

Toronto workers support campaign for Bogdan Syrotiuk's freedom and express opposition to imperialist war

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16 July 2024

Socialist Equality Party Canada (SEP) members held a successful campaign Saturday in Toronto's downtown St. James Town neighbourhood to mobilize working class support for the imprisoned Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk. A leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, which is active throughout the former Soviet Union and opposes the US-led war on Russia in Ukraine, Syrotiuk is being held on trumped-up charges of "treason" by the Ukrainian regime.

Syrotiuk is a principled socialist opponent of both the Ukrainian far-right regime and the Putin government. He is accused of being a Russian agent and faces 15 years in prison, which is effectively a death sentence in Ukraine.

The bogus charges against Syrotiuk are directly connected to Canadian politics. The far-right Ukrainian regime is supported to the hilt by Ottawa, which has provided over \$10 billion in military and financial assistance to Kiev since the US-incited Russian invasion in February 2022. Canada also provides ideological support to Kiev, as it is one of the key global centers of far-right Ukrainian nationalism.

The SEP campaign in St. James Town demonstrated that Canadian imperialism's waging of war around the world is broadly opposed in the working class. SEP members gathered numerous signatures for the petition to free comrade Bogdan, and distributed dozens of copies of statements on his persecution and an open letter to the Ukrainian government to passers-by. Workers drew the connection between the targeting of Bogdan and the role of the imperialist powers in backing Israel's bloody genocide against the Palestinians. Opponents of the genocide have been

viciously persecuted by governments in Canada and other countries.

"Are you against war? I'm against war too!" said Diane, a retiree who signed the petition. She took a copy of David North's open letter and promised to read more about Bogdan's case.

A worker added, "They're playing chess with nuclear weapons! When you play chess, if you make one wrong move, you're done!"

Michael, a worker who stopped by with his young son, was drawn to the display of literature. "Are you also opposed to what Israel is doing in Gaza?" he asked. "I can't even talk about it because it makes me so angry." SEP members explained that the Gaza genocide cannot be understood apart from the drive of world imperialism towards a third world war. US and Canadian imperialism have endorsed the genocide and facilitated it by supplying Israel with weapons as part of preparations for a region-wide war on Iran. This is the Middle East front in a rapidly emerging global conflict that the imperialists are recklessly stoking so as to redivide the world in their interests. Campaigners explained that the only way it could be fought was by building a mass socialist movement in the working class.

After this discussion, Michael purchased a copy of David North's book, *The Logic of Zionism: From Nationalist Myth to the Gaza Genocide*.

As the campaign was about to wind up, a Ukrainian retiree visited the stall. After he asked whether they were socialists, SEP members explained that the SEP is the Canadian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the party of world socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938, and

irreconcilably hostile to Stalinism.

The man, who introduced himself as Nikolai, exclaimed, “I’m so glad that there is an internationalist group still working!” He explained that he was from Ukraine and had emigrated from the Soviet Union 45 years previously. He expressed his support for the Russian Revolution and for Bolshevism, and his implacable opposition to Stalinism, war and imperialism.

“The Soviet Union experience was one of the greatest disappointments of the progressive movement. Because it started out so good,” he explained. “All the workers together, and then under Stalin it became a horror show. Show trials in 37-38. It was a short period of time, but it was horrendous. Horrendous! And Stalin destroyed the flower of Bolsheviks. There were thousands of people in Russia better than Stalin.”

Nikolai also expressed his opposition to imperialism’s war in Ukraine, commenting, “Everybody’s talking about peace. But they keep fighting.”

The warm response of St. James Town workers to the campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk demonstrates the fundamental hostility of the working class to the plans of Canadian imperialism, now at an extremely advanced stage, to participate from the front ranks in a global imperialist adventure to re-divide the world.

On July 10, Canada’s Defence Minister Bill Blair announced at the NATO Summit that Canada would replace its entire submarine fleet. No estimate of the billions of dollars that this will cost was provided, but it is a certainty that the working class will be forced to foot the bill.

At the same summit, the Canadian government announced \$500 million worth of new military spending on weapons for Ukraine, and \$389 million to train F-16 fighter pilots. The NATO alliance agreed to open a permanent office in Ukraine, which could serve as a “trip wire” to justify NATO troops on the ground if it comes under attack. The fuelling of the conflict by supplying weapons to Kiev will from now on be coordinated by NATO directly from facilities in Germany. This reckless escalation threatens to spiral towards a nuclear conflagration with Russia.

The far-right Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), an influential organization within Canadian foreign policy circles for decades, has welcomed the escalation

of the war with open arms. On the same day as the SEP campaign in St. James Town, the UCC staged an explicitly pro-war demonstration in Toronto’s Dundas Square. Ignoring the fact that the war has already led to the slaughter of at least 500,000 mainly young Ukrainians, signs and slogans at the rally included appeals to “Give Ukraine weapons” and impose a “no-fly zone” over Ukraine. The demonstration consisted of a few dozen hardened far-right activists, underlining the fact that its nationalist, pro-war hysteria has zero popular support.

The response to the SEP’s intervention in St. James Town demonstrates that the building of an anti-war movement in the working class on a principled, socialist basis, in opposition to all sections of the ruling class, is politically possible and urgently necessary. This campaign must be taken up on the broadest possible basis.



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