arsenal for the defense of freedom, its own capabilities to ensure defense,” he said.

Overnight, Ukrainian officials said Russia launched 28 drones and three cruise missiles, and 12 people were wounded by a drone attack in the central city of Dnipro.

Though smaller in scale than other recent assaults, the January 7 aerial attack was the latest indication that Russia has no intention of stopping its targeting of Ukraine’s civilian infrastructure, often far from the front lines.

In a post to Telegram, Ukraine’s air force claimed that air defenses destroyed 21 of the 28 drones, which mainly targeted locations in the south and east of Ukraine.

“The enemy is shifting the focus of attack to the frontline territories: the Kherson and Dnipropetrovsk regions were attacked by drones,” air force spokesper-



Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Yoko Kamikawa (right) meets with her counterpart, Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba, in Kyiv on January 7.

son Yuriy Ihnat told Ukrainian television.

Russia made no immediate comment on the attack.

In the southern city of Kherson, meanwhile, Russian shelling from across the Dnipro River left at least two people dead, officials said.

In the past few months, Ukrainian forces have moved across the Dnipro, setting up a small bridgehead in villages on the river’s eastern banks, upriver from Kherson. The effort to establish a larger foothold there, however, has faltered, with Russian troops pinning the Ukrainians down, and keeping them from moving heavier equipment over.

Over the past two weeks, Russia has fired nearly 300 missiles and more than 200 drones at targets in Ukraine, as part of an effort to terrorize the civilian population and undermine morale. On December 29, more than 120 Russian missiles were launched at cities across Ukraine, killing at least 44 people, including 30 in Kyiv alone.

Ukraine’s air defenses have improved markedly since the months following Russia’s mass invasion in February 2022. At least five Western-supplied Patriot missile batteries, along with smaller systems such as the German-made Gepard and the French-manufactured SAMP/T, have also improved Ukraine’s ability to repel Russian drones and missiles.

Last week, U.S. officials said that Russia had begun using North Korean-supplied ballistic missiles as part of its aerial attacks on Ukrainian sites.

Inside Russia, authorities in Belgorod said dozens of residents have been evacuated to areas farther from the Ukrainian border.

“On behalf of regional Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov, we met the first Belgorod residents who decided to move to a safer place. More than 100 people were placed in our temporary accommodation centers,” Andrei Chesnokov, head of the Stary Oskol district, about 115 kilometers from Belgorod, wrote in Telegram post.

(With reporting by RFE/RL’s Ukrainian Service, Reuters and AP)

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Statement...

(Continued from page 9)

Putin and Russia’s children’s rights commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova, for war crimes

While military support for Ukraine has been forthcoming from the West, as well as generous humanitarian aid, in addition to providing support for Ukraine, we call upon the international community to more fervently condemn and punish Russia.

Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 states that genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, including: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical

destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. These criteria have been met.

While Russia’s actions alone convey intent to destroy Ukraine in part or in whole, Russia’s words must be considered, as well. Top Russian government leaders and state-controlled information agencies continually declare that their goal of elimination will be accomplished: Ukrainians who insist on

retaining their identity must be physically destroyed; those who abandon their Ukrainian identity and become Russian may live. Therefore, if Russia’s plan succeeds, there will be no Ukrainians in Ukraine. That is the language of genocidal intent.

As an acknowledgment of the horrific reality that has been forced upon Ukraine, WFUWO calls upon the international community to act with moral imperative and declare Russia’s targeted acts of destruction against Ukrainians as genocide.

NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

to worsen further this year if hostilities continue and strikes targeting energy and other critical infrastructure increase this winter, OCHA and the U.N. mission in Ukraine warned in statements issued on January 9. OCHA said that the war also forced about 6.3 million Ukrainians to find refuge abroad, and as of the end of last year, 5.9 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded in Europe. "Civilians are being killed and injured daily, while their homes and critical infrastructure are being destroyed," the U.N. mission said. "The first week of January brought a wave of attacks to Ukraine, starting on the 29th of December and continuing to this day. Families across Ukraine were ringing in the New Year to the sound of air raid sirens, hunkering down in underground shelters and metro stations, or in the basements of their homes," it said. The U.N. Mission in Ukraine urged the international community to do more to help both Ukraine and its neighbors cope with the increased needs of the civilian population during the winter season. "Meeting the most urgent needs in

Ukraine and neighboring countries will require stepped-up and sustained support from Member States, the private sector and partners," it said. OCHA and the U.N. mission to Ukraine said that U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths and High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi are due to present on January 15 in Geneva their coordinated plans "to save lives and address the suffering" caused by Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Zelenskyy stresses unity in call with Duda

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on January 9 discussed further defense cooperation and Ukraine's air-defense needs in a phone call with Polish President Andrzej Duda. Messrs. Zelenskyy and Duda also discussed the issue of financial and political support from the European Union and exchanged views on the expected decisions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at its summit in Washington in July, Mr. Zelenskyy's press office said. "I am convinced that the future of Ukraine and Poland lies in unity, mutual support and mutually beneficial cooperation," Mr. Zelenskyy said during his call with Mr. Duda, according to the press office. He also

expressed his gratitude for Poland's unwavering support for Ukraine as a constant ally on Kyiv's path to joining the European Union and NATO. "Our common border should be a real European border. Border of unity. There should be no borders between our nations," he said. There's been no comment on the call from Poland. Poland and Ukraine have been working to defuse a dispute involving farmers, who began blocking border crossings with Ukraine in November. The farmers agreed to unblock one checkpoint but continue to block others demanding the return of permits for Ukrainian drivers. Mr. Zelenskyy also spoke on January 9 with Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo and congratulated Belgium on assuming the presidency of the E.U. Council. "I appreciate that support for Ukraine and international law is among its priorities," Mr. Zelenskyy said on X, formerly Twitter. "We appreciate the December decision to open Ukraine's EU accession talks, and we anticipate that with Belgium's support our country will make significant progress toward implementing further formal steps on this path." He said he also discussed bilateral defense cooperation with Mr. De Croo as well as the coordination of European defense assistance and the importance of approving 50 billion euros in E.U. financial assistance. On the battlefield, Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, Ukrainian Commander in Chief Valeriy Zaluzhnyi and Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant Gen. Serhiy Shapoval visited positions of the Ukrainian military near Kupiansk, the press service of the Defense Ministry said on Telegram. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander of the Kupiansk sector of the front, briefed them on the situation around Kupiansk, where Ukrainian soldiers have repelled near-constant attempts by Russian forces. "I had the honor to meet with the commanders of the units that are fighting in this direction now. Reported on the situation, current challenges. Decisions will be made in the near future. The enemy will not like it," Mr. Umerov said. In the Kharkiv region, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said on Ukrainian television that the Russian Army has resumed its assault on Synkivka, a village near Kupiansk. There had been a lull in the fighting there due to difficult weather conditions and the damage that Ukrainian forces caused to the Russian troops. According to Mr. Synyehubov, the attacks of the Russian Army come in waves, which is predictable, and they can be repulsed without any problems. On January 4, The Telegraph, a British newspaper, reported that Russian troops could launch a "large-scale offensive" in the Kharkiv region as early as January 15. The Ukrainian military intelligence directorate has confirmed that they have observed an accumulation of Russian forces and equipment in the region, but they cannot confirm when the assault will start. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Deep freeze, blizzards cut power to settlements

Ukraine's Energy Ministry says 1,025 settlements were without electricity on January 9 as the war-racked country grapples with a wave of unusually cold weather, snowfall and high winds that even forced Russia to pause its relentless waves of drone and missile strikes. The ministry said that blizzards and the icing of power lines had led to outages in the Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, Mykolayiv and Kirovohrad regions. Nearly 29,000 consumers in 324 settlements have been left without electricity in the Dnipropetrovsk region, 268 settlements in the Odesa region, 215 in the Mykolayiv region and 146 settlements in the Kirovohrad region. In the Zaporizhia region, 59 settlements were cut off, in Kherson 14, and nine in the Chernihiv and

Chernivtsi regions. "Emergency teams in the regions affected by bad weather are working around the clock to repair the damage," the ministry said in a statement. "However, ice makes work and movement more difficult." The forecast by Ukraine's hydrometeorological center remains bleak, with more snowfall expected in the south and southeast, and with temperatures as low as minus 21 Celsius at night and minus 12 during the day. For the first time in weeks, Russia did not launch drone strikes on Ukraine's territory on January 9, a development that Natalia Humenyuk, the spokeswoman of the Defense Forces of Southern Ukraine, said was also due to the spell of unusually bad weather. "We understand that the absence of a wave of drone attacks is a response, in a certain way, to weather conditions as well. However, the enemy continued the artillery bombardment," Ms. Humenyuk said, adding that the southern cities of Kherson and Antonivka bore the brunt of the shelling. The lull in Russian air strikes comes a day after an unusually heavy wave of missile and drone attacks that left five people dead and wounded dozens in several Ukrainian regions on January 8. Meanwhile, Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of Russia's Belgorod region bordering Ukraine, said that three people were wounded in the city of Belgorod by Ukrainian shelling. Mr. Gladkov said on his Telegram channel that Russian air defenses shot down 10 "air targets" late on January 8. There was no immediate confirmation from Ukraine, but the Kremlin said the Russian military would do everything in its power to tackle the stepped-up Ukrainian shelling of Belgorod. "Of course, our military will continue to do everything in order to minimize the danger at first and then eliminate it entirely," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. He accused the Ukrainian military of firing on civilian targets in the center of the urban hub of some 340,000 people with weapons supplied by European countries. The Kremlin has tried to maintain a semblance of normalcy on the home front, but the recent strikes on Belgorod have brought the Ukraine conflict closer to home for Russians. In recent weeks, the Belgorod region has been repeatedly targeted by Ukrainian forces. A strike late last month reportedly killed 25 civilians, prompting city officials to evacuate hundreds and extend a closure of schools. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, with reporting by AFP and Reuters)

Scholz urges E.U. to increase weapons deliveries

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has called on fellow European Union members to provide more military support this year to Ukraine in its fight against Russia's full-scale invasion. Mr. Scholz made the call at a joint press conference with Luxembourg Prime Minister Luc Frieden on January 8 in Berlin. "Arms deliveries to Ukraine, currently planned by most E.U. member states, are too small. ... I call on our allies in the European Union to also step up their efforts in favor of Ukraine," Mr. Scholz said. Germany is the second-largest provider of military aid to Ukraine after the United States. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Russian rapper summoned to recruitment center

Russian rapper Vacio, who is serving a second jail term for taking part in a party at a Moscow nightclub last month that sparked controversy, has been summoned to a military recruitment center. A member of the Public Monitoring Commission of Moscow, Aleksei Lobarev, said on January 8 that he visited Vacio, whose real name is Nikolai Vasilyev, in a Moscow jail a day ear-

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Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Gutzeit on Ukraine's sport achievements in 2023

The president of Ukraine's National Olympic Committee (NOC), Vadym Gutzeit, reflected on the past year's major achievements by Ukrainian athletes along with their challenges. Gutzeit touched upon the ongoing battle to ban Russians and Belarusians from international sports and the NOC's future goals. He underlined the close relationship between Ukraine's Ministry of Youth and Sports and the NOC, explaining that the ministry sets sports policies while the NOC implements them internationally and represents the nation.

Gutzeit expressed pride in the Ukrainian athletes' accomplishments in 2023, especially in light of the ongoing war. He specifically cited success at the European Games, World and European Championships and Ukrainian participation in almost all international competitions. There were victories and defeats, but Ukraine's national flag was a constant reminder of the country's presence and resilience.

He addressed the focal topic of excluding Russians and Belarusians from competitions, most importantly from the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris. Gutzeit described his constant communication with ministers and leaders of other Olympic committees, pleading for support to suspend these athletes. He highlighted the suspension of Russia's Olympic Committee in the IOC as a major achievement.

Speaking of the 2024 Paris Games, Gutzeit affirmed that Russians will not participate in team sports and certain individual events because of their suspension. He reiterated plans to exclude Russians from all competitions under any flag. He said Ukrainian athletes have secured 51 Olympic licenses thus far, with more to be obtained in the future.

The NOC president mentioned the present-day challenges faced by Ukrainian athletes, including mental, financial and family difficulties. He related his personal experiences with retired athletes and has encouraged them to return to sports. He called attention to Ukrainian athletes' determination and resilience in the face of severe adversity, drawing inspiration and motivation from the courageous men and women on the frontlines defending their homeland.

An action plan for 2024 includes a more

open working environment, organizing more events and fostering more children's involvement in sports. He added that there is a need for greater focus on university sports, student leagues and the club system.

Gutzeit maintained the importance of Ukraine's presence at the Olympics, especially in the context of the ongoing war with Russia. He admitted that it may be difficult for Team Ukraine to match its previous levels of Olympic success, but he has faith and belief in the dedication and determination of Ukrainian athletes and their coaches.

Gutzeit recognized the solidarity and support of the international sporting community for Ukraine. He said his goals as NOC president includes improving Ukrainian sports, making them more accessible and promoting pride in Ukrainian athletes.

NOC 'Athletes of the Month' for 2023

On Gutzeit's initiative, the tradition of acknowledging and celebrating the most outstanding Ukrainian athlete for each month of the year was restored for the past year. Below are the winners as selected by the NOC of Ukraine and the Olympic Team.

January: Anastasiya Merkusheva – biathlon, for her competitive results in the Biathlon Cup.

February: Anastasiia Novosad – skiing, for winning two bronze medals in aerobics at the World Championships.

March/December: Dmytro Kotovskiy – skiing, for a bronze medal in mixed team aerobics at the World Championships and a bronze medal at the Ski Acrobatics World Cup.

April/October: Illia Kovtun – gymnastics, for multiple gold medals in several disciplines in World Cup competitions, a silver medal and Olympic qualification at the World Championships.

May: Daryna Verkhogliad/Nataliya Dovgodko/Anastasiia Kozhenkova/Kateryna Dudchenko – rowing, for winning gold in quadruple sculls at the European Championships.

June: Liudmyla Luzan – sprint canoe, for gold and silver medals at the European Championships.

July: Olha Kharlan – fencing, for her controversial disqualification at the World Fencing Championships, subsequent reinstatement and 2024 Olympic berth.

August: Yaroslava Mahuchikh – high jump, for a gold medal victory at the European Games.

September: Kamila Konotop – weightlifting, for winning a silver medal in the women's 59-kilogram at the World Weightlifting Championships.

November: Dilshot Khalmatov – judo, for winning silver in the men's 60-kilogram category in judo at the European Championships.

14-year-old Samunenkov a chess grandmaster

Fourteen-year-old Ukrainian Ihor Samunenkov recently became the world's youngest international chess grandmaster, fulfilling the grandmaster requirements at competitions in Poland, Hungary and Slovenia.

By the decision of the Third International Chess Federation (FIDE) Council, Samunenkov was awarded the grandmaster title, the federation wrote on its Facebook page on December 29.

Samunenkov has been playing profes-

sional chess for eight years, winning several titles and awards during this time. He fulfilled three standards of an international grandmaster in the following chess competitions: the European Individual Championship (Slovenia), the Vezerkepzó Summer GM 2023 tournament (Hungary) and the Polish Extra Liga tournament (Poland).

He is the fourth-youngest player to achieve the title in Ukraine and currently is the youngest grandmaster in the world. He sat in 38th place with a 2530 rating in the world's Top 100 Juniors.

Chelsea scouting Dovbyk for possible transfer

Ukrainian striker Artem Dovbyk is reportedly very high on Chelsea's wish list entering the January transfer window as the Blues look to bolster their attacking options. Dovbyk's outstanding performances for La Liga's Girona football club have helped his squad overtake rivals Barcelona and Atletico Madrid in the Spanish League's standings.

The cost to acquire the 26-year-old Ukrainian is reported to be in the neighborhood of \$50 million. Dovbyk has scored 11 goals and five assists through 17 games this season as of December 31. He moved from Dnipro-1 to Girona this past summer and is under contract through 2028.

In 23 appearances for Ukraine's national team, he has tallied seven goals.

Chelsea sent scouts to watch Dovbyk several times toward the end of 2023. His 6-foot-2 physical profile is of particular interest to Chelsea's head coach Mauricio Pochettino due to his concern over the lack of height in his squad.

Dovbyk has the same agent as Chelsea's Mykhailo Mudryk and the two are close friends who talk regularly.

Sunderland may be chasing Mykhaylichenko

Ukrainian football players are being pursued left and right. Sunderland, a professional football club in the English Football League Championship, the second level of the English football league system, is according to various reports pursuing Ukrainian left-back Bohdan Mykhaylichenko.

The club already boasts Nazariy Rusyn, Timur Tutberov and Ivan Struk on its roster. Reports from Croatia and Ukraine say Mykhaylichenko could be the team's fourth Ukrainian. He is currently playing with Dinamo Zagreb, where he reportedly has fallen out of favor and is expected to have his contract terminated shortly, making him available as a free transfer.

Ukrainian journalist Igor Burbas posted the news on social media and Croatian newspaper Rijeka Danas claimed that the player will be released because he used his mobile phone in the team's dressing room.

The 26-year-old is a Ukrainian international and played alongside Rusyn for Team Ukraine. He has played for Zorya Luhansk, Dynamo Kyiv, Anderlecht and Shakhtar Donetsk since turning pro in 2014.

Ukraine hints at possible boycott of Olympic Games

In a December 29 interview with BBC Ukraine, Minister of Youth and Sport Matviy Bidnyi said his country might not take part in the upcoming 2024 Summer Olympics if Russian athletes are allowed to compete in Paris. Ukraine's sports minister said Ukraine will wait to hear the International



Ihor Samunenkov, a 14-year-old chess player, attained the rank of grandmaster in 2023 after meeting official requirements, making him the fourth-youngest grandmaster, according to the International Chess Federation.

Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision regarding the "arguments and appeals" of the parties involved in the ruling.

A potential boycott of the Games by Ukrainian athletes is presently under consideration as a direct response to the IOC's approval to invite Russians and Belarusian athletes to compete in the Games as neutrals, though Ukrainian officials have made it clear that they would not consider such a move to be an actual boycott.

"First of all, we are not using the word boycott as such. We are saying that this is our position: We will not take part in the competition if athletes who support Russian aggression are allowed to participate. This is a matter of principle for us," Bidnyi said.

Bidnyi went on to say that, considering Ukraine's position, he is now waiting to see how the IOC reacts. "We will analyze what will happen, what will be the IOC's reaction to the arguments we are now presenting, to our appeals, petitions, speeches, etc.," he said.

He was quick to add that a boycott of the Olympics would hurt Ukrainian athletes and that there is a risk involved. He acknowledged "possible sanctions" outlined in the Olympic Charter that Ukrainian athletes could face if a potential boycott is implemented. If such sanctions were implemented, Ukraine could suffer repercussions beyond the 2024 Games.

Stakhovsky condemns IOC's decision

Ukrainian tennis player Sergiy Stakhovsky retired from 19 years of professional tennis following the Australian Open in 2022 at the age of 36 to join Ukraine's reserve army. In a December 27 interview with BBC Radio 5 Live, Stakhovsky condemned the IOC's decision to allow Russians and Belarusians to compete at the 2024 Paris Games as neutral athletes and offered a few other opinions.

He said Ukraine cherishes "every single athlete we have" since they may be the country's "last star shining." He added that "Ukraine, in terms of sport, has been crippled for generations to come" as a result of Russia's full-scale war on the country.

Stakhovsky criticized the IOC's ruling to permit athletes from the two aggressor nations to participate as neutrals at the

(Continued on page 19)



Sergiy Stakhovsky, a retired professional tennis player (seen in 2017), joined Ukraine's reserve army and continues to protest the participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes seeking to compete at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

More than 80 Ukrainian athletes appeal to French dignitaries

by Ihor N. Stelmach

More than 80 Ukrainian athletes have signed an open letter to President Emmanuel Macron of France, the mayor of Paris, France's minister of sports and organizers of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games. The elite athletes oppose the participation in the Games of Russian and Belarusian athletes who have supported Russia's war on Ukraine. The open letter was posted to Ukraine's Ministry of Youth and Sports website, The Odessa Journal wrote on January 4.

The letter was sent Paris Mayor Ana Maria Hidalgo, Minister of Sports Amelie Oudea-Castera and the chairman of the organizing committee of the Olympics and Paralympics, Tony Estanguet, in addition to President Macron. The letter underlines that several "neutral" Russian athletes who have qualified for the Olympics plus others close to obtaining Olympic licenses have voiced their support for Russia's war.

The letter begins with an expression of respect and thanks of support for Ukraine in its fight against Russia. France's unwavering stance and comprehensive assistance as a partner to Ukraine has let Kyiv continue its battle to preserve Ukrainian freedom and identity.

President Macron was hailed for his December 20 assurance that the European

Union's military support of Ukraine will continue. France's Minister of Sports was commended for allocating one million euros for the training of Ukrainian Olympians and Paralympians ahead of the Paris Games. Mayor Hidalgo has openly expressed her opposition to Russian and Belarusian athletes participating in the 2024 Olympics, even as neutrals. She has hinted that athletes from the two nations may not be permitted into her city.

The Ukrainian athletes are looking to uphold valued Olympic principles and prevent Russian and Belarusian athletes from participating in the Games. The letter points out that no athlete from Russia or Belarus has publicly spoken out about the nearly two-year genocidal killings of Ukrainians in the unprovoked war.

Three specific Russian athletes are listed as not "neutral," but open supporters of the war, according to their own social media, internet and promotional posts. These athletes include Vladislav Larin, an Olympic taekwondo champion who appeared prominently in a video calling on Russian citizens to support the country's military in its war on Ukraine. Olympic wrestlers Zaurbek Sidakov and Zaur Uguev took part in a rally in support of the war with Vladimir Putin on March 18, 2022, under the slogan "For peace without Nazism! For Russia! For the President!" Sidakov also liked several social



Mayor Ana Maria Hidalgo of Paris, seen in 2020, has voiced her opposition to Russian and Belarusian athletes competing in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

media posts supporting Russia's aggression toward Ukraine.

The letter called out another nine Russian athletes close to qualifying for the Olympics who have openly supported the war against Ukraine. They include five taekwondo athletes, three judokas and one wrestler.

The Ukrainian athletes said that permit-

ting athletes from the two aggressor countries who openly support the armed hostility against Ukraine violates the ethics of the Olympic Charter and their participation would be unacceptable. The signees have asked that Olympic licenses for these Russian athletes be revoked. The Ukrainian athletes have argued that banning Russian and Belarusian athletes from the Olympics and Paralympics would promote and strengthen peace and equality around the world, which are tenants of the Olympic movement. It would also prevent the upcoming Games from becoming a propaganda tool for the Russian regime.

The letter concludes with an expression of hope in resolving the issue of licenses for these athletes in the 2024 Olympics.

"As long as Russian forces bombard Ukraine, targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, and as long as Russian soldiers remain on Ukrainian soil, Russian and Belarusian athletes should not participate in sporting competitions," the letter reads.

The letter was signed by more than 80 decorated Ukrainian athletes, including Olympic medalists Oleksandr Abramenko, Marta Fiedina, Yurii Cheban, Oleh Verniaiev, Yaroslava Mahuchikh, Olha Saladukha, Vladyslav Heraskevych, Illia Kovtun, Andriy Protsenko and tennis stars Sergiy Stakhovskiy, Oleksandr Dolhopolov and Lesya Tsurenko, among others.

NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 16)

lier, adding that the rapper had told him that he had been officially summoned to show up at a military recruitment center this week. However, he won't be able to do so, as he is serving a 10-day jail term on a hooliganism charge. Vacio, who attended an "almost naked party" at the Mutabor night club on December 20-21 with just a sock on his genitals, was the only person sent to jail, on a hooliganism charge, for attending the party. After serving his first term, 15 days, last week, Vacio said he was taken to a military recruitment center, where he was handed a written order to

show up on January 9. However, after bringing him to the recruitment center, police took him to a local station for "a preventive talk," and a Moscow court again sentenced Vacio to 10 days in jail for hooliganism. It is not clear why Vacio was summoned to the military recruitment center. He is legally unfit to serve in the armed forces due to an unspecified medical condition. Pictures and videos taken at the scandalous party that was attended by many celebrities appeared online and caused outcry among pro-Kremlin activists and lawmakers in late December. The party's organizer, blogger Anastasia Ivleyeva and popular singers, such as Filipp Kirkorov, Anna Asti, Eurovision song contest winner Dima Bilan, Lolita Milyavskaya, journalist Ksenia

Sobchak, and others offered public apologies amid a wave of official criticism. A court in Moscow did not charge Ms. Ivleyeva but ruled that the party had "propagated nontraditional sexual relations." Propagating gay relations is a crime in Russia. However, the Investigative Committee launched a preliminary investigation into possible tax evasion by Ms. Ivleyeva. Russia's largest mobile network operator, MTS, the Tinkoff Bank, the VK social network, as well as the TNT and NTV television channels canceled advertising contracts with Ms. Ivleyeva and other celebrities who attended the party. Also, the concerts of several attending entertainers as well as their participation in special television programs on New Year's Eve

were canceled. Over the weekend, in an apparent way to clear himself from possible accusations or even charges, the owner of the Mutabor night club that hosted the party, Mikhail Danilov, publicly handed to the Russian Orthodox Church what he called a piece of the relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, which, according to Mr. Danilov, he bought in Vatican City last year. The wave of apologies that participants rushed to issue prompted heated debate online, where some Russians compared them with the era of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, during which many resorted to repenting for deeds real or imaginary to try and save their lives amid mass purges. (RFE/RL's Russian Service, with reporting by Moskovsky Komsomolets)

Things will never...

(Continued from page 14)

exceed 20,000. On March 16, 2022, the Russians bombed a local theater that the Mariupol residents turned into an air raid shelter. The shelter-seekers wrote "children" on the ground in Russian to let the combatants know that the location was being used as a shelter. Nevertheless, the Russian militants bombed the building, killing and injuring those who were staying

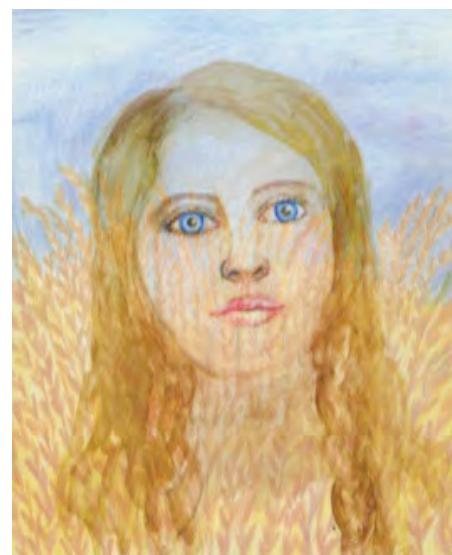
there. As of today, the city remains under the control of Russian occupiers.



In her works, Ms. Melnychuk emphasizes that the horror of war is told through the tragedies of people – their shattered lives, losses, mourning and grieving. The album attempts to bring awareness to the most vulnerable victims – children. The current younger generation will carry the memory of war and they are the ones who will have the burden of reconciling with the loss – their childhood that ended abruptly when they experienced the unexpected loss of

their parents, homes, friends, future and dreams.

One may say that many children in Ukraine had to grow up quickly to learn how to carry the memory of war. However, the children affected by war did not know what was expected of them – they did not know that they had to grow up quickly. Even when realizing their new adult obligations and responsibilities, they remain children who miss the hugs of their parents who were killed by a random Russian missile, tortured to death, or executed.



"Don't Close Your Eyes" documents loss and death but it also gives hope and embraces life. No war lasts forever, after night comes day, and after darkness comes the light. The final drawing captures the light and directly alludes to the national colors – blue and yellow – and the portrait of a young woman seems to grow out of the wheat stalks.

A closing quote by Siegfried Sassoon helps make sense of the ambiguity of loss:

The anguish of the earth absolves
our eyes

Till beauty shines in all that we can see
War is our scourge; yet war has made
us wise,

And, fighting for our freedom,
we are free.

Do wars make sense? Do wars indeed make us wise? Hope is probably the only remedy when one deals with the pain of irrevocable loss and with the familiar world shattered by violence. The life rebuilt after destruction might and can be better than the one that was destroyed, but it will never be the same and the phantom of pain will probably be a haunting part of this new life for us not to forget the victims of wars.

"Don't Close Your Eyes" can be purchased online at <https://www.arrowsmithpress.com/hanna-melnyczuk/>.



OUT & ABOUT

January 20 Somerset, NJ	Seminary graduation ceremony, St. Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary, https://stsuots.edu/	January 26 Stanford, CA	Presentation by Ilya Budraitskis, "Russia's New State Ideology," Stanford University, https://creees/stanford.edu
January 20 Elkins Park, PA	Commemoration of Ukraine's Sovereignty and Unity Day, with requiem service at St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Cemetery, 215-962-5830	January 27 Philadelphia	Presentation of Debutantes, Ukrainian Engineers' Society of America, Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing, hewka@verizon.net or 610-277-1284
January 20 Buffalo, NY	Malanka, "2024 Traditional Ukrainian New Year's Malanka," Ukrainian American Youth Association Buffalo Branch, ansserediuk@cym.org or adriannaliddell@cym.org	January 28 New York	Concert, "Impressions, featuring art of Preston Trombly," Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org
January 20 Silver Spring, MD	Benefit concert, "Ukrainian Christmas," featuring vocalist Oksana Mukha and violinist Oleksandr Bozhyk, Revived Soldiers Ukraine, St. Andrew Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral, 224-800-4394	January 28 New York	Gallery talk with Ivanna Svitliar, "Maria Prymachenko's Captions and Dialect," The Ukrainian Museum, www.theukrainianmuseum.org
January 20 Troy, MI	53rd Winter Ball and Presentation of Debutantes, Ukrainian Engineers' Society of America (Detroit Branch), Detroit Marriott, 248-496-5957 or dksawicky@gmail.com	February 2-3 Cambridge, MA	Conference, "Decolonizing Ukraine in Theory and Practice," Harvard University, www.huri.harvard.edu
January 21 Carnegie, PA	Annual meeting and elections, Organization for the Defense of the Four Freedoms for Ukraine, The Ukrainian Club, 412-334-7555 or ywowczuk@vovkfoundation.org	February 3 Pearl River, NY	Chervona Kalyna Cotillion Ball, Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization, Hilton Pearl River, https://kalynadeb.org
January 21 Whippany, NJ	Benefit concert, "Ukrainian Christmas," featuring vocalist Oksana Mukha and violinist Oleksandr Bozhyk, Revived Soldiers Ukraine, Ukrainian American Cultural Center of New Jersey, 973-413-5947	February 3 Cleveland	Plast Cleveland Debutante Ball, Cleveland Chapter of Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization and the Shostokryli fraternity, Cleveland Marriott Downtown at Key Tower, plastcledeb@gmail.com
January 21 Chicago	Ukraine's Unity Day Commemoration, Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (Illinois Division), Ukrainian Cultural Center, 630-776-4651 or www.uccaillinois.org	February 4 Jenkintown, PA	Benefit concert, "Ukrainian Christmas," featuring vocalist Oksana Mukha and violinist Oleksandr Bozhyk, Revived Soldiers Ukraine, St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church, 267-333-0100
January 21 Jenkintown, PA	Christmas program, "Let's Carol Together," Ukrainian National Women's League of America (Branch 128) and Ukrainian Education and Cultural Center, 215-663-1166	February 7 Philadelphia	Film screening, "Beyond the Statistics - Amplifying the Voices of Forcibly Displaced People From Ukraine," Temple University, Science and Education Research Center, intl@temple.edu or https://events.temple.edu
January 23 Online	Virtual presentation by Fr. Bohdan Hladio, "Ukrainian Winter Festivals: Faith, Music, Traditions," Ukrainian History and Education Center, www.ukrhec.org	February 8-9 Naples, FL	Inaugural Banquet and Day of Reflection, Ukrainian Catholic University Foundation, Vineyards Country Club, 415-314-1845 or lhaluha@ucufoundation.org
January 24 Online	Webinar, "Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine," by Catherine Wanner, Harvard University, www.huri.harvard.edu	February 9-10 Cambridge, MA	Conference, "The European Dream. 2024: A Continent at the Crossroads," Harvard University, https://euroconf.eu
January 25 New York	Book talk, "Ukraine 22: Ukrainian Writers Respond to War," Columbia University, https://harriman.columbia.edu	<i>Entries in "Out and About" are listed free of charge. Priority is given to events advertised in The Ukrainian Weekly. However, we also welcome submissions from all our readers. Items will be published at the discretion of the editors and as space allows. Please send e-mail to mdubas@ukrweekly.com.</i>	

Ukrainian pro...

(Continued from page 17)

Games. Speaking from an undisclosed location in Ukraine, he highlighted the number of Ukrainian athletes who had perished while defending their homeland in the conflict with Russia.

"It's going to be very hard for Ukraine to come back," Stakhovsky said.

One of many high-profile Ukrainian sports stars to speak out against the war, Stakhovsky thinks more Russian athletes should do the same. Russian tennis players Andrey Rublev and Daria Kasatkina are two athletes who expressed anti-war sentiments in 2022. Stakhovsky believes that, if more Russians who are against the war spoke up, "there would be a completely different picture."

Stakhovsky's reaction to IOC President Thomas Bach's statement that "individual athletes cannot be punished for the acts of their governments" and that allowing individuals to compete was "respecting human rights" was, in his opinion, "an absolute joke."

Responding to Russian athletes being in fear for their lives and their families, Stakhovsky pointed out that the athletes no longer live in Russia. He says the Russian athletes don't want to face any criticism or lose their fans back in Russia, so they choose to remain silent.

Stakhovsky added that it is necessary to find more athletes who support Ukraine and present evidence to the IOC in hopes of

rescinding their decision to permit Russians and Belarusians to compete in Paris.

Navratilova slams Russian journalist

Retired tennis superstar Martina Navratilova reacted strongly to a Russian journalist who berated Ukrainians on the heels of Russia's massive air attack on December 29. On her social media platform, she stood up to Russian journalist Armen Gasparyan, referring to him as a man who "doesn't have a soul."

Speaking on X (formerly Twitter), the former world No. 1 responded to a tweet from a Russian commentator who alleged that Gasparyan gloated over the Russian missile barrage on Ukraine in a video.

The commentator, Julia Davis, relayed news that Gasparyan, who hosts a show on Vladimir Solovyov's channel, said that Ukrainians are not people and berated them as millions of villagers, all of whom were "born without brains."

Navratilova sarcastically called him a lovely man, before going on to say: "What a lovely man. ... He might have a brain, but he sure as hell doesn't have a soul."

U-13 hockey team in Ottawa tournament

The Bell Capital Cup has brought the world of hockey together for almost a quarter of a century. The 23rd annual Bell Capital Cup held in Ottawa from December 28 to January 1 brought together boys and girls from three continents. More than 200 teams in the U-10 through U-13 House League and competitive divisions (A, AA

and AAA), including visually impaired athletes, para-athletes and special needs athletes, took part in the tournament.

Team Ukraine hit the ice in Stittsville, Ontario, for the Ukrainian U-13 hockey team's first-ever international game on December 29. Many of the youngsters traveled from Kyiv to play in the tournament, arriving in Canada a few days before Russia launched a massive aerial barrage on cities across Ukraine.

As he got ready for his first game, right-winger Stefan Garbarenko was thinking of his family back in Ukraine. He wanted to call his grandmother, brother and sister, but because of the time difference, he figured they might be asleep or busy. Despite his hardships, he was still very excited to be in Ottawa playing in a hockey tournament.

Excitement abounded at the Bell Sensplex arena that was packed with members of local Ukrainian communities who came out to support Garbarenko and his teammates in their first game against the Ottawa Jr. 67s. Ukrainian families cheered the team on, letting the young athletes know they have friends and supporters on this side of the world.

During the opening ceremony of the tournament the Ukrainian team received a visit from Ukraine's ambassador to Canada, Yulia Kovaliv.

"Happy to join @bellcapitalcup and welcome U-13 Ukrainian team in Ottawa with their first play! Boys from Dnipro, Kyiv and Kremenchuk continue to play hockey during the war time! Encouraged by their determination! Wishing good luck!!"

Kovaliv wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

Team Ukraine lost to the Jr. 67s 8-1, but rebounded to win their next two games, beating the Oakville Rangers and the Westchester Express by identical scores of 4-3. They were then trounced by Team Beijing 12-0 and, in their final game, a rematch with Oakville, the Ukrainians lost 5-1.

Despite a huge disparity in goal differential (31-10), Ukraine's Oleksii Korotkyi proved to be one of the tournament's top scorers (tied for second), tallying 6 goals and 2 assists for 8 points in 5 games.

Davis Cup qualifier in Lithuania

The ongoing war with Russia has forced Ukraine to play their Davis Cup qualifying matches against the United States in Vilnius, Lithuania, on February 1-2. Ukraine was due to host the U.S. team in the best-of-five series, but fighting continues in the full-scale war that started with Russia's unprovoked invasion in February 2022.

Team Ukraine will consist of Vitaliy Sachko (ranked No. 169), Oleksii Krutykh, Viacheslav Bielinskyi, Vladyslav Orlov and Illya Beloborodko.

The U.S. roster will include Taylor Fritz (ranked No. 10), Sebastian Korda, Christopher Eubanks, Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram.

(Based on reporting by Source 777 via OBOZ.UA, UNN, Metro, SB Nations' Roker Report, Inside the Games, BBC Sport, Sportskeeda, CTV News and NBC Sports.)

Ihor Stelmach may be reached at iman@sfgsports.com.



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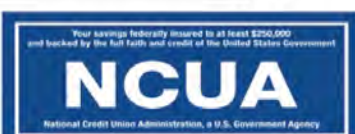
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