

Ukrainians in Berlin demonstrate in defence of democratic rights against the Zelensky regime

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The WSWS urges all its readers to sign the petition for the release of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk.

Last Sunday, a rally against the war in Ukraine and the dictatorship of the Zelensky regime took place in Berlin, organised by Ukrainians.

The call for the rally read:

We do not want men to be abducted, beaten and held in cellars in Ukraine. We demand open borders and respect for human rights. We also want to commemorate the men who died after being abducted by the Territorial Recruitment Centre (TCC). We invite everyone. Many of you still have relatives, fathers, brothers and sons in Ukraine who are in danger due to the arbitrary actions of the gangster authorities!

The rally was organised by the “Alliance of the Post-Soviet Left” (BPL), a group of mainly young exiles from Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet republics in Germany. In October this year, the group published a statement in defence of the Ukrainian socialist and anti-war activist Bogdan Syrotiuk, who has now been imprisoned by the Zelensky regime for more than six months.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* were present at the demonstration, handing out leaflets about Bogdan’s imprisonment and talking to participants about the situation in Ukraine and the prospect of ending the war.

Sheka, who is originally from Kharkiv and came to Germany just one day before the war began, reported on the situation in Ukraine:

The Ukrainian men have to hide right now and stay at home because they are afraid of the TCC, the Ukrainian military. My brother also has to hide. He’s only 21 years old. He has no desire to go to war and lose his life.

The Ukrainian government is very corrupt. That’s my opinion.

I was lucky that I left Ukraine the day before the war. And I want all Ukrainian men who want to do so to be able to leave Ukraine. I wish them all peace and well-being.

One demonstrator who introduced himself under the name “Whitewind” originates from Siberia. He came to Germany from there to escape being conscripted in Russia. He said:

I see a clear connection between the war in Ukraine and the wars in other countries, like now in Gaza. In every country, the capitalists are backing militarism, including here in Germany. Everywhere politicians say that the state needs more tax money for weapons, although there are enormous social problems for workers everywhere.

He explained the connection between the war in Ukraine and capitalism:

I have heard that there are plans for new factories here in Germany to produce weapons for Ukraine. Weapons companies like Rheinmetall can make huge profits from the war, but at the same time there are similar plans to make weapons in Poland, where workers can be employed for less pay and the costs of German manufacturers can be undercut. This is all part of the logic of the capitalist system.

Speaking about the possible danger of the war escalating into a nuclear war he said:

It is a very dangerous situation because several of the belligerent countries have nuclear weapons. The only solution is a movement from below, from workers in every country against capitalism. From this point of view, I see the need to support all victims like Bogdan Syrotiuk, who were imprisoned because of their opposition to the war.

WSWS reporters had a long conversation with **Andrej**, who had started studying in Germany before the war began and thus escaped conscription in Ukraine. He described the situation in Ukraine in detail:

Basically, most Ukrainians are locked up in their own country and unable to live properly. In many cases, they are unable to pursue their professions properly. People are being attacked and hunted on the streets. They are conscripted by force. Basically, everyone knows that. What is less well known are the numerous cases of torture and murder in Ukrainian police stations.

We are here in part to report on these cases, to describe them, to say that these cases actually exist. They are not documented by

Russian media or anything like that, but by Ukrainian media, including quite large ones, including those that previously supported President Zelensky.

The mainstream media in Ukraine are therefore well informed about the cases of torture and murders in Ukrainian commissariats. Unfortunately, this is not the case here in Germany, here in the EU.

We understand why, of course. We understand that this is seen as part of the Russian narrative. Nevertheless, we cannot simply ignore the widespread cases of torture.

There was a big class difference between who got conscripted and who did not, Andrej said:

Basically, the people who are conscripted are the people who couldn't afford to pay the bribes, who couldn't afford to bribe the doctors to issue the tickets to avoid military service.

At the moment, we are living in a surreal state of affairs in which the Ukrainian state employs almost a million police officers. The task of these police officers is quite clear. They are there to enforce conscription and keep the increasingly less democratic government of Zelensky in power. They are not there to protect Ukraine's "democracy" on the streets.

There is a lot of discussion in Ukraine about why people are conscripted and forcibly recruited. For example, fifty-year-old people, people with a severe form of tuberculosis, people with some forms of cancer, but not the broad spectrum of police officers, who are numerous in Ukraine, almost as large as the Ukrainian army itself. This is a surreal situation.

About the role of the German pseudo-left parties, all of which support the war in Ukraine, Andrej explained:

The Left Party, maybe we're old-school about it, but the way we see it, a left-wing party should stand for egalitarian transformations of societies, for the equalisation of rules and for a state where the rules apply equally to all people—at the very least. And also for supporting those who are most at risk, those who are most vulnerable. And the most vulnerable in Ukraine are not the police or the Ukrainian state or anything else that is prioritised by the European parties, especially the "left." The priority should be the Ukrainian citizens, their rights and so on. ...

We see the transformation of the Greens into a pro-war party. We see the ignoring of the crimes against humanity in Ukraine, the crimes against large parts of the Ukrainian population, which are documented and are not being addressed by the German government. We see very clearly that the parties that present themselves as left-wing are not actually pursuing left-wing policies. We live in a surreal situation where both the left and the right agree that the fact that Russia is attacking Ukraine basically allows the Ukrainian government to use practically the same or even worse methods than the Russian government uses to conscript its people. In Russia, for example, people can leave the country. The Russians don't need to bribe their personnel to get out of Russia.

Andrej knew about the arrest of Bogdan Syrotiuk and said:

Bogdan is one of the many people who find themselves in the situation where spreading the word and talking about the methods of the Ukrainian government leads to being prosecuted in the form of a political trial. Of course, it is surreal that his case is not widely publicised here in the German media.

Unfortunately, he is not the only one. This is a rather systematic way of dealing with opposition voices in Ukraine. One of the people we are more familiar with as an organisation is Sheliazhenko, the Ukrainian pacifist who basically just wrote a letter to Zelensky supporting unarmed resistance against the Russian invasion. As a result, an indictment was fabricated against him.

On the question of how to end the war, Andrej said:

It was clear to us from the beginning and now it is even more obvious to wider circles of European governments and parties: the war will eventually end in talks, in a peace agreement. We were stunned by the decision of the Ukrainian government, supported by Boris Johnson personally and by Western governments, and basically almost forced [to end the negotiations in March 2022].

The warmongering role of Boris Johnson personally and the unwillingness to compromise in Istanbul in March 2022 have partly led to the situation where Ukraine is at risk of losing even more land. It has already cost the lives of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people. Millions are being driven out of the country, women, children.

There are clear interests behind the war, said Andrej:

There are obviously interest groups supporting further wars, finding arguments and lobbying for further militarisation. The NATO budget exceeds the Russian military budget tenfold. I don't really see how a further five to six-fold overrun would improve the situation. I personally and our organisation as a whole do not see a military end to this war or an improvement in the situation in Ukraine.

When the WSWS reporters explained their perspective that the war could only be stopped through the mobilisation and unification of the Ukrainian, Russian and international working class, Andrej said:

We had a meeting in Cologne of more than 70 anti-war activists from Ukraine and Russia. We came to the conclusion that peace must come "from the ground," and basically sustainable peace and long-term peace in Europe can only be achieved through democratisation, only by creating opportunities for the state to democratise.

The rally in Berlin against the dictatorial forms of rule of the Zelensky regime is of great significance. It illustrates the rapidly growing opposition of the Ukrainian working class to the war. But there should be no illusions. The war cannot be stopped by exerting pressure on the very governments waging the war. They represent the class interests of an obscenely rich ruling class that will not be swayed from its course by any

pressure.

What is needed is the building of a socialist anti-war movement that unites the Ukrainian, Russian and international working class and fights for the overthrow of capitalism.



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