RUSSIANS MAKES GOODWILL GESTURE

by our European Affairs correspondent

RUSSIAN TROOPS are battling to drive the last fascist bands out of Mariupol whilst other units are pulling out of positions around Kiev as a goodwill gesture following face-to-face talks with the Ukrainians in Istanbul this week. But a ceasefire is still a long way off as the Zelensky regime still refuses the meet the minimum demands of the Russian Federation.

Russian and Ukrainian negotiators held peace talks in the Turkish city of Istanbul this week. The Turks, who maintain good ties with Ukraine but have refused to join the US-led sanctions regime against Russia, have been acting as a go-between for the last few weeks. Now their efforts seem to be paying off with the first serious steps towards an end to the fighting.

The Ukrainians now say they’re ready to pledge to remain a neutral nation and not to host foreign troops on their soil. In exchange, Ukraine wants NATO-like security guarantees from leading world powers including Russia. They’re still refusing to recognise Crimea’s accession to the Russian Federation or the independence of the Donbas republics, which are part of the Kremlin’s basic demands.

Nevertheless, the two sides have agreed to meet again and as a sign of good faith Russia will “drastically” de-escalate military activity near Kiev and northern Ukraine.

In Mariupol, Donbas and Russian units are mopping up the last fascist strongholds in the strategic port on the Black Sea. Trying to save their own skins the Azov battalion commanders were preparing to leave their men to their fate, but this was foiled when the Ukrainian helicopter sent to save them was shot down over the Black Sea.

The Russians have captured two Azov fascists accused of brutal war-crimes and uncovered more evidence of fascist atrocities during the advance into Mariupol that has included crack units from the Chechen republic, which is part of the Russian Federation.

Their commander, Ruslan Geremeyev, who led the troops that liberates the city hall and hoisted their flag on it last week, was wounded in battle.

But Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov, who met him when he visited the wounded in hospital this week, said: “He is on the mend and will soon be back in the ranks.”

Meanwhile, imperialist hopes that their sanctions would trigger mass protests in Russia and trigger an anti-Putin coup by the oligarchs are fading. Their man Alexei Navalny, the jailed leader of the pro-American ‘Russia of the Future’ party, got another nine years last week on contempt of court and fraud charges.

And the oligarchs? Well, as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation put it: “The West’s hopes that sanctions against the oligarchs will encourage them to start a fight against Putin are also illusory. Oligarchs no longer play a leading role in the political life of Russia. Most of them left the country long ago and are trying their best to integrate into Western society. For them, Russia is just a source of super-profits. The oligarchs themselves are universally disliked in Russian society, as robbers who seized public property after 1991. So they will not be able to create and lead any protest movement.”

“Public opinion leaders from among cultural figures are split. The pro-Western stars of show business have gone abroad, where they have long acquired luxury villas. The patriotic part of the intelligentsia supports Russia’s actions in Ukraine. Thus, there is currently no potential in society for the development of a protest movement that the organisers of the sanctions are trying to provoke.”

A bumper postbag with £976 pushes the running total to £2,336 thanks to supporters all over the UK including £50 from an Eastbourne reader, another £50 from an old friend in Essex and yet another £50 from a supporter in Carlisle. A Cornish reader sent in a tenner. A Southall comrade donated £100. A reader in Lardhall, Scotland gave us a tenner. So did a London Korean solidarity activist. We got £4 from a Camberwell supporter and £2 from another in Bournemouth. We now owe £1104 to hit our target for March.

Every week we play our part in countering the sickening lies of the bourgeois media and the confusion spread by the bogus left over the conflict in Ukraine and a host of other matters as well. That’s why we need the communist press and why we need the New Worker. We are the only communist weekly in Britain. Keep our presses rolling!

Every pound helps in the struggle for peace and socialism. Please send donations to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the ‘New Worker’.

To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here:

http://newworker.org/zpcentral/fightingfund.html