

“Official cult of Holocaust perpetrators and ethnic cleansers”

John-Paul Himka, leading historian of Ukraine, condemns prosecution of Bogdan Syrotiuk

28 August 2026

Dr. John-Paul Himka, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Alberta, has sent a letter to the Pervomaisk City District Court condemning the imprisonment of Bogdan Syrotiuk, the 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist sentenced on August 10 to 15 years in prison on a charge of “high treason” under martial law. We publish the letter in full below, which was copied to the WSW.

Dr. Himka is one of the world’s foremost historians of modern Ukraine who has made major contributions to the study of Ukrainian nationalism, the Holocaust in Ukraine and eastern European historical memory. His work has ranged across the social and political history of Habsburg Galicia, the emergence of the Ukrainian national movement, the Greek Catholic Church, the relationship among Ukrainian, Polish and Jewish communities, and the role of Ukrainian nationalist forces in the destruction of Ukrainian Jewry during the Nazi occupation.

His major books include Socialism in Galicia: The Emergence of Polish Social Democracy and Ukrainian Radicalism (1860–1890) (1983); Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century (1988); Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867–1900 (1999); and Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA’s Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941–1944 (2021).

A graduate of the University of Michigan, where he received a PhD in history in 1977, Himka taught for decades at the University of Alberta. He has held a Pinchas and Mark Wisen Fellowship at the United

States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Himka has supported Ukraine in the present NATO-backed war against Russia, and his political standpoint therefore differs from that of the World Socialist Web Site and Bogdan Syrotiuk. However, Himka denounces the Ukrainian regime’s “cult of Holocaust perpetrators” and has written a powerful condemnation of Syrotiuk’s prosecution and imprisonment.

How can one continue to defend Ukraine as a democracy when someone is sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment for expressing opinions that in no way jeopardize Ukrainian security? I have written a long monograph on the war crimes of OUN-UPA:

- Ukrainian nationalists and the Holocaust
- Ukrainskie nacionalisty i Holocaust

I thank God that I am a Canadian citizen, where there is no official cult of Holocaust perpetrators and ethnic cleansers and where I am allowed to express my opinion.

I am an emeritus professor of Ukrainian history and have been publishing academic works on Ukraine for no less than fifty-five years. I was banned from entering Russia in November 2022. I have been active in Ukraine’s defence in several organizations and have publicized Ukraine’s plight in leftist media:

<https://spectrejournal.com/ukraines-geopolitical-precarity/>

The kind of obvious miscarriage of justice that went on in your court does not make it any easier to defend my ancestral homeland.

The World Socialist Web Site urges its readers to add

their names to the petition for Bogdan's freedom. Write to the Pervomaisk City District Court at inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua and the Nikolaev Court of Appeal at inbox@mka.court.gov.ua, with a copy to freebogdan@wsws.org, demanding that the sentence be thrown out and Bogdan be freed at once.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact