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An Open Letter to the Ukrainian government: Release Bogdan Syrotiuk!

On Thursday, June 13, the following letter from the Socialist Equality Party and the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site will be delivered to Oksana Markarova, the Ambassador of Ukraine, in Washington, D.C.

Madam Ambassador:

On April 25, 2024, the SBU — the state security service of the Ukrainian government — arrested Bogdan Syrotiuk, the 25-year-old leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, a Trotskyist organization active in Russia, Ukraine and other countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. For the past seven weeks, Comrade Syrotiuk has been held incommunicado in a prison in Mykolaiv. He has been prevented from securing adequate legal representation to oppose the mendacious allegations that have been brought against him by the government you represent. Lawyers in Kyiv and Mykolaiv with experience in fighting politically motivated prosecutions and frame-ups by the Ukrainian government withdrew their offer to represent Syrotiuk following threats of retaliation that led them to fear for their own personal safety.

The allegations against Bogdan Syrotiuk are without the slightest factual substance. The claim that he has been engaged in treason is based entirely on his public opposition to the Ukraine-Russia war, which he has expressed in articles posted on the World Socialist Web Site [wsws.org].

In a desperate attempt to criminalize Syrotiuk's exercise of his democratic right of free speech, the SBU frame-up artists claim in their charging documents that the World Socialist Web Site is "a Russian propaganda and information agency."



Bogdan Syrotiuk in his office.

There is not a shred of evidence to support this outrageous allegation. The absurdity of this lie is obvious to every reader of the World Socialist Web Site, let alone to those who are familiar with the history and politics of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which is based on the socialist internationalist principles defended by the Trotskyist movement since its founding in 1923.

In hundreds of articles posted on the World Socialist Web Site since the outbreak of the war, the ICFI has made its opposition to the military policies of both the Ukrainian and Russian governments absolutely clear. On February 24, 2022, the day of the Russian invasion, the WSWS, the voice of the International Committee, declared:

The International Committee of the Fourth International and the World Socialist Web Site denounce the Russian military intervention in Ukraine. Despite the provocations and threats of the US and NATO powers, Russia's invasion of Ukraine must be opposed by socialists and class-conscious workers. The catastrophe that was set in motion by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 cannot be averted on the basis of Russian nationalism, a thoroughly reactionary ideology that serves the interests of the capitalist ruling class represented by Vladimir Putin.

The state police of Ukraine know very well that they cannot substantiate their charge of treason against this young and courageous socialist. They must, therefore, resort to the sort of lies used by the Stalinist regime of the Soviet Union in the era of the Terror and Moscow Trials, when it denounced its Trotskyist opponents as agents of Nazi Germany. Notwithstanding the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism in Ukraine, the methods and spirit of the Stalinist police agencies live on.

Contradicting its allegation that Bogdan Syrotiuk and the WSWS are agents of Russian propaganda, the SBU indictment acknowledges that the World Socialist Web Site "covers the main socio-political problems around the world from the position of revolutionary opposition

to the capitalist market system, with the aim of establishing world socialism through socialist revolution.”

This factual description of the Marxist-Trotskyist program of the WSWS — which is anathema to Putin’s capitalist regime — exposes the fraudulent character of the imprisonment and prosecution of Bogdan Syrotiuk.

He is being persecuted and threatened with life imprisonment because he calls for the unity of the Ukrainian and Russian working class in opposition to a war that is being waged in the interests of the oligarchical capitalist elites of both countries.



Bogdan Syrotiuk in mid-April 2024.

Your government — which glorifies the virulently reactionary ideologies and programs that have characterized bourgeois Ukrainian nationalist movements since the days of Skoropadsky, Petliura, and worst of all, the pro-Nazi Stepan Bandera and his Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists — fears the resurgence of socialist sentiments within the Ukrainian working class, which will inevitably assume the form of a striving for unity with its class brothers and sisters in Russia and the repudiation of the war. That is why the arrest of Bogdan Syrotiuk has been followed by a state directive, dated June 3, 2024, banning internet access to the World Socialist Web Site throughout Ukraine.

It is well known that the Zelensky regime, which has canceled elections and rules on the basis of martial law, has illegalized all left-wing and socialist organizations in Ukraine. Even the US State Department was compelled in a report issued in May by its Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor to call attention to the brutally repressive character of your government.

The report specifically cited as violations of human rights the prevalence of “enforced disappearance, torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; restrictions on freedom of expression, including for members of the media, including violence or threats of violence against journalists...”

Bogdan Syrotiuk is a victim of your government’s lawlessness. His arrest on April 25 occurred amidst numerous reports in the international media of rising opposition to the war among Ukrainian workers and youth. It is obvious that the frame-up of Syrotiuk on treason charges is aimed at intimidating opponents of the war, which your government is waging in the interests of Ukraine’s capitalist elite and its imperialist allies.

The arrest and prosecution of Bogdan Syrotiuk has aroused outraged opposition throughout the world. Progressive and socialist organizations have denounced the political frame-up.

The international campaign for his freedom is gaining strength every day. Thousands of people from all over the world — workers, youth, artists, and academics — have signed a petition demanding an end to the frame-up and the immediate release of Bogdan Syrotiuk from prison.

Madam Ambassador, we request that you forward this letter and our demand for the freedom of Bogdan Syrotiuk to your government.

With the appropriate sentiments,

David North

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