

Report to the SEP (US) Eighth National Congress

The campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk and the fight against war

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We are publishing here the report to the Eighth Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (US) given by Clara Weiss to introduce the resolution “Free Bogdan Syrotiuk,” which was passed unanimously by the Congress, along with the main resolution “The 2024 US elections and the tasks of the Socialist Equality Party.” The congress was held from August 4 to August 9, 2024.

It has now been over three months since comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk, the founder and leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists, was arrested by the Ukrainian Secret Service, SBU, on charges of “high treason under martial law.” He is threatened with a sentence of between 15 years and life in prison. A bit over a month after Bogdan’s arrest, on June 3, the Ukrainian government banned the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Staying true to its historical origins in the Stalinist bureaucracy, which consolidated its privileged position through the mass murder of socialists and Trotskyists, the oligarchy that rules Ukraine today uses a combination of amalgams, outright lies, slander and state force to suppress its revolutionary opposition.

The main evidence cited by the prosecution are articles that appeared on the *World Socialist Web Site*. According to the prosecution, Bogdan was “engaged in the preparation of publications commissioned by representatives of a Russian propaganda and information agency, the *World Socialist Web Site*.” This denunciation of the WSWS is combined with the acknowledgement that the WSWS “covers the main socio-political problems around the world from the position of revolutionary opposition to the capitalist market system, with the aim of establishing world socialism through socialist revolution.”

These quotations should make clear that it is not only Bogdan, but also the International Committee that stands on trial. Nor should there be any doubt that these documents, and the case as a whole, were worked on jointly by the fascist-ridden SBU and its handlers and funders in the CIA and German Secret Service.

The WSWS and ICFI assessed the indictment of Bogdan Syrotiuk as a “declaration of war against all left-wing and socialist opposition to the Zelensky regime and, specifically, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its public organ, the *World Socialist Web Site*.”

This assessment highlights the political significance of the campaign to free Bogdan. It is not only a matter of concern to us because he is our comrade. It is a political necessity for the development of a class conscious movement of workers throughout Europe, the US and internationally against imperialist war, the escalating attack on democratic rights and the threat of fascism.

It should be recalled that one of the first acts of the US government before it entered the last world war was to imprison the leadership of the Trotskyist movement, based on the notorious Smith Act Trial. Cannon’s defense of revolutionary Marxist principles before the court in

Minneapolis in 1941 was published under the title “Socialism on Trial.”

It laid out, in accessible terms, the ideas of revolutionary socialism and Marxist opposition to war to a mass working class audience. Today, Trotskyism is again on trial. But Comrade Bogdan will not have the chance to defend his views in public. This task will fall upon the International Committee and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The political record of the ICFI and the YGBL

The essential basis for refuting the bogus charges of the SBU against Bogdan and the ICFI is the political record of the WSWS. At the same time, this record also reveals the real political reasons for why Bogdan was arrested.

The *World Socialist Web Site*, which the SBU slanders as a “Russian propaganda and information agency,” has consistently advanced a line that opposes both oligarchic regimes, in Russia and Ukraine, as well as the imperialist powers. In its February 24, 2022 statement, published hours after the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, the International Committee of the Fourth International stated:

The International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* denounce the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. 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 catastrophe that was set in motion by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 cannot be averted on the basis of Russian nationalism, a thoroughly reactionary ideology that serves the interests of the capitalist ruling class represented by Vladimir Putin.

What is required is not a return to the pre-1917 foreign policy of tsarism, but, rather, a revival, in Russia and throughout the world, of the socialist internationalism that inspired the October Revolution of 1917 and led to the creation of the Soviet Union as a workers state. The invasion of Ukraine, whatever the justifications given by the Putin regime, will serve only to divide the Russian and Ukrainian working class and, moreover, serve the interests of US and European imperialism.

At the last Congress, we stressed that the opposition of the Trotskyist

movement to the war in Ukraine was rooted, above all, in the response by the International Committee to the Stalinist destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991. We have also emphasized that this historical record, and the history of the Trotskyist movement as a whole, must form the essential basis for the training of our cadre.

This orientation has been vindicated by the development of political relations between the International Committee and the YGBL. A few words must at this point be said about Bogdan Syrotiuk himself. His turn toward Trotskyism and the development of the YGBL are one of the highest political expressions so far of the intersection between the decades-long struggle for Trotskyist principles by the ICFI and the experience of masses of workers and youth that we have identified as a key feature of the fifth stage in the development of our movement.

Bogdan was born in 1999, less than 8 years after the catastrophic destruction of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy and the restoration of capitalism. His life and that of his family reflect the fate of the Ukrainian working class in the 20th century, its bitter experiences with Stalinism and fascism, but also its proud association with the 1917 revolution.

The city where Bogdan was born and worked, Pervomaïsk, only became a city through the merger of three small settlements in 1920, in the midst of the civil war that followed the October revolution. The name of the town, “Pervomaïsk”, means “City of May Day.” In the subsequent decades, it emerged as a significant regional industrial center and its population grew to almost 90,000. The restoration of capitalism was a catastrophe for the working class of that region, as well as all of Ukraine and the former Soviet Union. By the time Bogdan was born, all major factories in the city that had been established by the Soviet working class had been privatized. By 2022, the city’s population had declined by almost a third, to just over 60,000.

Bogdan lost his parents at an early age and was raised by his great-grandparents and grandparents. His great-grandfather, Ivan Kompaniets, had a particularly strong influence on him. As a child, he had survived the horrific famine of 1931-1932—a result of the adventurist Stalinist politics of building “socialism in one country.” As a teenager, he experienced the Nazi occupation of Ukraine during World War II. His father died fighting against fascism in the Red Army. After the war, he worked as a coal miner and construction worker, while also being a gifted artist—a talent he passed on to Bogdan.

Whatever the Stalinist bureaucrats’ promises about “peace and prosperity” that would supposedly come with capitalism, Bogdan and the youth that now make up the YGBL grew up under conditions of extraordinary social devastation and decline. At the same time, he was surrounded by people who recalled the greatest horrors that the working class had gone through in the 20th century. Some of the interviews he conducted as a teenager with local residents who had experienced the crimes of German and Ukrainian fascism were later published on the WSWS in his unique essay, “The crimes of the Banderovites against the Ukrainian people.” This essay, as his other articles on the Ukrainian fascists, provoked the particular ire of the SBU.

The biggest political watershed in Bogdan’s life was the far-right coup in Kiev in February 2014. Comrades should take the time to examine the record of the ICFI of this seminal event. It was a milestone in the descent of the world into a new global war, the strengthening of fascist forces, and the efforts to falsify history to justify the greatest crimes of imperialism in the past and future. It also marked a new stage in the rightward shift of the petty-bourgeois ex-lefts, with the Pabloites, in particular, glorifying the coup and the involvement of fascists in it. Other layers became apologists for the Putin regime.

This political analysis set the IC apart from all of these petty-bourgeois nationalist tendencies and Bogdan’s experiences intersected with our analysis. He was deeply shaken by the removal of monuments to Lenin,

the denunciations of the Red Army’s struggle against fascism in the Second World War, and the glorification of the Ukrainian fascists. Out of opposition to the official Russophobia, he began speaking only Russian.

At the time, his political activities still took place in the framework of the Stalinist Communist Party of Ukraine, whose politics dominated the nominal left in Ukraine. (It was banned in 2015). However, Bogdan soon began to break from Stalinism. The basis for this break was his arguably greatest political strength: His commitment to historical truth.

By 2016 he considered himself a Trotskyist, and in 2018 he formed a youth group whose goal, in Bogdan’s words, was “to fight for the truth about Lev Davidovich Trotsky.” Its name, the “Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists,” is a reference to the name that the Soviet Left Opposition gave itself in the 1920s and 1930s. The name was meant to underscore the continuity between the struggle waged by the Opposition and the program and principles of the October revolution. The YGBL found supporters across the former Soviet Union, above all in Russia, but also in Moldova, Kazakhstan and other former Soviet republics.

It is worth stressing—and Bogdan emphasized this many times—that Bogdan learned about the International Committee of the Fourth International and David North through scans that he found online of the *Bulletin of the Fourth International*, the journal that the ICFI published in Russian from 1989 to 1993.

The *Bulletin* included the most important statements issued by the ICFI since the split with the WRP and from its intervention in the crisis of Stalinism. A few weeks before the invasion began, the YGBL contacted the IC. Bogdan later recalled:

When on February 24, 2022 the first shots were fired and the shells began raining down from the sky, we were not alone, we were with the International Committee of the Fourth International. Their articles and statements were our articles and statements ... for their position and assessment was our position and assessment.

A few weeks later, Bogdan Syrotiuk addressed the International May Day Rally of 2022. He succinctly summarized our position on the origins of the war and condemned the reactionary invasion by the capitalist Putin regime and stressed that it was only under the leadership of the ICFI that a struggle against this war could be waged. He said:

The views of the Marxist tradition, held by Lenin and Trotsky, and, after them, by us, led us inevitably to the International Committee of the Fourth International as the only international organization still defending the historical traditions of October, defending the personality and ideas of Lenin and Trotsky against Stalinist slander. An organization that has not lost its proletarian character.

The International Committee, which supports the struggle for socialism on an international basis, has become for us the beacon to which all ships of Marxist revolutionaries must aspire in order to unite in their struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist order and the establishment of socialism throughout the world.

In the fall of 2022, the International Committee undertook a critical initiative in its work to build its youth and student organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). For the first time in the history of the Trotskyist movement, an international leadership body was formed to oversee and guide the work of the youth

and student movement, in close cooperation with the leadership of the ICFI. We also established a much clearer political and theoretical focus for this work: The fight to orient youth and students toward a struggle against war through the mobilization of the working class. The political basis of this fight is laid out in the IYSSE statement of November 3, 2022. To avoid longer quotations, I will briefly summarize the key principles:

- The war against Russia is part of a new redivision of the world among the imperialist powers. Whatever the propaganda about “democracy,” in its economic and geopolitical aims, it is an imperialist war of plunder.

- The fight against war must be rooted in the lessons of history.

- The fight against war is a fight against the capitalist nation-state system and for the international unification of the working class.

- The fight against war must be rooted in the working class, which is not merely an “ally” of students and youth in this struggle, but its decisive social basis. The IYSSE statement states unambiguously: “The IYSSE does not only seek the support of workers in the struggle against war. We recognize that the defeat of imperialism depends upon the emergence of the working class, armed with a socialist program, as the leading and decisive revolutionary force in the fight against the world capitalist system. Just as it was the Russian Revolution, the greatest intervention of the working class in world history, that brought an end to the first global carnage of World War I, it will be the intervention of the international working class that will today stop the escalation toward World War III.”

- Lastly, the fight against war and for an orientation to the working class requires a fight against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies of nationalism, reformism, irrationalism, pragmatism and toothless radicalism that seek to disorient workers and youth, undermine their historical and social consciousness, and tie them to the capitalist order. The essential prerequisite for this struggle is a systematic training of the cadre in the history and traditions of the Trotskyist movement.

From the inception of the international IYSSE leadership, the YGBL participated in its meetings. Shortly before we issued this IYSSE statement, they issued a statement of their own which is one of the main pieces of “evidence” in the indictment of Bogdan. In December, the IYSSE held an international webinar. It included speakers from throughout the world, including the US, Turkey, Brazil, New Zealand, Europe and Australia. Speaking on behalf of the YGBL, Andrei Ritsky gave a report on the socialist opposition to the Putin regime. The webinar was also addressed by comrades David North, Will Lehman, and Barbara Slaughter.

In January 2023, the *World Socialist Web Site* launched its Ukrainian edition. Two months later, in March 2023, the IYSSE began an international meeting series, “The war in Ukraine and how to stop it,” with meetings in Canada, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, the US and Europe. Though not large, the meetings immediately provoked the concern of the state apparatus and its pseudo-left and fascist hirelings who sought to disrupt and, in several cases, also ban our meetings. The “justification” for censorship was the same as for Bogdan’s arrest: that the ICFI’s internationalist opposition to the war made it a “defender of the Putin regime.” The YGBL published multiple statements refuting this contemptible lie and opposing the attempts to ban our meetings. Their statement in support of the meeting by comrades in Brazil as well as a report on our meeting in San Diego with David North are part of the “evidence” confiscated by the SBU for its case against Bogdan.

At its 2023 May Day rally, held on April 30, the International Committee developed its political strategy in opposition to the development of war. In the opening report, David North outlined the shared history of revolutionary struggle of the Russian and Ukrainian working class and developed our critique of the Putin regime and its strategy of “multipolarity.” We also made a conscious decision to have both comrade Bogdan and Comrade Andrei Ritsky speak as representatives of the YGBL in Ukraine and Russia, respectively. They

spoke forcefully to the political bankruptcy of both oligarchic regimes that emerged out of the Stalinist restoration of capitalism. Bogdan opened his speech with the words:

The claim that all Ukrainians support this war is a brazen lie. The main prop for this war is not the proletariat and the Ukrainian population, whose situation is appalling. The main props for this war are the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists and those they serve. We, the orthodox Trotskyists of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists, do not support this war, either in Ukraine or in Russia.

This event, as with our meeting series, did not go unnoticed in Washington and Kiev or, we should add, Moscow. Less than three weeks after our May Day rally, on May 18, 2023, the regional head of the SBU in the Nikolaev region initiated criminal proceedings against Bogdan based on violation of Criminal Article 111, part 2—high treason under conditions of martial law. For almost a year, the SBU carefully monitored the activities and publications of the YGBL and ICFI on the WSWS before it decided to move to arrest Bogdan on April 25, 2024.

In the year between the initiation of the investigation and Bogdan’s arrest, the collaboration of the YGBL and the ICFI in the fight against war made important advances. YGBL comrades participated in last year’s summer school and we held meetings organized by the YGBL on the centenary of the Left Opposition in October 2023—as well as the centenary of the death of Lenin.

Between February and April this year, the YGBL issued a series of statements in which we significantly developed our analysis of the Putin regime as a Bonapartist regime of the oligarchy that balances between different factions of the oligarchy, between the working class and the oligarchy and between the oligarchy and imperialism. The last statement by the YGBL in which comrade Bogdan was involved, “The danger of the imperialist carve-up of the former Soviet Union and the tasks of the working class,” was issued in April after a significant escalation of NATO’s war against Russia with the Moscow Terror attacks of March 2024. The statement developed our assessment of the imperialist carve-up of the former Soviet Union now underway, and the Putin regime as a Bonapartist regime of the oligarchy that pursues an essentially neo-Stalinist foreign policy. It explained:

The principal function of his regime consists, above all, in the preservation of the privileges of the tiny stratum of oligarchs that has emerged as the new ruling class of Russia through the looting of Soviet state property. ...To preempt this “explosion” of class tensions, Putin is desperately seeking to mediate between the working class and the oligarchy, between the different factions of the oligarchy, and between the national and economic interests of the oligarchy and the interests of Western imperialism. But the ever more aggressive offensive by imperialism and its fueling of internecine struggle within the oligarchy, as well as the development of the class struggle, make this balancing act ever more tenuous... The working class of the former Soviet Union confronts an existential threat. If the situation is left in the hands of the ruling oligarchy, the alternatives posed are between a direct conflict with NATO, which threatens the use of nuclear weapons, and a carve-up of the entire region through a series of civil wars and regime-change operations. Workers and youth across the former Soviet Union can only fight against the existential threat posed by the imperialist onslaught by returning to the path of 1917, i.e., the path of class struggle and socialist revolution.

Just three days before his arrest, Bogdan finished drafting his planned speech for the May Day Rally 2024. It concluded with the words:

We members of the Ukrainian branch of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists and the entire YGBL call for the unification of the Ukrainian and Russian proletariat with the proletariat in the imperialist countries to end this war!

We call for the construction of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in all former Soviet republics!

And we call on the proletariat of the whole world to unite under the banner of its leader—the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Let the words of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels sound louder and stronger: “Proletarians of all countries, unite!”

The principles guiding the campaign for Bogdan’s freedom

Bogdan has now been in prison for over three months. As we have stressed in our statements, his health is poor. He has access to medication, but the conditions in Ukrainian prisons are such that they pose an imminent threat to his health and even life. This is not just our assessment but that of the US State Department, which has publicly acknowledged “harsh and life-threatening prison conditions” in Zelensky’s Ukraine. Our warnings that he would be at the mercy of a “kangaroo court” were not empty words. Every single court decision in this case has quite literally been based on a “copy and paste” of the charges by the SBU. Lawyers have been threatened and intimidated to preempt them from taking up his defense.

The case against Bogdan gives the lie to the imperialist war propaganda about the defense of “democracy” in Ukraine or, for that matter, anywhere else. Ukraine is ruled by a gang of mafia oligarchs and fascists, who, for the sake of their own enrichment and reactionary interests, have placed the country’s working class and resources at the mercy of imperialism. The “legal principles” that were mobilized to imprison this 25-year-old socialist are nothing more than the fusion of the Stalinist and Nazi court systems of the 1930s.

This does not mean that we take a defeatist attitude. On the contrary. We will not tire until Comrade Bogdan is free, and he will be free. While we take the legal aspect of this case very seriously, we understand that this is a political case that requires a political struggle. Bogdan’s freedom can only be achieved through the mobilization of the widest possible support for him. Days after his arrest, we therefore initiated a global campaign to demand his freedom. We launched a petition, issued an open letter to the Ukrainian government, and held rallies at Ukrainian embassies, most of which refused to even receive the letter.

Our campaign stands in the over century-long tradition of campaigns by the socialist movement in defense of class war prisoners. This includes the campaigns to free Thomas Mooney and Warren Billings, two American socialist workers who were wrongfully convicted and imprisoned for their opposition to the US entry into World War I, and, most recently, Julian Assange. In all of these campaigns, the Trotskyist movement has played a leading role.

At the heart of these campaigns is the political principle that there can be no fight against war and no fight against capitalism without a fight for democratic rights. That defense must be concrete. As James P. Cannon once noted, “There is not much value in talking about defending civil rights unless one is willing to defend the victims of their violation. The

truth is always concrete, and so are civil rights.” (James P. Cannon, “Tentative Action on the Civil Rights Front,” *Notebook of an Agitator. From the Wobblies to the fight against the Korean War and McCarthyism*, Pathfinder Press, 1993, 410, 412-413.)

Therefore, we have appealed and will continue to appeal to all those who lay claim to being left-wing, socialist or democratically minded. Thanks to this principled approach, the campaign has begun to reveal more clearly those who are indifferent and even opposed to the defense of democratic rights and a struggle against war. A few telling examples must be mentioned. Among the vast majority of academics, as in all matters that require a stance in defense of principles, the response has been a deafening silence.

In Russia, comrades in the YGBL have widely circulated the information about Bogdan’s arrest among organizations that claim to be socialist and internationalist opponents of the war. The responses, with few notable exceptions, have been particularly vile, and expose the immense class gulf between those tendencies and our movement. One group, which is representative of the neo-Stalinist section of the Russian pseudo-left that is oriented toward the Putin regime, wrote that since Bogdan opposed the invasion from the beginning, we shouldn’t “complain now.” It wrote:

Alas, but it is quite logical that he got a full spoonful of it! Now he has a chance to find out on his own skin whose regime is more reactionary. Only the “reactionary” troops of the dreadful, terrible Putin will free him. We are, to put it mildly, not fans of Vladimir Vladimirovich, but your comrade’s position is frankly stupid. Do not mechanically copy the tactics of the Bolsheviks of the early twentieth century! Think with your head! The Bolsheviks tied their tactics to specific conditions, which are absolutely not equal to today’s conditions.

It might appear difficult to think of a more revolting display of social chauvinism and contempt for all basic principles of the socialist movement. But there is one such example. A Maoist organization, which is apparently more oriented toward the NATO-backed section of the Russian oligarchy, wrote:

We consider it unacceptable to interfere in the affairs of the working class of another state. We also believe that any help to your comrade from Russia would be harmful. This story is a matter of Ukrainian politics. Its coverage and defense of your comrade should [be] handled by Ukrainian politicians and Ukrainian media. We consider it unacceptable to help the Ukrainian security services with evidence of your comrade’s connection with Russians. We consider it even more unacceptable to create reasons for Russian propaganda to demonize Ukraine, to declare it a concentration of atrocities and evils. The very last thing one would want is to aid Russian imperialism, and it is important for Ukrainian communists to defend their independence.

The campaign for Bogdan’s freedom, like every major defense campaign in the past, thus sharpens the class lines and provides the basis for the political clarification of the international working class as to the true character of these reactionary tendencies. At the same time, it will bring forward and reveal those forces and tendencies in society that *can* be mobilized for the defense of democratic rights and in opposition to war.

We have received endorsements from artists like Roger Waters and Ai

Wei Wei. To their credit, a number of noted historians, including Mario Kessler and Christian Gerlach, have declared their support for it, as have several left tendencies in Russia, Latin America and Europe. We have also received substantial support in our campaign from Maxim Goldarb, a Ukrainian socialist whom the WSWS had previously defended against persecution from the Ukrainian state, and, more recently, Ukrainian journalists. But the campaign has no doubt received the strongest response in the working class, including in India, where Maruti Suzuki workers have given powerful interviews on Bogdan's case. Rank-and-file committees in Australia, Sri Lanka, Germany, the UK and the US have released statements in support of Bogdan. We have also found an important response to the campaign among refugees from Ukraine and immigrant workers from Eastern Europe in Germany.

Conclusion

In concluding this report, I want to stress that Bogdan was always very conscious of the fact that, in joining the ICFI and taking up the struggle for Trotskyism, he made a commitment that would require great sacrifices and harbored very real risks, including to his life.

But he is also highly conscious that he and the YGBL have joined a world movement and a movement of history that speaks for the most powerful social force on the planet: the international working class. He was particularly moved by the memorial meeting we held for comrade Helen Halyard in December, to which he submitted greetings on behalf of the YGBL and to which he listened in the middle of the night. I would like to quote from the note that he sent afterward because it reflects better than anything else who Bogdan is and what he represents:

Dear and respected comrade North,

I would like to thank you very much for inviting me to the memorial meeting in memory of Comrade Helen. I listened to each presentation with great attention and awe despite the late hour.... Each presentation was imbued with a sense of gratitude, respect and comradely love. And with great clarity about who Comrade Helen was and the role she played in their lives and in our movement.

When I wrote my address to the memorial meeting, I was very much afraid that I would fail, and that my writing style would make it seem routine and mundane, and that it might contain a lot of inappropriate revolutionary phrases, but your speech and that of the other comrades dispelled my worries, and everything I wrote was appropriate and even necessary.

I wrote the address at midnight, when the sound of explosions and gunfire could be heard outside my window. ...

The memorial meeting had a very great educational power, and spoke volumes about how we should be. ...For me, the greatest examples have always been set by those who themselves burned [for a great idea] and could light others on fire, leaving a piece of their flame in all those they ever met.

I was especially happy to see and hear from senior comrades Barbara Slaughter and Fred Mazelis. If possible, please give them a fiery greeting from me and my comrades in the YGBL.

Bogdan's high level of consciousness of the historical traditions of this movement no doubt sustains him now under extremely difficult conditions. But this consciousness was not only a product of his own

political study and commitment to principle. It was also the result of the approach that the IC took toward the development of the YGBL. From the beginning, the clarification of questions of historical traditions, principle and perspective was placed at the very center of our collaboration. In a letter to the YGBL from June 2022, David North stressed:

A young organization must establish its continuity with the antecedent history of the Trotskyist movement by taking up the fight, in the present, against the opponents—Stalinist, Pabloite, state capitalist, social democratic, labor, petty-bourgeois radical, anarchist, bourgeois nationalist, and liberal reformist—of revolutionary Marxism. This fight is conducted on a theoretical, political, and organizational plane, and is always directed toward establishing the complete and unconditional political independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie. However difficult and contradictory the process, the political movement that conducts this struggle expresses with ever increasing clarity the continuity of Trotskyism and, thereby, moves into alignment with the objective trajectory of the world socialist revolution.

The immense advances that the ICFI has made in the past two years in the struggle against war and the development of a cadre in the former Soviet Union were fundamentally rooted in this orientation. Bogdan's persecution and indictment make clear that these same political advances were also carefully followed by the bourgeois state. The bourgeoisie recognized that much broader social and political processes were expressed in them and decided that it *had* to respond to defend its own class interests. They decided that, amid growing popular opposition to the war, they cannot tolerate even one young leader of our movement in Ukraine to be at large. Nor could they allow the *World Socialist Web Site* to be accessible to workers and youth.

Bogdan Syrotiuk's arrest is thus an unmistakable sign that the International Committee and its cadre are now working under fundamentally transformed conditions. A prolonged period of reaction and suppressed class and political struggle has come to a close. As we predicted in 1991, we are in a period of imperialist war and social revolution. The true interests and conflicts in society are emerging with ever greater force into the open. So far, this has found an expression above all in the escalation of imperialist war and the attack on democratic rights. But it will also inevitably find an expression in the growth of open class struggle.

The position of the revolutionary tendency in society has irrevocably changed. This presents us with great opportunities, but also immense responsibilities and challenges. When we speak of Bogdan's arrest as a "declaration of war" on the ICFI, we mean it, and we know that the bourgeoisie means it. The war is now on. The campaign to free Bogdan must therefore be understood not simply as an organizational effort, but as a central political battleground in an intensifying class war. Our principal weapon in this fight is the political record of the Trotskyist movement and our principal aims are both the freedom of Bogdan and the political education and mobilization of the working class.

I therefore urge comrades to endorse this resolution. It must form the basis for a significant expansion of the work of the SEP in the US, the center of world imperialism, alongside our comrades in the International Committee and YGBL, to mobilize the broadest possible public support for Bogdan. Like every trial against socialist leaders in the past, it will be an important lever to educate large sections of the working class, youth and intelligentsia in the principles that underlie the Marxist opposition to war and the fight for socialist revolution, the defense of which led to Bogdan's imprisonment. We must turn the attack by the bourgeoisie on

the Trotskyist movement into a counter-offensive for Trotskyism. On this basis, we will not only succeed in freeing our comrade. The campaign will also significantly strengthen the political, intellectual and moral authority of the International Committee throughout the world and help establish the political leadership of the Trotskyist movement in an emerging mass movement by the working class and youth against war and capitalism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact