

News Bulletin

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



#15



You are reading the fifteenth edition of the periodic 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 it on your media or distribute it among your activists. We will be glad to answer any of your questions and will appreciate your feedback.

In brief

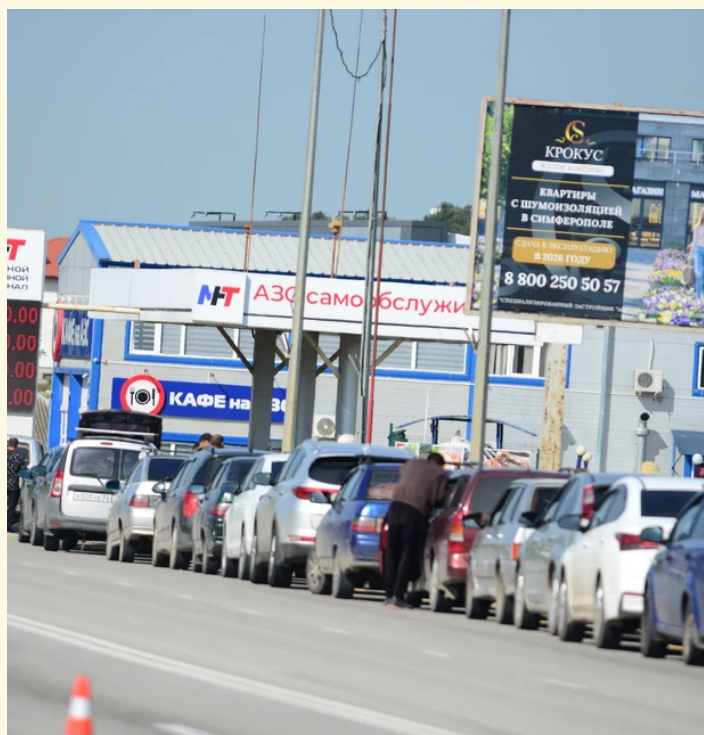
Oil-Rich Russia Queues for Fuel

Across Russia, the fuel crisis is producing scenes that would appear absurd in one of the world's largest oil-producing countries. Long lines form outside stations that still have petrol, while stations that have run dry stand empty. Russian media have reported arguments and fights in the queues as drivers grow desperate, sometimes involving weapons. Restrictions on fuel sales have been introduced in almost 60 regions.

The shortages followed repeated Ukrainian strikes on refineries and other oil infrastructure. The government introduced export bans, emergency monitoring and regional limits on sales. President Vladimir Putin publicly admitted that queues remained and that drivers could not always find the grade of petrol they needed. Meanwhile, for taxi drivers, couriers, truckers and small traders, every hour in a queue is unpaid time. An empty pump can mean losing an entire working day.

The crisis is now disrupting basic social functions. In Stavropol region, the authorities restricted official car use to save around 3,000 tonnes of fuel. Buses, ambulances, firefighters, road services and municipal services had to receive supplies through special arrangements. The federal government also ordered priority supplies for vehicles delivering food, warning that shortages could cause products to spoil and transport costs to raise shop prices.

The government has also weakened environmental standards. Some producers may now sell



Gas station queue in Crimea.
Photo by Andrey Tolmachev

petrol containing up to 15 times more sulphur than modern fuel, and diesel with up to 35 times more. The lower-quality fuel also means more frequent engine and exhaust-system breakdowns. In addition, while poisoning the lungs of Russian people, oil companies received 210.6 billion roubles in state compensation in June.

Zyuganov Warns Russia's Rulers Against Revolution

Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of Russia's largest "communist" party, The CPRF, has warned the government that its economic policies could lead to a repeat of the 1917 Revolution, and urged the authorities to prevent it.

Speaking in the State Duma on 21 April, Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov described Russia's economic situation as deeply alarming. He pointed to falling production and the worsening financial crisis. Unless the authorities urgently changed course, he said, "by autumn we will face what happened in 1917." He added: "We have no right to repeat this."

The statement exposed more than Zyuganov probably wanted to say. A leader who presents himself as an heir of Lenin was not calling on workers to organise against capitalism. He was warning the capitalist government of Russia that their policies could provoke resistance from below. He was begging the government of Vladimir Putin to do what the government of Nicholas II failed to: introduce reforms before social unrest threatens the existing order.

This is the real role of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. It uses Soviet symbols, praises the October Revolution and speaks against the oligarchs. But in practice, its leadership acts as a neutralizer of class consciousness of the proletariat,

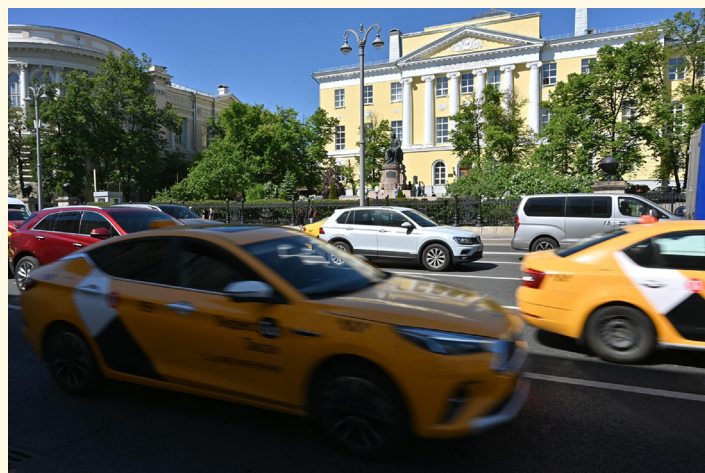


G. Zyuganov speaking in the State Duma
Photo: KPRF-TV

and an adviser to the state. In the same speech, Zyuganov declared his support for President Vladimir Putin and blamed officials for failing to carry out the president's strategy.

The CPRF later tried to cover up the embarrassing meaning of its leader's words. The official transcript was rewritten to say that Russia "may" face a repeat specifically of February 1917. But Zyuganov did not make this distinction in his actual speech. The video of the speech openly contradicts the altered text. By publishing a false transcript, the party tried to paint this anti-revolutionary statement into a carefully constructed historical argument. But the clumsy attempt at rewriting Zyuganov's words makes the truth clear. The CPRF celebrates revolution in its symbols, while carrying the banner of reaction in reality.

Taxi Apps Take the Profit, Drivers Take the Risk



More than 5 million drivers in Russia may be working outside the official taxi system, according to an estimate by the taxi service Maxim. Drivers are fleeing the official platform economy that has become increasingly unbearable for them.

Taxi platforms control fares, distribute orders

and take a large share of every payment. But drivers carry almost all the costs. They must buy or rent the car, pay for fuel, repairs, insurance and compulsory checks, and absorb the losses from waiting without passengers. They are called independent contractors when they have to pay the bills. At the same time, they are treated like employees when an algorithm decides what work they receive and how much they earn.

The state has made this system even harsher. New registration, inspection and vehicle requirements impose more costs on drivers, but give them none of the basic protections of employees: no guaranteed wage, paid leave, sick pay or protection against arbitrary decisions by the platform.

Many drivers are leaving the applications and dealing with passengers directly. More than 11,000 messenger chats and online groups now allow passengers to publish routes and drivers to offer a price without an aggregator. Their combined audi-

ence is estimated at around 23 million accounts. These arrangements can mean a lower fare for the passenger and more income for the driver. But they also leave both sides with weaker legal and insurance protection.

The crisis has also produced attempts at collective resistance. As reported in Bulletin #13, hundreds of taxi drivers across Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan held a one-day strike on December 15th against Yandex's low fares, high commissions and control over their work. They demanded lower

commissions, higher minimum fares and the right to see trip destinations without paying extra. The Russian Labour Front supported the action by distributing leaflets and publicizing the drivers' demands.

The growth of the grey market is the logical result of a platform economy that takes the powers of an employer while refusing every employer's obligation. Drivers are being pushed out of legal work by low pay and high costs, by weak worker protections and strong corporate control.

In depth



The fight of the “Druzhina” trade union

At a bread factory belonging to the “Kolomen-sky” holding in the Moscow region, workers organized a collective struggle to improve their working conditions, forming a trade union and resisting pressure from management. The Russian Labour Front is the key supporting force for workers in this struggle. Below, we will tell the whole story and try to explain why, although it might seem small, this story is an important milestone in the development of class struggle in Russia.

First campaign

After receiving news and many messages from workers in the spring and summer of the previous year about harsh working conditions in the bread

industry of the region, the Moscow section of the Russian Labour Front (RLF) began its campaign in support of the workers of all bread factories. The RLF activists and supporters started to spread leaflets and posters near the factories, with the heading “Are you working for a bun?” and called on workers to show solidarity, organize, and report working conditions for publication. The RLF was reporting about recent tragic incidents at different plants, such as deaths, limb mutilations, and other situations that happened due to violations of labour-safety regulations, as well as about low wages, obsolete equipment, lack of appropriate days off, vacations, or sick leave, and disrespectful treatment by management.





An RLF activist spreads leaflets near a bread factory
Photo: RLF

During the first months of the campaign, activists who were distributing leaflets near the Kolomensky plant were mostly getting neutral to positive feedback about the working conditions. However, from time to time, workers admitted that there were problems, including overtime and fines. In the beginning of July 2025, someone from the holding's administration came to the comments section of the RLF Telegram channel, questioning the validity of the allegations about problems at the plant. Then, on 4 July, it emerged that the administration of the Kolomensky plant was forcing employees to take a polygraph test. Those who refused to take it were threatened with dismissal.

“Druzhina”

A year later, on 4 July 2026, the RLF reported that at the Kolomensky plant in Balashikha, in the Moscow region, workers had formed a trade union called “Druzhina” (“Дружина”—translates from Russian as “voluntary squad”). Their first demands were as follows:

- stop the pressure;
- bring the microclimate in the working areas into compliance with legal requirements [which includes the temperature to be below 28.5°C];
- include the trade union in all commissions on labour safety and incident investigations;
- provide a room for the trade union's work;

The RLF has been helping the trade union with legal, methodological, and organizational aspects from the start.

After the trade union put forward its demands, the plant management came out with a so-called “honour code,” which, among other things, required workers to change into their own clothes before

going out for a cigarette break. When people are working in extreme heat and their uniforms are soaked with sweat, it is challenging to change into clean everyday clothes quickly. As a result, fines were imposed, and for some workers it was the last straw: they started to resign. The overall situation regarding working conditions was deteriorating: the plant administration increased the workload by cutting the lunch-break time in half without compensation; the temperature in the workshops was unbearable; air conditioners were directed at the equipment and rarely at the workers—only when the workers were losing consciousness; the production plan set by the bosses was not feasible, and the administration refused to explain it.

Despite all the complaints, the incidents, and the heat in the workshops, conditions remained unbearable, and the administration of the plant did nothing to resolve the situation. Organized workers moved into action.

Starting from the morning of 12 July, furnace operators at the Kolomensky bread factory refused to work. Formally, they did not start a strike. Instead, they relied on Article 216.1 of the Labour Code of Russia, which permits workers to refuse to work in conditions dangerous to their health or life until the danger is eliminated. An immediate outright strike would have been illegal (and hence prosecutable): according to the Labour code it is required to hold formal preliminary talks in an attempt to settle a labour dispute, to notify the employer in advance and to carry out a minimum amount of work during the strike itself. In case of disagreements, the minimum amount of work is determined by the executive authority. In addition to the aforementioned legal requirements and the accompanying bureaucratic procedures, a trade union cannot decide to hold the strike—the law re-

quires the decision to be made by the workers' conference, which in this case could have been argued to be a conference of all workers of the factory and not only furnace operators.

Confrontation

Instead of addressing the issues with working conditions, the plant management resorted to an aggressive reaction. The same morning, right after some workers refused to continue their duties, the security service was summoned to throw those workers out of the plant territory. Some of the workers were escorted by security to an isolated room with video-surveillance near the entrance to the factory area. They were denied the opportunity to eat their lunch with their coworkers and eventually they went home. The plant administration not only refused to engage in dialogue but also increased the pressure, denying that there had been any complaints from the workers before. Workers were ready to accept written guarantees that the temperature problem would be resolved within a reasonable period, but management refused even that. Meanwhile, more and more details about harsh, unsafe, and unsanitary production conditions were coming out. The Russian Labour Front was constantly reporting about the development of the class confrontation at "Kolomensky," attracting public attention to it.

On 13 July, workers again refused to work for the same reason. The temperature in the workshop was still over 33 °Celsius. The canteen became an isolation room, used by the administration to prevent workers from communicating with the trade union's leadership. The chairman of the trade union was blocked from entering the factory territory, so he had to call the police. Meanwhile, the acting director of the factory, along with a former director, the production manager, and a security-service employee, came to the canteen to put further pressure on the workers. This was a coerced negotiation conducted under conditions controlled by the factory administration. The negotiation ended without results: conditions were not changed, proper ventilation was not installed, and no guarantees for a resolution were given. The administration stated that workers had no right to stop working and threatened not to pay them for the downtime.

The administration began pressuring workers individually. One of the workers who refused to work called her colleagues and apologized that she had to resume her duties. She explained that the bosses had made her understand the consequences if she did not return to work. In practice, they used the fact that her residency depended on her employer. Isolation and threats are means of resolving

the conflict from the capitalists' side.

Eventually, even officials from the Balashikha administration tried to communicate with the employer, but the plant bosses ignored their phone calls. Information about the conflict was spreading. The struggling workers posted a video about the situation on YouTube. The RLF was constantly publishing updates in its Telegram channel, including information that exposed the bosses' methods of making the workers stumble and lose their fight.

On 15 July, following media coverage spurred by the RLF publications, a member of the State Duma, Denis Parfionov, sent a request to Rostrud (Federal Service for Labour and Employment) and Rospotrebnadzor (Federal Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare) concerning the situation at the Kolomensky plant, demanding an investigation into the matter and support for the workers' legal demands. He also called for the restoration of the mandatory reduction of the working day in cases where the temperature rises above the permitted maximum in a workplace.

Later that day, for the first time since the beginning of the conflict, furnace operators were offered alternative duties for their night shift. They were able to work in safe conditions, sewing and cleaning bread couches. It was a small advance, but it was not considered a final resolution of the conflict. On 20 July, the RLF reported that the administration of the plant was putting more pressure on workers actively involved in the struggle: trying to trick some into signing a different contract; making claims against others about their "inappropriate" appearance and violations of discipline; making claims about the use of mobile phones; and demanding an explanatory note for supposed absenteeism on 13 July, when the workers were present on the plant premises but refused to work in dangerous conditions. Workers did not fall into those traps.

Over time, working conditions began to improve: the administration fixed the air conditioner in the workshop, and water coolers were installed. On 28 July, the director of the plant resigned from his post. An inspection by the Prosecutor's Office took place at the factory on 3 August. On the eve of the inspection, which had been initiated at the workers' request, even more improvements followed: repair of the ventilation system started, and a new air conditioner was installed in the "hot" workshop.

In parallel, many workers experienced delays in receiving their wages, which the employer explained as an "accounting error." This was something the trade union was prepared for. The trade union and the RLF provided financial aid to those who were struggling.



On 16 August, the RLF reported that the State Labour Inspection (SLI) had issued a warning to the “Kolomensky” factory administration for violations of the Labour Code of the Russian Federation, including Article 370, which requires that trade union representatives have the right to visit workplaces without hindrance. In official communication with this state body, the employer admitted some of the violations.

These positive developments coexisted with lasting pressure that the employer continued to put on workers who had decided to fight for improvements in labour conditions.

Management has now escalated its pressure on the union. Before one shift, the plant director told workers that their previous refusals to work in unsafe conditions amounted to “sabotage and terrorism,” warned that she could involve the authorities, and asked whether they wanted to become “accomplices of terrorists.” She then urged anyone who had joined the “so-called trade union” to leave it, falsely suggesting that the union was illegitimate because it was not officially registered. In reality, Russian law does not require a trade union to register in order to operate. For management, a worker who refuses unsafe labour is no longer an employee with rights, but a “terrorist” to be intimidated into silence.

Conclusions so far

Activists of the Russian Labour Front played a central role in founding the “Druzhina” trade union and supported the struggling workers throughout the difficult confrontation. The RLF continues to support them. This trade union, as well as “Stalniye Kolyosa” (“Steel Wheels,” a trade union of truck drivers), are among the results of the long and hard work that the RLF carries out on a daily basis by providing methodological, legal, media, and other forms of assistance to workers in different sectors and regions of Russia. More results are to come, since the RLF not only helps to solve individual problems but also helps workers realize that the real improvement of labour conditions is achieved through the organized struggle of workers.

The Kolomensky plant case is another illustration that capitalists prefer not to recognize the organized force of independent trade unions and try to use isolation and pressure. Capitalist management also prefers not to recognize even the smallest victories of struggling workers. Instead, they try to retreat quietly, conceding some of the workers’ demands while attempting to punish those involved in the struggle thus discouraging organised action.

The struggle on the Kolomensky plant continues and the experience will be utilized in future.



**Нет условий —
нет хлеба!**

