

Eastern European workers in Offenbach, Germany support the fight to free Bogdan Syrotiuk: “I have respect for him”

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Last Saturday at a supermarket for Eastern European products in Offenbach near Frankfurt, a WSWs team mobilised support for the campaign to free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Bogdan is being held in a Ukrainian prison. He is wrongly accused of “treason in the service of Vladimir Putin.” In reality, he had the courage to resist the war in Ukraine, which has already claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people. Bogdan has built up the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL) in Ukraine, which fights against the pro-war policy of both sides, the Ukrainian and Russian governments, and for the unity of the Ukrainian and Russian working class.

At the Mix market in Offenbach, we spoke about Bogdan and the war in Ukraine with workers from Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova and the former Yugoslavia.

The reactions were unanimously against the war, which is being waged as a proxy war against Russia by the US government and its NATO partners in Berlin. Practically everyone who took the time to read through the first few lines of the leaflet expressed their disgust at the political campaign against a young socialist and opponent of war.

“In the 21st century, we should be able to live without war in the world,” said Daria from Bulgaria. “This boy is in prison there in Ukraine—apparently the Ukrainian government only imprisoned him because he fought against the war.”

Most of them commented to the effect, even in passing, “Yes, we are against this war. It’s a big disaster.” Not a single person supported the narrative of the German government and the political establishment

that the war was necessary to defend “democracy” in Ukraine and “Western values” against Russia.

“I am against both sides waging war there,” said Vasily from Romania, “and in my opinion both America and Russia are responsible. But I think America is the driving force that wants this war. The Ukrainian people are right in between, they are not the source of the war that is now destroying their country.”

Vasily works as an electronics technician in Hesse, and would rather not have his boss see his photo on the internet, but he spoke out clearly against the warmongers and in favour of Bogdan Syrotiuk’s liberation: “This Bogdan fought against war, I have great respect for that. It’s terrible that he’s sitting in Zelensky’s prison for it.”

He continued, “Zelensky is a puppet of America.” Vasily pointed out where US imperialism had already intervened in recent years: “They interfere everywhere. If you look at where they have invaded, where they have waged war in recent years, it started with Yugoslavia. Then came Afghanistan, then Iraq, Syria and Libya. They are destroying everything. All these countries have been destroyed. People have been left impoverished and can barely live.”

Burjan, a construction worker in the Taunus region, asked with interest: “Oh, this young man is in Zelensky’s prison? You have to get him out of there, yes, yes, I think that’s right.”

He said, “This Zelensky is getting help from every country, from Germany and the USA. But it’s costing us workers a lot of money.” He referred to the recent industrial action in construction and the way in which the IG BAU construction union pushed through a low wage settlement. “We now have to work more, and

because of Ukraine we have to do without 80 euros, which is being taken from us.”

Burjan continued, “Every war leaves poor people behind. When will this war end?” The war in Ukraine strongly reminded him of his homeland in the former Yugoslavia. “That was a wonderful country, but what has the war done to it? In Yugoslavia, Croats, Bosnians, Serbs—22 million people!—lived together peacefully until the war came. Today they are all small, separate countries: Croatia with around 4 million, Bosnia with 3 million ... what’s the point of all this? It’s not good for the people.”

This is exactly what he sees in Ukraine: “Ukrainians and Russians lived together in one big country—the Soviet Union. And then this war was instigated by the secession. It’s not good for the people, you can see that all over the world: just look at Israel, what’s happening to Gaza today. Children are dying by the dozen there—it’s cruel.”

Burjan also addressed the plight of Ukrainians living in Germany as refugees and immigrants. They are being refused passports at Ukrainian consulates and the German government is threatening to withdraw their welfare benefits in order to force them back into the war as cannon fodder.

“It’s all terrible for them now,” said Burjan. “I can fully understand that: When I came to Germany, I initially only received a limited stay permit, which I had to have extended every six months. I came here in 1994 and lived here for eight years with limited status until 2002, when I was sent back, which was difficult. I only came back later. But I didn’t have any permanent papers for a long time.

“And maybe the same thing is happening with the Ukrainians. They have no permanent papers; I know how difficult that is, especially when you have a family and small children. You have everything set up, you have a job, you have to pay for the flat, the children have their school here and are learning the language. Then you have to leave again. It’s very difficult, especially if the country is a war zone.”

We call on all our readers: Sign the petition to demand Bogdan Syrotyuk’s release! Share the information about his case on social networks and discuss it with friends and colleagues. Get in touch with us and join the fight for Bogdan’s freedom! You can find more information at: wsws.org/freebogdan.



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