

News Bulletin

International Department of the Central Committee of the RKSM(b)



You are reading the fourteenth edition of the news bulletin composed by the International Department of the RKSM(b). Preparing it, we strived to offer you a perspective on the events in Russia, different from the one of mass-media. Hopefully, this will alleviate your analysis of the developments in Russia and strengthen our mutual international cooperation. You are free to use the bulletin as you deem appropriate, e.g. you can translate it and publish on your media or distribute among your activists. We will be glad to answer any of your questions and will appreciate your feedback.

In brief

The RKSM(b) hosts the 5th NATE! Festival



On the festival stage. Photo by Andrey Bokhan

On 9 May in Moscow, the RKSM(b) co-organised the fifth festival of music and poetry, “NATE!”, dedicated to the 81st anniversary of the Soviet Victory over fascism. At a time when the memory of the war is increasingly turned into a state ritual and a tool of nationalist propaganda, the festival reminded the attendees of the class character of that struggle.

Tradition of the “Nate!” festival, name referencing Maykovskiy poem “Take it!”, springs from the political situation in Russia, where non-pro-government demonstrations are de facto banned.

During the evening, the stage featured contemporary thematic and Soviet wartime songs as well as songs in German and Spanish, emphasizing the international character of the anti-fascist resistance and workers’ solidarity. Apart from performance of several singers and bands, numerous speakers stepped on stage with poetry reading or

thematic speeches.

Activist of the Russian Labour Front Alexander Batov gave a lecture on the International Brigades and German communists. In contrast to modern school narratives presenting the Great Patriotic War as a war of “Russians against Germans,” he described it as a conflict between capitalism and communism. He also spoke about German communists who fought against Nazism and the resistance movement that involved around 1.5 million people across Europe.

The RKSM(b) activist Irina Staerk compared Soviet and modern Russian cinema. Using examples from films about the so-called “Special Military Operation,” she showed that while Soviet films focused on tragedy, collectivism, and human dignity, modern ones often promote militarism, dehumanization, and violence.

Candidate of Economic Sciences Rafael Abdulov, in his lecture “The Price of War and Peace,” examined the economic side of Victory. Using figures, he showed how the Soviet Union, despite losing around 40% of its national income in the first year of the war, defeated the German war machine through planned economy and industrial mobilization.

Once again, the “NATE!” festival became a place where music, poetry, and political education came together in a discussion about the past and the future. Participants not only recalled the lessons of Victory, but also reminded the audience that new struggles lie ahead.

1 May Campaign of the Russian Labour Front



Construction workers with the leaflets. Photo by the RLF

The Russian Labour Front (RLF) initiated and publicised a nationwide leaflet distribution campaign to remind the working class of the true meaning of 1 May.

One week before the International Workers Day, the RLF in addition to its regular activities among the workers and the popular strata published a leaflet design alongside an appeal to Front activists and supporters to distribute printed leaflets in workplaces, streets and public spaces. The message stated:

“To mark 1 May, we have produced leaflets for distribution to highlight the importance of the work done by ordinary people of all ages, genders and nationalities”.

The editors further added:

“These days, you can no longer say, – «It doesn’t concern me», because working conditions are getting worse every day. Today, this is a matter for us all”.

The leaflet itself carried a short and direct message:

“1 May – is about you: about your wages; about your labour conditions; about your safety; about your life; about your pride. It is your day. Let’s take our pride back!”

Supporters and activists of the RLF from across Russia, from Moscow, Kazan and Rostov-on-Don to Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk and Khabarovsk, responded to the appeal. Its spread across European Russia, the Urals, Siberia and the Far East showed the nationwide scale of the campaign. Thousands of leaflets were distributed for more than two weeks, with activity continuing up to 9 May.

Four-Day Week and Layoffs Spread Across Russian Industry

A number of industrial companies have announced reduction in their production in recent months, cutting working week down to 3–4 days and layoffs, due to a falling demand.

After three years of GDP growth fuelled largely by military spending, Russia’s economy is losing momentum. The boom has not produced stable civilian development. Demand is weakening, credit remains expensive, investment is being postponed, and more factories are moving into survival mode. In April 2026, the Central Bank cut its key rate to 14.5%, but this still remains a heavy burden for business borrowing. The Bank of Russia kept its 2026 growth forecast at only 0.5–1.5%.

One of the clearest cases is the Chelyabinsk Electric Locomotive Repair Plant. Regional labour authorities confirmed staff reductions and the introduction of a four-day week from May 1 to June 30, 2026. The plant linked the move to a sharp fall in orders from Russian Railways. According to management, there were no repair orders for electric locomotives for the second half of the year.

This is not isolated. The same pattern is spreading:

- DAAZ, an auto-parts plant in Dimitrovgrad, moved part of its staff to a three-day week from January 19. Around 400 support and engineering workers were affected; management also admitted that 270–280 layoffs could follow if the economic situation does not improve.
- MMK, one of Russia’s largest steelmakers, announced a 10% cut in management staff and stopped idle units after capacity utilization fell to around 60%. Its management said no recovery in demand for steel products was expected in 2026.
- Chelyabinsk Electrometallurgical Plant reduced ferroalloy production for three months from April 1, citing a significant fall in demand and the inability to sell all output. The decision affected 170 workers.
- Uralvagonzavod moved part of its civilian rail-car-production staff to a four-day week because of falling demand for civilian products. Workers were offered transfers to other areas, including defence production.
- CEMROS introduced a temporary four-day week

at its management company and plants because of falling cement consumption and rising imports.

On the ground, the picture looks darker. At the top, officials still hide behind macro figures: unemployment remains near historic lows. What they prefer not to say is what kind of “employment” this increasingly is—four days instead of five, fewer shifts, lower pay, and the constant threat of being

Russia’s “White-List” Internet

Across Russia, mobile operators and regional authorities are increasingly cutting all access to mobile internet. What was first associated mainly with border regions, now has spread deeper into the country’s territory. There are recurring shutdowns in major cities, with some regions facing interruptions for days or even weeks. At the same time, the federal government is developing “white lists”—lists of websites and apps that continue working when the wider mobile internet is restricted.

The Ministry of Digital Development says these lists are needed so that “socially important” services remain available. Reported examples include Gosuslugi, Russia’s state services portal, government websites, and large Russian digital companies such as Yandex and VK.

The same process is visible in policy toward VPNs, tools used to bypass blocked websites. The authorities are now forcing Russian platforms to police VPN use. Services that continue to work normally with a VPN risk removal from the white list, exclusion from mandatory pre-installation on

next in line for “optimization.” Capital can always find a statistic to prove workers are doing fine—even while cutting the working week under their feet.

The four-day week is spreading across Russian industry—not as a social reform, but as a symptom of economic decline.

devices, and loss of state IT accreditation and tax benefits. Major platforms increasingly restrict access until users switch their VPN off.

Independent researchers examining the Android code and network traffic of MAX (a government-promoted messenger developed by VK) reported that it can detect an active VPN and send network information, including the user’s external IP address and mobile operator, to its servers. A later code analysis found an analytics module designed to collect the package names and installation dates of non-system apps, which could reveal installed VPN tools.

The real danger is that disruptions to communication are becoming normal in Russia. Measures introduced as temporary wartime responses are creating a system in which the state can decide when people may communicate, which platforms remain available, and what information can spread. This system can cut people off from one another and push them onto services that follow state rules and collect their data.

In depth

Defence Ministry recruits students for new drone forces with money, study benefits and promises of a safer service

Russian Defence Ministry is expanding a recruitment campaign aimed at university and college students, offering them one-year contracts in the newly created Unmanned Systems Forces. The campaign is being promoted through educational institutions, where students are promised high payments, academic leave, tuition benefits and service in technical roles rather than assault units.

The scale of the recruitment drive appears significant. According to recent reports, the Ministry planned to recruit 78,800 people into the drone

forces by the end of 2026. Other media have reported that more than 200 universities and vocational colleges have been involved in recruitment efforts.

A considerable number of students’ feedback on this tendency was collected by us. On Student’s-day—25 January, RKSM(b) launched a campaign #HeTepи (translates from Russian as “DoNotTolerate”), which encourages students in Russia to share information about social and academic issues they are facing in their schools, colleges and universities. Students started to send us letters with particular cases of injustice; poor





conditions of classes and dormitories; lack of perspective for decent employment after graduation; reductions or absence of scholarships; degradation of scientific research programs and equipment and many other problems. When recruiting materials started to appear in educational institutions, it became a popular subject of letters, we received from students as a part of #НеТерпи campaign. They described not only the materials, but also obligatory meetings, where officials were encouraging young male students to sign a military contract.

The recruitment drive is being promoted through educational institutions. Some universities publish dedicated pages explaining how students can sign up, what documents they need and which university officials they should contact. These pages present the service as a technological career track: operating drones, working with equipment, communications, engineering tasks and computer-based systems. The benefits are in the centre of the military proposal. Student recruits are promised a one-year contract, academic leave, the right to return to their studies, and in some cases an individual study schedule or distance learning options. University pages also mention possible transfer from paid tuition to state-funded study, financial support from the institution, help with later employment, and preferential admission to further education programs.

The financial offer is much larger than ordinary student income. The Russian University of Transport (MIIT) recruitment page, for example, advertises a “guaranteed income” from 5.54 million roubles for a year of service. It also lists a one-time payment of 2.3 million roubles, including 1.9 million from the Moscow government and 400,000 from the Defence Ministry, as well as monthly payments that can reach hundreds of thousands of roubles depending on the stage and location of service.

Officials say the contracts are voluntary and limited in duration. Russia’s Defence Ministry has also said students joining the drone forces should serve only in their assigned specialty and should not be transferred to other units without consent. Students are told they are not signing up for assault infantry, but for a specialised drone role. But the promises remain contested. Independent media have reported pressure on students, including those with academic problems. According to Verstka, students at Bauman Moscow State Technical University were required to visit an unmanned aerial vehicles centre as part of their pre-graduation practice; students told the outlet they were warned that refusing to attend could mean the practice would not be counted, potentially blocking graduation.

Cases have also been reported in which struggling college students were offered one-year army contracts as drone operators after falling behind academically, with the contract presented as an alternative to expulsion. Lawyers have warned that the promise of a one-year contract may be uncertain under Russia’s ongoing mobilisation regime, which has already complicated the dismissal of other contract soldiers. The risks for students are not theoretical. Several newspapers have reported the death of 23-year-old Valery Averin, described by relatives and media reports as a student recruited into the drone forces. His adoptive mother said he was trained as a drone operator but was later sent into combat, where he has been killed in action.

For students with financial problems, tuition debt, failed exams or fear of expulsion, the offer can be like an escape route of these very serious problems. This recruitment campaign is not appealing only to students’ patriotism. It also turns financial and education benefits into tools of military recruitment, using the vulnerability of young people against them.

