

A case of political sabotage: Duncan Chapel's filthy provocation against imprisoned Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

WSWS International Editorial Board
20 August 2026

Duncan Chapel—a member of the British section of the Pabloite international network and a regular contributor to *International Viewpoint* and *Anticapitalist Resistance*—has published a libel against imprisoned Ukrainian anti-war socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.

His aim is to sabotage the growing international opposition to Bogdan's persecution by the Zelensky regime, injecting poisonous misinformation and lies into the public discussion of the case.

He is acting as a political provocateur, whose actions serve the interests of the fascistic Ukrainian regime and NATO.

The operation comes at a critical time, when the defense campaign is preparing an appeal against Bogdan's conviction for high treason under martial law, carrying a 15-year sentence.

In a brief note published to his "Red Mole" Substack page, Chapel assembles a collection of lies so brazen that not even Ukraine's kangaroo court included them in its charges.

He accuses Bogdan of being "a Russian-backed Ukrainian paid to submit pro-Russian war propaganda to the WSWs website," in communication with a "handler" and in possession of "several Russian military items." Chapel concludes: "he looks like a paid operative rather than a political prisoner."

These are outright lies. No reference to payments from a Russian individual appears either in the list of charges for which Bogdan was convicted, or in the sentencing rationale.

The verdict states that Bogdan is guilty of treason because of his collaboration with a "foreign organization." That organization is identified repeatedly as the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which publishes the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) and to which the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists (YGBL), the group led by Bogdan, is affiliated.

Each of the six charges against Bogdan relates to a WSWs article opposing the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine and calling for the unity of the Russian, Ukrainian and international working class against it.

The prosecution extensively detailed Bogdan's collaboration with the WSWs and its associates. There are over 30 references to the WSWs, over 20 to anonymized individuals associated with it, at least 15 to the YGBL, seven to the Fourth International and the ICFI, and one to Clara Weiss, a writer for the WSWs. The anonymized "Person 9," referenced four times, is the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the WSWs, David North.

The judge addresses the defense argument that "the prosecutor

failed to prove the existence of the foreign organization to which assistance was provided and that its activities had the relevant subversive orientation." The court's response makes clear that this is a political prosecution:

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) is an international political organization... known for its publications on the World Socialist Web Site. The Fourth International is a communist international organization, an alternative to Stalinism. It is based on the theoretical legacy of [redacted]_36 [Leon Trotsky] and sets as its objective the achievement of world revolution, the victory of the working class and the construction of socialism.

It is Bogdan's socialist-internationalist political activity which is branded as "treason" and "pro-Russian disinformation."

There is a single sentence, on page 10 of an 18-page judgment, which refers to Bogdan "initiating with [redacted]_29 [Person 29] the receipt of monthly monetary remuneration and receiving such funds." This sentence occurs in a paragraph devoted exclusively to Bogdan's relations with the WSWs, specifically to writing assignments.

There is no indication, let alone allegation, that the "remuneration" came from any agency of the Russian state or any individual associated with it. Neither this claimed event nor "[redacted]_29" is ever referenced again.

The document details extensive surveillance of Bogdan by "covert investigative (search) action." Had there been anything that could have been used to claim Bogdan was in the pay of a Russian state official, it would have been the central focus of the entire prosecution.

There is not a single reference to any Russian state agency in connection with Bogdan's communications. Bogdan did not have a "handler." That fictional character has been concocted entirely by Chapel.

To reinforce his libel, Chapel seizes on the Ukrainian prosecution's listing of Russian military items under "the physical evidence." He conceals the fact that these items (1) were

supposedly found at an address different from Bogdan's, without even a claim being made about its connection to him; (2) were never produced in court either physically or by photograph or witness testimony.

Once again, if there was any shred of plausibility to these accusations, they would have been made central to the prosecution's treason case and every item listed would have been paraded in court.

They were not. The judgment instead orders these mythical items to be destroyed.

Chapel's last line of attack against Bogdan is his statement that "Human rights NGOs in Ukraine are not taking up" his case. No explanation is given by Chapel for the abstention of the NGOs. Clearly, he is implying that the NGOs view Bogdan's case with suspicion.

The obvious explanation destroys his insinuation: Ukraine's human rights NGOs are heavily dependent on Western state-linked funding and broadly support the war, and all of them operate under the same martial-law regime now being wielded against Bogdan. No NGO taking up the case of an accused "traitor" prosecuted by the SBU could do so without exposing itself to state retribution.

The malicious intent of Chapel's post is underscored by his actions in preparing the attack. On Saturday, August 15 he sent an email to the WWSW requesting additional information. It concluded, "I would be glad to have a response by Friday 21 August. I expect to publish the following Monday, with or without one, and I would much prefer with."

He published his provocation the next day, Sunday August 16—five days before his own stated deadline for a response and eight days before his announced publication date. He then told a commenter on his post that "the ICFI [whom I wrote to about this] did not reply to clarify."

Chapel's message was sent as a set-up for his attack. It was also a fishing operation for information that would be of assistance to the prosecution as Bogdan prepares his appeal.

He demanded answers to "two findings that your coverage has not addressed." After referencing Bogdan's alleged "receipt of a monthly monetary reward," which he acknowledges is "at paragraph level a single sentence," Chapel demands: "was the World Socialist Web Site, or any body or individual associated with the ICFI, paying Bogdan Syrotiuk that monthly retainer, stipend, expenses or any other regular sum?"

Chapel's question makes clear that the court provided no information whatsoever about the origins and significance of the money referenced obliquely and only once in the document. Nevertheless, Chapel proceeds to manufacture the claim that the money was provided by a "handler" who is not referenced by the Court.

He then refers to the "second finding" that "the articles were prepared with the assistance of citizens of the Russian Federation... not individually identified," asking, "Who were they, and do you know what was their role?" It is not a secret that the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists is an organization that unites Ukrainian and Russian youth opposed to the war. Chapel apparently wanted the WWSW to provide him with names that will expose them to targeting by political police.

He then demands to know how Bogdan will be conducting his defense: "Will the appeal contest the court's finding on the monthly payments, or accept the finding and contest its characterisation?" Chapel was soliciting privileged information about the legal strategy of a defendant in a pending appeal—information of value to no one but the prosecution.

There are no requests for "clarity" about the Russian military items allegation, which he brazenly cites in his Substack post.

The only credible interpretation of Chapel's actions is that he set out to mount a provocation at the earliest possible opportunity against a defense campaign that is rapidly gaining support, and which is politically damaging to the NATO war, the Zelensky regime and their apologists.

This is confirmed by Chapel's writings, which center on denunciations of any individual or political tendency which does not wholeheartedly support the war against Russia. This has included an attack on Britain's Stop the War Coalition for "betraying Ukraine."

On August 20, just four days after his post on Bogdan, Chapel published on *Anticapitalist Resistance* an article dedicated to refuting "claims," "misconceptions" and "fake-news" circulating in the left that he states "are still used to remain silent or even oppose solidarity with Ukrainians who are fighting for national sovereignty against occupation and annexation by Russian imperialism."

The same political aim of supporting NATO's proxy war in Ukraine animates his attack against Bogdan Syrotiuk, intended to ensure that his frame-up by the Zelensky regime succeeds.

The WWSW does not know whether Chapel acted alone or in consultation with others. No claim is being made here about affiliations other than his association with the British Pabloites. But what can be stated with certainty is that the objective content and timing of his provocation serve the interests of the prosecution at the very moment Bogdan's appeal is being prepared. His lies will be rejected by anyone with the faintest concern for democratic rights and the truth.

The ICFI demands that *International Viewpoint* publicly repudiate this provocation by a member of their British section and a regular contributor to their press.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on its readers and all defenders of democratic rights to answer Chapel's provocation by joining the fight for Bogdan Syrotiuk's freedom.



To contact the WWSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact