

Canada's Deputy Prime Minister carries Ukrainian fascist banner at Toronto demonstration

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2 March 2022

Canada's Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland appeared at a Sunday demonstration in support of Ukraine in Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square, while proudly holding a red and black banner emblazoned with a fascist slogan, "Slava Ukraini!" (Glory to Ukraine!). Toronto Mayor John Tory (in a blue bandana) stood wrapped in the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag just behind Freeland.

The image was captured by a staffer and promoted via Freeland's official Canadian Government Twitter account @cafreeland. By Monday morning, in the face of mounting public criticism, another photo was reposted without the fascist banner. However, even the new version of the image still showed the flag in the background, and the "Slava Ukraini!" slogan was retained.

The episode exposes many truths that Freeland and the Canadian ruling class would prefer to keep hidden, both about the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and the historical affiliation of the Canadian ruling class with the far right and Nazism.

The red and black banner and its slogan are associated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), the military arm of the OUN, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. The pro-Nazi OUN is drenched in the blood of thousands of innocent Poles and Jews massacred by its members during German imperialism's war of annihilation against the Soviet Union.

The OUN was a right-wing Ukrainian nationalist and terrorist organization, whose two rival factions collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. The OUN 'M' under Andrei Melnyk favoured close collaboration with the Nazi state, while the 'B' faction under Stepan Bandera opted for a militant and bloody war to carve out a fascist "independent" Ukraine under the dictatorship of Bandera and Yaroslav Stetsko. In reality, both factions were entirely dependent upon Nazi German imperialism and then after the war upon American and British imperialism. OUN activists were among the CIA's first recruits.

Freeland's brandishing of the OUN's fascist banner has been greeted with silence in the corporate media because it cuts across the fraudulent narrative that the imperialist powers are arming "democratic" forces in Ukraine. But ignoring this revealing episode does not change the fact that Canada, together with its US and German imperialist allies, have worked closely with far-right and outright fascist forces in Ukraine since the 2014 Maidan coup that deposed pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich.

Many people who attended the Toronto demonstration no doubt did so because they quite rightly wished to express their opposition to war, the killing and injuring of innocent civilians and the Putin regime's reactionary Russian nationalism. But the Canadian ruling class is clearly attempting to exploit this outrage, together with widespread political confusion about the background to the conflict, to marshal support for NATO's proxy war against Russia. The banner seen above Freeland in the picture displaying the slogan #standwithukraine is that of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, which was campaigning for weapons to be delivered to Ukraine long before the outbreak of hostilities.

Freeland is campaigning for war, not against it. As Deputy Prime Minister, she has unveiled many of the brutal sanctions adopted by Ottawa against Russia, which amount to economic warfare and will have their most devastating impact on the lives of ordinary people. Canada's Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly is actively encouraging Canadian volunteers to travel to Ukraine to fight. The Trudeau government is also shipping large quantities of weaponry, including anti-tank missiles and sniper rifles, to Ukraine.

Moreover, Canada has served as a key player in NATO's steady expansion into Eastern Europe over the past three decades, which has included the systematic encirclement of Russia with an unrestrained military build-up on its western border.

Freeland is familiar in more ways than one with the foul political record of the OUN. Her grandfather, Michael

Chomiak, was the managing editor of a Ukrainian pro-Nazi newspaper, *Krakivski Visti*, from 1939 until 1945. Chomiak managed the relationship between the paper and the Nazi authorities. He lived in two palatial apartments stolen from Krakow's Jews and published a near-constant stream of anti-Semitic and anti-Polish incitement, using a printing press stolen from the Jewish newspaper *Nowiy Dzennik*, whose owners were later murdered at the Belzec death camp.

The paper's publisher, Volodymyr Kubijovyc, made frequent appeals to Adolph Hitler; for the transfer of stolen Jewish and Polish property to Ukrainians, for privileged treatment for Ukrainians, and for the creation of a fascist Ukrainian state on the model of the Cossack Hetmanate of the 17th and 18th centuries, with himself as "provydnyk" (Führer). Kubijovyc campaigned for and established the 14th Division of the Waffen SS, the so-called Galicia Division, which committed mass murders of partisans, Jews and Poles, and took part in the suppression of the uprising of the Slovak working class in the spring of 1945. He was its first honorary enlistee and swore the SS oath to Hitler.

Freeland worked for the aged Kubijovyc on his postwar "Encyclopedia of Ukraine" project in the late 1980s as a student in Edmonton, Alberta. The Encyclopedia is devoted to whitewashing the history of Ukrainian nationalism by expunging the overwhelming historical evidence of its fascist and Nazi collaborationist past and re-framing Ukrainian nationalists as perpetual victims.

Freeland's decision to pose for a photograph with the OUN banner is not merely, or even chiefly, a personal matter. It is in keeping with Canadian imperialism's systematic cultivation of and collaboration with far-right Ukrainian nationalists stretching all the way back to the end of World War II.

Ukrainian nationalism firmly established itself in Canada after 1945, when the Liberal government of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent undertook to admit tens of thousands of Nazi collaborators from Ukraine and other Eastern European countries. The established communities of Eastern European immigrants in Canada prior to the war had been politically dominated by socialists and the left. St. Laurent was determined to provide them with new leadership.

Thousands of members of Ukrainian, Latvian and Estonian Waffen SS Divisions were admitted to Canada, as well as tens of thousands of members of the fascist Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Leading members of various Eastern European fascist groups, including the Slovak Hlinka Guard, the Croat Ustasha, and the Romanian Iron Guard found safe haven in postwar Canada. These war criminals enjoyed support at the highest levels of the Canadian state, which desired only fervently "anti-communist" immigrants. An SS tattoo under one's armpit was in those days a ticket to

Canadian citizenship.

These collaborators became immediately influential in the 1950s, through the CIA front group the ABN (Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations), which was founded by Ukrainian Nazi collaborators such as Mykola Lebed, a seasoned murderer and sadist.

The project of whitewashing this history has been undertaken most diligently by the Ukrainian nationalists. The Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) at the University of Edmonton was co-founded by former Waffen SS member Peter Savyryn and continues to host and promote Kubijovyc's "Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine."

CIUS produces a stream of pro-nationalist "scholarship," which both whitewashes the fascist past of Ukrainian nationalism and supports the imperialist policy of the Canadian state. Its statement on the current situation in Ukraine chalks up the war to the personal ambitions of Vladimir Putin. It makes no mention of the role of fascist groups in spearheading the Maidan coup of 2014 or the expansion of NATO to Russia's doorstep.

As Canadian imperialism institutes an unprecedented campaign of economic warfare against Russia and provides weapons to Ukrainian nationalist proxy forces fighting NATO's war, its need to lie, not only about the present but about the past, will become ever more urgent. Far-right Ukrainian nationalists are now at the very center of Canada's foreign policy. No effort will be spared to cover up the fascist character of paramilitary groups in Ukraine, such as Centuria and the Azov Battalion, which have been recipients of Canadian military training for years, and for whom the Canadian government is now essentially organizing enlistment.



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