

The Left Party's silence on Bogdan Syrotiuk

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On September 30, as editor of the German-language *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS), I addressed an open letter to the co-chairs of Germany's Left Party (Die Linke), Ines Schwerdtner and Luigi Pantisano, and its parliamentary group leaders, Heidi Reichinnek and Sören Pellmann. I called on them to publicly condemn the sentencing of Ukrainian socialist and opponent of war Bogdan Syrotiuk to 15 years in prison and to campaign for his release. We had already informed them of the case on August 21. To date, no response has been received.

This silence is no accident. It is an expression of the political role of the Left Party and a warning to all those who regard it as an opposition to war, social cuts and fascism.

Bogdan was arrested by Ukraine's SBU intelligence service in April 2024. On August 10, 2026, a court in Pervomaisk sentenced him to 15 years in prison for "high treason under martial law." The appeal filed by his defense lawyers demonstrates that no evidence was presented of espionage, sabotage, the transmission of military information or collaboration with Russian armed forces. The trial targeted his socialist convictions, his articles for the WSWS and his collaboration with the international Trotskyist movement. The court even ordered the destruction of socialist literature confiscated during his arrest.

Bogdan opposes the Russian invasion and the Putin regime just as he opposes the war policies of the Ukrainian government and NATO. He fights for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers against war and nationalism. For this, the 27-year-old socialist is to spend 15 years behind bars.

Far more is at stake than the fate of a single prisoner. If political beliefs, international contacts and journalistic work are declared evidence of "high treason," any opponent of war can be branded an enemy of the state. This is precisely why the unconditional defense of Bogdan is a fundamental question of democratic rights.

The conviction refutes the propaganda that this is a war for "freedom" and "democracy." The Ukrainian government suppresses socialist opposition to the war, while Berlin and the other NATO powers support it with billions in funding and weapons.

And the Left Party remains silent. Yet even organizations that do not share Bogdan's socialist convictions have condemned the verdict. France's *La France insoumise* and Britain's Stop the War Coalition are demanding his release. The leadership of

the German Left Party refuses to take even this elementary step.

The Left Party and German imperialism

This silence is inseparably bound up with the Left Party's foreign policy. It functions as an extension of German imperialism, cloaking its return to militarism and great-power politics in left-wing and democratic phrases.

The Ukraine war is an imperialist war. The NATO powers are fighting for geostrategic supremacy, markets, raw materials and economic and political control over Eastern Europe. German imperialism is pursuing interests in Ukraine and against Russia that have nothing to do with the officially proclaimed defense of Ukrainian sovereignty. The aim is the forcible reorganization of Eastern Europe and the subordination of Russia to Western interests—an imperialist strategy rooted in a long and murderous tradition of German expansionism and aggression.

Although the Left Party claims in election campaigns and ceremonial speeches to oppose arms deliveries and rearmament, in government it supports the policies of rearmament and war. The states of Bremen and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where it participates in government, voted in the Bundesrat (Federal Council) in favor of the historic 2025 rearmament package. Representatives of both state governments also supported a Bundesrat motion calling for further military assistance to Ukraine.

At the same time, the party adopts the central political framework of the war propaganda: the supposed struggle for democracy and freedom. Defending Bogdan would shatter this framework. For if Ukraine is a bastion of democracy, how can the Left Party explain that a socialist has been sentenced to 15 years in prison there for his anti-war articles and internationalist convictions?

The silence is a desperate attempt to maintain the official war lie. The Left Party does not defend the persecuted socialist but the German state and its imperialist interests.

Hostility to a socialist perspective

There is another important reason: Bogdan is a Trotskyist. He does not confine himself to criticizing individual measures of the Ukrainian government. He fights against capitalism, against nationalism and for the international unification of the working class. His perspective is directed against all governments that sacrifice workers for their wars and profits.

This is precisely what makes him dangerous to the ruling elites. Across Europe, strikes, youth protests and opposition to rearmament, social cuts and the rise of the far right are growing. The decisive question is whether these struggles will be united with an international socialist perspective.

The Left Party fears such a development. Its role is to channel opposition into parliamentary channels, bind it to the Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and even the Christian Democrats (CDU), and defend the existing order against an independent movement from below. Bogdan's Trotskyist perspective stands in diametrical opposition to this policy. That is why the party leadership responds to his persecution not with solidarity but with hostility, expressed in its persistent silence.

This hostility has deep historical roots. The Left Party's predecessor, the Stalinist Socialist Unity Party (SED), suppressed every independent movement of the working class and youth in East Germany. It had the workers' uprising of June 17, 1953 crushed with the help of Soviet tanks and persecuted socialist opposition. Stalinism was not the continuation of Marxism but the rule of a privileged bureaucracy that fought against proletarian internationalism.

With German reunification and the reintroduction of capitalist property relations in the East, the SED evolved through the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) into today's Left Party. The Stalinist state party became a party that administers and aggressively defends capitalism. In state governments, it implemented privatizations and social cuts. In the new period of war and class struggles, it is relying on strengthening the very state repressive agencies that are being deployed against growing opposition.

Berlin shows where the Left Party is headed

Current developments in Berlin demonstrate this role in practice. Many of those who made the Left Party the strongest party in the September 20 election to the Berlin House of Representatives wanted to send a signal against war, social cuts, the genocide in Gaza and the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The party leadership is responding to this vote by attempting to form a government under its leadership together with the SPD and Greens. The exploratory agreement lays the groundwork for budget consolidation, spending caps and the strengthening of the police and security agencies. At the same

time, action is being taken against critics of Israel's war policy within the party's own parliamentary group. On housing, too, the party is subordinating its promises to financial constraints and the conditions imposed by its coalition partners.

While the Left Party ignores the campaign to free a socialist opponent of war in Ukraine, it is preparing a government in Berlin that will advance austerity and the strengthening of the state apparatus. These are two sides of the same political orientation: the subordination of the interests and rights of the working class to the requirements of German capitalism and imperialism.

The silence on Bogdan is therefore not only scandalous but a serious warning to all those who hope that the Left Party can be pressured into adopting progressive policies. This is not possible. A political reckoning must be made with the party and its fundamentally right-wing policies—through the building of an independent socialist movement of the working class.

The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) and the WSWS will continue to intensify the fight for Bogdan's freedom. His persecution is part of the international assault on democratic rights that accompanies the escalation of imperialist war and the social crisis. The defense of Bogdan is inseparably bound up with the struggle against war, fascism and their roots in capitalism.

We call on all workers, young people and defenders of democratic rights: Support the international petition, spread awareness of Bogdan's case, organize statements of solidarity and resolutions in your schools, universities and workplaces, and donate as generously as possible to his defense.

Bogdan Syrotiuk must be released immediately and unconditionally!



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