

No2Nato No2War interviews Johannes Stern on Bogdan Syrotiuk and political crisis in Germany

Our reporters
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The No2Nato No2War YouTube channel has published an extensive interview with Johannes Stern, editor-in-chief of the German-language edition of the *World Socialist Web Site* and a leading member of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), on the case of imprisoned Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk and the international campaign for his immediate release. No2Nato No2War was launched in early 2023 with significant involvement from the Workers Party of Britain, led by George Galloway.

The more than 50-minute interview also discussed the massive German military buildup, the militarization of schools and universities, the electoral advance of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the deepening social crisis expressed in mass job cuts throughout German industry.

At the beginning of the discussion, Stern described the historic character of the resurgence of German militarism.

“What people for long maybe couldn’t imagine—that after two world wars in the 20th century, you have now German militarism coming back on the European stage, on the world stage,” Stern said. The transformation, he explained, is affecting the whole of society, including the universities and schools.

He pointed to the growing cooperation between the Bundeswehr (armed forces) and universities, the deployment of military “youth officers” into classrooms and the recruitment of minors into the armed forces. At the same time, he stressed the substantial opposition among young people, expressed in school strikes against the reintroduction of conscription and militarism.

The central part of the interview focused on the case of Bogdan Syrotiuk.

The 27-year-old founder and leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), a socialist youth organization active in Ukraine, Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, was arrested by the Ukrainian security service

SBU on April 25, 2024. On August 10, 2026 he was sentenced by the Pervomaisk City District Court to 15 years in prison on charges of “high treason under martial law.”

Stern outlined Bogdan’s political development and explained that he opposed both the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the NATO war policy that preceded and fueled the conflict. Bogdan rejected the nationalism on both sides and fought for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against the oligarchic regimes in both countries and for an international socialist perspective.

The verdict itself, Stern explained, makes particularly clear the political character of the prosecution. The initial allegation that Bogdan was a “Russian agent” was never substantiated by evidence. Instead, his journalism, political writings and collaboration with the WSWs were transformed into supposed acts of treason.

“What is the political treason?” Stern asked. “It’s not sabotage. It’s not betraying military secrets. It’s writing for the *World Socialist Web Site*, political statements, socialist statements against the war, opposition to Ukrainian fascism.”

Among the writings cited against Bogdan were articles opposing the rehabilitation of Stepan Bandera and other Ukrainian nationalist forces that collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II.

Developments since the interview was recorded have further underscored the urgency of the campaign for Bogdan’s freedom.

On September 9, his lawyers filed two separate appeals against the sentence. A 24-page submission by one of his defense lawyers describes the verdict as “illegal and unfounded” and demonstrates that the prosecution produced no evidence that Bogdan assisted Russia or any other foreign state in subversive activity. Instead, the case rested on his political views, journalism, translations and editorial cooperation with the WSWs.

Only hours later, during the night of September 9–10, a

drone struck the Mykolaiv pre-trial detention center where Bogdan remains imprisoned. According to the information available, Bogdan and the other detainees were not injured. The WSWs has not independently established the origin of the drone or whether the prison itself was deliberately targeted. But the incident starkly demonstrates the danger Bogdan faces every day he remains imprisoned in the midst of an escalating war.

Stern had already warned in the interview of the dangers posed by the sentence and Bogdan's imprisonment.

"He's facing now [a] very serious, actually life-threatening sentence given the Ukrainian prison system," he said. "A 15-year sentence can be a death sentence."

Bogdan suffered from serious health problems even before his arrest and was denied necessary medical treatment for extended periods in detention. Following the verdict, there is the additional danger that he could be transferred from pre-trial detention to an even harsher penal facility.

A major focus of the interview was therefore the international campaign to secure his release.

At the time of the interview, more than 7,500 people had signed the petition. The number subsequently rose to more than 8,000 signatories from 90 countries, with protest letters sent from more than 30 countries. Historians, academics, artists, journalists, political organizations and workers internationally have spoken out against the verdict.

Stern stressed that legal measures alone will not secure Bogdan's freedom.

"Without a strong, really campaign from below and powerful campaign in the working class internationally, Bogdan will not be freed," he said. He called on viewers to sign the petition, visit FreeBogdan.org, circulate the case among coworkers, friends and family and broaden the campaign internationally.

The new campaign website brings together the international petition, protest letters, statements of support and the means to donate to the campaign.

The discussion then returned to political developments in Germany. The immediate background was the September 6 state election in Saxony-Anhalt, in which the AfD received 43.8 percent of the party-list vote, while the Christian Democratic Union fell to 17.2 percent.

Stern explained the SGP's assessment of the AfD as a far-right party whose rise must be understood as part of a broader shift to the right by the entire political establishment. Its program, he argued, represents an escalation of policies already pursued by the establishment parties: military buildup, social cuts, attacks on refugees and the strengthening of the repressive powers of the state.

At the same time, under conditions in which the established parties overwhelmingly support the war drive

against Russia, the AfD is able to exploit popular opposition to war and social anger despite its own militarist and pro-capitalist program.

"It's of course not a peace party, and it's not a socialist party," Stern said. He connected its rise to the record of the official "left," which has implemented social attacks while in government and thereby helped discredit the very conception of a socialist alternative.

The interview also addressed the massive destruction of industrial jobs, including at Volkswagen, and the extraordinary concentration of wealth at the top of German and international society.

Stern emphasized, however, that the rightward lurch of the political establishment should not be identified with the sentiments of the working class. There is enormous opposition to war, militarism and social inequality, he argued, but it requires an independent socialist perspective.

At the conclusion of the interview, Stern returned to Bogdan's case and the growing international response to his persecution.

"They are not succeeding in isolating Bogdan and simply imprisoning him," he said, pointing to the thousands of petition signatures and the support from historians, artists, journalists, intellectuals and workers. "This campaign can really make a difference. It shows that there is international opposition to war, militarism and fascism." This opposition must be armed with a clear socialist perspective and leadership.

The appeal against Bogdan's sentence, the drone strike on the prison where he is being held and the constantly escalating war make this campaign and this fight more urgent than ever.

Watch and share the full interview, sign the international petition at FreeBogdan.org and join the campaign to overturn the verdict and secure Bogdan Syrotiuk's immediate freedom.



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