Free Bogdan Syrotiuk!

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The WSWS urges all its readers to sign the petition demanding Bogdan's release.

Six months ago, on April 25, 2024, Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested by the SBU, the state security service of the fascistic Zelensky regime in Ukraine. Bogdan, 25, is one of the founders and political leaders of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), a Trotskyist organization active in Ukraine, Russia and the entire former USSR.

Bogdan was arrested on charges of "high treason under martial law," which carries a sentence of at least 15 years to life in prison. In reality, Bogdan is being persecuted solely for opposing the war and fighting to unify the working classes of Ukraine and Russia in the struggle against war.

Six months after Bogdan's arrest, opposition to the war is mounting inside Ukraine, with hundreds protesting in Kiev this week against forced conscription and the disappearance of their loved ones. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have been killed, a fact that has been covered up by the Ukrainian government.

Bogdan's attorney has been informed that his petition for release has been rejected and that the trial will proceed. Six months after his detention in the maximum security prison in Nikolayev, Bogdan is still waiting for his official indictment and court hearing.

"This trial is outrageous," said David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site.* "The persecution of Bogdan Syrotiuk exemplifies the fact that the claims that this is a war for democracy are a lie. This is a regime that is totally indifferent, which has used the Ukrainian people as cannon fodder."

He added, "The SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] documents are not just against Bogdan. They are a full-blown declaration of war on the entire left and socialist opposition to the Zelensky regime, and, in particular, against the International Committee of the Fourth International and its publication, the *World Socialist Web Site*."

The campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk has received a significant response among workers and young people all over the world. More than 3,800 people have signed the petition demanding his release. The campaign has also been endorsed by Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters and by Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein. "It is a travesty," Stein said. "He should be released and freed to continue his political work."

Bogdan was arrested because he and the YGBL stand in political solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), opposing the war in Ukraine from the standpoint of socialist internationalism and advocating for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers.

As central evidence, the prosecution cited Bogdan's connection to the *World Socialist Web Site* and his fight for socialism. According to the charges, Bogdan "engaged in the preparation of publications commissioned by representatives of a Russian propaganda and information agency, the World Socialist Web Site." This slander against the WSWS was accompanied by the statement 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."

On June 3, the Ukrainian government banned the WSWS. Since then, the regime has taken increasingly brutal actions against the growing opposition to the war. The Ukrainian underground journalists' collective assembly.org.ua told the WSWS that Ukraine was increasingly taking on "the characteristics of a totalitarian state."

"If there's no male population in public places and there are vans driving through the streets like during the Hitler occupation of Kharkov, catching passers-by in basements to be beaten up and tortured, this speaks volumes about the situation with rights and freedoms," it said.

Zelensky is ruling as a dictator. He has suspended elections, introduced martial law, and banned all left-wing and socialist organizations. The anti-democratic and violently repressive nature of the Kiev regime is so striking that even the US State Department felt compelled to name some of the worst excesses in a report published in May by its Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Among the human rights violations listed in the report are:

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> enforced disappearance, torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; restrictions on freedom of expression, including for members of the media, including violence or threats of violence against journalists…

Bogdan's arrest exposes the official propaganda of the imperialist powers, which claim they are fighting in Ukraine for "freedom" and "democracy" against "Russian authoritarianism." Ukraine is not a democracy, but a dictatorship led by fascist elements and criminal oligarchs who, like their Russian counterparts, have their origins in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist bureaucracy. In order to protect their reactionary interests, the Ukrainian oligarchs and their fascist thugs have provided the working class of their country to the imperialist warmongers as cannon fodder.

Since the NATO-provoked Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have already been sacrificed at the front–not for "freedom" and "democracy" or the "independence of Ukraine," but for tangible geostrategic and economic interests of the imperialist powers.

The declared aim of the imperialist powers, primarily Washington and Berlin, is to inflict a "strategic defeat" on Russia in Ukraine. This is part of the even more comprehensive goal of subjugating the whole of Eurasia in order to wage war against China. The genocide in Gaza and its extension into Lebanon, Iran, and ultimately the entire region, which is supported and financed by the imperialist powers, also serves this goal. The wars in the Middle East and Ukraine are part of the imperialist drive for the re-division and subjugation of the entire world.

In this context, the significance of the fight for Bogdan's freedom extends far beyond Ukraine. His six months of imprisonment make it clear that with the imperialist escalation on all war fronts, attacks on democratic rights are also increasing worldwide. The same developments are taking place in Europe.

In order to push through its policies of war and social devastation, the ruling class is courting fascist forces and adopting their authoritarian program. In Germany, the domestic secret service, which is riddled with far-right forces, has classified the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party)–the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and sister organization of the YGBL–as "anti-constitutional" and placed it under surveillance. The reason given is that it fights "against supposed nationalism, imperialism, and militarism" and for a "democratic, egalitarian, and socialist society."

All this underscores the enormous political significance of the campaign for the release of Bogdan Syrotiuk. The drum head tribunal against him is aimed at intimidating all opposition to war and capitalism–in Ukraine itself and worldwide. Everywhere, the ruling class fears the specter of revolution. The fact is that resistance is growing. Despite the brutal repression, soldiers are deserting in droves in Ukraine because they do not want to be slaughtered for the interests of the Ukrainian oligarchs and the imperialists.

The genocide in Gaza, which has now lasted for more than a year, has led to a strong growth in anti-war opposition worldwide. This growing hatred of imperialism and its crimes is now coinciding with a powerful development in the class struggle. In the US, 33,000 Boeing workers this week rejected a sellout contract for the second time and voted to continue their strike, dealing a serious blow to Boeing management and the union bureaucracy of the International Association of Machinists (IAM).

Thousands of workers, youth, artists, and academics from around the world have signed a petition calling for an end to the conspiracy against Syrotiuk. Six months after his arrest, this campaign is more important than ever, and the WSWS and the ICFI reiterate and reaffirm the demand for his immediate release.

The campaign aims to build a class conscious movement of workers throughout Europe, the US, and internationally, linking the struggle against imperialist war with the struggle against the attack on democratic and social rights and the danger of fascism. On this basis, Comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk can and will be freed! We urge all of those who support this campaign to sign the petition demanding Bogdan's release and to publicize the campaign for his freedom as widely as possible!

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