

**VOICES
FROM
UKRAINE**

1

Assembly

|| POCKET EDITION || JANUARY 2025

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- Rally of Soldiers' Women. The First Mass Social Protest in Ukraine 2023 ----- / 5 /

- Refusals to fight from both sides of the front: entering the second autumn of war ----- / 11 /

- A volunteer from Kharkov was tortured by the military after trying to leave Ukraine ----- / 19 /

- Strike at a military airfield and other refusals to fight in Russia and Ukraine. Mid-autumn 2023 ----- / 29 /

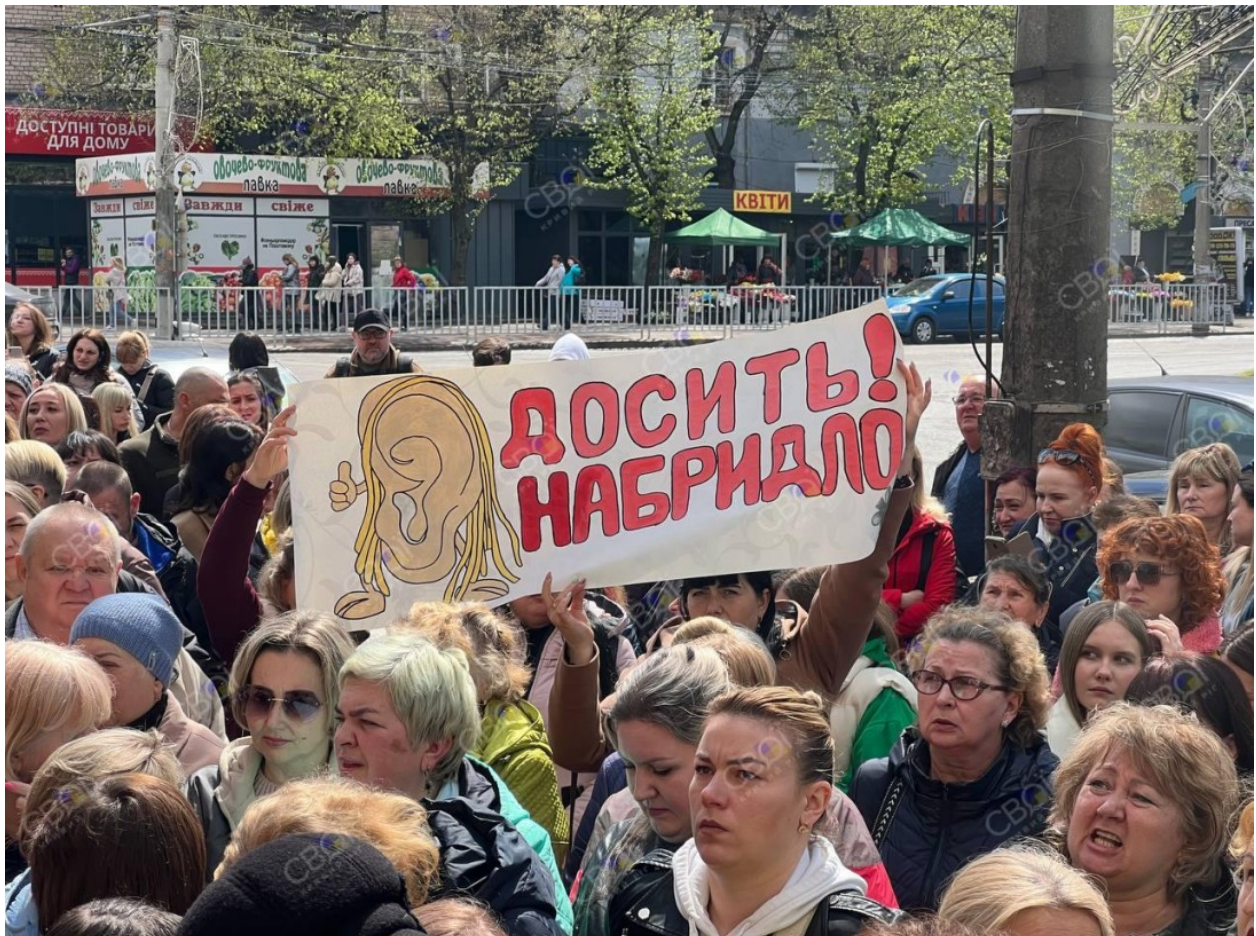
- The darkest hour is before the dawn? Assembly's view on another year of trench warfare in 2024 -- / 41 /

We publish here the English version of several articles by the Kharkiv anarchist collective *Assembly*. Since the beginning of the war, the *Assembly* project has participated in actions of solidarity and resistance in bombed locations under dramatic circumstances. *Assembly* maintains a critical attitude towards the Ukrainian state and its governing bodies. It also provides information to the workers and criticizes the local bosses who use the war situation to further exploit the workers. The *Assembly* project is also a portal for informal journalism / assembly.org.ua / and various autonomous initiatives in Kharkiv. It works on the creation of original content about events in different parts of the city, about which the local media do not report.

All texts in this publication were originally published on website libcom.org

RALLY OF SOLDIERS' WOMEN. THE FIRST MASS SOCIAL PROTEST IN UKRAINE 2023

APRIL 23, 2023



Not only in Russia, the new Verdun meat grinder near Bakhmut and Donetsk is gradually changing the attitude of the population towards the authorities.

Title photo banner: "Enough! Tired!"

In the first half of yesterday, April 22, Liberation Square in Kryvyi Rih, or Krivoy Rog - Zelensky's hometown - was flooded with wives and mothers of soldiers chanting "Shame!" and demanding from the unit's commander Yuri Sinkovsky come out to them. Their relatives from the 129th Separate Territorial Defense Brigade are fighting at the front in the Donetsk region. Territorial defense squads were initially created on a voluntary basis to perform auxiliary tasks, such as patrolling the streets and serving at checkpoints, but last summer they began to be thrown into the hottest spots of Donbass. This immediately started to cause various conflicts with their command.

During the month, family members of the personnel reported on social networks about the lack of support for the brigade there. In particular, according to the wives, the fighters were on the front line without water, food, ammunition, they even bought body armor there at their own expense and drove their own cars instead of armored vehicles. They also wanted to know why the injured and the dead are not being evacuated, speaking about the poor and untimely treatment of the wounded.

Hundreds of protesters blocked the road traffic. Victoria Tretyak, a representative of the City Defense Council, suggested that the protesters apply to the military prosecutor's office with a collective statement that the property transferred from the Council did not reach the servicemen. Neither she nor another deputy chief of the Defense Council, Alexander Piskun, was able to answer a single question. As well as the representative from the brigade commander who arrived at the rally.

The demonstrators decided to prepare a list of questions for the command of the 129th brigade and the Defense Council to answer online.

This is only the largest example of such actions in Ukraine since last month. So, earlier in April, the wives and mothers of the soldiers sent to the front gathered in front of the enlistment center in Ivano-Frankivsk. They tried to call the leadership of the National Guard's military unit 1241 to find out why the commanders sent the soldiers to the front without weapons, support, equipment. From their words, only 25 out of 300 people remained in two days. However, the leadership of the unit did not want to answer and hung up. The soldiers claimed that they did not want to go to certain death and there is intention to judge the survivors for this. In Odessa, especially known for the brutality of enlistment officers who grab guys right on the streets and lock them up in recruiting centers, where they undergo a symbolic medical examination

and immediately go to training, there was a protest against the forcible retention of conscripts in the enlistment office of the Suvorovsky district. The women who came for their husbands called the police, which arrived at the facility and accepted statements about the kidnapping. The intervention made it possible to stop the detention. It is especially interesting that in this case the pharaohs took the side of the people, although usually they, on the contrary, help to load the guys into the enlistment car by force. Perhaps this is just the beginning of the big processes ahead?



All photos are from local media.

REFUSALS TO FIGHT FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE FRONT: ENTERING THE SECOND AUTUMN OF WAR

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

Just a modest local view from the Kharkiv region on the increase in fatigue among the Russian and Ukrainian frontline troops during summer 2023.

The bloody counter-offensive dragged on for months, which turned into a new meat grinder on the Somme after the new Verdun battle near Bakhmut, is being noticeably reflected in the social atmosphere. The interlocutor of Assembly, driving trains in the Kharkov subway, anonymously told back on June 25:

"My brother is fighting near Bakhmut, the 31st assault

brigade. Last week they went on the offensive - got such fight back that retreated further than they were before the offensive. The next day, the colonels arrived with threats. And where to attack, there are cannons, mortars, aircrafts. The day before yesterday, two battalions refused to fight at all. They didn't feed the guys, they threatened to imprison them. Three battalions laid down their arms, because they were driven to the slaughter without support. 30 people were immediately laid on the ground. They gave a new commander, but it's all the same. They barely took some village. There are no tanks, there is no Bradley, they are taking care of it, in order not to upset the West. But they are not taking care of the infantry - they gave two Polish sniper rifles and took them away. There is no food, only one dry ration. Were threatened to imprison, they answer: imprison, and who will come to our positions? Now they continue to fight somehow, but on the spot, without mood. Such things."

The same informant confirms the June article by Der Spiegel about tankers in the Armed Forces of Ukraine who imitate tank damage to avoid their going on the southern counteroffensive. *"They stand still. They gave them a combat vehicle with a plastic hood. Once they went somewhere, it stalled, they barely dug it out. These vehicles are standing, no one wants to drive them, a death capsule,"* said that driver on August 5.

Also in the first half of August, a video interview of political blogger Yury Romanenko, close to Zelensky's Office, with sniper Konstantin Proshinsky, who is fighting near Bakhmut, appeared. It received a resonance, including in the Western media, with the words that the army would not be against the "Korean scenario", as well as criticism of "tough mobilization" and a ban on leaving Ukraine for men, because *"we will never win a war against Russia by numbers."* But besides this, Proshinsky confirmed the Assembly's information about saving Western heavy equipment by infantry

attacks in the style of Russian "meat assaults" and about refusers in the Ukrainian army. According to the military, among the recruits recently sent to Bakhmut, the youngest was 52 years old. Among the rest were men with tuberculosis, hepatitis and diabetes. They were mobilized, allowed to spend the night in the enlistment office, and the next morning were sent to the front. Many of such fighters after the first battle write a refusal to participate in hostilities. This is not desertion, therefore it does not entail criminal liability - the applicant should be transferred to a supply company, and soon such companies *"will number thousands of people,"* the guest of the program said.

Meanwhile, the advance of the Russian Armed Forces in the territory from Kupyansk to Kremenna, apparently, is even less successful than the Ukrainian attempts of breaking through to Azov Coast and Bakhmut. The fighting spirit of the occupiers is so-so too. Our colleagues from ASTRA published on August 9 and 11 new

evidence about a clandestine basement for Russian refusers in Zaytsevo, northeast of the Lugansk region. Mobilized of the "Storm" detachment (military unit 31134) complained to their families how they were being forced to go to certain death. Relatives of several servicemen told ASTRA about this, submitting their complaints to the *Investigative Committee*, as well as an audio recording of a conversation with one of the mobilized. On the recording, the fighter says that they will have a fourth assault in a row, they are thrown into attacks without weapons and rest: *"We are only 20 out of 100 left from "Storm". That's almost 20 minutes of combat. <...> We are being forced to go into the minefields. Why are we so driven there? Because the authorities have already reported that they have already taken everything. <...> For those who went into denial, the commander personally shot through the legs."* All 24 survivors were sent to the basement in Zaytsevo, contact with them disappeared. As the edi-

tor of the channel, Anastasia Chumakova, added to us, the inmates there are constantly different.

The Siberian opposition resource "*People of Baikal*" posted on July 25 about a mobilized resident of Irkutsk named Alexander, who served in the "Storm" unit of the 90th tank division. In early March 2023, he, along with three mates, left the position and went to Alexandrovsk, where they rented an apartment and drank alcohol. There they were detained and sent to the commandant's office. After that, Alexander was found dead near Chervonopopovka (also on the Lugansk-Kharkov borderland) with traces of a noose around his neck. "*I realized that this is not the war that I imagined. This is extermination, we were prepared as a bait. Let them put me in prison, I won't die for this,*" his brother Sergey retells the words of the deceased. He is trying to clarify the circumstances of death through the military prosecutor's office and *Investigative Committee*.

And the timing for both states is running out. More or less warm September, and that's all - again cold, mud and positional clashes. Judging by the sharp tightening of the Russian conscription legislation, a new wave of open mobilization is coming there. However, until the presidential elections in 2024, their authorities are trying to limit themselves by forcing the signing of contracts of the most bonded social strata - convicts, conscripts and Central Asian migrants. Along with those who refuse to fight, both on the Ukrainian and Russian side it is already easy to meet a front-line soldier who vaguely suspects that he is being used as expendable material, but is afraid to admit it to himself. They like to ask random civilians why they are not in the trenches and are not going to go there, but somehow they do not ask the owners of life anything about doing business with representatives of the enemy and corruption in army purchases. How many of them will come to anti-war positions is still a question. It is only certain

that if everything continues as it is now, then someday both states simply will not have the strength for new offensives.

The front line may not even change much compared to the current one, but it may also move to the Ukraine borders of 1991. The defeats of one army from another are not capable of ending the war on their own - they only force the losing regime to more actively pour new tons of human chips into the funeral pyre...

A VOLUNTEER FROM KHARKOV WAS TORTURED BY THE MILITARY AFTER TRYING TO LEAVE UKRAINE

SEPTEMBER 24, 2023



Calling on media in other countries not to keep silence on this story!

News about the latest militaristic and repressive measures has been flowing in such a stream for weeks that it sometimes interrupts attention to events at the front. There is an increasing impression that the Kremlin and the Office of Zelensky are starting to fight not so much with each other, but with those who do not want to fulfill their “duty to their homeland.” The Ukrainian parliament will soon consider bill No. 10062 on a unified electronic register of conscripts and those liable for military service – modeled on the neighboring chamber, where summons will now be considered served from the moment they appear in it. The Ministry of Defense allowed to draft into the Armed Forces of Ukraine those who are of limited fitness due to hepatitis, cured tuberculosis, asymptomatic HIV, mental problems, etc. Bill No. 9672 propo-

ses to cancel the deferment from the army for recipients of the second higher education, post-graduate students and those who first attended the university after 30 years. Doctors are being stormed with large-scale checks for trading in disability documents. Women from among medical staff and pharmacists will be registered with the military from October 1st, and those who have a military record will have to update their data; after the launch of the e-register, they can be screened out when trying to leave Ukraine. Threats of extradition and punishment to men who went abroad, deceiving the authorities (as the authorities themselves did to them all their lives). The Border Guard Service of Ukraine has already begun to publicly show “educational work” with violators of the western border, forcing them to listen to the anthem and the priest’s sermon, after which they are handed over to the enlistment officers. To detect such citizens in the bushes, the border patrols began using drones with

thermal imaging cameras, supposedly so necessary for the front. Then, presumably, they will start to drop grenades or hunting nets on the migrants. In turn, the deputy head of the Russian Guard in Donetsk, former separatist field commander Alexander Khodakovsky called for the creation of barrier detachments for Russian soldiers – because *“many are ready to wait from prison for their loved one, who threw away their weapons and refused to fight, just so as not to die.”*

Against such an informational background, the story of a Kharkov resident at the military recruitment office of Staryi Sambir in the Lviv region received a huge resonance. This is not the first time that they tried to send into the army those captured trying to escape from the “country of dreams”, this time the mobilizers just did a little less work and video records were transferred to bloggers, instantly exploding social networks with anger. The inmate was kept there from September 12th to 19th, beaten on the head with a pistol,

starved, not provided with medical care, threatened with death and that “*the police would not look for him.*” Even before this video, hardly many people doubted that the cops act in conjunction with the enlistment kidnapers, while the State Bureau of Investigation reported on the 19th that the deputy chief of one of the departments in the Sambir districtal recruitment center and its driver are detained. They face up to 10 years in prison under Part 3 of Art. 406 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code (violation of statutory rules, relationships by military personnel using weapons). The Bureau requested that both be taken into custody without bail; the court in Lviv sent them under round-the-clock house arrest for 2 months. The *National Agency on Corruption Prevention* has found suspicious property worth 4.4 million hryvnias owned by the chief of the same facility. Of course, even if they are found guilty and imprisoned, it will not change anything systemically – power corrupts, and absolute po-

wer corrupts absolutely.

The investigation established that the suspects illegally detained at least two men – residents of Kharkov and Krivoy Rog. After being detained by border guards during unauthorized crossing the border with Poland, they were taken to the enlistment office, where the servicemen tried to force them to go through the medical examination. One of these refusers was kept for 10 days, another one for 7 days.

The resident of Krivoy Rog says that his name is Roman Kuzmenko, born November 12, 1985. Our compatriot is 43 years old and he was hospitalized with a concussion; he introduces himself as Vadim Spokoynyi (Ukrainian spelling – Vadym Spokiynyi). *“Vadym is an animator. His stage name is Max. The first weeks Vadym was in Kharkiv – he volunteered a lot, helped people, tried to entertain children in bomb shelters so that they would not be so sad and scared. Later, he moved to Staryi Sambir with his acquaintance Dina.*

They didn't have a home here, so they temporarily lived in a van near the river. I helped them find accommodation. Later, his father also moved in with Vadym, he has a disability, does not walk much, is practically bedridden. His father somehow found the strength to come to the Military Commissariat. But they didn't let him in. They didn't even let me see each other. It's terrible. He is not a criminal and is not in a pre-trial detention center”, his local comrade Sofia Ryzhenko told the LMN newsletter. She does not know whether Vadim has official guardianship over his father. “Can you imagine what it's like to be an animator and work with children? He is very kind, harmless. Well, how can you force a person to sign that he will go to war, if he is afraid of it or cannot?”, the girl asks a rhetorical question. The fact that he, with such a peaceful character, showed an iron will and managed to withstand many days of attempts to break him is what is most shocking in this situation.

Those living in Staryi Sambir note that this is not the first case of such imprisonment of citizens by the enlistment officers. And, as a Kharkov resident named Ivan shared with us on September 20th, hell was going on there long before the full-scale Russian aggression:

“I got into this recruitment center in 2016. I almost got beaten there too. Barely escaped. They even wanted to send me then to the ATO [Anti-Terrorist Operation, the official name for hostilities in Donbass], despite the fact that I had a referral for a surgery in Kharkov. They said I didn't need surgery. I was registered there, went to sign up through the enlistment office, I had documents that I was undergoing surgery, and receipts for payment. Two drunk doctors came (like a medical commission). They said I didn't need surgery. They decided so without practically examining it. They said that the ATO would be just right for me, since I go to the gym and am in good physical shape. I said that I would probably refuse and am informed a little about my

rights. They fucked my brain for a very long time and didn't hand over the documents, and I also communicated in Russian. This really threw them up. Military commissars generally communicated as with cattle. Like you're pissing to go to the ATO, etc., etc. Although they themselves saw this ATO only on television. Something like this, in short."

The Ukrainian public is more and more asking the question: how does this state with such everyday practices differ from the Russian one? In particular, Yevgenia, the wife of the Russian mobilized Yevgeniy P. from military unit 61899, turned to the Russian liberal pacifists ASTRA. For refusing to go to the assault with injuries, he and other soldiers were sent to the basement in Zaytsevo (a village controlled by the so-called "Lugansk People's Republic" near the Kharkov region), where they are threatened and forced to continue fighting. The detainee told his wife about this on September 18th by phone, after which contact with him

disappeared. In May, in Bakhmut, he received a fragment wound in the leg, due to which he was sent to the hospital. However, Yevgeniy was not given aid there; the fragment was not removed, his wife says. He was sent home for rehabilitation for a month. A month later, the commander changed, the new one sent a unit to Naro-Fominsk near Moscow. The entire company with wounds was locked in the barracks and kept there for a week. The surgeon then concluded that they could all continue to fight despite their injuries. They were taken in the direction of Svatovo and abandoned in the forest without any means of subsistence. *“My relatives and I cut off all the hotlines, reached the head of the unit, but our requests and prayers for the salvation of the guys are simply ignored, citing the fact that, they say, there is a war, etc. This is just madness and absurdity, the boys with wounds were thrown just like cannon fodder!”*, the woman told this media.

STRIKE AT A MILITARY AIRFIELD AND OTHER REFUSALS TO FIGHT IN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE. MID-AUTUMN 2023

OCTOBER 26, 2023

Updates on refusals to fight or join armies in Ukraine and Russia amidst the Russian invasion.

According to the National Police of Ukraine, since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, about 8 thousand criminal proceedings have been opened in the country for evading mobilization. As of the middle of this month, the list of leading regions looks like this: in Transcarpathian there are 936, in Dnipropetrovsk –

669, Mykolayiv – 583, Lviv – 528, Volyn – 460, Vinnytsya – 460, Chernivtsi – 424, Kharkiv – 389, Rivne – 360, Ternopil – 342, Sumy – 336. However, only 2015 men received suspicions, of which the most were in the same Transcarpathian region – 322, Volyn region – 193, Rivne – 166, Lviv – 156, Dnipropetrovsk – 146, Poltava – 116, Mykolayiv – 92, Ternopil and Kharkiv – 88 each, Zhitomir – 81, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernihiv – 70 each, Vinnytsya – 62. Of these, 1,877 indictments were sent to court, again in first place it turned out to be Transcarpathia – 297, the top five also included the same Volyn – 171, Rivne – 159, Lviv – 141, Dnipropetrovsk – 138, Poltava – 108. If blackouts begin again, enlistment officers and investigators will have more work: clients who are now hiding in their homes will run charge your phones at “points of invisibility”, where they can be promptly received. Our full material about this is in Russian.

Monitoring by the Assembly of the Ukrainian state re-

gister of court decisions shows that if at the beginning of the year sentences under Art. 336 of the Criminal Code (evasion of mobilization) and Art. 408 of the Criminal Code (desertion) in the Kharkiv region were rare and separate, since the spring and summer they gradually began to be stamped in batches, also tightening the punishment for failure to appear to a unit: in the middle of summer the first draft dodger appeared in our region, who was sentenced to a real prison term, but now this happens regularly. These data are unlikely to differ much from the general situation in the country. A typical example from local social networks of how a summons to a unit can be issued looks like this: the day before yesterday, on Kibalchich Street, cops probably forced a 56-year-old man into a car and took him to the enlistment center, where he became fit for duty in 20 minutes. The next day he already had to show up with his things. Then such people join the ranks of refusers in the *Armed Forces*

of Ukraine, as our magazine told about earlier.

Since the beginning of August, the list of the first instance sentences under Art. 336 has been added by 12, and by 6 cases under Art. 408. During this time, the Leninsky District Court of Kharkiv set a record, sending five evaders to jail, despite one of the convicts has a minor child to support, another is a volunteer of the charity foundation Help Save Kharkiv, and the third explained his act by his reluctance to leave his elderly mother alone. There are no examples of suspended sentences under this article for the specified period in our region: everyone is given 3 years of actual imprisonment.

The Parliament of Ukraine is preparing for voting bill No. 10062 of September 18, 2023 on the creation of a unified electronic register of those liable for military service. According to it, the Ministry of Defense will have access to information about such citizens from all official databases, and the list of information that must

be transferred to the register by various authorities will also be expanded. This was done taking into account the experience of Russia, where, together with the electronic register, the practice of sending summonses online is being introduced. There, the summons will be automatically considered served within 7 days after being entered into the register; after receiving notification of a ban on traveling abroad, the Russian conscript will have to hand over his passport himself within 5 days. In Ukraine, there is currently no such technical capability - the hindrance is that the "mobilization resource" base has not yet been digitized. One way or another, everything is going to the fact that instead of a simple kitchen grumbling about the authority, Ukrainian workers will have to become real lifestyle anarchists. Not only to avoid official employment, as now, but to strive to sever all ties with the state and live clandestinely, including stopping seeking medical care, selling cars and resetting bank cards

being ready to blocking for failure to appear on a summons. The ever-increasing blurring of the difference between the occupation and “their own” will affect the political atmosphere of Ukraine, where war fatigue and distrust of any government are already beginning to dominate, especially in the front-line regions. Although until a social explosion breaks out in Russia, of course, passive protest will prevail: maximal going to underground, withdrawal of assets abroad, flight from the country by any routes that are not yet blocked.

One of the main reasons for increasing mobilization, Ukrainian propaganda cites the fact that the Russian Federation monthly recruits tens of thousands of contract soldiers into the army, but at the same time, recruits are combined with those already serving. Contracts are signed by mobilized, by mercenaries of the disbanded Wagner PMC, and those who decided to renew the contract after expiration. At the same time, instead of the ideological component, the Kremlin is

increasingly relying on money and hints to resume open mobilization if it fails to recruit enough contract soldiers.

However, hidden mobilization among conscripts, convicts, debtors and other forced categories is one of the factors disintegrating the army. Based on the analysis of statistics from the judicial department of the Supreme Court of the RF for the first half of 2023, compared to the first half of 2022, the total number of convicted military personnel increased by 40%. From January to June, 2,694 people were convicted, of which 1,270 were convicted for crimes against military service, the rest for other crimes, including murder, theft, drug possession, drunk driving (this does not count the violence committed by ex-Wagnerists who did not join the Russian Armed Forces). A year earlier, there were 1,918 convictions, of which 543 were for military crimes. Thus, the number of sentences for military crimes has increased by almost two and a half times.

These crimes include failure to comply with order, desertion, unauthorized leaving of service, feigning illness and voluntary surrender.

The Russian liberal-pacifist Telegram channel ASTRA counted on October 24 at least 173 Russian military personnel placed in illegal camps for refusers in the occupied territories of Ukraine over the past 10 days. In their opinion, this is just the tip of the iceberg – what they managed to establish through appeals to the channel. Messages came mainly from the Kupyansk direction on the Kharkiv-Lugansk borderland; they are full of the same complaints about drunken commanders, lack of ammunition, reconnaissance, artillery support, food and water. Some people do not want to fight at all, others refuse precisely to go to the slaughter. Most often, stories feature a torture basement in the village of Zaytsevo, which began to fill up en masse last fall, then was dispersed after publicity, and is now operating again. How many people are si-

ting there at the moment is unknown.

A full overview of such incidents over the past month is available here in Russian, let us limit ourselves to only the most bright and recent case. According to ASTRA, about 150 mobilized and contract soldiers, who had previously been taken from Zaitsevo and the same prison in Rassypnoye 15 km away, were held at an army training ground in the Kursk region. On the evening of October 24, they were taken to Voronezh, threatening to send them to Rostov-on-Don, and from there to an assault on Avdeevka near Donetsk, where Russian troops had been attacking for two weeks. From the words of another informant, the number of detainees could be even higher, because there were 11 Ural trucks in the convoy. 50 prisoners were taken out of Rassypnoye after a lawyer arrived directly there. *“At first I went to Zaitsevo, but there was no one in Zaitsevo, and I found out that they were being held in Rassypnoye. I drove up to the premises, it looked like a*

school building. I went straight to the fence. A military man looked out from behind the fence. I walked up, knocked, and showed my lawyer's ID. I told him: I know for sure that my clients are here, I want to talk to them, he didn't even look. He says "wait" and leaves. He came and said: "there's no one here." I ask: what are you doing here with weapons then? He repeated again: "there is no one here and leave here," he told ASTRA. "My husband is mobilized, he refused to go on the offensive on Makeyevka. They were placed in Zaitsevo. Then, apparently, there was a check and they were driven around for 9 hours and returned back to the "LPR" [so-called Lugansk People's Republic]. Today he managed to call from someone else's number. They are near Kursk, waiting for a car to Rostov. As I understand it, from there the plane will be in the direction of Avdeevka. He said that they called the prosecutor's office, but they were told: an order is an order. The local military police are threatening the riot police that

they will still go to the front, but already beaten,” the wife of one of the inmates told the same media.

The lawyer hired by the families was not allowed to see the protesters, they were denied medical aid. A group of men who were taken to the Voronezh airfield Baltimore, according to their relatives, *"stood up and said: call anyone, we won't go anywhere from here."* This was already at the very end of the day. More than 30 of those taken there refused to board the plane to Rostov and waited for the military prosecutors. *"They give them the wrong weapon, no one knows why, they take everything, half of it has already been sent on the plane. They were intimidated to such an extent that people stopped standing their ground. Were sent without documents. My husband is still waiting for the prosecutor, but it is unknown how this will end,"* a relative of a military man told ASTRA. By that time, some of the refusers had already been transferred to Rostov, having taken away their belongings, including

telephones and equipment purchased with personal funds. At 23:46 Moscow time, those who refused to board were taken back to Voronezh, but those who flew to Rostov had to go to Avdeevka.

According to the latest data, 35 refusers from regiments 488, 283 and 254, who did not board the plane, were returned to Voronezh. As of yesterday, October 25, they were at the Pogonovo training ground, where two commanders of the 254th regiment were threatening them to return. “We were told that we would be zeroed out, that is, they would shoot us. Because we know a lot,” one of them told ASTRA. He later added that three of the soldiers are runaway from this base... We continue to monitor the situation.

THE DARKEST HOUR IS BEFORE THE DAWN? ASSEMBLY'S VIEW ON ANOTHER YEAR OF TRENCH WARFARE IN 2024

DECEMBER 27, 2023



In the picture: “War is a kind of action, thanks to which people who do not know each other kill each other for the sake of glory and benefit of people who know each other very well, but do not kill each other”

(Paul Valéry)

This is a shortened version of our Russian-language publications from November and December.

This word began to appear in almost every analytical material of the Western press about the Russian-Ukrainian war. Since the retreat of the Russian army from Kherson in November last year, the front line has frozen almost without movement, despite the bloody attempts of each side to achieve a turning point in their favor and gain operational space. After the new Verdun – the winter-spring meat grinder near Bakhmut – came a new battle on Somme for a dozen villages in the steppes of the Azov Coast, which from

October smoothly turned into another Verdun / Bakhmut around Avdeevka. If it falls, the same will continue on new frontiers a little further. Meanwhile, the mess of mud and corpses in Krynki, perhaps, is already looking like a new Passendale.

If the current positional balance is not compared to the First World War only by the lazy, its finale is not yet remembered so often. It was disrupted by the workers of the warring countries: *“The war did not end in 1918 because of the military defeat of one side or another. The generals would have happily spent a few more years killing millions of people to achieve their goals. It ended because it was against the various armies and populations of Europe took action. Most people know that Russia emerged from the war in 1917 thanks to the Russian Revolution. One of the key factors in the revolution was that the workers and peasants of Russia rebelled against the war and against their own ruling class. What is less known is that that there had*

been major mutinies in the French army, as well as smaller but equally significant mutinies in the British army, in 1917. The key uprising ended the war was the Kiel mutiny of the German navy in 1918. The High Command, in a desperate attempt to turn the tide of the war, ordered bring the practically intact fleet to sea. However, the naval underground organizations, which included anarchist sailors, were already expecting this. In response, they formed the Soviets and seized their ships, surrounding ports and barracks. This caused a wave of military mutinies and workers' strikes, forcing the panicked ruling class of not only Germany, but also Europe as a whole to sit down at the negotiating table and work out a peace treaty." By the time of the probable arrival of Trump or another isolationist candidate for the presidency in the United States, the Russian-Ukrainian war will rage for 3 years already. This is approximately the same amount of time it took for the revolutionary situation to appear

then. Neither the barrier detachments, nor the military tribunals, nor the hordes of street screamers for “until the bitter end” helped.

The very threat that those celebrating 2024 in the trenches next New Year will meet on the neutral land, drink 100 grams each and go home with weapons, can become a powerful incentive for the Kremlin and the Ze-Office to begin to negotiate in order to prevent something much more dangerous for both of them option. But even if the scenario of the last century beginning is repeated – instead of, for example, the story of Iran and Iraq, which got stuck in the same massacre for 8 years and then both declared it won, that only strengthened the two regimes – this means that the next year will bring many more rivers of blood. According to BBC News Ukraine, with the new bill on mobilization Ukrainians may be required to appear at the recruitment centers within 48 hours after receiving a summons by email or registered mail.

Death postmen will receive more tools to check the military registration documents of citizens on the streets, deliver them to enlistment offices, and put them on the wanted list. For ignoring of summonses, the terms of arrest and fines will be increased, it will be possible to prosecute violators in absentia, and the circle of those entitled to a deferment will be narrowed. It is also proposed military registration for those in prison. Will prisoners want to go to the front, knowing that even law-abiding people, to put it mildly, are not very well trained and equipped – a big question that could threaten prison riots. It will be especially hard for draft evaders who prefer to go to prison rather than fight. When the “Assembly” began to sound the alarm about the fact that Kharkov courts stopped issuing suspended sentences for failure to appear to a unit, many local readers brushed it aside like it is “better to jail than to the grave.” Well, let's see how soon the first will cease to be an alternative to

the second.

There is no public information to what extent the mobilization plan for Kharkov is currently being implemented, but the state authorities spoke it out during the autumn in neighboring cities. In Poltava, implementation is only 13%, in Sumy – 8%. A week ago, the chief of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine Kyrylo Budanov admitted the minimal effectiveness of forcibly mobilized Ukrainians: *“Everyone who wanted came in the first 6 months. Who is being drafted now? Unfortunately, there will be no good answer here. If you don’t find motivation for these people, then how many people are forced or in accordance with the law “No matter how hard you drive them, their efficiency will be almost zero. Which, in principle, is what has been happening lately.” A former adviser to the Zelensky's Office and one of its top propagandists Alexei Arestovich said in the last days of November: “Let me name some numbers: 100 people who left military*

units without permission per day in Ukraine. 100 people per day, it's a brigade per month. A brigade escapes from the front per month. 4,5 million draft evaders who don't want to register for military service. In units there are 30-40, up to 70% refusers. It's just: "I won't fight, do with me what you want." What are the borders of '91st year?" Knowing his craving for hype on any occasion, the estimates may be exaggerated, but our sources said about numerous refusers in the *Armed Forces of Ukraine* back during the summer counteroffensive. This is not desertion, so such militaries should be transferred to non-combat units.

Petersburg liberal activist Grigory Sverdlin, founder of the "Go Forest Go" project to help Russians avoid participation in war, shared the following statistics on his Facebook page:

"There are more and more deserters. In October, almost every fifth (!) appeal to Go Forest Go was with a request for help to leave the unit:

April 121/4288 = 2.8%

May 87/997 = 8.7%

June 54/644 = 8.3%

July 115/1142 = 10%

September 185/1614 = 11.4%

October 218/1197 = 18.2%

Approximately 30% of deserters remain in Russia. Because there is nothing to live on abroad, it's scary to cross the border and not leave the relatives behind. They hide, move, but stay. We also help with this as much as we can."

As he added to us, in November the figure was 174/1481 – that is, 12% of requests. The increase, in his opinion, is caused by the fatigue of the mobilized, who no longer hope for rotation, and general fatigue from the war. Other journalists were told in this organization that several unrelated deserters told how almost 80% of their squads escaped, and only about

15% of them were caught.

According to counting by “Mediazona”, released on the anniversary of the start of Russian mobilization, over the year in the Russian Federation there have been almost four times more sentences for unauthorized leaving of a unit and desertion than there were annually in such cases before the war: since July 2023, courts have handed down more than 500 of them every month. 2-3% of the Russian army group in Ukraine looks like a small figure for now, but even this is a percentage of the losses of Soviet troops killed in Afghanistan out of the total number of those who served there, and how many escaped were not caught and are listed as missing - one can only guess. It should also be taken into account that the motivation to desert is reduced by the European borders closed to Russians, the social control system in Russian cities, unprecedented in the history of wars, and the predominantly open terrain of south-eastern Ukraine,

where it is difficult to hide from the military police.

The decay of the Russian army is also hindered by Ukrainian propaganda, which portrays as enemies all Russian citizens who are not lacqueying for Ukraine, even if they refuse to fight (they say, these are the same “orcs”, only funky). This is being done for the same reason why in the defense of Ukraine the emphasis is on driving people under pressure instead of developing voluntary initiative: horizontal ties at the grassroots are dangerous for anyone holding power. But this same barrack slavery can contribute to the fraternization of yesterday’s workers in camouflage uniforms, quickly making them understand that forced people have nothing to share, and the enemy is those who drive them to slaughter.

Almost right now, was published a statement of Russian soldiers from the Moscow and Ulyanovsk regions about monetary extortions and beatings from the command. Servicemen of military unit 41680 sta-

ted that two weeks after signing the contract, they were sent to an assault on the Avdeevka direction without training or preparation. From their words, most fighters are “beaten and kept in basements” before a mission. Their colleague Artyom Yakupov was diagnosed with a concussion after another beating. In this footage provided by the military, the man can be seen with bruises on his face. Artyom’s girlfriend also confirmed to reporters that he was beaten by his commanders. On October 12 he received a shell shock, and on the 20th he was sent on an assault, after which he did not return. They also claim that monetary “extortions” of up to 50 thousand rubles per month are collected by the sergeant majors of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd companies. The money allegedly goes toward “construction materials, vehicle parts, uniforms, funeral services and psychological aid to the relatives of the dead.” In fact, according to the military, the collected funds are spent on the personal needs of the com-

mand. *“We repeatedly hear prices to avoid storming. Some pay 100 thousand rubles,”* the military said.

A lieutenant colonel from East Siberia mysteriously died near the front line. Sergei Savenok was born in the Donetsk region, studied in Simferopol, since the late 80s he lived in the Irkutsk region and served as a political instructor in a military unit. Then retired in 2009 and last year voluntarily decided to fight. The local opposition media “People of Baikal” quotes on November 13 the words of his wife Yelena: *“He went to the special military operation in September last year along with the mobilized. He was 62 years old, he was very worried about the boys, how they would be there. He has been in the service all his life, he has combat experience, and he wanted to teach the boys how to fight. When they told me that he shot himself in Svato, I didn’t believe it. This is not that kind of person. I believe that he was killed.”* According to her, in May of this year, the officer came on vacation and complai-

ned to his wife that it was hard for him at the front and he did not want to return there. In July, she was informed that Sergei had shot himself with an automatic rifle. He was buried in August.

After being notified of the death, Yelena immediately wrote to Putin's online reception, from where her appeal was forwarded to the *Investigative Committee*. Lawyer Yakov Iontsev, who is working on the case, believes that Sergei was killed by his colleagues: *"The serviceman died under vague circumstances. We believe he was killed by another serviceman, that is, a representative of the authorities. We can easily imagine a violation of the rights of a soldier, less easily even his murder. But it's hard to imagine that someone shoots a lieutenant colonel, and the investigation pretends that nothing happened."*

There is still no response from the investigators.

The New York Times, citing American officials, warned

on December 11 that *"without changes in strategy, 2024 could be akin to 1916, the deadliest year of World War I, when thousands of young men lost their lives and the battle lines changed very little."* So, the Overton window is opening more and more, and may eventually swing so wide that it breaks off its hinges and blows someone's head off.

The policy of war to the last Ukrainian/Russian rests to a great extent on patriotic women who are not afraid to go into the trenches themselves and look at it from the tribune like at gladiators (but the Colosseum at least had a paid entrance, whereas in this case, rooting for "our team" is available for free). If they are forced to try to overcome it with their own hands, they will immediately say "let's come to an agreement", "I don't owe this state anything" and "why do I need this Ukraine/Russia at all". Therefore, both dictatorial regimes will postpone the mobilization of women until the last minute. But a critical mass of those who do not

want to defend others' villas and yachts is gaining step by step even without this...

Stay tuned to the "Assembly" - there's going to be a lot more interesting and important things in the coming year! Let's move on!



**ПРЕДСТАВЬ СЕБЕ:
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А НА НЕЕ НИКТО НЕ
ИДЕТ!**

"SUPPOSE THEY GIVE A WAR AND NO ONE COMES!"

NEITHER ZELENSKI NOR PUTIN



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Let's Turn Capitalist War & Peace into World Social Revolution

