

Left-wing organizations in Latin America, Europe, North America take up the defense of imprisoned Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk

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At least a dozen left-wing political organizations in 11 countries have publicly backed the campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk, the 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist sentenced to 15 years in prison on August 10 for opposing the war. The petition demanding his release has drawn 1,249 signers from 65 countries since the sentencing and 6,734 in all as of Monday afternoon.

Groups in Britain, Canada, France, Italy and Russia came forward last week; organizations in Argentina, Spain, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic have followed, along with Left Voice in the United States and two German groups.

The Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, which Bogdan leads, is a youth organization in Ukraine, Russia and other former Soviet republics that stands with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The *World Socialist Web Site*, the ICFI's publication, published the six articles the prosecution entered as its evidence.

Among the most recent is *Política Obrera*, the Argentine organization led by Jorge Altamira, the 84-year-old founder and longtime leader of Argentina's Partido Obrero (Workers Party). Altamira founded the journal *Política Obrera* in 1964, led the Partido Obrero for decades until it expelled him in 2019 and then revived the older name.

Política Obrera first demanded Bogdan's release on May 4, 2024, nine days after his arrest. On August 17, 2026, it ran an article on the sentence, and on August 22 its executive committee wrote to the Pervomaik City District Court, in Ukraine's Mykolaiv region, repeating the article's central passages and asking the court to annul the verdict.

The article states: "No evidence of sabotage or direct military collaboration has been presented. This is an entirely political trial" (translated from the Spanish).

In Spain, the Partido Comunista Obrero Español (Spanish Communist Workers' Party), a party that broke from the

Communist Party of Spain in 1973, posted on X on Monday, linking to the WSW's report on Bogdan's case: "Last August 10, the sentencing of a socialist to 15 years in prison for alleged high treason in Ukraine was made public. The cause? The publication of antiwar articles calling on Russian and Ukrainian workers to unite" (translated from the Spanish).

The same day Grupo Tortuga, an antimilitarist collective in Spain's Valencian Community, republished the WSW's statement on the verdict in full.

The Revolutionary Communist International, the left-wing international led by its co-founder, Alan Woods, posted a solidarity appeal on August 19, credited to its Ukrainian supporters, Marxist Tendency Ukraine.

Rudá Avantgarda, a Czech left-wing organization that publishes the international's material, put out a Czech translation the same day. And Socialistisch Alternatief, a Dutch left-wing organization active since 1977, has since published the statement in Dutch.

In Berlin, Renate Dahlhaus signed the petition on Sunday in the name of the Spartacist Workers' Party of Germany and its Committee for Social Defense, two groups of the Spartacist tendency.

Left Voice, a left-wing publication in the United States, called for Bogdan's release in May 2025, a year after his arrest, and its statement is quoted on the campaign's petition page: "we unequivocally oppose the Ukrainian regime's attacks on opponents of the proxy-war which offers nothing for the Ukrainian working class."

The political tendencies have been joined by academics and public figures—the historians Mario Kessler, Victoria Bynum, Mark Tauger and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe and the sociologist Volodymyr Ishchenko among them—and on Monday by the groundbreaking tenor George Shirley, the first black tenor to sing a leading role at the Metropolitan

Opera, who has written to the court.

Shirley, 92, grew up in Detroit and became the first black teacher of music in the city's public high schools. His Met debut came on October 24, 1961, as Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

He taught at the University of Michigan for two decades and holds the 2014 National Medal of Arts, presented by then-US President Barack Obama in 2015.

His letter opens with a series of questions, among them: "Is Ukraine a country where democratic rights exist, or is it devoid of same? Do citizens of this country have a right to express their opinions, or must they walk in lock step with those presently in authority?"

"I write in support of Bogdan Syrotiuk, imprisoned for speaking the truth, as have countless others throughout history who had the courage to do so when others failed miserably out of fear for their freedom, for their lives!" Shirley writes.

Shirley continues: Bogdan's "appeal to those citizens of Russia and Ukraine who want the present slaughter to cease is a sensible and humane cry to preserve, not destroy, the lives of all involved!"

He closes: "I urge you to free Bogdan Syrotiuk with all deliberate speed. Human life is sacred, and his call for unity with those in Russia for whom the US-NATO war is an abomination is appropriate to say the least!"

Since Friday morning the English-language petition form has added 298 signers from 40 countries, Germany second only to the United States. Michael Bokovoy of Michigan signed on Sunday night, listing himself as a member of United Auto Workers Local 602 at General Motors' Lansing Delta Township assembly plant.

Apart from Shirley's and Política Obrera's, 29 more letters for the court, the latest dated August 22, have come in since August 17, from Australia, the United States, Sri Lanka, England, France, Germany, Denmark, Bulgaria, Canada and Brazil and from writers who gave no country.

D. Dharshika, a nursing officer at Kandy Hospital in Sri Lanka, wrote on August 21: "Bogdan Syrotiuk spoke for peace and for the unity of workers across borders. That is not treason—it is the voice of humanity."

Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker running for president of the United Auto Workers, posted on X on Sunday: "On Aug. 10, a court in Ukraine sentenced Bogdan Syrotiuk, a 27-year-old antiwar socialist, to 15 years in prison for writing that Russian and Ukrainian workers have no reason to kill each other, and calling on them to unite against the war. I demand his immediate and unconditional release, and so should every member of the UAW."

The social media posts that carried the case to a wider audience last week have kept gathering readers. The August

15 post on the verdict by Volodymyr Ishchenko, a Ukrainian sociologist at the Free University of Berlin, had been viewed 111,000 times on X by Monday evening, up from 88,700 when it was first reported.

On Instagram, Fight For A Future, an account with some 780,000 followers, reproduced the WSWS statement on August 19; by Monday evening its post had risen from 32,000 likes to 37,900. MintPress News's post of August 20 had risen from 5,500 likes to 7,082, and the Italian outlet InsideOver's post of August 18 to 6,126. The August 19 post by Budni Ukhilyanta, the Telegram channel for Ukrainian men avoiding conscription, had been viewed 5,440 times.

The court convicted Bogdan of high treason under martial law. The offense, in the verdict's own words, was "propaganda of communist ideology and of the political current of 'Trotskyism'"; the proof was six WSWS articles and his correspondence with the WSWS editors. The prosecution produced no evidence of espionage.

Ukraina.ru, a site owned by Rossiya Segodnya, the Russian state media company that also runs RIA Novosti and Sputnik, published on Saturday an analysis by its staff writer Pavel Volkov arguing that the conviction fails under Ukraine's own law: the prosecution never produced the foreign organization Bogdan supposedly served beyond "a mere reference to the Fourth International's website," he wrote in Russian, and Article 62 of Ukraine's constitution "directly forbids building an accusation on assumptions."

No major Western newspaper or wire service has reported the case. A poll of the Google News index for "Syrotiuk" on Monday returned roughly 80 items: the WSWS's own, a few small outlets and unrelated people who share the surname.

The deadline for Bogdan's appeal is September 9. Supporters can write to the Pervomaisk City District Court (inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua) and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal (inbox@mka.court.gov.ua), copying freebogdan@wsws.org, and sign the petition and donate to the campaign at wsws.org/freebogdan.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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