

1 year since the arrest of the Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists
24 April 2025

Exactly one year ago, on April 25, 2024, our Comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk, aged 25 at the time, was arrested by the Ukrainian Secret Service (SBU). Bogdan is a socialist opponent of the war in Ukraine and is a leading member of our organization, the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), which has declared its solidarity with the world Trotskyist movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Bogdan has been charged with “treason under martial law.” He is being held in an overcrowded prison under poor hygienic conditions in Nikolaev, sharing his fate with imprisoned factory workers and youth. If convicted, he faces between 15 years to life in prison. Central to the indictment and trial is the SBU’s claim that Bogdan “was involved in preparing publications on behalf of representatives of the Russian propaganda and information agency *World Socialist Web Site*.” The principal “evidence” for the charges are articles he wrote that were published by the WSW.

In reality, Bogdan’s and the ICFI’s well documented views directly refute this claim of the SBU. The ICFI and the YGBL have opposed the invasion of Ukraine from the beginning as a reactionary response by the Russian oligarchy to the imperialist encirclement of Russia, which would only serve the interests of the imperialist powers and divide the working class.

Bogdan has consistently called for an end to the war through the unification of the Ukrainian, Russian and world working class on the basis of a socialist perspective. He has consistently opposed both the Zelensky regime and the Putin regime, both of which he has characterized as the reactionary result of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

This is what Bogdan, as the representative of the YGBL in Ukraine, wanted to say at last year’s May Day online rally of the ICFI:

On this day of international working class solidarity, we, the 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 of the imperialist

countries to end this war!

We call for the creation of branches of the International Committee of the Fourth International in all former Soviet republics.

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 ring out louder and stronger: “Workers of all countries, unite!”

He wrote these words just a few days before his arrest and was unable to deliver them. These words alone are more than enough to make clear the content of his “crimes.”

In fact, Bogdan was arrested for expressing his anti-war socialist views, for his exposures of the crimes of the Ukrainian fascists and, above all, for his struggle for the rebuilding of the Trotskyist movement in the former Soviet Union.

The YGBL was founded in 2018 as an organization seeking to uncover the truth about Trotsky and the Left Opposition’s struggle against the nationalist betrayal of the October Revolution by Stalinism. The YGBL emerged in conditions aptly described by the Soviet historian Vadim Rogovin as scorched earth for Trotskyism. In the Great Terror of the 1930s, virtually all Trotskyists and other revolutionaries had been physically destroyed by the Stalinist bureaucracy. In the decades after, all information about Trotsky and the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalinism was distorted or concealed.

In our further development, we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to join the conscious struggle of the international working class. This recognition was expressed in our decision to join the International Committee of the Fourth International as the only force capable of leading the working class. Today, the YGBL, together with the ICFI, is fighting to overcome the legacy of Stalinism and revive the internationalist traditions of Lenin and Trotsky in the working class of the former Soviet Union.

Bogdan’s prosecution exposes the imperialist propaganda that the war waged by NATO against Russia in Ukraine is a

war for democracy against Putin's dictatorship. For the persecution of this socialist youth, dictatorial laws are being mobilized that allow the Ukrainian government to prosecute citizens for their statements if they are suspected of being "traitors to the state." To "prove" such crimes, special linguistic "experts" are brought in to prove the "criminal" content of statements. In effect, what is happening is the persecution of people for "thought crimes," a procedure previously associated, above all, with Nazi Germany. Tens of thousands of young people and workers have been arrested on this basis.

Since the start of the war, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian youth and workers have died on the front lines; many more permanently injured or crippled. Their lives have been brutally squandered, not for "freedom" and "democracy" but for the predatory interests of the imperialist powers and the rapacious oligarchy.

Bogdan was arrested amid growing opposition to the war and an immense social crisis in Ukraine. Having emerged from the Stalinist betrayal of the October Revolution, the Ukrainian oligarchy, like its Russian counterpart, is acutely sensitive to the threat posed to its rule by the Trotskyist movement. Fearful that Bogdan's views would gain a wider hearing amid a movement among workers and youth against the war, it moved to arrest him.

The arrest of Bogdan is not only an attack on Bogdan and the YGBL, it is an attack on the entire working class and the ICFI in particular. The state is building its case with the aim of criminalizing Trotskyism. The WSWs, the online publication of the ICFI, was banned one month after Bogdan's arrest in order to cut off Ukrainians' access to the exposure of Bogdan's trial and to the real information about his views.

There can be no doubt that Bogdan's arrest was orchestrated not only by Kiev but also by the imperialist backers of the Zelensky regime in Berlin, London and Washington. It is worth remembering that the ICFI has been under attack from governments for a number of years. In 2018, the Socialist Equality Party in Germany (SGP) was added to the list of "left-wing extremist organizations." And last year, the IYSSE in Germany, the youth section of the SGP, was added to the list of "anti-constitutional organizations."

But we have not been and will never be intimidated by such attacks. The International Committee responded to Bogdan's arrest with a powerful campaign on a global level, demanding his immediate release and popularizing the Trotskyist principles for which he stands. In the first days after Bogdan's detention, a petition demanding his release was created and gathered more than 4,700 signatures. A special page on the WSWs features information about Bogdan and this campaign.

On June 13, the ICFI held pickets outside Ukrainian embassies around the world, reading out a letter from David North, the chairperson of the WSWs editorial board, to the Ukrainian government demanding Bogdan Syrotiuk's release.

Bogdan's release was one of the central themes of the election campaigns of the Socialist Equality Parties in the UK, Sri Lanka, the US and Germany.

The campaign has received support from numerous organizations, intellectuals and public figures, including Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters. As a result, the state prosecutors have come under intense public scrutiny and are scrambling in court to prove their case against Bogdan.

But this struggle is far from over. One year on, the fight to free Bogdan is more urgent than ever. At stake is not only Bogdan's freedom but the political mobilization of the international working class against the escalating threat of world war, fascism and dictatorship. Whatever the outcome of the current negotiations by the US with Ukraine and Russia, the trajectory is toward a new imperialist redivision of the world. But as the experience of the war in Ukraine shows, imperialist war and the ensuing mass death cannot be imposed on the working class without a brutal crackdown on anti-war opposition and the bolstering of fascist forces.

Since Trump's coming to power, his administration has revived the law to justify the deportation of "illegal immigrants," has already deported more than 100,000 people and has also revoked the visas of more than 1,600 foreign students, many of whom were targeted because of their political statements protesting the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Like Bogdan, they are being persecuted effectively for their opposition to war and fascism, a "thought crime."

We therefore appeal to workers and youth in Russia, Ukraine, the US and throughout the world to join the campaign for Bogdan's release as a central part of the conscious struggle against fascism, dictatorship, war and capitalism.

- Sign the petition demanding Bogdan's release, and share it with your friends and acquaintances!
- No to fascism and war! Fight for the unification of the Ukrainian, Russian and international working class, through the building of the Trotskyist movement!
- Participate in the 2025 Online May Day Rally on May 3!
- Join the Socialist Equality Party and build the Fourth International!
- Fight for freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk!



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact