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Russia resumes air strikes on Odesa, Kharkiv, wounding several

As strike on market in Russian-occupied Donetsk reportedly kills 27

RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service and Current Time

Russia launched fresh drone and missile attacks on Ukraine's southern regions of Odesa, Mykolaiiv and Dnipropetrovsk early on January 25, wounding several people and causing material damage, the Ukrainian military and regional officials said.

Ukraine's air defense said the drones attacked Odesa in two separate waves. A total of 11 of the 14 Iranian-made drones launched by Russia were downed – 10 in Odesa and one in Mykolaiiv.

Regional Gov. Oleh Kiper said six people were wounded by falling debris in the Black Sea port.

Mr. Kiper said that an industrial facility, residential buildings and civilian infrastructure were damaged in the attack. He said the southern city's Primoriye and Khadzhibey districts bore the brunt of the attack.

Local authorities said the Russian attack also targeted the warehouse of a furniture factory in the industrial district of Odesa, starting a large fire.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, an industrial enterprise was destroyed in a drone strike that caused a fire, regional Gov. Serhiy Lysak said on Telegram, adding that the fire had been put out by firefighters.

Mr. Lysak also said the settlement of

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Ukraine's U.N. envoy says global body 'not fit' for 21st century

by Mark Raczkiewycz

CHICAGO – When Ukraine's ambassador to the United Nations arrived at the Ukrainian Cultural Center on January 21, he was uncommonly surrounded by friendly faces.

The ambassador, Sergiy Kyslytsya, is usually in New York where the U.N. is headquartered. He often finds himself facing a hostile foe – Russia – which holds a permanent seat on the intergovernmental organization's Security Council, one of its five main bodies that was founded in 1945 following the end of World War II.

Mr. Kyslytsya's speeches often go viral on social media platforms, especially when he contradicts his Russian counterpart with evidence, facts and characteristic Ukrainian sardonic humor to expose the absurdity of Moscow's lies about its genocidal war on Ukraine, which began in 2014.

His warm welcome in the third most populous city of the U.S. came after he arrived to be the keynote speaker of an event marking the 105th anniversary of Ukrainian Unity Day. The Ukrainian holiday celebrates the unification of two separate state entities in eastern and western Ukraine into one country on January 22, 1919, in the wake of World War I.

"The U.N. doesn't fit the 21st century – it's not able to face the challenges and it has no means to enforce its decisions,"

Mr. Kyslytsya told The Ukrainian Weekly during an interview before the event. There are "52 [military] conflicts worldwide," he said.

The Russo-Ukrainian war, already entering its 10th year, is the most prominent among them and the bloodiest on the European continent since World War II.

The U.N., he said, "faces the situation when the number of conflicts and the magnitude of violations is such that the international laws of the U.N. [founding] charter is basically not observed even by the founding members," among whom Russia is the main successor state of the Soviet Union.

His comment about the U.N. does not mean the global body has lost its relevance, he said.

"To permanently cancel the U.N. is not an option because you'll find yourself in a position where there is no global platform where, at least in theory, the Russian Federation even has to speak and explain itself," Mr. Kyslytsya said.

Every week, Moscow has to "face the situation where only five countries support the Russian narrative" and where "141 nations are against it," he said referring to a U.N. resolution in March 2022 that saw 141 member nations, or 73 percent of the body's members, vote to declare Russia an aggressor nation.

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Moscow accuses Kyiv of shooting down plane, says Ukrainian POWs were on board



Video screengrab

A screen grab from a video shared on social media appears to show an aircraft spiraling to the ground and exploding in Russia's Belgorod region on January 24.

RFE/RL's Russian Service and Current Time

Russia accused Ukraine of shooting down a Russian military cargo plane that crashed on January 24 in the Belgorod region near the border with Ukraine, killing all 74 people on board, including 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) who

were on their way to a prisoner exchange.

Ukrainian officials did not confirm or deny the Russian allegation, saying in a statement on Facebook that a prisoner exchange was to have taken place on January 24 and Russia had not informed Ukraine that Ukrainian POWs would be

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Polish PM Tusk's historic visit to Kyiv signals renewed commitment to Ukraine's European future



Office of the President of Ukraine

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk (left) meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on January 22.

by Roman Tymotsko

WARSAW, Poland – In a gesture of symbolic and political significance, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk made his inaugural visit to Kyiv on January 22, Ukraine's Unity Day.

The visit, Mr. Tusk's first foreign trip since he took office on December 13, sig-

naled a renewed and strengthened commitment from Poland to support Ukraine, both in terms of military aid and in broader bilateral relations.

Amid Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine and rising diplomatic tensions in the region, Mr. Tusk's visit was a clear sign of

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Moscow struggles to keep up façade of success in 'long war'

by Pavel K. Baev
Eurasia Daily Monitor

Official Russian discourse on the war against Ukraine has been blatantly misleading and self-righteous. Last week, President Vladimir Putin added a revealing new bit to Moscow's war propaganda. He felt it necessary to address and dismiss Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's peace plan discussed at the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, from January 15 to 19. Previously, the Kremlin had noted that it made no sense to discuss a prospective peace in Ukraine without Russia. The presence of 83 states (China opted not to participate) at the closed-door meeting on Mr. Zelenskyy's "formula" made it necessary for Putin to state Russia's objections more emphatically (Kommerzant, January 16). The Kremlin leader asserted that Russia would never give up its conquests in Ukraine. The official English translation of Putin's speech used the softer word "gains," though the original Russian word *zavoevaniya* literally means "spoils of war" (Kremlin.ru; The Moscow Times, January 16). Due to the Kremlin's imperial proclivities, Russia has few options in its "long war" against Ukraine, and continuing to stand by its territorial gains looks to further diminish Moscow's regional influence and global standing.

Internationally, such language may end up being seriously counterproductive for the Kremlin. Many countries of the Global South prefer to keep their distance from the European war and even profit from it, but they likely disapprove of any territorial "conquests" (The Moscow Times, January 19). In recent months, China has not actively advertised its peace plan, presented in February 2023, but professes to maintain

support for Ukraine's territorial integrity (Novaya Gazeta, January 18). Putin's statement has given more credibility to the warning of Adm. Robert Bauer, chairman of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Military Committee, that the alliance must be prepared for a full-scale war with Russia (RBC, January 19).

Putin's mention of *zavoevaniya* was not a slip of the tongue. The Russian president remains attentive to his domestic audience. The Russian population has gradually and steadily moved toward ending the war through peace talks but rejects any retreat or territorial concessions (Forbes.ru, December 27). Putin seeks to build on these ambivalent feelings and transform the majority of Russians into willing accomplices of his crime of aggression, which, as Mr. Zelenskyy argued in Davos, has greater goals beyond just annexing five Ukrainian regions (Meduza, January 16). The Kremlin leader suspects that, for many of his "loyal subjects," problems with heating caused by the degradation of critical infrastructure are far more acute than prospects of "denazification" in Ukraine. Thus, he seeks to re-focus the Russian public's attention on tangible gains from the Ukrainian battlefield (Forbes.ru, January 16). Putin hopes that the election campaign for the already predetermined elections in March will serve as a means to end the need for broad public approval in continuing the war (Carnegie Politika, January 11).

Moscow's propaganda is insufficient to ensure this outcome and alleviate public concerns. The Kremlin must move swiftly to suppress any discontent, such as the recent protests in Bashkortostan, and continues to cultivate the illusion that Russia is

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Kremlin creates illusion of imaginary victories, unable to solve real problems

Part II
by Ksenia Kirillova
Eurasia Daily Monitor

On January 4, Andrey Bezrukov, a former Russian intelligence officer and current propagandist, spoke on the Russian podcast Geopolitburo where he promoted the message that Russia has always carried out a mission of "peace and a civilization." For the first time in many years, Russian propaganda has begun to appeal to the image of a desired future – that is, a "new Russia" and its role in the changing world (YouTube.ru, January 4). The image is extremely vague, and the orientation toward the ideals of a "bright future" is fraught with new threats for the Kremlin. On the one hand, rhetoric about moving toward a cherished goal can inspire the Russian population in the short term. On the other hand, the contradictions between the image conjured by propaganda and reality are becoming more obvious by the day and may threaten public discontent to spread and intensify (see Part I).

The most serious contradiction is the inability of Russian officials to ensure the population's basic security during a time of war. For example, on New Year's Eve, Ukraine bombed the Russian border city of Belgorod, resulting in hundreds of casualties (BBC News Russian, December 30).

According to independent journalists, it is the war increasingly coming home resulting in attacks on Russian cities that causes the most concern among Russians (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, December 21).

Last year, the Kremlin struggled to answer the population's growing fears and anxieties about the war in Ukraine. At the beginning of 2023, the penetration of Ukrainian sabotage groups into Russian territory and increased drone strikes caused major anxiety among the Russian people. In mid-2023, the most alarming event was former Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's aborted rebellion, followed by fears of the impending Ukrainian counteroffensive. The top cause of anxiety in the third quarter of 2023 was the proliferation of Ukrainian drone attacks. The end of the year was marked by growing concerns over a possible new wave of mass mobilization (Novaya Gazeta Europe, January 3). The increased round-up of migrants and prisoners has further aggravated the fear of more being sent to the front (Novaya Gazeta Europe, January 2).

The crimes of former prisoners returning from the front are another threat to Russian security (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, January 19). The number of mobilizations (BBC News Russian, December 30).

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NEWSBRIEFS

Prime ministers agree to 'new pragmatism'

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal says he agreed with his Slovak counterpart, Robert Fico, on a policy of "new pragmatism" as the two neighbors try to improve relations that have soured since the populist Slovak leader won an election last year vowing to halt military aid to Kyiv. The two met in the western Ukrainian city of Uzhhorod on January 24 to "open a new page" in bilateral relations, according to Mr. Shmyhal, just a day after Mr. Fico called life in Kyiv "normal" even though Russian missiles had rained down on the capital hours earlier. After the meeting, Mr. Shmyhal said agreement was reached "on a number of important issues" that will allow Ukraine to purchase weapons and equipment directly from Slovak companies without government interference, and support from Bratislava for the Ukraine Facility program, which envisages the provision of 50 billion euros by the European Union for Ukraine. "Despite all the political challenges, we are developing a policy of 'new pragmatism' in our relations," the Ukrainian prime minister said. Since assuming office in October 2023, Mr. Fico has followed through on his campaign pledges to reorient Slovak foreign policy to be "independent." At his first European Union summit in late October, Mr. Fico reiterated that Slovakia won't back further military aid to Ukraine, while also rejecting further international sanctions against Russia. Earlier this week, he said Slovakia rejects the admission of Ukraine to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) because its membership would mean "nothing else than a basis for World War III" and that Kyiv would have to give up some territory to end the war launched by Russia in February 2022 because there was no military solution to the conflict. His comments on January 23 about life in Kyiv struck a particularly sour note with Ukrainians given that dozens of people had been wounded during a barrage of Russian missiles. After meeting Mr. Shmyhal, Mr. Fico appeared to strike a conciliatory tone, saying that, while there are "some issues where we might have different opinions, that's life." Mr. Fico assured Mr. Shmyhal that Ukraine had the "full support" of

Slovakia to fulfill the country's "European integration aspirations." In December, the European Union voted to start membership talks with Ukraine despite hesitation among some members. Ukraine is counting on quick steps in the first half of 2024 regarding the opening of negotiations on its bid to join the E.U. Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba said this week, while also calling on the bloc to increase the supply of weapons and approve a long-term support program for Kyiv. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Bill proposing to allow multiple citizenship

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy marked Ukraine's Day of Unity with the introduction of a draft law that allows multiple citizenship, a move that would make it possible for foreign fighters and ethnic Ukrainians outside the country to hold Ukrainian passports while not giving up other citizenship. Mr. Zelenskyy said in an address on January 22, which marked the 1919 Unification Act of the Ukrainian People's Republic and the short-lived West Ukrainian People's Republic, that the law would not apply to "citizens of the aggressor country," a thinly veiled reference to Russian citizens. Ukraine has been fighting to repel a full-scale Russian invasion, launched by the Kremlin in February 2022. The Ukrainian government established an officially sanctioned foreign legion just days after the invasion, with some estimates putting the number of foreigners at around 2,000. "Today, we have to step forward not only to strengthen the unity of Ukraine and our people, but also for the unity of the rights and freedoms, the truth for Ukrainians, the truth for us, and the truth for our history," Mr. Zelenskyy said of the draft law that will allow the adoption of comprehensive legislative amendments and the introduction of multiple citizenship. "Those who, with the outbreak of a full-scale war, regardless of their place of residence, birth or passport, said in the affirmative, 'I am Ukrainian' ... Ukrainians by origin, who have long proven that they are Ukrainians in spirit. And after many years of waiting, they should finally become

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Walter Honcharyk, administrator
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Subscription Department

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

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

Chicago's Ukrainian community observes 105th anniversary of Ukraine's Unity Day

Kyslytsya emphasizes 'unity' not 'division' amid ongoing war

by Mark Raczkiewycz

CHICAGO – National identity among Ukrainians worldwide was bolstered after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. It was on full display at Chicago's Ukrainian Cultural Center on January 21 when Ukrainians and their supporters gathered to commemorate the 105th anniversary of the nation's Unity Day.

Some Russian speakers in the country have switched to Ukrainian, while others who have identified more with Russia have made efforts to rediscover their heritage. And many have become vociferous advocates of Ukrainian sovereignty as evidenced by their ongoing fundraising and lobbying efforts.

The Illinois Division of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA-Ill.) is among the different groups that have intensified public outreach efforts since Russia launched a full-scale war on Ukraine nearly two years ago.

The keynote speaker at the event, Ukrainian Ambassador to the United Nations Sergiy Kyslytsya, arrived from New York and urged Ukrainians to focus more on what "unites" them rather than what "divides" the nation amid a genocidal war that is entering its 10th year.

He quoted historian and statesman Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who before Ukraine became a unified state on January 22, 1919, following passage of the act that united the Ukrainian National Republic and the Western Ukrainian National Republic said the following:

"We should not cling on what divides and separates individual parts of Ukrainian land, but rather focus on what unites and brings them together. ... To unite, to concentrate, not to divide, not to disperse – this should be our universal motto," Ukraine's U.N. envoy said, citing Hrushevsky, before more than 220 attendees at the Unity Day event.

Ukraine's brief period of independence

from 1917 to 1921 ended when the Soviet Union and Poland subsumed what is currently Ukraine. Today, Moscow occupies about 18 percent of sovereign Ukrainian territory.

Three congressmen, the UCCA's top leadership in Illinois, municipal officials, clergymen of various congregations and concerned Ukrainian Americans were among the attendees.

Dr. Maria Dmytriv-Kapeniak, the UCCA-Ill. president, urged the U.S. to continue providing military and financial support to Ukraine.

"The challenges that Ukraine faces today are unprecedented," she said. "Ukraine has been protecting the rest of the civilized world from the Russian empire for two years now, ... [and] because of our love for freedom, we've made the ultimate sacrifice for this."

As Ms. Dmytriv-Kapeniak and others spoke at the podium, attendees held placards that read, "Congress Pass the Bill." She urged members of the U.S. bicameral legislature to approve additional funding for Ukraine and not "use" Ukraine as "a bargaining chip."

The European Union and U.S. Congress have stalled on providing Kyiv with additional military support this year amid political wrangling. Some critics of additional Ukraine aid have voiced counterarguments that echo Kremlin narratives calling for concessions of Ukrainian land in exchange for peace.

A separate UCCA news release for the event said, "Meanwhile, Russia is taking advantage of the chaos in Congress and is conducting massive air strikes across Ukraine targeting and destroying civilian infrastructure."

Russian missile strikes alone killed 18 civilians and injured more than 130 people on January 23 after residential buildings were hit, mainly in Kharkiv, Kyiv and Pavlohrad in the Dnipropetrovsk region of the country.

Kyiv only managed to intercept roughly half of the 41 projectiles that Moscow launched, including ballistic and cruise missiles.



Courtesy of UCCA-Ill.

Mariya Dmytriv Kapeniak, the president of the Illinois Division of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, delivers a speech at Chicago's Ukrainian Cultural Center on January 21 during a sold-out event to commemorate the 105th anniversary of Unity Day in Ukraine.

U.S. House Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Ill.) told The Ukrainian Weekly during the event that he expects a Congressional supplemental aid package for Ukraine "in the next week or two" and that the legislature "will do everything that we can."

As a Congressman who has been to Ukraine numerous times, met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and witnessed Russia's war crimes in the Kyiv suburb Bucha, Mr. Quigley said that his position regarding Kyiv "has become stronger and informed by my visits there and my discussions with the Ukrainians here."

Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill.), whose district encompasses a large portion of Chicago's Ukrainian Village neighborhood, said he was "always happy to walk into a room



Mark Raczkiewycz

U.S. House Rep. Mike Quigley (D-Ill.) is seen before delivering an introductory speech at Chicago's Ukrainian Cultural Center on January 21 to commemorate the 105th anniversary of the Day of Unity in Ukraine.

with Ukrainians."

He mentioned studying Russian history, world history and Western civilization during his academic studies and then evoked Martin Luther King, Jr., to voice affinity with Ukrainians.

"I'm a citizen of the world. ... Chicago is the best city in America, ... but as MLK said, 'but what affects the world, affects us here...' so goes Ukraine, so goes democracy," Mr. Davis said.

His congressional colleague, Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.) told the packed hall that "this our fight."

Democracies are inseparable," he said, while joking that, because of his long name, he shares an affinity with many Ukrainians who also have names that are difficult for Americans to pronounce.



Mark Raczkiewycz

A man dressed in the uniform of a Ukrainian Sich rifleman stands in front of the entrance to the main hall of Chicago's Ukrainian Cultural Center on January 21 during a sold-out event to commemorate the 105th anniversary of Unity Day in Ukraine.

FOR THE RECORD

UCCA to convene 23rd Congress of Ukrainians in America in 2024

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America released the following statement on January 25.

On January 23, the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) hosted a virtual meeting of UCCA's National Council, UCCA's highest ruling body. In accordance with UCCA's Bylaws, the National Council ratified a proposal from the Presidium of UCCA's Executive Committee to schedule the 23rd Congress of Ukrainians in America on October 11-13. At this convention, delegates from across the United States will meet on the outskirts of Philadelphia to elect a new UCCA National Executive and plan a course of action for the next four years. Delegates will also hear reports from the outgoing National Executive and committee chairs and discuss the work that has been accomplished since the last convention. Of special significance will be the planned workshops and roundtable discussions for both delegates and guests, which will allow for open discussion on

key political, strategic and social concerns that are important to the Ukrainian American community as well as its relations with Ukraine.

Since UCCA's founding convention in 1940, the Congress of Ukrainians in America has served as a venue for U.S. presidential campaigns and political party leaders to share their visions of U.S.-Ukraine relations. In addition to the 538 members of the Electoral College, which decide the presidential election on Tuesday, November 5, all 435 seats in the United States House of Representatives and 33 of the 100 seats in the United States Senate will be contested, potentially influencing the make-up of both the Congressional Ukraine Caucus and the Senate Ukraine Caucus. Following an historic election in 2020, with over 150 million combined votes cast for the first time in U.S. history, UCCA will once again endeavor to spark civic engagement through its convention to maximize the Ukrainian American presence at the polls, with the goal of convinc-

ing incoming Representatives and Senators to continue to enact vital Congressional support for Ukraine.

UCCA's National Council will meet again this spring to appoint a Nominating Committee for the 23rd Congress, as well as a Shevchenko Freedom Award Committee, and solicit proposed amendments to UCCA's bylaws. In advance of the January 23 meeting, UCCA's National Office worked with UCCA's Philadelphia-area local branch leadership in preparation for the selection vote. Eugene Luciw, president of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America's Philadelphia branch, and Natalia Luciw were responsible for the majority of fact-finding and in-person meetings in the area.

In commemoration of UCCA's 23rd Congress of Ukrainians in America, a convention book will be published, part of which will be dedicated to greetings and advertisements from members and organizations within the Ukrainian community.

Russia, Ukraine clash over whether there was warning about plane that crashed

RFE/RL's Russian Service and Current time

Ukraine and Russia have contradicted each other over whether there had been proper notification to secure the airspace around an area where a military transport plane Moscow says was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) crashed, killing them and nine others on board.

Russian lawmaker Andrei Kartapolov told deputies in Moscow on January 25 that Ukrainian military intelligence had been given a 15-minute warning before the Ilyushin Il-76 military transport plane entered the Belgorod region in Russia, near the border with Ukraine, and that Russia had received confirmation that the mes-

Mr. Kartapolov did not provide any evidence to back up his claim and Ukrainian military intelligence spokesman Andriy Yusov reiterated in comments to RFE/RL's

Ukrainian Service that it had not received either a written or verbal request to secure the airspace where the plane went down.

There has been no direct confirmation from Kyiv on Russian claims that the plane had Ukrainian POWs on board, or that the aircraft was downed by a Ukrainian antiaircraft missile.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called for an international investigation of the incident, and Mr. Yusov reiterated that call, as “there are many circumstances that require investigation and maximum study.”

The RIA Novosti news agency on January 25 reported that both black boxes had been recovered from the wreckage site in Russia's Belgorod region near the border with Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on January 25 called the downing of the Illyushin Il-76 military transport plane a

show any evidence that it was downed by a Ukrainian missile, or that there were Ukrainian prisoners on board.

While not saying who shot down the plane, Mr. Zelenskyy said that "all clear facts must be established ... our state will insist on an international investigation."

Ukrainian officials have said that a prisoner exchange was to have taken place on January 24 and that Russia had not informed Kyiv that Ukrainian POWs would be flown on cargo planes.

Ukrainian military intelligence said it did not have "reliable and comprehensive information" on who was on board the flight but said the Russian POWs it was responsible for "were delivered in time to the conditional exchange point where they were safe."

Dmytro Lubinets, Ukraine's commissioner for human rights, said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that "currently, there are no signs of the fact that there were so many people on the Il-76 plane, be they citizens

of Ukraine or not.”

Aviation experts told RFE/RL that a Ukrainian antiaircraft missile might have downed the plane, but added that it could have also been a Russian missile that was responsible.

“During the investigation, you can easily determine which system shot down the plane based on the missiles’ damaging elements,” said Roman Svitana, a Ukrainian reserve colonel and an aviation instructor pilot.

When asked about Russian claims of dozens of POWs on board, Mr. Svitan said that, from the footage released so far, he'd seen no evidence to back up the statements.

"From the footage that was there, I looked through it all, it's not clear where there are dozens of bodies. ... There's not a single body visible at all. At one time I was a

(Continued on page 18)

The Ukrainian Weekly Press Fund: October 2023

Amount	Name	City	State						
\$215.00	Dekajlo, Oleh & Innesa	East Meadow	NY	\$45.00	Bonacorsa, Christine	Belleville	NJ	Sokolyk, Stephen	Richardson
\$210.00	Sarachman, Chrystyna	Philadelphia	PA	\$25.00	Boyko, Christine	Henrico	VA	Tarasko, Basil	Wawarsing
\$120.00	Ivanonko, Zenon	Vestal	NY		Hawryliw, Adrian	Philadelphia	PA	Tymkiw, Stephan	Millersville
\$115.00	Holowinsky, Yurij	Maryville	TN		Hirka, Wsewolod	Katy	TX	\$15.00	Baltarowich, Oksana
100.00	Bilynsky, Roman	Delta	PA		Prokopovych, Irynej	Calabasas	CA	Hanas, Orest & Zirk	Huntingdon Vy
	Kurylko, Daria	New Providence	NJ	\$20.00	Bekersky, Lesia	Whitesboro	NY	Rasiak, Ruslan	Timonium
	Ripecky, Ruta & Andriy	Chicago	IL		Futey, Bohdan	Annapolis	MD	\$10.00	Essenhigh, Anna
\$75.00	Mcgrath, Michael	Franklin Square	NY		Galonzka, Antin & Juliann	Walpole	MA	Myr, Patricia	New York
\$50.00	Baran, Andrij	Saratoga Spgs	NY		Holowaty, Gerald	Warren	MI	Zaluckyj, Daria	Philadelphia
	Briggs, Zennon	West Hartford	CT		Hotz, Michael	Watertown	MA	Zurawski, Bogdan	South Lake
	Nychka, Andrew & Renata	Armonk	NY		Hrycak, Orest	Cranford	NJ	\$5.00	Galonzka, T
	Wakulowska, Victoria	Philadelphia	PA		Jaworiw, Nadia	Manasquan	NJ	Pyk, Emil	Kendall Park
					Nebesny, Michael	Clinton	IN	Zaluckyj, Kristina	Willowbrook
					Rishiy, Christina	Trenton	NJ		Chicago
					Shepelavey, Christina	Columbia	MD		
									TOTAL: \$1,740.00

The Ukrainian Weekly Press Fund: November 2023

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Amount	Name	City	State	Amount	Name	City	State	Amount	Name	City	State	
\$410.00	Nowadly, John	Fairfax	VA		Melnik, Roman & Kathy	New Hartford	NY		Pawlowsky, Myron	Winnipeg	MB	
\$220.00	Juzych, Mark S & Nadia	Bloomfield Hills	MI		Ochrym, Jean	Etobicoke	ON		Pawluk, Markian	Lansdale	PA	
\$210.00	Marushak, L	Cerritos	CA		Shevchenko, Arthur	Winter Park	FL		Puzyk, Bohdan	Osprey	FL	
\$200.00	Hadzewycz, Mark	Basking Ridge	NJ		Syzonenko, Valentina	Somerset	NJ		Skyba, Andrij	Harwood Heights	IL	
	Shklar, Eugene	Jacksonville	FL		Welhasch, Stephan	Santa Fe	NM		Syzonenko, Wolodymyr	Randolph	NJ	
\$115.00	Masiuk, George	Alexandria	VA		Zajtchuk, Russ	Chicago	IL		Zalucky, Don	Guilford	CT	
\$100.00	Deychakiwsky, Yuriy & Irena	North Potomac	MD	\$45.00	Melnitschenko, Marko & Ljubow	Englewood Cliffs	NJ	10.00	Cybyk, Andrij	Morris Plains	NJ	
	Fedoriw, Bohdan	Redondo Beach	CA		Kowalyk, Ted	New York	NY		Hayuk, Hlib	Lakewood	CO	
	Hrycelak, Maria	Park Ridge	IL		\$35.00	Deychakiwsky, Nicholas	Brighton	MI		Holuka, Alexandra	Flushing	NY
	Lozowy, Ludmilla	New York	NY		\$25.00	Hrycak, Olga	Morristown	NJ		Kernitsky, Roman	Colts Neck	NJ
	Martyniuk, Irene	Fitchburg	MA			Hywel, Marie	Mansfield Twp	NJ		Kowal, Igor	Concord	MA
	Melinshyn, John	Arlington Hts	IL			Markewycz, Zwenyslawa	Poughkeepsie	NY		Lobachevsky, Oksana	Somerset	NJ
	Temnycky, Roma & George	Manlius	NY			Mizak, Bohdan	Philadelphia	PA		Longinotti, Cathy	Short Hills	NJ
						Wolchasty, Anthony	Southampton	PA		Zabijaka, V	Jacksonville	FL
										Zaplitny, Sophie	Battle Creek	MI
\$80.00	Mulyk, Jaroslava	Morristown	NJ	\$20.00	Bilous, Lidia & Orest	Osprey	FL					
	Mulyk, Jaroslava	Morristown	NJ		Dekajlo, Ihor & Luba	Flushing	NY					
	Ritter, Alexandra	Bethlehem	PA		Dolinsky, Larissa	Westfield	NJ					
\$60.00	Kowalchuk, Roman & Anisia	Vero Beach	FL		Kiebusinski, Ksenia	Blacksburg	VA					
	Worobec, Roman	Alexandria	VA		Lutwiniak, P	Sunrise	FL					
\$55.00	Pawlenko, Natalie	Brick	NJ		Shust, Nestor	Fairlawn	OH					
\$50.00	Horbachevsky, Andrew	Yonkers	NY		Slywinsky, Tamara	Sterling Heights	MI					
	Maksymjuk, Stefan	Silver Spring	MD		Woloszyn, Gregory & Maria	Forest Hills	NY					
				15.00	Kowinko, Christina	Stratford	CT					

'It's all becoming less bearable': RFE/RL journalist Alsu Kurmasheva marks 100 days in Russian custody

by Robert Coalson and
RFE/RL's **Idel.Realities**

Alsu Kurmasheva receives letters in jail – from family, friends, colleagues and strangers – but sometimes it takes weeks for them to reach her in pretrial detention in the Russian city of Kazan. On January 13, the RFE/RL journalist wrote, she received a large packet of letters after a long hiatus over the winter holidays.

"It was very hard for me without them," she wrote. "To be honest, it's all becoming slowly but surely less bearable."

January 25 marks 100 days since Ms. Kurmasheva's arrest in October, and she has been in custody ever since.

"Even one day unjustly behind bars is a tragedy," acting RFE/RL President Stephen Capus said, "but a U.S. citizen wrongfully held in a Russian prison for 100 days is outrageous."

Ms. Kurmasheva was initially charged with failing to ask the Russian government to register her as a "foreign agent" and, two months later, she was charged with spreading falsehoods about the Russian military.

The "foreign agent" charge carries a maximum prison term of five years, while the second charge is punishable by up to 10 years. Ms. Kurmasheva and RFE/RL deny the allegations and say Moscow is punishing her for her journalistic work.

A dual U.S.-Russian citizen, Ms. Kurmasheva has not been granted consular access in jail. Russia has denied three U.S. requests to visit her in detention.

"Russia should grant her unconditional and immediate release," Mr. Capus said. "We hope the U.S. State Department will quickly designate Alsu as 'wrongfully detained.'"

While that has not happened, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on January 18 that the United States was paying "an enormous amount of attention" to Ms. Kurmasheva's case.

"Just because we have not made a 'wrongful detention' determination at any point does not indicate anything about the work that we are doing or about what our future posture may be," Mr. Miller added. "We are constantly gathering information in all these cases, assessing facts, assessing law in helping ... guide us to what ultimately will be the right determination."

In a similar case, U.S. citizen Evan Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal, was detained in Russia on March 29, 2023, on suspicion of espionage, the first time a journalist working for a U.S. media company was arrested on such charges in Russia since the Cold War.

He was formally charged on April 7. The U.S. State Department designated Mr. Gershkovich "wrongfully detained" on April 10, and U.S. Ambassador to Russia Lynne Tracey met with him in jail for the first time on April 17.

Mr. Gershkovich, one of the few foreign

journalists who continued to work inside Russia following Moscow's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, remains in custody amid speculation that the Kremlin wants to negotiate a prisoner exchange.

"I am certain that the real reason Alsu is in pretrial detention is because she is an American citizen," said Pavel Butorin, Ms. Kurmasheva's husband and the head of Current Time, the Russian-language network led by RFE/RL in cooperation with the Voice of America (VOA).

Calls for release

Western governments and Russian and international rights groups have criticized Ms. Kurmasheva's detention. The Committee to Protect Journalists, Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, the International Press Institute and others have called for her release. The National Press Club in Washington, D.C., has placed her portrait in its lobby and has urged the State Department to "declare unjust detention now."

The human rights group Memorial, which has been banned in Russia, has designated her a political prisoner.

In December, European Union foreign-policy chief Josep Borrell called for her "immediate release" and called on Russia to "ensure the safety of journalists ... and stop prosecuting them."

The U.K.-based Rights In Russia group has organized a mechanism for writing letters to Ms. Kurmasheva and others widely considered political prisoners.

"One hundred days is unacceptable," acting RFE/RL President Capus said. "And, unfortunately, we don't see an end to this anytime soon. That is why we think everything must be done."

What have we done today?

Ms. Kurmasheva, who has worked for RFE/RL's Tatar-Bashkir Service for some 25 years, left her home in Prague in mid-May 2023 to attend to a family emergency in Russia's Tatarstan region, where her elderly mother lives.

On June 2, she was prevented from leaving the country, and her U.S. and Russian passports were confiscated. On October 18, she was taken into custody and placed in Kazan's SIZO No. 2 pretrial detention facility, where she has been held for the last 100 days.

She has been able to exchange letters with family and supporters through Russia's censored prison mail system, Zonatelekom. Her colleagues in Prague have been able to subscribe her to several newspapers and magazines.

"As of today, it has been exactly three months," she wrote to supporters on January 18. "Everything has changed. I have changed. You have changed. Your letters have changed. After a long pause, I received dozens of letters that you wrote over the



Courtesy photo via RFE/RL

Alsu Kurmasheva, who was initially charged with failing to ask the Russian government to register her as a "foreign agent," was later charged with spreading falsehoods about the Russian military.

holidays. They are so candid. You entrusted me with your fears."

"You decided not to give up on everything, but to share with me while others were finishing their olivye," she wrote, referring to a salad that is a traditional staple of New Year's Eve celebrations in Russia. "That is priceless."

In the same letter, she mused about why she returned to Russia despite the relentless clampdown on dissent under President Vladimir Putin. Kremlin critics say the state's efforts to crush civil society and silence independent voices have been growing for years and intensified still further since Russia unleashed the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"You marvel at my courage for returning home at 'such a time,'" Ms. Kurmasheva wrote. "But we live now; we won't have any 'other' time. Rather, there will be time, of course, but perhaps someone precious to us, someone who needs our help today, won't be there."

"I am responsible for my family, for my young children and for my elderly mother. In my life, and in yours, January 18, 2024, will not come again," she wrote. "What have we done today?"

Ms. Kurmasheva suggested that, when it comes to helping people, what goes around comes around.

"All my life, people have opened doors for me. And later, I began opening doors – at first for my children and those close to me and later for those who needed my help and support," she wrote. "Now I understand that opening doors for others is a responsibility."

In a message sent shortly before the New Year, Ms. Kurmasheva wrote about an "extraordinary letter" she received from a young woman from southern Russia.

"A couple of weeks before, she had been in Kazan visiting friends," Ms. Kurmasheva wrote. "She really likes it here and visits a couple times a year. Her friends told her about me – apparently more than they are reporting in official media. She wrote that she 'felt a strong desire to change my ticket and leave' and that she 'didn't think such a thing could happen in a beloved city.' Later, on the train, she wrote me a long letter. Such unlikely stories, and so much goodness just around the corner from evil."

'Inhumane' conditions

Because of the censorship rules governing her correspondence from custody, Ms. Kurmasheva must be circumspect in describing her conditions, prison staff, other prisoners and the like.

In early January, she spent two weeks in a cell without many basic conveniences, such as a table or refrigerator. "The conditions in those two weeks were inhumane," she wrote on January 9. "I can't even describe it."

"Things are a bit better now," she wrote, but added, "Everyone is sick, but no one cares."

When Ms. Kurmasheva herself fell ill, she asked the prison medic to examine her and was told: "There is no point. I can't do anything anyway."

The medic explained that he lacked even basic medicines to give to prisoners. After reluctantly examining her throat, he advised her to "gargle with salt water," Ms. Kurmasheva wrote in a letter on January 8.

Also in early January, Ms. Kurmasheva wrote that, over the New Year holiday, she watched a version of The Count Of Monte Cristo – the revenge tale of an unjustly accused and imprisoned person – on the television in her cell. She was also able to watch the 1973 Czechoslovakian-East German classic Three Nuts For Cinderella, as well as a Russian music-video channel.

"I spent two days trying to fix the black-and-white image to color, but it looks like I'll just have to make do," she wrote.

'Worst jailers of journalists'

Ms. Kurmasheva is one of four RFE/RL journalists – Andrey Kuznechik, Ihar Losik and Vladyslav Yesypenko are the other three – currently imprisoned on charges related to their work. Rights groups and RFE/RL have called repeatedly for the release of all four, saying they have been wrongfully detained.

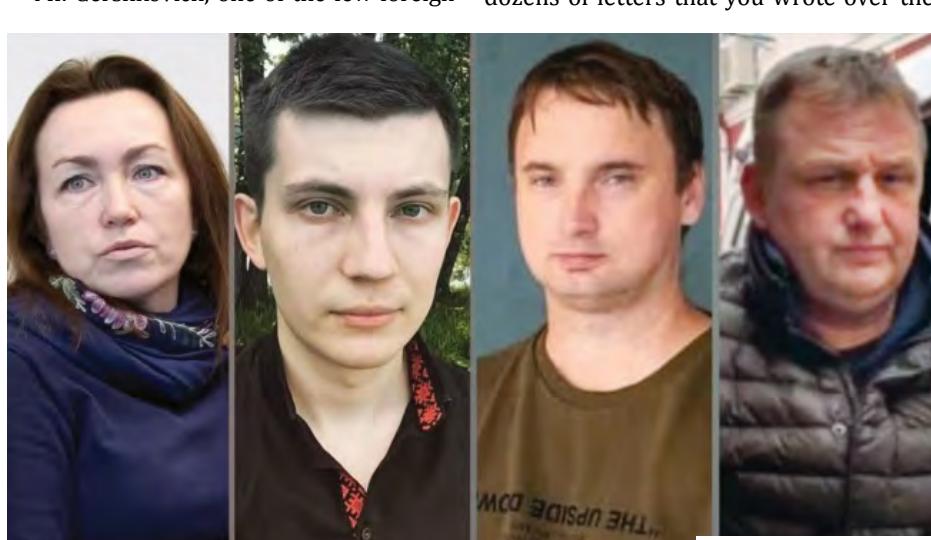
Mr. Losik is a blogger and contributor to RFE/RL's Belarusian Service who was convicted in December 2021 on several charges, including the "organization and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order." He was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Mr. Kuznechik, a web editor for RFE/RL's Belarusian Service, was sentenced in June 2022 to six years in prison following a trial that lasted no more than a few hours. He was convicted of "creating or participating in an extremist organization."

Mr. Yesypenko, a dual Ukrainian-Russian citizen who contributed to Crimea.Realities, a regional news outlet of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, was sentenced in February 2022 to six years in prison by a Russian judge in occupied Crimea after a closed-door trial. He was convicted of "possession and transport of explosives," a charge he steadfastly denies.

According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, Belarus and Russia are among the "worst jailers of journalists" in the world. As of December 1, 28 journalists were in custody in Belarus and 22 in Russia.

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RFE/RL's jailed journalists (from left to right) are Alsu Kurmasheva, Ihar Losik, Andrey Kuznechik and Vladyslav Yesypenko.

THE UKRAINIAN WEEKLY

Russia must release U.S. journalists

The continued detention of journalists in Russia, including RFE/RL journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, marks a deeply troubling and abhorrent act against global press freedom and human rights. As Ms. Kurmasheva spends her 100th day in a Russian jail, her case highlights the dire consequences journalists face for their commitment to pursuing the truth and holding elected officials accountable.

Ms. Kurmasheva's detention underscores the urgent need for action from the international community, particularly the United States, to designate her as "wrongfully detained" and raise the profile of her case as politically motivated. Despite calls for her designation and expressions of concern from the U.S. State Department, there has been no tangible progress in securing her release.

The circumstances surrounding Ms. Kurmasheva's arrest are deeply troubling. Initially charged with minor infractions related to passport registration, she was later accused of more serious offenses, including spreading falsehoods about the Russian military. These charges, widely denounced by rights groups and journalistic organizations, are emblematic of Russia's crackdown on dissent and independent media. It is yet another example of the difference between Russia, a country quickly moving to complete authoritarianism, and Ukraine, where journalists strive to hold their elected officials accountable even amid the nearly two years of martial law.

Ms. Kurmasheva's case is not isolated. Other journalists, including Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich and former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan, have also been wrongfully detained by Russian authorities. The Kremlin's use of journalists as bargaining chips in political negotiations is reprehensible and underscores its blatant disregard for press freedom and human rights.

The conditions under which Ms. Kurmasheva and other detained journalists are held are deplorable. Reports of inhumane treatment, lack of access to medical care and censorship of correspondence highlight the harsh realities they face behind bars. These conditions not only violate basic human rights but also serve as a chilling reminder of the risks that journalists endure in pursuit of the truth.

The international community must unequivocally condemn Russia's actions and demand the immediate release of all wrongfully detained journalists. Western governments, human rights organizations and media outlets have a moral obligation to stand in solidarity with those who have been silenced and oppressed by authoritarian regimes.

The U.S. State Department's role in advocating for the release of Ms. Kurmasheva and other detained journalists cannot be overstated. While statements of concern are a step in the right direction, concrete actions are needed to hold Russia accountable for its egregious violations of press freedom and human rights.

Diplomatic efforts must be intensified to secure the release of all wrongfully detained journalists, including those held in Belarus and other repressive regimes. The United States, in partnership with its allies and international organizations, must leverage all available tools to hold perpetrators of press freedom violations accountable and ensure justice for those unjustly imprisoned.

The designation of Ms. Kurmasheva as "wrongfully detained" would send a powerful message to the Kremlin that the international community stands united in defense of fundamental freedoms. It would also increase pressure on Russian authorities to end their campaign of intimidation and harassment against journalists. But more than that, not issuing such a designation for Ms. Kurmasheva leaves journalists around the world fearful they may face the same fate.

As Ms. Kurmasheva marks her 100th day in detention, the global outcry against Russia's assault on press freedom must grow louder and more resolute. Every day that journalists such as Ms. Kurmasheva languish behind bars is a stark reminder of the urgent need for collective action to defend the principles of democracy and free speech, which are bedrocks of any democratic society.

In the face of adversity, journalists such as Ms. Kurmasheva continue to inspire with their unwavering commitment to truth and integrity. Their courage and resilience serve as a beacon of hope in the fight for a world where dissent is not silenced and the truth is not stifled.

Jan.
30
2014

Turning the pages back...

Ten years ago, on January 30, 2014, Russia observer Paul Goble in his blog "Window on Eurasia" echoed a warning that Vladimir Putin may use the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics as cover for military action in Ukraine.

Avrom Shmulyovich, a longtime Israeli specialist on the Caucasus, was first to raise the alarm when he identified that Putin had already decided to "repeat [his] successful Olympic experience in 2008," referring to Russia's invasion of Georgia.

Russia, Mr. Shmulyovich added, had already begun a phase of "active intervention in Ukrainian affairs," and planned to use "citizen volunteers" (Cossacks and Russian criminal elements, among others) to quell the Euro-Maidan protests in Kyiv. Putin also has employed the use of motorcycle biker gangs, like the Night Wolves, to intimidate people in the Donbas region of Ukraine, as well as in Zaporizhia and in Crimea.

Mr. Goble noted that Russia used Cossacks who masqueraded as Jews while they denounced the Euro-Maidan protesters as fascists and anti-Semites. Journalists revealed these attempts as misinformation and provocations aimed at gaining support from an international audience, as well as from Russians domestically.

Mr. Shmulyovich suggested that Moscow's use of the Olympics in Sochi would "delay, if not prevent altogether, a rapid response," should Russia decide to invade Ukraine.

Source: "Will Putin use Sochi Olympics to cover a Russian intervention in Ukraine?" by Paul Goble (Window on Eurasia), The Ukrainian Weekly, February 9, 2014.

Kyiv raises stakes by expanding appeals to Ukrainian 'wedges' inside Russia

by Paul Goble
Eurasia Daily Monitor

For more than a decade, Moscow has claimed that a significant portion of the people who live within Ukraine are ethnic Russians and that the Russian government is within its rights to intervene on their behalf. Many around the world have accepted these claims without close examination. Few have paid attention to the reality that there have been and remain many large ethnic Ukrainian population centers in Russian territories. These communities can be found not only in regions neighboring Ukraine but also as far as the Pacific coast (For background on the Ukrainian "wedges," numbering more than three million people, see *Window on Eurasia*, June 9, 2016; *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, January 18, 2023; and the sources cited therein). Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently elevated the significance of these "wedges" against the backdrop of Russia's war. On January 22, he issued a decree directing the Ukrainian government and the international community to focus more attention on the plight of these Ukrainian communities under repressive Russian rule and thereby make them allies in Kyiv's fight against Moscow's invasion (President.gov.ua, January 22).

Today, more than a dozen centers of Ukrainian life exist within the Russian Federation. Most were formed at the end of tsarist times or during Stalin's deportations in the 1940s. Ukrainians call them "wedges," with the three most important being the "crimson" wedge of regions immediately adjoining Ukraine, the "blue" (or "yellow") wedge along the Russian-Kazakhstan border separating Bashkortostan and the peoples of Idel-Ural from Central Asia, and the "green" wedge between Vladivostok, Nakhodka and Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East. Mr. Zelenskyy focused on the crimson wedge in his decree, which has already been the focus of attacks by Ukrainian forces. Kyiv's attention to this particular community has outraged Russians who view these territories as theirs from time immemorial. It has also frustrated other nationalities, such as the Circassians, who were there before the Russian imperial advance. This may prove to be a problem for Ukraine in its efforts to reach out to the peoples of the North Caucasus (Apn.ru, September 30, 2022; see *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, January 24, 2023; Kavkazr.com, January 22).

The other two wedges located much further away from Ukraine could ultimately prove to be the most explosive. The blue wedge along the Russian-Kazakhstan border has been growing in importance because Russians view that strip of land as a wall between the peoples of Idel-Ural, including the Tatars and Bashkirs, which they see as critical to holding the Muscovite empire together (Vpoanalytcs.com, May 23, 2022). Bashkir activists believe that recovering what they call the "Orenburg Corridor" will make this historically Ukrainian territory a bridge to independence from Russia (*Window on Eurasia*, February 7, 2023). These activists have been gaining support for their aspirations both in Ukraine and Kazakhstan (Webkamerton.ru, November 16, 2021).

The "green" wedge in the Far East was once the largest Ukrainian population center within what is now the Russian Federation. Ethnic Ukrainians who arrived in the last decades of tsarist times formed a majority of the population there in the

1920s. This community remains the focus of Moscow's greatest concerns. In 2023, Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of the Russian Security Council, said many residents of the region, despite speaking Russian and identifying as Russians in the census, are, in fact, Ukrainians in spirit. As such, they are a serious threat to Moscow's control (see *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, June 8, 2023; Aif.ru, January 11). Such Muscovite fears have only intensified in recent months, given the raft of attacks on Russian infrastructure and increased criticism of Kremlin policies enacted against the people of the region who are presented as agents of the Ukrainian security services (Stoletie.ru, January 19).

Moscow has tried to assimilate the ethnic Ukrainians within Russia by suppressing Ukrainian institutions and preventing the outside world from learning much about these communities, both in Soviet times and more recently. The Ukrainians in Ukraine, nevertheless, have a long history of interest in connecting with their co-ethnics inside Russia. That interest has grown over the years as efforts by activists and parliamentarians after Ukraine's independence in 1991 to do more to support these communities did not gain much traction until Russian President Vladimir Putin's Anschluss of Ukraine's Crimea and his invasion of Donbas in 2014. At that time, those efforts were expanded, with many in the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's parliament) expecting the Ukrainian government to reach out to the wedges and make them its allies (Topwar.ru, June 11, 2014; *Window on Eurasia*, June 9, 2016, August 26, 2018). Kyiv did relatively little, however. Its attention to the wedges has been overshadowed by its appeals to and support for other non-Russians inside Russia until now (President.gov.ua, September 29, 2022; see *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, October 13, 2022; Svoboda; Abn.org.ua, August 24, 2023).

Some Ukrainians are hopeful that Mr. Zelenskyy's recent pronouncement will finally lead to concerted government efforts to connect with these communities, though many remain pessimistic. One skeptic, Yuri Kononenko, who founded the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow (since closed) and oversees an archive on Ukrainian diaspora communities in Kyiv, says that the Ukrainian government lacks "a systematic policy on this issue," and so its achievements in this area have been "pathetic." Mr. Kononenko suggests that Mr. Zelenskyy's decree has more to do with mobilizing Ukrainians within Ukraine and the diaspora communities in countries other than Russia than with any outreach to the wedges within Russia (Novaya Gazeta Europe, January 23). He does see two positive consequences of the Ukrainian president's new stance. On the one hand, it represents "a symmetrical answer" to Putin's oft-repeated claims that he is engaged in "the reunification" of Russia's historical territories. On the other hand, Mr. Zelenskyy's decree will likely increase attention to and research on an essential component of Ukrainian life that has often been ignored.

Many Russian commentators have concluded the opposite of Ukrainian skeptics' view and are already demanding that Moscow respond forcefully (Vz.ru, January 22; Ukraina.ru, January 24). In the coming days, such demands are likely to become more frequent. The Kremlin will presum-

(Continued on page 7)

Ukraine's U.N. envoy...

(Continued from page 1)

That vote was a testament that the "so-called Global South countries" are on Ukraine's side, but their stance is limited to other world issues, Mr. Kyslytsya said.

For example, when Russia was expelled from the U.N.'s Human Rights Council in April 2022, 93 votes were cast in favor and 24 against, with 58 countries abstaining, he said.

"It's another thing when it comes to more practical and thematic cooperation" with member countries, Mr. Kyslytsya added.

Still in October, 18 months after Russia's suspension, it failed to be re-elected to the world's top human rights body during a secret ballot when Bulgaria and Albania received three-year terms there.

"U.N. member states sent a strong signal to Russia's leadership that a government responsible for countless war crimes and crimes against humanity doesn't belong there," Louis Charbonneau, U.N. director at Human Rights Watch, said soon after that vote.

Mr. Kyslytsya defended the U.N. for being an "important framework where you are reviewed by your peer nations and where the global community tells you that you are not right," he said of the Kremlin's belligerence.

In 2022-2023, Kyiv received \$7.2 billion worth of humanitarian assistance from various U.N. agencies and help "from 3,000 in-country team members deployed in Ukraine who are working practically in every region except in the temporarily occupied territories where Russia doesn't allow to enter," he continued.

And Kyiv's official position, according to Ukraine's U.N. envoy, is that Russia "has occupied the Soviet Union's permanent seat on the Security Council in an illegitimate way."

Thus, he said, if you allow someone to invade your house and you're fine with that for 30 years, then why would you expect

that person to be evicted," Mr. Kyslytsya said, adding that the question of whether Russia should be allowed to occupy the important seat is "basically a question to the founding members of the U.N., especially to the other members of the security council."

The day after Mr. Kyslytsya was interviewed by The Weekly he again clashed with Russians representatives, this time Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov, at the U.N. Security Council. Mr. Lavrov called an extraordinary meeting to complain about the collective West providing arms to Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya, in his unique way, took aim at Mr. Lavrov.

"I'm not surprised that the person for whom the Russian ambassador [to the U.N. – Vasily Nebenzya] requested this meeting [referring to Mr. Lavrov] has quickly extricated himself from the chamber," he said as Russia's chief diplomat stormed out.

Reading from a joint statement, the Ukrainian envoy underscored Russia's "hypocrisy" while condemning military support for Moscow from Iran and North Korea in violation of U.N. sanctions. Russia has also gotten material support from Belarus.

That same day, on January 22, the actual day of unity, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a decree to preserve the identity of Ukrainians living in Russia, including those on historically Ukrainian-populated lands.

"Russia must comply with its international obligations to ensure that Ukrainians living in its territories, including those historically inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians, have the right to education in the Ukrainian language and its free use, civil, social, cultural and religious rights, access to Ukrainian-language media, and the right of peaceful assembly," a presidential statement says.

Russia has shuttered all Ukrainian-language schools in occupied territories of Ukraine since 2014 and multiple videos have surfaced on social media showing Ukrainian-language books being burned in a move reminiscent of what Nazi Germany did in the prelude to World War II.



Ukrainian Ambassador to the United Nations Sergiy Kyslytsya is seen in Chicago's Ukrainian Cultural Center on January 21 following his keynote speech at a commemoration of Ukraine's Unity Day, which marks the day 105 years ago when, in 1919, separate territories in western and eastern Ukraine were united into a single nation-state.

Kyiv raises...

(Continued from page 6)

ably launch a propaganda barrage and impose even more repressions against Ukrainians inside Russia as well as against any other non-Russians seeking Kyiv's support. Both these moves could prove counterproductive, attracting more attention to the Ukrainian wedges and to the duplicity of Moscow's claims about ethnic Russians

in Ukraine. This, in turn, could prompt ethnic Ukrainians and other non-Russians to become increasingly alienated from and at odds with Moscow. If that happens, Kyiv's expanded attention to the wedges could give Ukraine some powerful new allies in its fight against Putin's aggression.

The article above is reprinted from Eurasia Daily Monitor with permission from its publisher, the Jamestown Foundation, www.jamestown.org.

COMMENTARY

Lake Placid mourns the passing of Dmitry Feld



Lauren Yates, Adirondack Daily Enterprise

Dmitry Feld of U.S.A. Luge assisted with the installation of Ukrainian flags on Main Street in Lake Placid, N.Y., in March 2022.

by Ihor N. Stelmach

If you didn't know any better, you would have thought he was the mayor of Lake Placid, N.Y. A community leader, Dmitry Feld was president of the Shipman Youth Center's Board of Directors, co-organizer of the annual I Love BBQ and Music Festival, the local face of humanitarian efforts to aid Ukraine, USA Luge marketing manager, loving husband to his wife, Linda, loving father to son, Dima, and a friend to all.

Some in his hometown referred to him as a legend, others as a miracle man. All were shocked to hear of his passing on January 10. Previously treated for cancer, Mr. Feld became ill during the Christmas holidays when the leukemia that had been in remission returned, affecting his breathing. A battle with RSV and pneumonia led to his being intubated to assist his breathing. But the 68-year-old Ukrainian passed away at the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington, Vt.

The joke was always that Mr. Feld arrived in Lake Placid, N.Y., from Ukraine by sled.

He was born in Kamchatka, then in the Soviet Union, in 1955, and at about age 3 his family moved to Vilnius, Lithuania, before moving again to Kyiv. As a youngster, he played soccer, which he didn't like because being small he took a beating on the pitch. At 15, he saw pictures of luge in a newspaper and thought he might like it because it was a one-person sport. He bought his own sled but told his mother he would be playing table tennis so she wouldn't worry. A year later, he began sliding with the Ukrainian luge team.

At 18, he was obligated to complete two years of compulsory military service with the Soviet Army, ending up in the Far East, not far from Kamchatka.

In 1979, Mr. Feld visited the U.S. and first came to Lake Placid, N.Y., to watch the Soviet luge team. Three years later, he returned as a volunteer trainer of young lugers at nearby Mount Hoevenberg, N.Y. He would later meet and marry his wife, Linda, in Lake Placid, N.Y., and became an American citizen in 2001.

Mr. Feld was hired as a full-time coach by USA Luge in 1984. He coached dozens of young athletes, including Gordy Sheer, a 1998 Olympic silver medalist who was Mr. Feld's co-worker since 2005 and is presently USA Luge's marketing director.

Mr. Feld worked in promoting and developing luge, bobsled and skeleton in the

areas of marketing, communications and sponsorships. His job took him to the last six Winter Olympic Games.

In a January 11 interview with the Adirondack Daily Enterprise, Mr. Sheer said, "Dmitry's contribution to USA Luge is almost immeasurable. It's been said that he was the heart and soul of USA Luge. Dmitry is the root of a tremendous number of partnerships. He truly cared about anyone and everyone. He really genuinely cared."

Mr. Feld was an enthusiastic volunteer who donated his time and attention to many causes in the community. He was named volunteer of the year by the Daily Enterprise and Lake Placid News in 2010 and received the Liberty Bell Award (outstanding citizen) from the Essex County Bar Association that same year. The annual I Love BBQ Festival, of which Mr. Feld was the volunteer general manager, raised almost a third of the youth center's annual budget.

He served on the board of the Adirondack Arc, an organization that provides opportunities to people with developmental disabilities.

In 2017, the Lake Placid-North Elba National Volunteer Week Committee honored him for his dedicated work with the Shipman Youth Center as a distinguished adult volunteer of the year. Mr. Feld was recognized for his volunteer service with several nonprofit groups and boards, displaying an amazing commitment to the community and beyond, working to improve the lives of others.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Mr. Feld organized the donation of hundreds of thousands of pounds of equipment and supplies to the Ukrainian frontlines, schools and hospitals. USA Luge CEO Jim Leahy said Mr. Feld single-handedly raised over \$100,000 for Ukraine aid.

One of his final tasks came last December when he organized Ukraine's participation in the Luge World Cup held in Lake Placid, N.Y. He made sure the Ukrainian team had visas, made their stay comfortable and helped with a party for the sponsors.

He saw to it that 20 Ukrainian flags were displayed on Main Street in Lake Placid, N.Y., in March 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In August 2023, Mr. Feld hosted two Ukrainian teachers from Kyiv and organized a school-supply drive for

(Continued on page 15)

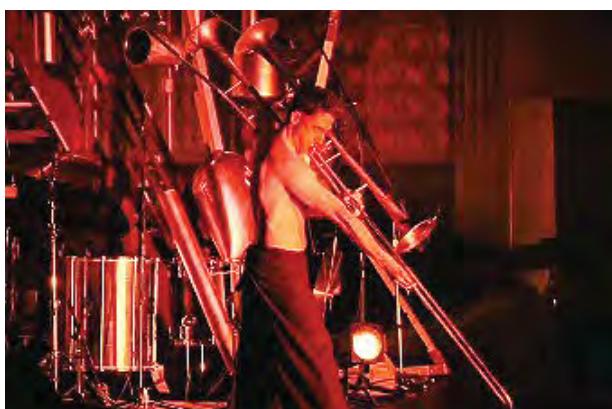
Ukrainian avant-garde opera Chornobyl Dorf blazes a surreal path through New York's Prototype Festival

by Nicholas Gordon

NEW YORK – With provocative, apocalyptic imagery, the Ukrainian experimental opera Chornobyl Dorf provides a jolting, surreal theatrical experience. Led by composers Roman Grygoriv and Illia Razumeiko, the all-Ukrainian cast and crew of "Chornobyl Dorf: Archeological Opera in Seven Novels" recently completed an electrifying run of eight shows in the Prototype Festival of new opera and music theater at La MaMa Experimental Theatre in New York.

The opera is set in a post-nuclear disaster future where the earth is now bereft of civilization. The remaining members of humanity seek to create or find new meaning through a series of inscrutable performance rituals in which the archeology of universal symbols and signs goes awry in a gloriously fiery chaos.

Upon entering the opera, guests are handed earplugs – and indeed a thundering, kaleidoscopic torrent of sound awaits within. At La Mama Theater, the audience is very much a part of the mise en scène: stage and floor seating are merged as one. This element intrigued the show's composer, director and key player, Mr. Razumeiko, for the layers it adds to the opera's immersive sensory experience.



Actor Ihor Boichuk plays the trombone during the performance of Chornobyl Dorf at La Mama Experimental Theater in New York.



Actress Mariia Portopenko performs in Chornobyl Dorf staged at La Mama Experimental Theater in New York.



Steven Pisano

Actresses (from left to right) Kateryna Hordiienko, Marichka Shtyrbulova and Mariia Portopenko perform in Chornobyl Dorf at La Mama Experimental Theater in New York.

"La Mama is an interesting space and we were happy to have it for two weeks," Mr. Razumeiko said. "We could fill this space with our show. It's the first time we've put an orchestra in the audience."

Mr. Razumeiko studied musical composition at Petro Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine in Kyiv.



Actress Kateryna Hordiienko performs in Chornobyl Dorf at La Mama Experimental Theater in New York.

He has been collaborating with Mr. Grygoriv for 10 years and together they have produced and performed numerous critically acclaimed operas on the global stage.

Chornobyl Dorf builds slowly, with haunting choral and folkloric singing and chanting, the vocalists wandering the set amidst an orchestral soundscape created with both traditional folk instruments – flutes, banduras, dulcimers, trombones – and unorthodox steampunk-ish musical contraptions with percussion. Accordions, left to dangle from bodies in one sequence, are an example of erstwhile civilization's misused artifacts in this new realm, producing only a faint approximation of their true sound.

All of the variegated sounds and visuals of naked bodies and vibrant, spiky costumes infusing the rituals are backdropped by an unsettling blend of strange cinematic imagery playing out on a giant wall screen: there are scenes of the tribe's members dwarfed by vast landscapes, standing waist-deep in the sea, on cliffs wearing elaborate haute couture gowns, or lost in the eerie beauty of desolate nuclear disaster spaces.

(Continued on page 14)

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Ukrainian Gift of Life works to heal children suffering from congenital heart defects

by George Kuzma

GLEN ROCK, N.J. – As the war to protect Ukraine from a Russian takeover continues, so does the battle to protect the country's children from the impact of congenital heart defects.

Since 1995, Ukrainian Gift of Life (UGOL) has provided support for the advancement of pediatric cardiology in Ukraine together with Rotary International's Gift of Life (GOLI) and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), among others.

Those alliances were developed by UGOL founding trustee, George Kuzma. Recently, Mr. Kuzma led a mission to Ukraine to assess the level to which pediatric cardiology has progressed after 25 years of support.

Rob Raylman, GOLI's CEO, and several Rotarians from New Jersey and Colorado, together with Dr. Henry Issenberg, a recently retired cardiologist and UGOL board member, joined Mr. Kuzma on the trip.

The team was charged with determining current needs in Ukraine and determining if it would be productive to continue providing financial, training and logistical assistance.

The team flew to Warsaw and then to Krakow, Poland, before driving six hours into Lviv. Although the primary goal of the trip was to conduct a medical assessment, they also obtained an understanding of the geography and culture in Ukraine.

When they checked into the Citadel Inn in Lviv they were in awe when they learned that it was originally built in the early 1850s as an imposing fortress and converted during World War II into a Nazi concentration camp (known as the "Tower of Death") for Ukrainian prisoners. Because it is located near one of the highest points in Lviv, they were treated to a panorama of the city.

UGOL and Rotary support is currently focused on Lviv's St. Nicholas Hospital (primarily for pediatric cardio surgery) and at Ohmatdet (a pediatric hospital with a neonatal unit). Both were chosen because of their mortality rates and success factors. On their first day in Lviv, the group toured the two hospitals.

The team was greeted by the grateful families of two children who had surgeries that were sponsored by UGOL with a grant from GOLI. One was a 15-month-old girl from the nearby Ternopil region whose defect was corrected through a minimally invasive surgery under her right arm; the other surgery took place this past spring on a two-week-old who received a successful resection of the great aortic arch. This is an extremely complex surgery with a 40 percent mortality rate.

Dr. Issenberg, formerly a cardiologist with Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, N.Y., and Montefiore Hospital in New York spent most of the day reviewing cases and surgical approaches in the cardiology unit.

The day culminated with a round table that included surgeons, cardiologists and anesthesiologists from Kyiv and Lviv and Mr. Kuzma's team. In attendance was Dr. Oleksandr Babliak, a leader in advancing minimally invasive pediatric heart surgery in Ukraine and worldwide who developed techniques to correct approximately 80 percent of genetic heart defects.

Having determined that the surgical approach at the hospital was as good as any approach in the United States, the round table discussion centered on the needs in Ukraine that would continue to advance pediatric cardiology throughout the war.

The group determined that the needs continue to be the



Iryna (Debela) Kokoten, a patient who had surgery in 1999, and her daughter traveled five hours to attend a gathering with the Ukrainian Gift of Life team in Lviv.

sourcing of supplies and equipment (such as the recently purchased infant cooling system for the neonatal unit), the UGOL training program at CHOP and surgical consumables for children of families in financial need.

Notably, Mr. Raylman, who has developed and implemented scores of surgical missions throughout the world, observed that Ukraine is not a developing country in pediatric cardiology, but one that must be supported so that it can advance even further. It was agreed that this ongoing support would provide Ukraine with the opportunity to contribute on the world stage in the future.

The next day during a meeting of two Lviv Rotary clubs, there was further evidence of the success of efforts and the support of pediatric cardiology in Ukraine. The program started by bringing over 100 children to the U.S. for heart surgery in the years immediately following independence from the Soviet Union.

As Mr. Kuzma entered the meeting room, the waiting crowd applauded while, on one side of the room, stood Rotarians with whom Mr. Kuzma worked and doctors he has partnered with and supported over two decades. On the other side of the room were adults whose hearts he helped to heal when they were children, as well as other beneficiaries of UGOL-sponsored surgeries and their families.

"Showing up for the children of Ukraine is so important at this most traumatic, challenging time," Mr. Kuzma said.

Many of those children have now grown into adults and have children of their own. The young adults shared their gratitude for UGOL's outreach, the Rotarian's hospitality in America, and GOLI's financial support for surgeries being performed in Ukraine.

To a person, the beneficiaries of Mr. Kuzma's efforts spoke of the most memorable moment of their visit to the United States for surgery – seeing Mr. Kuzma's smiling, comforting face as they arrived at the airport because at that point they believed they would be ok.

"To this day, I remember George at the airport and the fact he was there for me and so kind and positive made all the difference in the world," said Ira who was operated on in New York in 1999.

As he said goodbye to everyone, he was sure to leave



Alisa Kepa
An intensive care unit patient in Ukraine is seen being treated with equipment supplied by Ukrainian Gift of Life.

them with a singular message.

"I am the face and all these Rotarians here and in the U.S. are the body. You should know that, although I am not always here, you will always be in my heart," Mr. Kuzma said.

His passion for helping Ukraine has driven him to lead the project that has helped some 1,000 children get life-saving surgeries their families could not afford while simultaneously engaging UGOL in other projects for doctors and making pediatric cardiology self-sustainable in Ukraine.

"When Ukraine became independent in 1991, I decided I wanted to begin helping with a program we learned about through our son, a junior Rotary/Interact Club member," Mr. Kuzma said.

"Ed [Mr. Kuzma's son] came home from school and asked us to host a mother and her child, Veronika, who needed heart surgery. They were being brought from Poland to America by the local Rotary Gift of Life program. It was a very gratifying experience to see Veronika go home with her mother having hope for a healthy, happy life for her child and it was equally gratifying to begin 30-year friendships with Rotarians and becoming a Rotarian myself. ... Bringing Gift of Life to Ukraine was the perfect project," Mr. Kuzma said.

After creating a UGOL Board of Directors and raising some funds, Mr. Kuzma, his wife and sister embarked on a visit to Ukraine in 1995 to put together a strategy for making an impact in a country they held dear in their hearts.

They met with family members and church leaders to identify creditable partners in the venture. Meeting Dr. Yuriy Ivaniv, a respected cardiologist and Rotary member who had a fax machine made the project feasible at that time.

UGOL has an alliance with several of the 84 Gift of Life International programs that are based in Rotary Clubs and districts on five continents. Since 1975, that network has helped nearly 50,000 children with heart disease in the developing world.

More information about Ukrainian Gift of Life, including how to support the program and make a financial contribution, can be found online at www.ukrainiangiftoflife.com.



The intensive care unit at Ohmatdyt hospital in Lviv, Ukraine, is supported by Ukrainian Gift of Life.



Team members of Ukrainian Gift of Life hold a round-table discussion with medical professionals after their trip to Ukraine.



Patients who had surgeries in the U.S. as children in 1996-2003 and were sponsored by the Lviv-Leopolis Rotary Club in Lviv.



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Polish PM...

(Continued from page 1)

Poland's unwavering support for Ukraine.

"We greatly value this choice – the choice to be in Ukraine. Poland's choice of Ukraine," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said after meeting with Mr. Tusk in the Ukrainian capital.

Mr. Tusk's inaugural visit to Ukraine as Poland's leader marks a significant moment in Polish-Ukrainian relations as both countries face ongoing geopolitical challenges.

The Polish prime minister announced a new defense aid package for Ukraine, marking a significant step in Poland's military support of its eastern neighbor.

The package, which was announced after a period of apprehensive anticipation, dispels concerns that Poland might decrease its military support for Ukraine. Instead, it signals that Poland is ready to recommit to further supporting Kyiv as it nears the full-scale war's second anniversary.

The new defense package includes a substantial Polish loan designated for Ukrainian arms purchases, reflecting a shift toward more significant and direct military support. The loan facilitates Ukraine's acquisition of larger-scale weapons systems, crucial for its ongoing defense efforts.

"We highly appreciate that we were not left alone in this battle for Ukraine. We are together with many nations that have helped us and continue to do so. And the Polish people, the Polish state is one of our greatest helpers," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

Moreover, the package opens avenues for joint arms production, a move that signifies deepening military and industrial cooperation between Poland and Ukraine. The collaboration is poised to bolster the defense capabilities of both nations, enhancing their ability to respond to regional security challenges effectively, Ukrainian and Polish officials noted.

Mr. Tusk's visit to Kyiv was marked by substantive bilateral talks with Mr. Zelenskyy, underscoring a shared commitment to deepening cooperation, according to a statement issued by the Polish prime minister's office.

The discussions between Messrs. Tusk and Zelenskyy encompassed various

aspects of bilateral relations, focusing on defense support, energy cooperation, and regional security. Mr. Zelenskyy, addressing the media, highlighted the significance of the talks.

"Our discussions with Prime Minister Tusk have opened new horizons for cooperation, particularly in defense and energy sectors. These talks are a cornerstone in strengthening the ties between our nations," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

The leaders also delved into energy cooperation, discussing plans for expanding infrastructure and enhancing energy potential, a statement issued by Mr. Zelenskyy's office after the meeting said.

"The expansion of energy ties between Ukraine and Poland is crucial for our mutual energy security and independence," said Mr. Zelenskyy, who added that this includes plans for new projects like constructing transmission lines between Ukraine and Poland, reflecting a mutual recognition of the strategic importance of energy independence.

Moreover, the talks touched upon the broader geopolitical landscape, including a bilateral agreement to support Ukraine's path toward the European Union. Mr. Tusk's support for Ukraine's E.U. aspirations was unequivocal.

"Poland will assist Ukraine in every step towards full E.U. membership – it's a commitment we stand by firmly," Mr. Tusk said.

The leaders also addressed the need for pragmatic solutions to issues concerning the Ukraine-Poland border, agreeing to resolve any critical issues through government level discussions.

Mr. Tusk's endorsement of Ukraine's aspirations toward E.U. membership and his commitment to aid in the process reflects a strategic alignment that extends beyond mere diplomatic support, the Polish prime minister said.

This stance from Poland could influence other E.U. member states and potentially accelerate Ukraine's integration into other European structures, Mr. Zelenskyy added.

"Poland's support is crucial in our journey towards the E.U. It is a partnership that strengthens not just us but the ideals of the union," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

The new defense package and joint military initiatives signal a shift in the regional security dynamic. By strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities, Poland is not only supporting a neighbor but also con-

tributing to the stability of the European continent. This move could prompt other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members to reassess their support strategies, potentially leading to a more coordinated and robust response to security challenges in the region.

The discussions between Messrs. Tusk and Zelenskyy weren't confined to grand strategies but they also tackled practical challenges, particularly those concerning the border and economic cooperation. Recognizing the critical nature of these issues, both leaders committed to pragmatic solutions that would serve mutual interests and enhance bilateral ties.

Mr. Zelenskyy emphasized the importance of joint efforts in overcoming border-related issues.

"We agreed that all critical concerns can be efficiently resolved through government-level cooperation. This collaboration underscores our shared goal – to ensure smooth and beneficial interactions across our borders," he said.

Regarding economic relations, the leaders delved into opportunities for enhancing trade and investment. The discussions covered the significance of the unimpeded movement of goods, which is crucial for both economies, especially in sectors like agriculture and manufacturing. Moreover, the talks ventured into energy sector cooperation, focusing on joint projects that could strengthen energy independence and sustainability for both countries.

These dialogues reflect a keen understanding that a robust Polish-Ukrainian relationship extends beyond diplomatic support to encompass economic, infrastructural and societal dimensions, Mr. Tusk said in a press statement.

By addressing these challenges head-on, Poland and Ukraine are not just strengthening their alliance but they are also laying the groundwork for long-term regional stability and prosperity, he said.

A significant aspect of Mr. Tusk's visit was the engagement with Ukrainian youth and the focus on educational cooperation.

Addressing students at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Mr. Zelenskyy underscored the importance of youth in shaping the future.

"You, the young generation, are not just our future but also our present. Your resilience, intellect and spirit will drive Ukraine forward," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

"Investing in education is investing in freedom and democracy. Poland stands with Ukraine in nurturing a generation that will uphold these values," said Mr. Tusk, who emphasized the role of education in building a strong, democratic society.

The leaders discussed initiating joint educational programs and exchanges to strengthen cultural and academic ties. The focus on education and youth engagement illustrates a long-term vision for Polish-Ukrainian relations that transcends immediate geopolitical concerns and plants the seeds for enduring cooperation and mutual understanding, a statement from the Polish prime minister's office said.

The discussions between Mr. Tusk and Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal in Kyiv were pivotal in reinforcing the intergovernmental relationship.

"Our talks with Prime Minister Tusk are a stepping stone towards resetting our intergovernmental relations, emphasizing equality, mutual assistance and a shared vision for our nation's independence and prosperity," Mr. Shmyhal said.

The prime ministers agreed on intensifying bilateral cooperation, with Mr. Shmyhal noting, "We are committed to holding coordinating intergovernmental meetings and energizing the work of our intergovernmental commission. This is a testament to our strong partnership."

Their discussion also focused on facilitating the movement of goods across the their shared border.

"The unimpeded movement of goods is essential for our economies. We have resolved to work together to ensure seamless trade and support for our farmers and carriers," Mr. Shmyhal said.

"I have proposed to Prime Minister Tusk our collaboration in the construction of strategic highways, which will enhance our connectivity and economic interaction," Mr. Shmyhal said.

Mr. Tusk's visit to Kyiv bolstered the growing bond between Poland and Ukraine, which was strengthened after Russia launched its full-scale war on Ukraine in February 2022, and he stressed that Warsaw will continue to help Ukraine integrate into Europe.

"Poland will try to help in all aspects of the E.U. accession process so that Ukraine's full membership in the European Union becomes a fact as soon as possible," Mr. Tusk said.

Moscow accuses...

(Continued from page 1)

flown on cargo planes.

Ukraine's Main Intelligence Directorate said it did not have "reliable and comprehensive information" on who was on board the flight but said the Russian POWs it was responsible for "were delivered in time to the conditional exchange point where they were safe."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for full clarity on the circumstances of the crash.

"We need to establish all the clear facts, as much as possible, given that the downing of the plane occurred on Russian territory, which is beyond our control," he said in his nightly video broadcast.

"It is clear that the Russians are playing with the lives of Ukrainian prisoners, the feelings of their loved ones and the emotions of our society," Mr. Zelenskyy said.

He did not confirm or deny Russia's claims but said it had been a "very difficult day."

He also called for an international investigation into what brought down the plane.

Moscow backed up its accusation that Ukraine deliberately shot down the

Ilyushin Il-76 military cargo plane by saying Russian radar registered the launch of two missiles from Ukraine's Kharkiv region, which borders the Belgorod region.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said in a statement that did not mention the crash that the Ukrainian military had noticed more Russian military transport aircraft landing in Belgorod and linked this to Russian missile strikes on Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities.

"With this in mind, the Armed Forces of Ukraine will continue to take measures to destroy means of delivery and exercise aerospace control to eliminate the terrorist threat, including in the Belgorod-Kharkiv direction," it said on Telegram.

The Ukrainian military intelligence statement on Facebook said Kyiv had not been asked to ensure airspace security around the Belgorod area as had been the case during previous POW swaps.

It said Russia's accusations that Kyiv shot down the transport plane could be "a planned action to destabilize the situation in Ukraine and weaken international support for our state."

The United States has no confirmation of who may have been on board the plane, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

"We've seen the reports, but we're not in any position to confirm them," Mr. Kirby said.

Russia called for an emergency United Nations Security Council session to discuss the downing of the aircraft, which Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov called a "criminal" act by Ukraine.

"The Ukrainian prisoners of war were transported to the Belgorod region in order to conduct yet another swap that was agreed between Moscow and Kyiv," Mr. Lavrov told a press conference at the United Nations in New York.

"Instead of this, the Ukrainian side launched an air defense missile from the Kharkiv region. It targeted the airplane and was a fatal strike."

Russian officials said earlier that the plane was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war, six crew members and three escorts.

A list of the six crew members who were supposed to be on the flight was obtained by RFE/RL. The deaths of three of the crew members were confirmed to RFE/RL by their relatives.

Video on social media showed a plane, which appears to be an Ilyushin Il-76 military transport aircraft, spiraling to the ground, followed by a loud bang and explosion that sent a ball of smoke and flames

skyward.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the plane crash, saying he was still gathering information on the incident.

However, Russian lawmaker and retired Gen. Andrei Kartapolov, speaking in a television interview, accused Ukraine of shooting the plane down, while the media outlet Ukrainska Pravda, citing what it called sources in Ukraine's armed forces, wrote that Kyiv's military had indicated the crash was "their work," adding that the plane was carrying missiles for Russia's S-300 air-defense system. It later deleted the post.

Moscow and Kyiv have held several prisoner swaps since the Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The Russian Defense Ministry earlier reported that a drone had been shot down in the region but gave no further details.

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

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 2)

Ukrainians by passport," he added. Current law does not allow dual or multiple citizenship for Ukrainian passport holders. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a similar law earlier this month enabling foreign fighters the possibility of receiving Russian citizenship. Mr. Zelenskyy also signed a decree that contains an outline of a program "to preserve the ethnic identity of Ukrainians" traditionally residing in Russia's Krasnodar, Belgorod, Bryansk, Voronezh, Kursk and Rostov regions. The

Day of Unity has been marked as a national holiday in Ukraine since 1999. The idea to mark the Day of Unity appeared almost a decade before that, when the country was still part of what was then the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians joined together on January 21, 1990, to form a live chain connecting Kyiv, the capital, with several other nearby cities in a show of unity. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Berlin to give Kyiv anti-submarine helicopters

Germany will give Ukraine six Sikorsky Sea King anti-submarine warfare helicopters, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius announced. "[The Sikorsky] Sea

King is a proven and powerful helicopter that will help Ukrainians in areas from reconnaissance over the Black Sea to transporting soldiers. This will be the first German delivery of this type," Mr. Pistorius said after the 18th meeting of the Ramstein Contact Group of more than 50 allies of Ukraine, which took place online on January 23. At the start of the meeting, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin called on the members to continue assisting Ukraine. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

More bodies found under rubble in Kharkiv

Ukrainian rescuers have found two more bodies under the rubble of a house in Kharkiv destroyed by a Russian missile strike on January 23, bringing the total number of dead in the eastern city to 10, regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said on January 24. He said the two victims were a 57-year-old man and a 56-year-old woman, adding that the search-and-rescue operation at the site of the impact continues. Russian troops launched a massive wave of missiles on several Ukrainian cities on January 23, killing at least 20 people and wounding more than 100. (RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service)

Darya Trepova sentenced to 27 years in prison

A military court in St. Petersburg on January 25 sentenced Darya Trepova to 27 years in prison after finding her guilty of killing prominent pro-Kremlin blogger Vladlen Tatarsky, a fervent proponent of Russia's war in Ukraine. Prosecutors had asked the Second Western District Military Court for a sentence of 28 years in prison and a fine of 800,000 rubles (\$9,000) on charges of terrorism and forgery. Ms. Trepova, who pleaded not guilty to the terrorism charge and entered a guilty plea to the charge of document forgery, was arrested after an explosion in a restaurant in St. Petersburg on April 2 killed Mr. Tatarsky, whose real name was Maksim Fomin. The blast also wounded 52 people. Mr. Tatarsky was talking to people who had previously attended a meeting with him when a woman presented him with a box containing a small bust of him that blew up, killing him, according to Russian media reports. Ms. Trepova, 26, admitted giving Mr. Tatarsky the box, but said at the trial that she did not know that there was an explosive device inside. Ms. Trepova's co-defendant, Dmitry Kasintsev, in whose apartment Ms. Trepova was detained, was sentenced to one year and nine months in prison. Mr. Kasintsev pleaded guilty to the charge of failure to report a crime, but rejected the charge of covering up a crime. In May, Russia's Interior Ministry issued an

arrest warrant for Ukrainian citizen Yuriy Denisov, saying that he was suspected of organizing the deadly attack. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said at the time that Mr. Denisov and Ms. Trepova had decided to assassinate Mr. Tatarsky. The FSB also tried to link the killing to associates of imprisoned opposition leader Aleksei Navalny. The FSB has not provided any evidence to back the allegations, and Mr. Navalny's aides have alleged the authorities were trying to link the anti-corruption crusader to the explosion to lay further criminal charges against him in the future. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Girkin sentenced to 4 years in prison

A court in Moscow has sentenced Russian nationalist Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov) to four years in prison on a charge of making public calls for extremist activities. The prosecution last week had sought almost five years in prison for the former leader of Kremlin-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. Mr. Girkin, 53, who has denied the charges, was arrested in July 2023 after strongly criticizing Russian President Vladimir Putin in online statements for his handling of the Ukraine invasion. He accused the Kremlin leader of "cowardly mediocrity" and described him as a "non-entity." He has also called out Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu for making "mistakes" in the invasion of Ukraine and accused him and Putin of "incompetence." Mr. Girkin last year even called on Putin to transfer power to "someone truly capable and responsible." A former officer of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), Mr. Girkin has also argued for a total military mobilization to ensure Russian victory in the war against Ukraine. Mr. Girkin was a key commander of Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region in 2014 and helped Russia annex Ukraine's Crimea that year. In November 2022, a court in the Netherlands sentenced Mr. Girkin and two other defendants to life in prison in absentia in the case of the 2014 shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine. All 298 people on board died in the crash. In February, international investigators said there were "strong indications" that Putin was personally involved in the incident. The Boeing 777 flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was blown out of the sky on July 17, 2014, amid a conflict between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian armed forces. The victims came from more than a dozen countries, although more than two-thirds of them were Dutch citizens.

(Continued on page 15)

could make a difference."

Ms. Shtyrbulova, who studied acting and folkloric singing at the Karpenko-Kary Kyiv National University of Theater, conceded that some viewers expressed confusion about the show and said they didn't understand it.

"This opera is about feeling and exploring the legacy of the future after the disaster," Ms. Shtyrbulova said. "It gives everyone something to think about. It's not giving answers but posing questions."

If great art can make the familiar strange, Chornobyldorf succeeds wildly to that end, transforming familiar objects and human forms, and even the confines of the theater itself, into something defiantly edgy and other. Chornobyldorf disrupts, challenges and entrances.

For all the questions and uncertainties that the opera might raise regarding what exactly is happening in its dystopian future, the boldness of the artistry and visionary risk on display is admirably unmistakable.

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NEWSBRIEFS

(Continued from page 14)

zens. Russia has denied any involvement in the downing of the plane. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Russia blames Ukraine for gas depot blaze

The Kremlin has blamed Ukraine for a blaze at a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in the Russian Baltic Sea port of Ust-Luga that broke out on January 21. Asked about the fire that led to the suspension of some operations at the terminal near Russia's border with Estonia, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Ukraine was "striking civil infrastructure, people." The fire at the terminal operated by the Russian energy company Novatak erupted following reports of drone sightings in the area. The fire was caused by two explosions, state-run Russian news agency RIA Novosti cited local officials as saying. The agency said on January 21 that the fire had been contained to a 100-cubic-meter fuel depot at the terminal, located about 110 kilometers west of St. Petersburg. Leningrad regional Gov. Aleksandr Drozdenko said on Telegram that there were no casualties as a result of the blaze and that the local fire service and the Emergency Situations Ministry were involved in the effort to extinguish it. The incident comes amid Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, which has been marked by frequent drone attacks by each side. Ukrainian officials have accused Russia of targeting energy and other key infrastructure during the winter cold to break the Ukrainian people's will to fight following Moscow's unprovoked full-scale invasion in February 2022. Moscow claimed on January 19 that a Ukrainian drone attack had hit an oil depot in Russia's western Bryansk region. One day earlier, Russian officials claimed that an attempted attack on a Baltic Sea oil terminal was unsuccessful. The Ukrainian Defense Ministry traditionally does not comment on or claim responsibility for attacks Moscow claims Kyiv has carried out on Russian territory. (RFE/RL's Russian Service)

Report: Georgia penchant to appease Russia

The Kremlin's war on Ukraine has split Eastern Europe, prompting Moldova and Ukraine to grow closer to the European Union while Georgia has exhibited a "penchant for appeasing Russia," according to a new report. The report by the Eastern

Partnership Civil Society Forum published on January 24 says Georgia "has flatlined in its overall E.U. [European Union] approximation because of serious backsliding in fundamental freedoms, democracy and governance-related indicators, the government's evident disregard for civil society and its penchant for appeasing Russia, which is at odds with the E.U. consensus." While Moldova and Ukraine improved their public administration in 2023, there was a "downwards drift in politically polarized Georgia," the report, called the Eastern Partnership Index, notes. It adds that Georgia had "lost considerable ground" in terms of democracy and good governance. Georgia was granted E.U. candidacy status in December, while Ukraine and Moldova were shown the green light to begin negotiations to join the bloc. The report notes that Georgia was afforded the status "even though" it had engaged in "anti-Western rhetoric" and attempted, but failed, to pass a controversial "foreign agents" bill in 2023. Ukraine and Moldova, however, "are steadily making the kinds of systemic changes that Brussels expects them to do to proceed along the accession path." The report says Georgia's "declining alignment with significant E.U. statements and its liberal trade policy," including strategic cooperation with China, could become "a critical concern for the E.U. in the future." It also notes a "glaring" contradiction between Georgia's stated aspirations to join the bloc and its "reluctance to adhere to the E.U.'s foreign policy consensus." "While the Georgian government presents its foreign policy as pragmatic, its voting patterns clearly suggest a departure from an E.U.-style values-based normative approach," the report says. The report suggests that "eliminating informal governance and oligarchic influences" were among key measures that could help Tbilisi in "realizing rules-based democratic institutions in line with E.U. membership norms." This comes as Bidzina Ivanishvili, the billionaire founder of Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream party, announced in December that he was returning to politics as the party's "honorary chairman," a decision he described as "unpleasant." The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is an umbrella network of nongovernmental organizations from the region and the European Union. Its mission is to aid civil societies in the planning, monitoring and implementation of the Eastern partnership policy that is aimed at bringing Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine closer to the E.U. (RFE/RL)

Lake Placid...

(Continued from page 7)

their school. In September, he and some friends packed a minivan full of used sneakers (150 pairs) to be shipped (van included) to Ukraine. Sneakers were often requested by Ukrainian soldiers who go through them quickly.

In October 2022, Mr. Feld traveled to Ukraine with friend John Cogar, a Saranac Lake, N.Y., veterinarian to administer aid to abandoned cats and dogs in war-torn areas of Ukraine and to bring much-needed drones for the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Perhaps it was longtime friend Mr. Cogar who best described Mr. Feld.

"He was just the opposite of what's

going on in our world today," Mr. Cogar told the Adirondack Daily Enterprise. "He did not cause conflict. He brought people together. I think all our goals should be to help him carry on the mission of peace and victory for Ukraine."

On a personal note, I never had the honor of personally meeting Mr. Feld, but I did have the privilege of communicating with him electronically. In our exchanges, he was humble, generous with information and invited me on more than one occasion to meet with him and Ukrainian athletes in Lake Placid, N.Y. I very much regret not taking him up on those invitations.

(Based on reporting by Adirondack Daily Enterprise.)

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

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With heavy hearts and sorrow, we inform family, friends, and the community, that on January 5, 2024 at the age of 89 passed away into eternity our dear Husband, Father, Grandfather



Dan Haidukewych, Ph.D.

Chemist, Researcher, Educator,
born on July 22, 1934 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

He leaves behind in profound sorrow:

beloved wife	- Lydia (Small)
dearest sons	- Dr. George (Jamie) Haidukewych, - Dr. Andrew (Dr. Taissa) Hayduke-Haidukewych - Alexander (Natalia) Haidukewych

dear grandchildren - Oliviana, Stephanie Brown, George, Ben,
Andrew and Peter

extended family in the USA, Canada and Ukraine

Funeral liturgy was held on January 13, 2024, at St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church in Warren, MI, followed by burial services with military honors at Resurrection Cemetery in Clinton Township, MI.

Memory Eternal - Вічна пам'ять!

In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Dan Haidukewych may be made to: St. Josaphat Ukrainian Catholic Church, 26401 St. Josaphat Dr., Warren, MI 48091.



Leonid Petrenko

95 years old, of Phoenix Arizona,
a proud Ukrainian by birth,
passed away peacefully of natural causes on January 13, 2024.

Leonid was born on April 14, 1928 to Mykola Brajchenko Petrenko and Maria Lytvyn in Novooleksandrivka, Ukraine, and immigrated to the United States on January 13, 1951, on the U.S. Navy General M B Stewart Squier-Class Transport Ship and resided in Milwaukee, Wisconsin prior to his becoming a Naturalized Citizen of the United States of America on June 13, 1961. In 1974 Leonid moved the Petrenko family to Phoenix, Arizona.

Leonid was a retired U.S. Army veteran, who served in the Korean War, and later finished his service to the country in the U.S. Army Reserve with the rank of Master Sergeant (E8).

Leonid was a beloved and proud father of his two sons: Victor (64) married with two adult children, and Ihor (61), both of whom also served honorably and retired from the United States Army.

Leonid was a dedicated and previously active member of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, both in Milwaukee and Phoenix.

Leonid was predeceased by Maria Lytvyn, Mykola and Justyna Petrenko, and Mykola and Tamara Burda.

Funeral liturgy and interment were held at the St Andrew Memorial Church and Cemetery in South Bound Brook, New Jersey, on January 20, 2024.

May His memory be eternal.

Russia resumes...

(Continued from page 1)

Myrivsk, in the Nikopol area, came under Russian artillery fire.

Russia also targeted Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, with five S-300 anti-aircraft guided missiles, the air defense said. It was not immediately known if the missile strike caused damage or injuries.

The eastern city of Kharkiv, which is located some 30 kilometers from the Russian border, has recently been subjected to an unusually intense wave of missile strikes that targeted residential areas. In the latest such attack, at least 10 people were killed on January 23.

On the battlefield, amid a seesaw of offensive and defensive actions by both sides, Russian troops continued their unsuccessful attempts to encircle the industrial city of Avdiivka in the eastern region of Donetsk.

The General Staff of Ukraine's military said in its early morning report on January 25 that four such attempts were repelled by Ukrainian defenders over the past 24 hours.

Earlier, on January 12, at least 27 people were killed by shelling at a market on the outskirts of the city of Donetsk in Russian-occupied Ukraine, the head of the Russian-installed authority in Donetsk said.

An additional 25 people were injured in the strike on the suburb of Tekstilshchik, including two teenagers, said Denis Pushilin, who accused the Ukrainian military of firing the shells.

He blamed Ukraine for the attack, calling it a "horrific" artillery strike on a civilian area.

Ukrainian shelling of a separate neighborhood in the city killed one person, Mr. Pushilin said, bringing the total number of dead in occupied Donetsk to 28.

According to Aleksei Kulemin, Donetsk's Russian-installed mayor, Ukrainian forces bombarded a busy area where shops

and a market are located.

Mr. Pushilin announced a day of mourning on January 22 in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, the name given to the part of the region Russia says it has annexed.

Kyiv has not commented on the event, and the claims of the Russian-installed officials in Donetsk could not be independently verified.

The Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry blamed the strike on Ukraine and described it as a "terrorist attack."

"These terrorist attacks by the Kyiv regime clearly demonstrate its lack of political will toward achieving peace and the settlement of this conflict by diplomatic means," it said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy posted a message on X, formerly Twitter, saying that thousands of people would still be alive today if Moscow had not launched the war but did not mention the strike against occupied Donetsk.

"Russia must feel and realize forever that the aggressor loses the most as a result of aggression," he said, adding that on January 21 more than 100 Ukrainian cities, towns and villages in nine regions had been shelled and, unfortunately, there were dead and wounded.

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres "strongly condemns all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including today's shelling of the city of Donetsk in Ukraine," according to a U.N. spokesperson, adding that all such attacks are prohibited under international humanitarian law.

The Donetsk regional military administration, meanwhile, said one person was killed and another was wounded as a result of shelling by Russian troops of Kurakhovo on January 21.

Vadym Filashkin accused the Russian troops of aiming at residential buildings, adding that a 31-year-old man died at the scene.

A kindergarten and several private hous-

es were damaged by the impact, and a fire broke out, which the rescuers have already extinguished, Mr. Filashkin said on Telegram.

Earlier on January 21, the Russian Defense Ministry announced a missile attack on occupied Crimea.

Russian anti-aircraft missiles allegedly shot down three missiles over the Black Sea near the western coast of the Russian-occupied peninsula, the ministry said on Telegram.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Russian-installed governor of the Ukrainian peninsula seized by Moscow in 2014, said at the time that air defense forces had "shot down an aerial target" over the Black Sea.

Prior to the statement, an RFE/RL correspondent reported an air raid and three explosions in Sevastopol.

On the front line, Russian forces took control of the village of Krokhmalne in Ukraine's Kharkiv region, the Russian Defense Ministry announced on January 21.

Ukrainian forces confirmed that the settlement had been occupied, but Volodymyr Fityo, spokesman for Ukrainian Ground Forces Command, said Kyiv's troops had been pulled back to pre-prepared reserve positions.

He said Krokhmalne had a population of roughly 45 people before the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

"That's five houses, probably," he was quoted as saying by Ukrainian news outlet Hromadske. "Our main goal is to save the lives of Ukraine's defenders."

Meanwhile, at least 42,284 Russian military personnel have been killed since the start of Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, according to research by journalists from Mediazona and the BBC Russian Service who have established the deceased soldiers' identities.

The number includes 5,089 mobilized soldiers and 7,810 inmates recruited from Russian prisons, the two media organizations said.

The journalists from Mediazona and BBC Russian Service also established that, out of the total, at least 3,053 were officers and 349 of them had ranks of lieutenant colonel or higher.

The journalists based their research on data from open sources, such as obituaries in the media and messages on social networks by relatives of the victims.

A breakdown by Russian regions showed that most of the identified troops killed in action were from the Krasnodar region, 1,640, followed by the Sverdlovsk region with 1,449, Bashkortostan with 1,353, and Chelyabinsk, 1,191.

Russia's capital, Moscow, lost at least 482 identified military personnel, while 480 deceased soldiers were from St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city.

The Russian Defense Ministry does not disclose data on personnel losses and does not comment on figures reported by journalists.

Earlier this month, Russian media website Important Stories found that, starting from 2022, the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation prohibited employees of its regional branches from publishing information about those involved in the war in Ukraine who receive social benefits, since such data could be used to calculate the losses of the Russian Army.

In April, Important Stories wrote that the Russian Defense Ministry has stopped publishing information about military pensions for disability and for war widows and orphans for similar reasons.

(With reporting by Reuters, AP and AFP)

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Kremlin creates...

(Continued from page 2)

lized former prisoners returning to Russia is on the rise, leading to a massive uptick in violent crimes. Independent journalists note that not all veterans return to prison after repeated violations, as the courts frequently hand down unjustifiably lenient sentences (Verstka, December 25). A particularly illustrative case is 25-year-old Admam Shcherbakov's murder of the father of the head of the press service of the Russian Orthodox Church, Vladimir Legoyda. Mr. Shcherbakov had been previously convicted numerous times and was not supposed to be released until 2025, but he was pardoned after completing his military service in Ukraine (Svoboda, December 30).

The Russian people's growing anxiety does not mean an increase in protest sentiments. On the contrary, a certain level of fear can cause a reverse reaction, paralyzing the will of the people and exacerbating their need to find at least some kind of support and "ground under their feet." For now, this seems to predominantly come with society's consolidation around the Kremlin. As political observers rightly note, however, Russian society tends to tire of war if it sees no prospects for improvement or if it frequently disrupts their everyday lives (YouTube.ru, January 3).

Propagandists proudly report that the Russian economy has moved to a war footing that will make it increasingly resilient. Kremlin propaganda increasingly characterizes the "building of a new country and

a new world" and the creation of a new "mobilization economy" as the foundations for Russia's bright future, which will ensure tremendous economic growth (Tsargrad.tv, October 17, 2022). In contrast, some experts assert that Russia's economic problems will only worsen. According to propagandists, the "Russian military-industrial complex has significantly expanded its capabilities and is fully supplying the army with all necessary weapons" (Vz.ru, December 21). Massive investments have indeed been allocated to Russia's defense industry, but that has not helped falling production rates and shortages of technical expertise (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, October 31, December 4; January 16). Reports from as early as the summer of 2022 indicate that Rostec enterprises have been forced to adopt multi-shift work schedules and forgo any vacations to fulfill state defense orders (TASS, August 24, 2023).

In September 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law imposing a 10-year prison sentence for violating the terms of state defense orders (RBC, September 24, 2022). A month later, he established a Coordination Council within the government to address the army's needs (Interfax, October 21, 2022). Since November 2022, defense procurements have been allowed to take place in a simplified manner, bypassing competitive bidding (Novaya Gazeta Europa, February 17, 2023).

The problems with Russian defense production are also evident in the increased purchases of essential raw materials. Independent journalists report that, since the start of the full-scale invasion of

Ukraine, shipments of cotton cellulose to Russia, necessary for gunpowder production, have surged. Cotton cellulose is primarily imported from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, allowing Russia to circumvent Western sanctions. In 2021, these countries supplied Russia with cotton cellulose worth almost \$4 million; in 2022, that figure rose to nearly \$10 million. Many sanctioned enterprises are listed among the clients of Uzbek and Kazakh manufacturers, and some contracts directly stipulate that the supply of cotton cellulose is part of a state defense order (Istories.Media, December 21).

Some independent sources note that the increase in defense orders partially helped prevent a significant decline in production in Russia in 2022 (Novaya Gazeta Europe, December 28, 2022). Propagandists openly state that the war and the associated growth in defense production have led to the redistribution of funding to the poorest regions of Russia, resulting in a sharp increase in the well-being of the previously underprivileged population. They proclaim, "Money is flowing into the regions" (YouTube.ru, December 4). Western experts also acknowledge that increased investment in the military-industrial complex has somewhat stimulated the Russian economy.

In the long run, however, this stimulation is seen as a "delayed-action bomb" for the Russian economy. Specialists note that reduced investments in schools and education will decrease productivity and that a lack of investment in the healthcare system will worsen the already dire demographic

situation. These consequences will become most pronounced when military expenditures decline (Reuters, October 24).

Russian economist Sergei Aleksashenko believes that Russia will also face a severe shortage of personnel for civilian enterprises. This will come as a consequence of mobilization efforts and defense production facilities "attracting" the highest qualified specialists from the civilian sector (Svoboda, March 9, 2023). Even media loyal to the Kremlin note that Russia already faces personnel shortages in several key industries (Expert.ru, December 30). As a result, it will become increasingly difficult to level out economic problems using traditional market mechanisms.

The Russian economy looks to further unravel so long as the war in Ukraine continues. Igor Lipsits, one of the founders of Moscow's Higher School of Economics, believes that market mechanisms in today's Russia are rapidly diminishing, leading to a return to the early 1990s without the prospect of much economic growth (YouTube.ru, December 22). Increasing government intervention in the economy leads to the failure of natural market mechanisms, and "manual" management of economic processes will fail sooner or later (Re: Russia, December 28). The longer these trends prevail in Russia, the less credence will be afforded to propaganda slogans about a "bright future."

The article above is reprinted from Eurasia Daily Monitor with permission from its publisher, the Jamestown Foundation, www.jamestown.org.

Ukrainian pro sports update

by Ihor N. Stelmach

Ukraine claims world taekwondo is engaging in Russian 'caviar diplomacy'

Ukraine's Ministry of Youth and Sport and its National Olympic Committee (NOC) asked World Taekwondo (WT) to review a decision made to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes, especially Vladyslav Larin, to participate as neutrals in international competitions. Minister of Youth and Sport Matviy Bidnyi and NOC President Vadym Gutzeit have called on WT to follow the example of the World Curling Federation and other sports federations in suspending athletes from the two aggressor countries from all international competitions.

Larin was one of 10 taekwondo athletes whose names were included on the list of Russian and Belarusian athletes supporting the war in Ukraine published by the Ukrainian Ministry of Youth and Sport.

The 2020 Olympic champion was banned from competing in the 2023 World Taekwondo Championships for his role in a video where he called on people to donate money to Russian soldiers. Ukraine withdrew from the tournament because Russians and Belarusians were allowed to compete as independent neutrals.

Larin was subsequently allowed to compete as a neutral athlete in the 2023 World Taekwondo Grand Prix series in Taiwan, where he won a gold medal in October. Two months later, he won the 2023 Wuxi Grand Slam tournament and qualified for the Paris Games.

According to Gutzeit, Ukraine provided the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the WT with proof of Larin's connection with the Russian army, including video evidence. The IOC responded by arguing that Larin's video did not prove his support was directly related to the war.

Bidnyi reacted to the IOC's response by underlining the presence in the video of Russian taekwondo vice president Anatoly Teryekhov, a member of the board of the International Taekwondo Federation since 2009. Bidnyi added that Russia uses "caviar diplomacy" to lobby for its interests within the sport of taekwondo.

Gutzeit wrote a letter to WT President Chungwon Choue and IOC President Thomas Bach on January 8, which expressed his concerns about Larin's victory in the Olympic qualifying tournament, mentioning that Larin is a member of Russia's Central Sports Club, CSKA.

The World Taekwondo Council unanimously approved the participation of individual neutral athletes in sanctioned competitions to take effect on January 10.

Shmuratko skates with symbolic blood stain on shirt

Twenty-two-year-old Ivan Shmuratko from Kyiv represented Ukraine at the 2024 European Figure Skating Championships in Kaunas, Lithuania, on January 10-14. He finished 14th out of 24 finishers (32 entrants) in men's singles with 210.65 points. He stood out by competing with an actual blood stain on his white shirt as a symbolic tribute to the painful and traumatic horrors and bloodshed the Ukrainian people have suffered for nearly two years due to Russia's unprovoked invasion of the country.

Ukraine sends 44 athletes to Youth Olympics

Forty-four athletes in 12 disciplines will represent Ukraine at the fourth Winter Olympic Youth Games in Gangwon-do, South Korea, on January 19 to February 1. Twenty-four boys and 20 girls from Ukraine will take part in the competition, according to the NOC of Ukraine's press release.

Ukrainian athletes will compete in 12 of the 15 disciplines of the Youth Games 2024 program: alpine skiing, biathlon, cross-country skiing, curling, figure skating, freestyle, luge, short track, skeleton, ski jumping, snowboarding and speed skiing.

Nazar wins hockey gold with Team U.S.A. juniors

Beginning with Team U.S.A.'s opening game against Norway through its last matchup in the tournament's final against Sweden, Ukrainian Frank Nazar was all about setting up his teammates with premium scoring chances. He finished with eight assists, all of which were primary, and created many more chances for himself and others on the gold-medal-winning squad. This was another positive sign for the Chicago Blackhawks and Nazar that he is back playing elite-level hockey after last year's hip surgery.

Nazar's eight helpers were second best among all skaters at the recent 2024



Wikipedia

Figure skater Ivan Shmuratko, seen during his short program at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, wore a shirt stained with blood-colored markings to remind people of Russia's war in Ukraine at the 2024 European Figure Skating Championships in Kaunas, Lithuania, on January 10-14.

World Junior Championship held in Sweden from December 26 to January 5, while his eight total points ranked him tied for fifth. His plus-9 was second-best among all players.

He will be remembered for his playmaking, although he did have his share of individual scoring chances, including a few breakaways where he did everything right except finish. He was very effective as a facilitator but also contributed as a penalty killer and consistently fore-checked and back-checked. He gave Team U.S.A. quality shifts at both ends of the ice, centered the team's No. 2 line and produced offense while being tasked with some tough defensive assignments.

In his sophomore year at the University of Michigan, Nazar is tied for fourth in scoring (through the team's first 18 games) with eight goals, 10 assists and 18 points. If he continues to play as he has during the second half of the season, there is an excellent chance he will turn pro. The Blackhawks envision him as the No. 2 center behind Connor Bedard down the road.

Voloshyna named new head coach of Canada's artistic swim team

Ukrainian Anna Voloshyna is set to take over as the new head coach of Canada's artistic swim team following February's World Aquatics Championships. Currently an assistant coach of the U.S. team, her contract is set to expire after the world championships in Doha, Qatar.

A statement issued by Canada Artistic Swimming on January 15 said Voloshyna will join the Canadian team based in Montreal in mid-February. The event in Doha is a last-chance qualifier for this summer's Olympic Games in Paris. Canada can earn a berth by finishing among the top five countries not already qualified in the team event.

Canada Artistic Swimming parted ways with its previous head coach in June 2023. Voloshyna, 32, won 10 world championship medals for Ukraine as a competitor.



Bournemouth soccer club fan Simon Cable (second from left), seen with Serhiy Kiral (center), mayor of the city of Sokal, Ukraine, during a meeting with Cherries Aid for Ukraine in 2022.

She has coached athletes from the U.S., Ukraine and Mexico.

Bournemouth fan and commentator aiding Ukraine

As Russia's invasion of Ukraine nears the two-year mark, efforts to provide funds, supplies and refuge to the victims have slowed down. So has media coverage of Russia's full-scale war on its neighbor.

Ferndown, England, resident and Bournemouth fan Simon Cable is doing everything in his power to keep Ukraine in the headlines. Several weeks after the war first broke out, Cable made his first trip to Ukraine to see how he could help. By the end of 2023, during his sixth trip to Ukraine, he was joined by former English professional footballer and current BBC Radio Solent co-commentator John Williams. It was Williams' third trip to Ukraine.

Cable, a life-long Cherries fan, couldn't make it as a professional in the sport, but he has been a lifelong supporter of the club. At the age of 19, he had a brief trial with the club and, after some light training, he met Williams, among other team officials. The two stayed connected for some 36 years with Cable being a season ticket holder and often seeing the radio commentator before and after games.

In his efforts to support Ukraine, Cable also spreads the word about his favorite football team. He hasn't attended a match for 18 months, reasoning that the money to buy a ticket would be better served to help Ukraine. He does tune in to every Bournemouth Premier League match to listen to his pal Williams.

The mayor of Sokal, a city in Lviv Oblast in western Ukraine, has an autographed Bournemouth shirt hanging on his wall. Sokal is one of the places Cable has visited in Ukraine, transporting van loads of supplies and even spending a scary night in an underground bunker in Kyiv.

Cherries Aid for Ukraine works with several other groups across England's south coast to make sure supplies are being provided. The group works with Swanage and Wareham Rugby Club, New Forest for Ukraine, Heroes Don't Wear Capes and groups in Weymouth and Southampton.

Cable's career in the telecommunications field has been beneficial for his efforts in supporting Ukraine. His employer has been generous with time off for his journeys to Ukraine and supported him with tech supplies, such as older mobile phones for the Ukrainian military. A local firm donated 1,000 wireless access points to take to Ukraine.

His list of needed supplies these days includes warm clothing and hand warmers for the winter months. He's noticed the Ukraine-Russia war no longer makes daily news headlines. While he receives regular calls and updates from Ukraine, he has said that the world mustn't forget about the ongoing situation on the frontlines.

Usyk would be second Ukrainian to beat Fury

Ukrainian Ivan Bezverkhyy has been working as a coach for the past three years at the Lokomotiv Junior High School and the club Sport Okrug in Zaporizhia. He survived four professional boxing fights after finishing his amateur career and decided his short-term future was in coaching.

Seventeen years ago, over four months

(Continued on page 18)

At age 83, Ukrainian climber still coaching children

by Ihor N. Stelmach

The Ukrainian city of Kharkiv was heavily shelled by Russian forces for the first six months of the Moscow's full-scale war on Ukraine. A vast majority of Ukraine's citizens fled their homes. In September 2022, the Ukrainian military succeeded in repelling the occupying Russian forces and people started to return to their homes. An 83-year-old master Ukrainian climber, skier, sports manager and coach named Liliya Samsonova was one of them.

She is the director of Kharkiv's Piaty Khatky Sports Complex, which sits about a dozen miles from the Russian border. For the past 60 years, she has played a major role in training and developing Ukrainian national and world champion climbers.

January 2023 saw Samsonova return from her temporary refuge in the city of Dnipro and resume her coaching of Ukrainian children.

During the past winter season, Russian forces sought to destroy Ukraine's power infrastructure. When the heating pipes burst in the sports complex, Samsonova directed training sessions in freezing temperatures in a small bouldering room on the building's fourth floor.

Samsonova described the sports complex as being "in desperate condition. It is 30 percent damaged and 70 percent survived. The roof is leaking, windows are missing." Volunteers assisted her in boarding up the windows with panels.

Samsonova got into the habit of turning on electric heaters every morning so the temporary training room would be warm enough for afternoon training sessions. The temperature got to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Despite the small confines of the room and bouldering wall, the coach and her 50 trainees work out three times a week.

While the sports complex was abandoned for some six months, it was ransacked and most of the climbing equipment in the facility was taken. Gone were computers, a music recorder for competitions, heaters and a television used for teaching.

Even worse is the lack of climbing shoes and harnesses, but there are no funds for their purchase. The city of Kharkiv allocated \$250 to support Samsonova's training sessions. The money let her to buy a rope and some carabiners.

The attendees train in running shoes, which do not permit the learning of proper techniques. Climbing shoes are an essential requirement, especially for children, who will



Liliya Samsonova, seen with her award from Ukraine's Ministry of Sport and Culture, is an 83-year-old climbing coach who instills tenacity and gritty determination in her students.

need to re-learn how to climb with proper footwear. Samsonova claims it is more difficult to re-learn than learn from scratch.

Despite the lack of equipment, sessions are quite beneficial for the children, who get to engage in a fun sporting activity and have a sense of normalcy in their war-torn city.

Samsonova's coaching is seeing results with her dedicated youngsters. After less than three months of training post-evacuation, Mykyta Abramkin placed fourth and sixth in the European Youth Cup and won a silver medal in Ukraine's Youth Speed Championships. Another of her athletes, Leonid Osadchy, was inspired to train abroad and to compete internationally for Ukraine's national team. Samsonova coaches him remotely.

Osadchy described his coach as "a really great person who loves her job. As a coach, she understands that a lot of

people won't continue climbing professionally, but she always tries to teach children to be good humans, first of all."

Samsonova is not out to profit from the business, so all training fees pay for the club's expenses. Those who can't afford the fees or climbing gear are helped personally by the venerable coach who wants to make it possible for children to follow their dreams.

Now and then, the group climbs outdoors on local crags, such as those in Chykelivka, a former granite quarry that served as the site of a three-day excursion. Future climbs at bigger areas, such as Bookie and Dovbush Rocks, are on the horizon.

As her youngest participants benefit from the physical and mental aspects of climbing, other former students are actively engaged in defending Ukraine. Multiple World Champion in Speed Maksym Osipov is one example of an ex-protégé serving in the Ukrainian military, one of the first to volunteer following Russia's invasion.

Renowned Ukrainian mountaineer Alexander Zakolodnyi, a world champion, coach and climbing wall owner lost his life in close combat in Soledar outside of Bakhmut at age 35. He trained with Samsonova and was heavily involved in the liberation of his home in Kharkiv Oblast in September 2022. He received the Order of Courage and Hero of Ukraine medals for his service.

Samsonova herself is no stranger to war. She grew up in Belarus when it was part of the Soviet Union, and her family lived in Minsk, which was one of the first cities destroyed by the Nazi Germans' Luftwaffe as part of Operation Barbarossa. Her mother took Samsonova and her older sister and fled to Saratov Oblast in Russia.

Born in 1939, Samsonova does not remember World War II, but she does recall the Soviet famine of 1947 when her family had nothing to eat.

Her deep-rooted passion for climbing and helping others sustains her despite her advancing age and surgery in December 2022. She continues to stay active and takes care of her health. When asked how she manages to cope with everything, she said that she's not quite sure. She does know that when she comes to her complex she can forget about the external world and can cope with everything.

(Based on reporting by UKclimbing.com)

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

Ukrainian pro...

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Bezverkhy twice fought then-unknown fighter Tyson Fury. He confidently beat Fury in the first bout at the international junior amateur tournament in Donetsk, Ukraine. He lost in the semifinal of the European Youth Championships in Serbia.

His win on March 31, 2007, in the final of the Junior Class A tournament ended with a score of 23-10. It came during an international tournament that had young boxers from 10 countries in the competition. The final fight between the Ukrainian and the Briton was to determine which country would take first place in the tournament. Bezverkhy prevailed by catching Fury with a powerful attack from in close, keeping the Cup in Ukraine.

In the rematch bout four months later in early July 2007, the Ukrainian was hindered by a sprained shoulder he suffered in his first fight with Fury. He directly attributes his loss in Serbia to his shoulder injury. Ironically, Fury claimed he broke two fingers on his hand in the semifinal of the tournament in Donetsk in his fight with Ukrainian Volodymyr Bandura, a claim that was never substantiated. Bezverkhy remembers Fury boxing with both of his hands in Serbia.

On February 17 Ukrainian World Boxing Association (WBA), International Boxing Federation (IBF), World Boxing Organization (WBO) and International Boxing Organization (IBO) heavyweight champion Oleksandr Usyk (21-0, 16 KO) puts his four championship belts on the line in a much-anticipated battle with Fury (31-4, 26 KO). If he wins, Usyk would be the second Ukrainian boxer to defeat Fury.

Lomachenko-Kambosos fight on for May 12

Vasiliy Lomachenko and George Kambosos have reportedly booked the date of May 12 for their fight to unify boxing's lightweight championship. The contest, to be held at

RAC Arena in Perth, Western Australia, will feature Australia's former unified champion against the three-division world champion and future hall of famer from Ukraine. The two will battle it out for the vacant International Boxing Federation (IBF) 135-pound title.

The 30-year-old Kambosos (21-2, 10 KO) is coming off a majority decision win against Maxi Hughes (26-6-2, 5 KO) of Great Britain in July 2023. Before that, the former WBA, WBO and IBF lightweight champion lost two fights for the undisputed title by unanimous decision to American Devin Haney (31-0, 15 KO) in 2022.

Lomachenko last fought in Las Vegas in May 2023, when

Russia, Ukraine...

(Continued from page 4)

military investigator, including investigating disasters; believe me, if there were seven or eight dozen people there, the field would be strewn with corpses and remains of bodies," Mr. Svitak added.

Russia backed up its accusation that Ukraine deliberately shot down the military transport plane by saying Russian radar registered the launch of two missiles from Ukraine's Kharkiv region, which borders the Belgorod region.

The Ukrainian General Staff said in a statement that did not mention the crash that the Ukrainian military had noticed more Russian military transport aircraft landing in Belgorod and linked this to Russian missile strikes on Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities.

"With this in mind, Ukraine's armed forces will continue to take measures to destroy means of delivery and exercise airspace control to eliminate the terrorist threat, including in the Belgorod-Kharkiv direction," it said on Telegram.

A Ukrainian military intelligence statement on Facebook said Kyiv had not been asked to ensure airspace security around the Belgorod area, as had been the case during pre-

vious swaps of POWs.

It said Russia's accusations that Kyiv shot down the transport plane could be "a planned action to destabilize the situation in Ukraine and weaken international support for our state."

Russia called for an emergency United Nations Security Council session on January 25 to discuss the downing of the aircraft, which Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov called a "criminal" act by Ukraine.

Russian officials said the plane was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war, six crew members and three escorts.

A list of the six crew members who were supposed to be on the flight was obtained by RFE/RL. The deaths of three of the crew members were confirmed to RFE/RL by their relatives.

Video on social media showed a plane spiraling to the ground, followed by a loud bang and explosion that sent a ball of smoke and flames skyward.

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OUT & ABOUT

Through March 3 Chicago	Art exhibit, "Immense Journeys: Art, Nature, Science and Beyond," featuring works by Melissa Jay Craig, Anne Hughes and Lisa A. Frank, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, www.uima-chicago.org	February 9-10 Cambridge, MA	Conference, "The European Dream. 2024: A Continent at the Crossroads," Harvard University, https://euroconf.eu
January 30 New York	Book talk, "Ukraine's Patronal Democracy and the Russian Invasion" by Balint Madlovics and Balint Magyar, Columbia University, https://harriman.columbia.edu	February 10 Parsippany, NJ	Presentation of Debutantes, Ukrainian American Youth Association, Sheraton Parsippany Hotel, https://cym.org/us/deb-tickets
January 31 New York	Film screening and discussion with Oleksandr Schchur, "Bucha," Columbia University, https://harriman.columbia.edu	February 10 Jenkintown, PA	Valentine designer bag bingo, Ukrainian Federation of America, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, 215-782-1075
February 1 Online	Online book discussion, "The Ruling Families of Rus: Clan, Family and Kingdom" by Christian Raffensperger and Donald Ostrowski, with panelists Susana Torres Prieto, Olenka Pevny, Frank Sysyn, Tania Plawuszczak-Stech and Marko R. Stech, University of Alberta, www.ualberta.ca/canadian-institute-of-ukrainian-studies	February 11 Princeton, NJ	Concert, featuring the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, and a post-concert discussion, "Artists in Wartime," with orchestra director Alexander Horonstai and visiting scholar Iuliia Skubutska, McCarter Theater Center, Princeton University, 609-258-2787
February 2-3 Cambridge, MA	Conference, "Decolonizing Ukraine in Theory and Practice," Harvard University, www.huri.harvard.edu	February 12 Cambridge, MA	Book talk, "Russia and Ukraine: Entangled Histories, Diverging States," with Oxana Shevel and Maria Popova, Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
February 3 Pearl River, NY	Chervona Kalyna Cotillion Ball, Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organization, Hilton Pearl River, https://kalynadeb.org	February 14 Cambridge, MA	Book talk, "The Voices of Babyn Yar" by Marianna Kiyanova, with Oleh Kostyuba, Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
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	February 21 Cambridge, MA	Conversation with journalist Terrell Jermaine Starr with Emily Channell-Justice, "Covering Ukraine and the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election," Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu
February 3-25 Chicago	Art auction and sale, Ukrainian National Museum, www.ukrainiannationalmuseum.org	February 22 Jenkintown, PA	Award banquet, "Lumen Christi," Sisters of the Order of Saint Basil the Great, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, www.stbasils.com or 215-379-3998 ext. 17
February 3 Jenkintown, PA	Film screening, "Pamfir" by Alexander Kucy, Ukrainian Educational and Cultural Center, www.ueccphila.org	February 23 Online	Online presentation by Fr. Bohdan Hladio, "Ukrainian Winter Festivals: Faith, Music, Traditions," Ukrainian History and Education Center, www.ukrhec.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	February 23 Stanford, CA	Presentation by Megan Buskey, "Ukraine is Not Dead Yet: A Family Story of Exile and Return," Stanford University, https://creees.stanford.edu
February 6 New York	Presentation and book signing with Coach T.J. Kostecky, "Eyes Up! Discover Your Potential and Form Meaningful Connections Through Subtle Shifts in Perspective," with Roman Ponos, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org	February 24 New York	Open house, Ukrainian Institute of America, www.ukrainianinstitute.org or 212-288-8660
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	February 24 Washington	Rally, "Two Years Since Russia's Full-Scale War Against Ukraine," Embassy of Ukraine, Lincoln Memorial, www.ucca.org
February 8-9 Naples, FL	Inaugural banquet and day of reflection, Ukrainian Catholic University Foundation, Vineyards Country Club, 415-314-1845 or ihaluba@ucufoundation.org	February 26 Cambridge, MA	Book talk, "The Psychology of Misinformation" by Jon Roodenbeck, Harvard University, https://huri.harvard.edu

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.

MOSCOW...

(Continued from page 2)

on track to victory (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, January 17; Svoboda, January 18). Putin places great emphasis on Russian forces' retaking the initiative on the battlefield, though the series of fruitless attacks on Avdiivka and Ukrainian gains in the Black Sea and around the Dnipro River cast doubts on that assessment (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, January 17; The Insider, January 19). Kyiv may be struggling with a shortage of firepower, but the North Korean artillery shells that the Russian guns are firing have neither the range nor the precision to match Ukraine's more sophisticated systems (New Voice of Ukraine, January 13).

Russian infantry battalions and air force squadrons are feeling increasingly demoralized by heavy losses on the front (Republic.ru, January 15). The latest shocking air encounter happened on January 14 over the Sea of Azov, when a Russian A-50 early warning and control aircraft was shot down, and a Il-22M command-and-control bomber was seriously damaged (Novaya

Gazeta, January 16). Seeking to degrade Ukraine's air defenses and long-range strike potential, Russian Aerospace Forces have targeted logistic and industrial assets supporting these capabilities, rather than Ukrainian energy infrastructure (Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie, January 11). The results have been unimpressive, and Ukrainian drones are trekking further into Russian territory, reaching fuel depots in the neighboring Bryansk region and oil terminals in St. Petersburg and Ust-Luga (Nash Bryansk, January 20; Fontanka.ru, January 18).

The Russian economy continues to struggle with falling investment and rampant inflation. The direct damage Ukrainian strikes have had on the Russian economy may not be that significant. Every hit, nevertheless, adds to the growing problems in Moscow's energy industry, further exacerbated by serious underinvestment (see Eurasia Daily Monitor, December 4, January 9; Kommersant, January 15). Putin keeps bragging about the Russian economy's strong performance, but the surface-level growth (quite possibly exaggerated) has been achieved almost exclusively by pouring heaps of money into the military-indus-

trial complex (Republic.ru, January 9). Many businesses are suffering from extremely high interest rates, and the abundance of money in privileged state corporations has generated heavy inflation (Re: Russia; Levada.ru, January 16).

The U.S.-backed plan for channeling Moscow's frozen financial assets to rebuilding Ukraine has attracted particular ire from Russian "military-patriotic" commentators (Topwar.ru, January 18). The Kremlin has tried to counter this plan with warnings about undermining the confidence of global investors (RBC, January 11). The looming problem of Russian accountability for the war against Ukraine and the losses suffered by many Western businesses compounds this issue, making it much more serious than a mere legal complication (Izvestia, January 16). Putin is implicitly positioning himself as the only leader capable of protecting Russia from demands for massive reparations, which are certain to cripple its economy and impoverish the middle class (The Moscow Times, January 16). This stance presumably protects the Russian president from possible palace coups, as Russian elites, discontented by the long war, see only greater damage to

their interests in challenging Putin (Riddle Russia, January 18).

Neither Russia's resource-exporting economy nor its corrupt bureaucratic regime were prepared for a large-scale war or maintaining the war effort over the long term. Yet, even in the face of these realities, Moscow appears set on keeping the war going. No cadre reshuffling typical for autocratic regimes in distress has happened, as every bureaucrat and courtier remains committed to delivering on Putin's orders. This grim and often reluctant acceptance of a lack of alternatives to partaking in the militarization and de-modernization of Russia is quite different from the firm determination in Ukrainian society to defeat the Kremlin's aggression and assert the country's European future. The forthcoming discussions on expanding Western support are crucial not only for boosting Ukrainian defiance but also for undercutting Putin's grasp on the levers that keep Russia locked in the cage of war.

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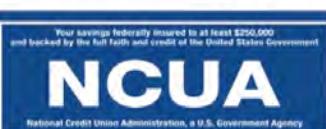
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