

Britain's Socialist Equality Party hosts online meeting demanding freedom for Bogdan Syrotiuk

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (UK) devoted its monthly readers meeting on September 2 to a call to join the campaign to free our comrade, Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Bogdan is facing 15 years in a Ukrainian prison. He has been targeted by the right-wing Zelensky regime and convicted of high treason after a political show trial. The verdict makes explicit that his fundamental “crime” is to have opposed the fratricidal slaughter in the Ukraine, waged as a proxy war against Russia by the NATO powers. He has opposed the reactionary invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime and called for a unified offensive by workers in Ukraine and Russia to bring the war to an end.

The meeting was addressed by German language editor of the *World Socialist Web Site* and leading member of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, Johannes Stern, who has played a leading role in the campaign for Bogdan's freedom and has been interviewed on multiple media platforms.

Stern directed his contribution to “two questions that are inseparably connected, the escalating war in Ukraine and the fight to free our comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk.”

He noted that the German government has now “formally accused Russia of responsibility for the explosive drone found at the Leipzig/Halle airport on August 4,” using this to announce punitive measures, including a more aggressive response against what they call the Russian shadow fleet.

“It's coming very close to an open state of war,” said Stern, “But if you ask the question, *cui bono*, who benefits, it's more the interests of the imperialist powers in Ukraine and not Russia.”

German imperialism, he stressed, was playing an ever more aggressive role in this confrontation. “Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, a social democrat, have declared that Germany must build the strongest conventional army in Europe and become *kriegstüchtig*—the German term for being ready for war.”

Stern pointed to the dark history of German imperialism, which twice in the 20th century had driven eastwards in pursuit of its strategic and economic interests—“under the Kaiser in the First World War, and of course, in an incomparably more murderous scale under Hitler in the Nazi war of annihilation against the Soviet Union.” This produced the Holocaust and led to the murder of at least 27 million Soviet citizens.

“Today, the German ruling class is once again declaring that it

must dominate Europe, also militarily, and pursue its interests as a global power.”

This assessment, said Stern, leads directly to the case of our comrade Bogdan. He explained how the 27-year-old Bogdan had begun turning to socialism quite early on. “His life, his family background is very much connected to the history of the 20th century. His grandfather fought in the Red Army and opposed the Nazi invasion, also living through the years of famine under Stalin.”

Bogdan had eventually turned to the *World Socialist Web Site* and the International Committee of the Fourth International, together with his group, the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists, which is active in Ukraine and Russia. They had adopted a conscious Trotskyist socialist internationalist perspective, “And that was basically his crime.”

The central evidence against him consisted of “six political articles published on the *World Socialist Web Site*, and also his correspondence with our editorial staff.” The verdict denounced his communist and Trotskyist politics.

Stern asked why Bogdan was considered so dangerous that he had to be locked up for 15 years: “I think the answer is clear. Bogdan fought for the only viable perspective which can actually stop this catastrophe. He opposed the NATO war offensive. He opposed Putin's invasion. He actively rejected the poison of Ukrainian and Russian nationalism with his comrades. He insisted on this basis that Russian Ukrainian workers who are now being sent to kill one another have common class interests and have to unite and have to organize and conduct a joint struggle against the ruling cliques on both sides of the battlefield.”

“What Comrade Bogdan opposed in Ukraine, the turn towards authoritarianism, dictatorship, fascism, these are the developments in all the major imperialist countries. And the link that war abroad requires repression at home.”

The Zelensky regime wants Bogdan dead

Chris Marsden, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (UK) said that the Zelensky regime wanted Bogdan dead, “And

they want to throw him into a hole until he is.”

He drew a parallel with Julian Assange, “who came as close as anyone would ever did to dying here in the UK. Julian Assange went into prison with a compromised condition. Bogdan, who has significant illnesses, has been locked away now for two years and is facing 15 more. And we’re not going to let that happen.”

Marsden noted that in Andy Burnham’s first House of Commons speech as prime minister. “The first real thing he talked about was waging war in Ukraine....

“His Labour government will escalate the offensive against Russia at the direct expense of the working class. The dangers of this cannot be stressed enough.” If capitalism continued, “the drive to redivide the world and its resources and markets between the major imperialist powers threatens catastrophe on a global scale. And the only way out of this nightmare is through capitalism’s overthrow by the working class.

“That is why the fight for the freedom of Comrade Bogdan is so politically vital. It encapsulates all the fundamental issues of perspective now confronting the working class: whether to seek peace through pressurizing the labour and trade union bureaucracy, and through it the ruling class, or to seek peace through the revolutionary mobilization of the international working class.”

Marsden noted that the campaign to free Bogdan had won the support of the Stop the War Coalition, Britain’s official anti-war movement, which had publicly demanded Bogdan’s release. However, “They did so while doubling down on their political opposition to everything he represents. They refused to name us at all and made Bogdan part of their campaign to pressurise Andy Burnham.”

Marsden drew attention to Bogdan’s address to the International May Day Rally of the International Committee in 2022, in which he said:

The views of the Marxist tradition, held by Lenin and Trotsky, and, after them, by us, led us inevitably to the International Committee of the Fourth International as the only international organization still defending the historical traditions of October, defending the personality and ideas of Lenin and Trotsky against Stalinist slander. An organization that has not lost its proletarian character.

The International Committee, which supports the struggle for socialism on an international basis, has become for us the beacon to which all ships of Marxist revolutionaries must aspire in order to unite in their struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist order and the establishment of socialism throughout the world.

He concluded with an appeal for everyone to “not only declare their backing for Bogdan’s release, but to join us in fighting for it.”

Following the reports, a lively discussion ensued

George said “the imprisonment and profound mistreatment of Bogdan is only the beginning of the effort of the global bourgeoisie to suppress critical thought and the profound need for global solidarity, global collaboration to overcome the crises of capitalism, to overcome the ecological crises, to overcome the crises of global war.

Gabriel said, “I’m from Australia and currently our government has sent over \$1.7 billion to the war in Ukraine despite not being a

NATO member, despite not being a European country.”

A Ukrainian, now resident in the UK, said he had family in Ukraine and “did not like the fact that Russian bombs are raining on them. So, I kind of have some sympathy for the military position. But parallel to that, I don’t like the fact that I’m being constantly told by friends, relatives, university colleagues, government, whatever, to support a nation that would lock me in prison together with Bogdan for my beliefs, for my socialist beliefs.”

Later he stated that Putin’s party, United Russia, emerged through the active intervention of US imperialism in Russia, otherwise the runaway winner of elections in 1996 would have been the Communist Party. Had that not taken place, he suggested, maybe all this could have been avoided.

In response, Marsden explained that “The Russian Communist Party is not and was not a communist party, it’s a Stalinist party. And the divisions that existed within the communist nomenclature at that time, between the openly capitalist restorationist wing around Gorbachev and then Yeltsin, was opposed by a stratum of the Stalinist bureaucracy that wanted to preserve their privileged existence within the police state regime that existed in Russia at the time.”

Trotsky explained in the 1930s that Stalinism was a counter-revolutionary tendency and that the historical prognosis was either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the agency of world imperialism, would restore private property and transform itself into a capitalist class, or the working class would carry out a political revolution against that bureaucracy and restore genuine workers democracy.

Today, like the fight against Stalinism, our basic conception of the socialist revolution, “is not simply that the working class will carry it out automatically, but that the working class must be made politically conscious. It has to have a socialist political perspective, a socialist leadership. The party that we’re building is the conscious representative of the international working class...

“Those who understand the gravity of the present situation, and who agree with Bogdan that the ICFI is the beacon to which all Marxist revolutionaries are being drawn should join the Socialist Equality Party and build it.”



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