

SEP/IYSSE (Sri Lanka) holds powerful meeting to demand the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk

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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a well-attended meeting on July 7 to demand the immediate and unconditional release of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Syrotiuk is a leading member of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), a Trotskyist organisation active in Russia, Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union. The SBU, the state secret service of the fascistic Ukrainian government of President Volodymyr Zelensky, arrested 25-year-old Syrotiuk on April 25. He is currently being held at the Mykolaiv maximum security prison in Southern Ukraine.

In mid-June, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement, with which the YGBL is in political solidarity, held demonstrations outside Ukrainian embassies and consulates in the US, the UK, Germany, France, Australia, Canada and Turkey to demand Syrotiuk's immediate release.

The meeting in Sri Lanka was held at the National Library Auditorium in Colombo and attended by over 100 party members, workers, youth and supporters. It was simultaneously streamed live on the party's Facebook page. At the time of this writing, it has been viewed by over 2,200 and shared by nearly 200 people. Speeches by SEP Assistant Secretary Saman Gunadasa, who chaired the meeting, and SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera were translated into Tamil.

Gunadasa opened the event by explaining that Syrotiuk was taken into custody and charged with treason because he was fighting for the Trotskyist perspective of uniting the working class in Ukraine and Russia against the US-led NATO war against Russia and opposing the capitalist governments in both these

countries.

"Comrade Bogdan has been deprived of communication and lawyers contacted to appear for him have been reluctant to do so because of the Zelensky regime's repression," he said.

"The Ukrainian regime has bogusly charged Syrotiuk and the *World Socialist Web Site* with being agents of the Russian government without a shred of evidence. It has also banned access to the WSWs in Ukraine since June 3," he explained.

Gunadasa told the meeting that as many as 500,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed since the war began and there was overwhelming opposition to the war among Ukrainian workers and youth. "In this context Bogdan's revolutionary intervention rang alarm bells in the Zelensky regime. This is the situation that drove the authorities to arrest him," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the IYSSE, Sakuntha Hirimutugoda outlined the real nature of anti-Russia war in Ukraine.

"Seventy-three days have elapsed since April 25, when comrade Syrotiuk was arrested. This action points to the anti-democratic character of the Ukrainian regime," he said.

Hirimutugoda warned that comrade Bogdan's life was in danger. The Zelensky regime had perpetrated countless "disappearances," arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as overseeing torture, inhuman treatment and life-threatening conditions in the prisons.

"Those above 16 years cannot leave the country and the age of the essential military draft has been reduced from 27 to 25. All people between 18 and 60 must report to the government about going to war.

"The majority of ordinary Ukrainians daily see how relatives and loved ones have lost their lives and so

there is a seething anti-war mentality. The imperialist powers, however, see this loss as a necessary cost for their business of re-dividing the globe,” Hirimutugoda said.

The main speech was delivered by SEP General Secretary Deepal Jayasekera who said Syrotiuk’s detention was “an attack on our world movement, the ICFI itself.”

The Zelensky regime’s accusation that Syrotiuk is an agent of the Putin regime is a patent lie. “Bogdan’s writings for the WSWs make it clear that he is an intransigent opponent of both the Ukrainian and Russian regimes,” Jayasekera said.

Challenging the SBU charge sheet that the WSWs is a “Russian propaganda and information agency,” Jayasekera reviewed the site’s principled opposition to the Russian invasion and to both the Ukrainian and Russian bourgeois regimes.

He quoted from an ICFI statement published on the WSWs on February 24, 2022, the day Russia invaded Ukraine, which denounced the military intervention. “Despite the provocations and threats by the US and NATO powers, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine must be opposed by socialists and class-conscious workers,” the statement said.

Jayasekera said that the world Trotskyist movement from its inception has fought for the principles of socialist internationalism. “Anyone who knows this history is also aware that the ICFI is an intransigent opponent of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy and the bourgeois states, including both Ukraine and Russia, that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991,” he added.

“Ukraine’s state security service, the SBU, knows very well that they cannot prove their concocted charges against Syrotiuk. They therefore resort to lies to victimise him in the same way that the then ruling Soviet bureaucracy concocted lies against Trotskyists accusing them of being agents of Nazi Germany during the frame-up Moscow Trials of 1936–38,” the speaker said.

Jayasekera noted international media reports about the growing anti-war opposition inside Ukraine and said the Zelensky regime was terrified that this would be given political expression through the struggle waged by Bogdan to unite Ukrainian and Russian workers against the war based on a socialist

perspective.

“Contrary to NATO’s claim that Ukraine is a democracy, the Zelensky regime is a dictatorship which rules through martial law and with all socialist and left-wing organisations banned in Ukraine,” the speaker said.

Jayasekera explained that the ICFI’s global campaign to free Bogdan is part of its struggle to build an international anti-war movement of workers and youth based on socialist policies. The US-led NATO war against Russia, Israeli’s imperialist-backed genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza and Washington’s war preparations against China, he continued, were parts of an emerging imperialist world war.

The SEP in Sri Lanka, he said, is fighting in collaboration with all other sections of the ICFI to build an international anti-war movement of workers and youth led by the working class against this growing danger of world war. Jayasekera concluded by calling on workers, youth, the rural poor and intellectuals in Sri Lanka, India and South Asia to join the SEP/ICFI and build this anti-war movement.

After a lively question and answer session, meeting participants contributed 10,500 rupees (\$US35) for the campaign and purchased 7,465 rupees in literature. The event ended with an appeal from the chair for all participants to sign the online petition to “Free Bogdan” and to send statements of support for the international campaign.



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