Campaign to free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk discussed on NZ M?ori radio

Our reporter
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On May 24, John Braddock and Tom Peters, *World Socialist Web Site* writers and members of the Socialist Equality Group (SEG) in New Zealand, spoke with Dean Hapeta (aka Te Kupu) on his radio show Te Kupu N? Te Kupu, on the M?ori station Te Upoko o te Ika Radio, about the global campaign to free Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Hapeta began by reading the petition, "Free Bogdan Syrotiuk, Ukrainian socialist and opponent of NATO's proxy war!" The 25-year-old, a leading member of the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists (YGBL), is the victim of a political frame-up by the SBU, Ukraine's fascistic security police. Bogdan and the YGBL, along with the WSWS and the International Committee of the Fourth International, are being falsely accused of supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The petition states: "In fact, Bogdan is an intransigent opponent of the capitalist Putin regime and its invasion of Ukraine. He fights for the unity of the working class in Ukraine, Russia and throughout the former Soviet Union." He is being held in atrocious conditions and, if found guilty by a kangaroo court, faces a possible sentence of life imprisonment, which is equivalent to a death sentence.

In a discussion lasting nearly two hours, Peters and Braddock explained the real reasons for Bogdan's arrest and what it reveals about the Ukrainian regime and the proxy war it is waging, on behalf of the US and NATO imperialist powers, against Russia. They also spoke about the connection between this war, Israel's genocide in Gaza, and US war plans targeting Iran and China—all of which are different fronts in a developing world war.

The YGBL, which is active in Ukraine, Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, opposes the war "from the standpoint that the workers of Russia and Ukraine have nothing to gain from slaughtering each other in the service of these regimes," Peters explained.

"On the one side, you have the Russian oligarchy that is determined to defend its wealth and resources. On the other side, the imperialist powers are using Ukraine and the Zelensky puppet government to try and inflict a military defeat on Russia and ultimately to carve up and subordinate Russia and the entire region of Eurasia… to take their resources and establish US imperialist hegemony. To do that, they are willing to fight to the last Ukrainian."

Bogdan and the YGBL, he continued, were being persecuted for the "crime" of elaborating a socialist program to put an end to the war. Ukraine's regime is terrified that its positions are finding support in the working class, which is suffering tremendously: the war has killed more than 500,000 Ukrainians and Russians. The Zelensky regime "is running out of people to conscript into the military," and is seeking to force hundreds of thousands of military-age men who fled overseas to return and fight.

The depiction of Ukraine in the media, as a democracy defending itself against Putin's authoritarian regime, was a lie, Peters said. He quoted from the US State Department's own human rights report highlighting a litany of abuses by the Ukrainian state, including "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, unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, and censorship."

Speaking about the causes of the war, Braddock

refuted the mainstream media propaganda that the war began "on the day that Russia invaded." He explained: "You can't analyse a war according to who fired the first shot… The preparation for the war in Ukraine was laid nearly a decade before with the Maidan coup." In 2014, the US and its allies supported the overthrow of a pro-Russian government, working closely with neo-fascist forces such as the Svoboda Party, which glorifies Ukraine's Nazi collaborators in the Second World War.

The 2014 coup provoked Russia's annexation of Crimea and a civil war in the breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, in which thousands of people were killed. NATO spent years building up Ukraine's military, which is infested with fascists, and moved tens of thousands of troops into Eastern Europe, surrounding Russia in preparation for war.

The longstanding aim of US imperialism, since the restoration of capitalism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union by Stalinism in 1991, was to seize control over all the resources that had previously been inaccessible to them. The defeat of Russia, moreover, is viewed in Washington as a necessary preparation for an even more decisive war against China, America's main economic rival.

Braddock warned: "We are now dealing with a situation that is tobogganing towards a Third World War. In the last few weeks, Paris, Berlin and Britain are now talking about putting NATO troops on the ground in Ukraine," raising the imminent danger of all-out war between nuclear-armed powers.

Hapeta observed that some people in New Zealand believe a war between Russia and Ukraine is far away and doesn't affect them. He said this was not the case, and the government would join a Third World War "against whoever the US is fighting."

Peters replied that New Zealand was already involved: the previous Labour Party-led government sent 200 soldiers to Britain in 2022 to help train Ukrainian conscripts. As a member of the Five Eyes intelligence network led by the US, New Zealand may also be assisting in gathering intelligence to assist the war.

The imprisonment of Bogdan and many other anti-war activists within Ukraine was part of "a global process," Peters said, "as we can see in the crackdown that's happening now against the protesters who are [opposing] genocide in Gaza, the student encampments in particular." The imperialist powers wanted to "impose the conditions that exist in Ukraine and in Israel all over the world: they're trying to criminalise opposition to imperialist war and genocide."

Hapeta quoted a March 28 Reuters report which stated that "at least 19,855 people have been detained in Russia for expressing anti-war views" since Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Peters said thousands had also been imprisoned in Ukraine "for what are basically thought crimes. That's what Bogdan has been detained for: not for trying to sabotage anything, or to assassinate anybody or to do anything violent at all. It's simply for writing articles and distributing them and expressing his opinions, engaging in political activities."

Braddock emphasised that while there was a "growing rebellion of people around the world" against the Gaza genocide, war could not be ended through appeals to the imperialist governments. He and Peters urged those listening to learn from the 1917 Russian Revolution, in which the working class led by the Bolshevik Party overthrew the capitalist class and created the first workers' state. The fear of revolution throughout Europe forced the imperialist powers to bring an end to World War I.

Likewise, the developing Third World War can only be ended through the mobilisation of the working class in every country, to abolish its source: the global capitalist system, and establish a planned socialist economy. The fight to free Bogdan, and the defence of all those who are persecuted for opposing genocide and war, is an indispensable part of the struggle to build such an anti-war movement.

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