Historian Mario Kessler denounces sentencing of Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk

Mario Kessler
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The following statement protesting the sentencing of Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk has been issued by Professor Mario Kessler. Prior to his retirement in 2021, he taught at the University of Potsdam in Germany. Now 71 years old, Kessler *is currently a Senior Fellow at the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) in Potsdam, where he continues research and writing. Widely respected internationally, Kessler previously held visiting professorships at several universities, including Yeshiva University, Rutgers, Sciences Po, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Massachusetts in Amherst (US).*

Kessler is an expert in Jewish history and the history of the socialist and workers movement. In 2011, he was one of 14 leading German and Austrian historians who opposed the German publication of the slanderous biography of Leon Trotsky by Robert Service.

Kessler's most recent publications include "Leon Trotsky or Socialism against Antisemitism" (Leo Trotzki oder Sozialismus gegen Antisemitismus, Dietz Verlag Berlin, 2022) and "Escape in chains, longing behind walls. Essays on history, politics and culture (2020-2024)" (Flucht in Ketten, Sehnsucht hinter Mauern. Essays zur Geschichte, Politik und Kultur (2020–2024), trafo Wissenschaftsverlag, 2024).

To sign the petition to free Bogdan Syrotiuk and submit a statement, go to wsws.org/freebogdan.

I, Professor Dr. Mario Kessler, historian in Berlin, hereby strongly protest the Pervomaisk court's conviction of Mr. Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Mr. Syrotiuk is accused of acting on behalf of the Putin regime in Russia. In court, Mr. Syrotiuk pleaded not guilty. He stated that, as a Ukrainian socialist, he condemns the Russian invasion from its beginning. The *World Socialist Web Site*, which is actively campaigning for his release and for which I was also interviewed, is a website registered in the United States.

The website is affiliated with a Trotskyist organization. Must I remind you that Leon Trotsky, as People's Commissar for Defense, ensured the formation of the Red Army, which was able to curb the mass murder of Ukrainian Jews during the civil war? Must I also remind you that in 1939, Trotsky vehemently condemned the partition of Western Ukraine between Germany and the Soviet Union and advocated for a Ukraine independent of the Soviet Union—including Stalin's Soviet Union?

How does this fit with the accusation that Mr. Syrotiuk, a self-proclaimed socialist and Trotskyist, is playing along with Putin's game?

Professor Dr. Mario Kessler, historian

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