

Turkish preface to *A Socialist Opponent of the NATO War in Ukraine: The Case of Bogdan Syrotiuk*

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On August 10, 2026, the Pervomaïsk City District Court in Ukraine’s Mykolaiv region sentenced Bogdan Syrotiuk, a 27-year-old Ukrainian socialist, to 15 years in prison for “high treason under martial law.” Bogdan had been arrested in April 2024 by the SBU, the Ukrainian secret service, for opposing NATO’s proxy war in Ukraine on the basis of opposition to both the Zelensky regime and the Putin regime, and for calling on the Ukrainian, Russian and international working class to unite against the war.

The Turkish edition of this volume, first published in Germany at the beginning of August 2026 as *The Ukraine War and the Fight for Socialism: The Case of Bogdan Syrotiuk*, appears under conditions in which the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement, has intensified its campaign for Bogdan’s freedom globally following the verdict.

The verdict itself powerfully confirmed the analysis made by Johannes Stern in his preface to the German edition. The court did not establish a single act of espionage, sabotage or military collaboration on behalf of Russia, because no such act existed. Bogdan was convicted for six political articles published on the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) and for his correspondence with the editors who published them.

The state’s experts examined 14 of his writings and included seven of them in the indictment; the court was then forced to remove one of these from the case—an article describing the military commissariats’ seizure of men off the streets—after its own forensic commission could find nothing criminal in it. In the reasoning of the verdict, the “crime” is defined in plain language as “propaganda of communist ideology and of the political current of ‘Trotskyism.’”

The court ordered the confiscation of Bogdan’s property, the seizure of his electronic devices and the destruction of the socialist books, leaflets and programmatic documents taken from him; it also charged him for the cost of the “expert examinations” used to convict him.

This is a political verdict from beginning to end, handed down by the NATO-backed fascistic regime in Ukraine. For Bogdan, whose health was already poor when he was arrested and who has been denied necessary medical treatment for more than two years, 15 years in Ukraine’s prisons, whose horrific conditions are well documented, is the equivalent of a death sentence.

As the WSWS and the ICFI intensified the campaign for Bogdan’s freedom launched in April 2024, the call to oppose this political persecution met with a powerful response worldwide. In the three weeks since the conviction was announced, more than 1,500 new signatures from dozens of countries have been added to the petition, bringing the total number of signatories to over 7,200.

Numerous left-wing organizations and publications in more than ten countries have taken up Bogdan’s defense and issued public statements against the verdict. California Scholars for Academic Freedom, which brings together some 200 academics from twenty California institutions, wrote to both Ukrainian courts, declaring that Bogdan had been convicted of a “thought crime.” Dozens of letters written by workers, teachers, nurses and students have reached the courts from Türkiye, Ukraine, Russia and Australia to Sri Lanka, from Bulgaria to Germany, France and Britain, and from the United States and Canada to Brazil. Will Lehman, the socialist Mack Trucks worker who ran for the presidency of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the United States, demanded Bogdan’s unconditional release.

The press that defends the war which the NATO governments market as a “war for democracy,” by contrast, has passed over in silence this verdict trampling on basic rights, including freedom of speech and of the press. Although weeks have gone by since the verdict, not one major bourgeois publication or news agency—including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the BBC and those in Türkiye—has written a single word about the case. This silence is not without reason: to recount Bogdan’s trial and the sentence handed down against him would mean the collapse of the justification for this imperialist war.

The Bogdan Syrotiuk case, which involves both this war and basic democratic rights, is of direct concern to readers in Türkiye. Türkiye is a NATO member with the largest land army after the United States; it lies at the intersection of the Balkans, the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Middle East; and it hosts critical infrastructure of the alliance, from the Incirlik Air Base in Adana to the Kürecik radar station in Malatya. As the country that controls entry to and exit from the Black Sea under the 1936 Montreux Convention on the Straits, it is also a maritime neighbor of both Ukraine and Russia.

In the first phase of the war, Ankara positioned itself as a “mediator” by closing the Straits to warships and hosting the

Istanbul talks. In March 2022, the framework of an agreement between the two sides was on the table in Istanbul. Why this framework collapsed, and what the real aim of the war was, was stated publicly in April 2022 by the then foreign minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu: “There are those within the NATO countries who want the war to continue. Their aim is for the war to go on, for Russia to be weakened further and perhaps for Putin to be replaced as well.”^[1]

These words belong to the foreign minister of a NATO member, and they make clear where the responsibility lies for the war now kept going for four and a half years. The hundreds of thousands of lives given by Ukrainian and Russian workers as the war has been prolonged are the price of a decision taken in Washington, London and Berlin, which direct a war in which the Ukrainian regime serves as a proxy.

Over the past four years, Ankara’s position has step by step been integrated into the escalation by NATO and Ukraine. This shift reached its high point at the NATO Summit held in Ankara on July 7-8, 2026. For the second time since the 2004 Istanbul summit, Türkiye hosted the leaders of the imperialist war alliance, who are at the same time the architects and backers of Israel’s genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza and of the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran.

Following the summit, which produced an increase in military spending and aggression, the war against Russia was escalated. And about a month after the summit, on August 10, the verdict against Bogdan Syrotyuk was announced. This is no coincidence. That Kiev found the audacity to sentence a socialist to 15 years for his writings is a direct product of its backing by NATO. As is clearly documented in the final article of this book, “Zelensky rules out elections, as Ukraine’s dictatorship jails opponents of the war,” Zelensky is ruling as a dictator against enormous popular opposition to both the war and the regime, and Bogdan has been targeted for giving this opposition to the war a socialist expression. While the Zelensky regime has banned a dozen parties by court order, above all left-wing parties, the Erdoğan regime has extended its political repression as far as the Republican People’s Party (CHP) and the New Party that split from it, despite their pro-NATO orientation.

As NATO’s war against Russia escalates, the Black Sea too is becoming a theater of battle. With the intelligence and technology supplied by NATO, Ukraine is carrying the war ever further onto the international sea lanes and onto commercial shipping. While countless ships and their crews have been targeted in the Black Sea in recent months, on August 26, 2026, the Turkish-operated *Lider Bordo Mavi* was hit by a drone attack off Tuapse; the following day the *Lider Kocatepe*, sent to tow the vessel, was also targeted and a fire broke out on board. Ankara was finally compelled to summon the Ukrainian ambassador to the Foreign Ministry on August 29. The replacement of the line of “mediation” by one that adapts itself to NATO aggression has created a deadly danger for seafarers in the Black Sea.

At the same time, demands are being raised in various NATO circles for a “reassessment” of the Montreux Convention, that is, for the opening of the Black Sea to the navies of the alliance. Such a step would mean placing Türkiye on the front line of a direct

military conflict with Russia.

All of this is being carried out against the will of the overwhelming majority of the population. US-led NATO is a hated organization in Türkiye, identified with military coups and with the repression of the workers’ movement and the left-wing opposition. Following the genocide in Gaza, social anger against the US and Israel has reached historic levels. This is accompanied by an ever-intensifying growth of class struggles.

The bill for the pledge given to NATO to spend 5 percent on the military takes the form of a minimum wage kept below the hunger threshold, unpaid wages, social cuts and the violent suppression of workers’ struggles. What the regime persecuting Bogdan Syrotyuk in Ukraine and the regime jailing workers’ leaders in Türkiye have in common is that both serve their own ruling class, are tied to imperialism and are hostile to the working class.

This book aims to advance the campaign for the freedom of Bogdan Syrotyuk, which today is an inseparable part of the struggle against imperialist war. This campaign will be successful to the extent that it takes root within the international working class and mobilizes it. Our appeal to the workers, young people, students, artists and intellectuals of Türkiye is clear: read this book, discuss it and distribute it.

Visit FreeBogdan.org and act: Sign and share the petition prepared for Bogdan’s release. Pass resolutions in your workplaces, your unions, your schools and your universities demanding freedom for Bogdan. Write to the Pervomaisk City District Court (inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua) and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal (inbox@mka.court.gov.ua), sending a copy to freebogdan@wsws.org, and demand that the conviction be overturned.

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August 31, 2026

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Exclusive Interview Given by Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu to CNN Türk’s *Tarafsız Bölge*, 20 April 2022” [in Turkish]. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-mevlut-cavusoglu-n-un-cnn-turk-tarafsiz-bolge-de-verdigi-ozel-roportaj--20-nisan-2022.tr.mfa>

[1] Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Exclusive Interview Given by Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu to CNN Türk’s *Tarafsız Bölge*, 20 April 2022” [in Turkish]. URL: <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-mevlut-cavusoglu-n-un-cnn-turk-tarafsiz-bolge-de-verdigi-ozel-roportaj--20-nisan-2022.tr.mfa>



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