

May Day 2022: Canadian imperialism, Hitler's Ukrainian accomplices, and the NATO-Russia war

Keith Jones
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This is the report delivered by Keith Jones to the 2022 International May Day Online Rally held on May 1. Jones is the national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in Canada. To view all speeches, visit wsws.org/mayday.

The Socialist Equality Party (Canada) joins with its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International in summoning the working class to oppose the reckless, ever-escalating US-NATO war on Russia. Absent the revolutionary intervention of the international working class, the imperialist powers will plunge humanity into a global conflagration, as they did twice before in the last century.

Canadian imperialism is playing an especially provocative and belligerent role in the Ukraine war, as it did in the war's preparation and instigation. Over the past quarter-century, under Liberal and Conservative governments alike, Canada has enthusiastically supported the US-led drive to encircle Russia, and to harness Ukraine to NATO and the European Union. From 2015, hundreds of Canadian Armed Forces trainers were deployed to Ukraine, where they worked alongside American and British military personnel to reorganize Ukraine's armed forces. This included helping integrate and train the fascists of the Azov Battalion.

The Trudeau Liberal government has led the charge for all-out economic warfare against Russia. Working in tandem with Britain's Tory regime, it pressed for Russia's exclusion from the SWIFT banking system and the seizure of the assets of Russia's central bank. Since January, Canada has pledged to deliver \$618 million worth of military aid to Ukraine by no later than next March. The first shipment of heavy weaponry

arrived last week.

Behind a smokescreen of poisonous war propaganda, the Canadian ruling class is pursuing the most predatory economic and geopolitical objectives. Under conditions of systemic capitalist crisis, it is determined to strengthen its eight-decades-old military-security alliance with Washington, which it deems pivotal to securing and expanding its extensive global imperialist interests. Canada also has its own strategic rivalry with Russia. This is particularly true in the Arctic, where climate change is making the exploitation of natural resources and sea lanes ever more viable.

But there is a third important factor propelling Canada's outsized role in the US-NATO war on Russia—the Canadian state's longstanding alliance with the Ukrainian far right.

After the fall of Hitler's Third Reich, Canada provided refuge to tens of thousands of Ukrainian fascists who had collaborated with the Nazis in some of the 20th century's most monstrous crimes, and carried out their own mass slaughter of Jews and Poles in pursuit of an ethnically "pure" Ukrainian state.

Canadian imperialism used these forces as tools in its Cold War foreign and domestic policy. This included helping them cover up and whitewash their crimes. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the Ukrainian-Canadian far right was deployed to press for capitalist restoration, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and, subsequently, for "independent" Ukraine's transformation into a vassal of the western imperialist powers.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) has long served as the nexus of the collaboration between the Canadian state and the far-right Ukrainian nationalists. The UCC, writes a noted Ukrainian-Canadian historian,

has put “the glorification” of the Nazis’ Ukrainian fascist collaborators “at the very center of the Ukrainian national identity project.”

The alliance between Canadian imperialism and the Ukrainian far right is most strikingly embodied in the person of Chrystia Freeland, Canada’s deputy prime minister, finance minister and chief architect of its feminist foreign policy. Freeland has often written and spoken of her schooling in Ukrainian nationalism by her beloved grandfather. To describe Freeland’s maternal grandfather, Michael Chomiak, as a Nazi collaborator is to be charitable. From January 1940 through the first months of 1945 he edited the sole Ukrainian-language newspaper in Nazi-occupied Poland. *Krakivs'ki Visti* (Krackow News) lionized Adolph Hitler, celebrated the Nazi war of extermination against the Soviet Union, incited hatred for Jews, and promoted the formation of a Ukrainian division of the *Waffen SS*.

The leading anti-Russia war-hawk in Canada’s government, Freeland has come to play an important role in Ukrainian domestic politics. Every evening she speaks by phone to Ukraine’s prime minister and finance minister. At gatherings of her Ukrainian-Canadian allies, Freeland routinely invokes symbols and rituals associated with the World War II Ukrainian fascists

When her political ancestry was exposed in 2017, the entire political establishment and corporate media joined Freeland in curtly dismissing it as “Russian disinformation.” No investigation of the Canadian state’s patronage of the Ukrainian far-right was to be permitted, above all of its contemporary iteration—be it the use of Ukrainian fascists as shock troops in the 2014 US-orchestrated, Canadian-assisted coup that overthrew Ukraine’s democratically elected, pro-Russian president; the Canadian Armed Forces’ training of the fascists embedded in Ukraine’s armed forces; or the state-sponsored Ukrainian Canadian Congress’s role in ideologically and materially promoting the Ukrainian far right and its exclusivist, virulently anti-communist nationalism.

The unanimous denunciations of “Russian disinformation” in the Freeland affair were a small anticipation of the anti-Russia war fever that now unites Canada’s entire political establishment, from right to ostensibly left, federalist and pro-Quebec

independence.

The social democrats of the New Democratic Party, with the full-throated support of the trade unions, responded to the war’s outbreak by forming a governmental alliance with Trudeau and Freeland. In the name of “political stability,” the NDP has pledged to keep the minority Liberal government in power until June 2025, as it wages war, dramatically hikes military spending and pivots to imposing austerity and inflation-driven real wage cuts.

This is a continuation and escalation of the role that the unions and NDP have played throughout the pandemic. In March-April 2020, they supported the Trudeau government’s funneling of hundreds of billions of dollars into the financial markets and banks and corporate coffers, then policed the ruinous back-to-work, back-to-school policy that has resulted in six successive waves of mass infection and death that have officially killed more than 39,000 Canadians.

Writing in the *Transitional Program*, Leon Trotsky observed that in times of extreme crisis like war, trade union leaders become bourgeois ministers. The union-NDP-Liberal alliance is aimed at suppressing the class struggle, so as to give the Canadian ruling class a free hand in waging imperialist war abroad and class war at home.

They will not succeed. The pandemic, the war, their ruinous economic fallout, and decades of austerity and ever-widening social inequality are impelling workers in Canada, like their class brothers and sisters around the world, into struggle. Moreover, these struggles are increasingly erupting in opposition to and outside the corporatist trade unions and phony establishment left parties.

The great challenge is to impart these struggles with a clear socialist internationalist program and perspective. That is the task of the ICFI and its Socialist Equality Parties. I appeal to you to join us in this fight.



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