

Canadian imperialism's fascist friends—Part 4: How Ottawa provided the Ukrainian fascists refuge and incubated and promoted far-right Ukrainian nationalism

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This is the fourth in a five-part series. The first part introduced Canadian imperialism's long-standing alliance with far-right Ukrainian nationalism. Part two investigated the origins of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi record of Krakivski Visti, which was edited by Mikhailo Chomiak, the grandfather of Canada's Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland. Part three documented how the OUN and Stepan Bandera's Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) participated in the Nazi's war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and served as the Nazis' henchman in the Holocaust.

In the years following World War II, the Canadian government, in close cooperation with its American and British allies, flung open the doors to Nazi collaborators and far-right nationalists from Ukraine and other Eastern European countries. For the Western imperialist powers, there were no better allies in their “Cold War” crusade against the Soviet Union than the fascists and ultra-nationalists complicit in the Nazi regime's historically monstrous crimes against humanity.

Far-right Ukrainian nationalists came to play a critical role in Canadian imperialist policy at home and abroad. Through the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, which later became the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), Ottawa supported the development of a network of organizations that denied any Ukrainian involvement in the Holocaust and created and promoted a nationalist mythology celebrating the Ukrainian fascists' “heroic” struggle against the Soviet Union to secure an “independent” Ukrainian state—first in league with the Third Reich and then Britain's MI6 and the CIA. Right-wing nationalist groups were consolidated in the political leadership of the large Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, which had been predominantly left-wing prior to the war. They were even used to infiltrate militant unions and undermine worker struggles.

Beyond their whitewashing of the crimes of Ukrainian fascism and promotion of virulent anti-communism, the right-wing nationalists grouped around the UCC played an important and ever-more aggressive role in Canada's foreign policy. When the Stalinist regime, under Mikhail Gorbachev, made overtures to the West, including allowing greater travel, as part of its program of capitalist restoration, the Canadian state-sponsored Ukrainian nationalists were deployed to extol the wonders of the “free market” and promote nationalism. Soon they would be playing a leading role in the campaign for an “independent” Ukraine harnessed to western imperialism.

The state-sponsored UCC and its fascist origins

From its founding in 1940, at the beginning of World War II, the Ukrainian Canadian Committee was an organization with the closest political and organizational ties to the Canadian state. The UCC was established with the support and at the behest of the Canadian War Department, a revealing fact which today's UCC proudly declares on its website.

A key factor motivating the Canadian state in sponsoring the establishment of a right-wing Ukrainian nationalist organization was the dominance of left-wing and socialist ideas among Canada's large Ukrainian diaspora. Large-scale emigration from the Ukrainian parts of the tsarist Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires to Canada resulted by the first decades of the 20th century in the emergence of a highly politicized and militant Ukrainian-speaking section of the working class that Ottawa feared being unable to control.

An example of this development was that by 1929, the Ukrainian Farmer Labour Temple organization had 187 branches, 62 libraries, and four newspapers across the country. Volodymyr Kossar, a founder of the far-right Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists/Ukrainian National Federation (UNF) in Canada, recalled in 1951 with outrage that when he arrived at the Ukrainian Farmer Labour Temple building in Winnipeg in 1927, pictures of Lenin and Trotsky were hanging on the wall.

Although the leadership of these left-wing and socialist organizations had fallen under the suffocating control of the Stalinists by the late 1930s, they still posed a problem to the war plans of the Canadian state. During the initial stages of the war, the Stalinist Communist Party conducted campaigns opposing intervention into the conflict, declaring it to be imperialist. While the Stalinists were motivated in taking this position by the foreign policy interests of Moscow, which had just entered the Hitler-Stalin pact with Nazi Germany, anti-war positions were popular among Ukrainian and other immigrant worker communities that had previously been inspired by the October Revolution and the socialist movement's long record of opposition to imperialism and war.

Canada's War Department saw the creation of the UCC as a means to mobilize the Ukrainian diaspora for war. As the UCC notes on its website, “The final and conclusive impetus for unity came from the National War Services of Canada which was anxious that young Ukrainians enlist in military services.”

The Canadian government used the War Measures Act to seize Ukrainian Farmer Labour Temple property and sell it off to the newly-formed UCC for next to nothing. The UCC amalgamated all of the right-

wing Ukrainian organizations at the time. These included the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist (OUN)-led Ukrainian National Federation (UNF), the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood (UCB), and the monarchist United Hetman Organization (UHO). These forces were already open admirers of fascism prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1933, as the Nazi regime, having been ushered into power by the German bourgeoisie, began violently eradicating all independent working class organizations, *Nowiy Schliakh*, the UNF's official newspaper, declared, "We may welcome with joy the triumph of the new German world over the old world."

Like Hitler's Nazis, the Ukrainian nationalist forces behind the UCC linked savage hatred of the Soviet Union and socialism with vicious anti-Semitism. In 1939, Father Wasył Kushnir—who would go on to serve as UCC president for more than two decades—told a public meeting in Winnipeg, held to counter recent Communist Party electoral victories, "Let our (Ukrainian) culture be national rather than serve the 'international Jew'." The leader of the Hetman organization in Canada urged Ukrainian forces to align with Nazi Germany, as "Germany had inscribed the destruction of Bolshevism on its banner."

On May 8, 1939, the UNF's *Nowiy Schliakh* published an article under a pseudonym written by Yaroslav Stetsko, who little more than two years later would read the proclamation, much celebrated in far-right Ukrainian nationalist lore, of the formation of "Ukrainian state power." Titled "The Jews and us," Stetsko's article promoted the Judeo-Bolshevik canard at fever-pitch. "Jewry," it declared, "is assisting Russian Bolshevism as well as other enemies of Ukraine. It has taken commerce in its hands and is living on the Ukrainian lands by deceit, exploitation and subservience to Ukraine's enemies. A people of swindlers, materialists and egotists who are demoralizing and corrupting the nations of the world, ... a people that is only interested in personal profit and the satisfaction of the basest instincts, wants to corrupt the heroic culture of warrior nations. ... Dispersed throughout the world, it has accepted as its own the international communist Marxist socialist ideology and is using it to help Moscow disintegrate the West."

The UCC's campaign to bring war criminals to Canada

After the devastation of World War II, one of the first acts of the UCC was to wage a lobbying campaign to gain the Nazis' Ukrainian collaborators from the OUN and the 14th Grenadier or "Galicia" Division of the Waffen-SS admittance to Canada. This campaign brought the UCC to national prominence under conditions in which Canada's ruling elite was collaborating closely with its American and British imperialist allies to bring fascists and right-wing nationalists to North America as part of the Cold War operations of the Western intelligence agencies.

Beginning in 1947, the Canadian state accepted over 165,000 displaced persons as immigrants into the country. Far from being motivated by any altruistic considerations, this policy arose from Canadian industry's desperate need for additional labour power. A "Special Panel" of RCMP officers and intelligence officials established in 1947 was tasked with screening out any communists or sympathizers from those applying for entry to Canada.

Canada relied heavily for information on new immigrants on British and American intelligence, which had established working relations with the OUN and other far-right Ukrainian nationalists as early as 1946. The newly established CIA concluded that they could be valuable allies in their efforts to spy on and destabilize the USSR. In fact, the CIA's emergent relationship with the Ukrainian fascists would quickly become the model for its entire Cold War apparatus of subversion and "regime

change," according to the CIA's own classified history. Like their American and British counterparts, the Canadian authorities were fully aware of the political background and activities of the far-right Ukrainian nationalists, but chose to align themselves with them as the Cold War heated up.

The UCC petitioned Canada's Senate in May 1946 and June 1947 to bring veterans of the OUN and Galicia Division to Canada. The Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC), the successor organization to the Ukrainian Farmer Labour Temple Association, made explicit warnings to the Senate Committee on Immigration and Labour that the displaced person camps contained many war criminals. These warnings, which included specific reference to the Galicia Division's membership in the Waffen-SS, were deliberately ignored.

The right-wing big business Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent was only too willing to look the other way when it came to accepting fascist collaborators, and not just Ukrainian ones. Slovak, Romanian, Hungarian, Croat, and Baltic state fascists and Nazi collaborators were all admitted to Canada during this period.

By 1948, the Canadian government started accepting Ukrainian immigrants from displaced person camps en masse. The majority of those accepted were cadres and supporters of the OUN and OUN (B)'s Ukrainian Insurgent Army and their families. Among them was Mykhailo Chomiak, the editor of the pro-Nazi Ukrainian daily *Krakivski Visti* (Krakow News) and future beloved grandfather of Chrystia Freeland, the Deputy Prime Minister in Canada's current Liberal government.

By 1950, the OUN (B) had established 30 branches across Canada. They also set up the Canadian League for the Liberation of Ukraine, which for a decade, ending in 1959, remained separate from the UCC due to the League's unabashed support for Stepan Bandera. The latter continued to openly proclaim his fascism while helping organize a violent terrorist campaign against the USSR.

Initially, veterans of the Galicia Division remained barred from Canada. The Waffen-SS had been declared a criminal organization as a whole at the Nuremberg Trials, which meant that all Galicia Division members were war criminals. However, the early reluctance of the Canadian state to admit the most open Nazi collaborators was rapidly overcome due to the UCC's lobbying efforts and Ottawa and Washington's Cold War imperatives. Ultimately, over 2,000 Galicia Division veterans were resettled in Canada, where they would be protected from being held to account for their horrific crimes over subsequent decades through the combined efforts of the UCC and the Canadian state and political establishment.

The UCC's outsized role in Canadian imperialist foreign and domestic policy

The UCC and many of the Nazi collaborators it helped bring to Canada went on to play a significant role in key areas of Ottawa's domestic and foreign policies.

In 1952, the Canadian government worked with the UCC to establish a Ukrainian-language radio broadcast in Europe aimed at transmitting anti-Soviet propaganda into the USSR. As the UCC's website explains, "To combat Soviet propaganda, Voice of America and Radio Canada International Ukrainian-language service broke through the information blockade and broadcast into the Soviet Union. ... This was achieved in no small part due to (the) hard work of the UCC and the Ukrainian Committee of America."

Domestically, the nickel-mining giant Inco, under the watchful eye of the RCMP Security Service, hired Ukrainian and Hungarian fascists to

agitate from within its workforce against the militant Mine Mill union, which was aligned with the Stalinist Communist Party of Canada. The fascists agitated against the union during a bitter 1958 strike, in which the company largely succeeded in imposing its concession demands, and served as goons in the ultimately successful government-Catholic Church-supported campaign to replace Mine Mill with the pro-imperialist, anti-communist United Steelworkers union (USWA).

To maintain the illusion that the Western imperialist powers were fighting for “freedom” and “democracy” against the “totalitarian” Soviet Union, the Canadian and US governments gave extensive support to pseudo-academic and propaganda activities aimed at covering up the complicity of Ukrainian nationalists in war crimes. An entire industry of ideological propaganda was established in Canada and the US to this end.

In the United States, the criminal sadist and former OUN (B) security chief Mykola Lebed was handed the keys to set up the Prolog Research Corporation by the CIA. This publishing house produced Ukrainian-language CIA propaganda for distribution in the Soviet Union, but also promoted Ukrainian culture and a carefully edited version of Ukrainian history to the diaspora community in Canada and the United States.

The Waffen SS Galicia veterans formed a group whose very name is an attempt to conceal their Nazi past, the “Brotherhood of Former Soldiers of the First Division of the Ukrainian National Army.” This new name, “First Division of the Ukrainian National Army” was invented in April 1945, only days before the Nazi capitulation, in an attempt to recast the Waffen-SS soldiers as Ukrainian “freedom fighters” before surrendering to allied troops. Their headquarters has been in Toronto since 1960, and their publication, *Visti Kombatanta* (Veteran’s News) was dedicated to falsifying their wartime record for themselves and the Ukrainian diaspora.

During the 1950s and 60s, the UCC was able to expand its activities thanks to the patronage of the Canadian state. Prime Minister St. Laurent and his successor, the Tory John Diefenbaker, spoke at UCC congresses and functions. “It is to your great credit,” Prime Minister Diefenbaker told a UCC function, “that one of the tasks you have set yourselves is to keep sirens sounding to warn the nations of the dangers of appeasement, complacency, or false security in the face of the monster menace of International Communism.”

Ukrainian activists spearheaded the “Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations” (ABBN) headed by the aforementioned Yaroslav Stetsko, which in reality was “the world’s largest organization of former Nazi war criminals,” according to its CIA sponsors. Both Diefenbaker and the Liberal Lester Pearson met with ABBN members, while heading Canada’s government, and their anti-communist quotes appeared in ABBN publications. When Stetsko visited Canada in 1967, he was made an honorary citizen of Winnipeg.

The UCC also waged a determined ideological struggle against the old-guard left-wing leadership of the earlier generations of Ukrainian immigrants, the Stalinist-dominated AUUC. These emerged in struggles over the memorialization of Ukrainian cultural figures like Taras Shevchenko and Lesya Ukrainka, and OUN/UPA criminals such as Roman Shukevych, the UPA’s military commander, to whom the UCC erected a statue in 1973 in Edmonton.

According to the historian Kassandra Luciuk, “The organization successfully lobbied the government on important issues, inserted Ukrainians into Canada’s national narrative, controlled and promoted what histories were told, and influenced Canada’s foreign policy on the Soviet Union. The UCC also solidified the reality of Ukrainians as an ethnic voting bloc, forcing both the government and the state into continued negotiation and interaction. As a result, members of the UCC were transformed from mercenaries of socio-political control into a political force themselves.”

In 1976, the Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies was founded at the University of Alberta by former Waffen-SS officer Peter Savyryn and

others. Savyryn was deeply influential in Alberta Conservative politics, for a time heading the provincial Progressive Conservative party organization, and the Chancellor of the University of Alberta in the 1980s. Savyryn made no secret of his pride in his SS affiliation.

The same year, Volodymyr Kubyovych, the former head of the Nazi collaborationist Ukrainian Central Committee (UTsK) and *Krakivski Visti’s* publisher, flew to Edmonton to organize the transfer of his *Ukrainian Encyclopedia* project, developed after the war, into the hands of Savyryn, and the University of Alberta’s Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS). The signing ceremony was photographed, indicating the participation in the project of other leading members of the UTsK, including Antanas Figol, the UTsK’s representative in Nazi Berlin during the war, and Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky, a former *Krakivski Visti* author. The *Ukrainian Encyclopedia* created a fictional account of the history of Ukrainian far-right nationalism that covered up its collaboration with the Nazis and participation in war crimes. The entry in the *Encyclopedia* on the Galicia Division, for instance, makes no mention of the many war crimes it was involved in, nor the fact that the Waffen-SS was declared a criminal organization by the Nuremberg Tribunal.

Chrystia Freeland’s grandfather Mykhailo Chomiak remained in regular contact with Kubyovych after 1945, and the two exchanged letters until Chomiak’s death. In 1978-79, he worked with Kubyovych on the *Encyclopedia* in France. In 1986, the young Chrystia Freeland worked as a summer student crafting entries for the *Encyclopedia*. Her work was conducted under the direction of another nationalist historian, Bohdan Krawchuck, who later went on to advise the Central Rada (Ukrainian Parliament).

Commenting on the quality of CIUS’ “scholarship,” historian Grzegorz Rosliński-Liebe wrote:

“From the very beginning CIUS refused to cope in a critical and professional manner with contemporary Ukrainian history. At the time of writing of this article (2013), CIUS has not initiated any program to investigate Ukrainian history during WWII, examine questions surrounding the collaboration of the OUN and UPA with the Nazis, Ukrainian fascism, the role played by Ukrainians in the Holocaust, or any other related subject matter.”

But the CIUS was, and is not today, primarily an academic institution. Rather, it is a forum for ideological propaganda backed by funding from the Canadian government. CIUS was part of a range of state-backed initiatives to honour and commemorate far-right Ukrainian nationalists, which included numerous statues and memorials across the country to Bandera, the OUN, and even the Galicia Division of the Waffen SS.

The Canadian government’s backing for the Ukrainian nationalists’ rewriting of history and myth-making was an important component of its official “multiculturalism” policy, which developed rapidly from the 1960s onwards, and which was announced by Pierre Elliot Trudeau at a 1971 speech before the UCC! “Multiculturalism,” which has been incessantly promoted by “left” and “progressive” organizations over the past five decades, is in fact politically retrograde. It promotes the conception that Canada is comprised of various discrete ethnic, racial and religious “communities,” whose members are and can only be represented by their “own” organizations. In the case of the Ukrainian diaspora, that function was undertaken by the UCC. But a similar policy was pursued with respect to other minorities from the Baltic States and Eastern Europe, from where large numbers of Nazi collaborators had been welcomed to Canada during the post-war period in much the same way as with the Ukrainians.

The Deschenes Commission: The Canadian state covers up Ukrainian nationalist war crimes

In February 1985, the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney established a Commission to investigate Nazi war criminals in Canada in response to public pressure. A major role in pressing for the commission was played by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, which had uncovered evidence revealing the presence of thousands of war criminals in Canada. Organized under former Quebec Superior Court Justice Jules Deschenes, the commission operated until December 1986.

The Commission's 35-year-old report is constantly cited by apologists for Ukrainian far-right nationalists. This is because the Commission's process and report amounted to an establishment cover-up, designed to reach the conclusion that there were few, if any, war criminals in Canada, and that the Canadian state was entirely innocent of any relationship with the fascist far right.

The Commission's structural flaws ensured this outcome:

- It was initially given only 11 months to gather evidence.
- It was instructed NOT to investigate the past decisions of previous Canadian governments.
- Its remit was confined to determining if there was a basis to prosecute war criminals only under *then-existing* Canadian laws.
- The Commission gave official standing to two organizations representing the interest of suspected war criminals: the "Brotherhood of Veterans of the 1st Division of the Ukrainian National Army in Canada," representing the Galicia Division, and the UCC. This official status allowed both organizations to cross-examine witnesses and aggressively push for the exclusion of testimony and evidence.

The UCC campaigned tirelessly to bar any evidence from the Soviet Union and Poland—the two countries where most of the alleged war crimes had occurred—due to alleged defects in Soviet and Polish People's Republic legal processes. The UCC and the far-right Ukrainian nationalists for which it spoke had the most to lose from exposure of Nazi war criminals in Canada. The UCC had lobbied for veterans of the Galicia division to be given refuge in Canada. Moreover, Soviet evidence exposing the war crimes committed by the OUN-UPA would have blown up the edifice of lies they had been constructing for decades about how they had valiantly fought both Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism. It might even have compelled Deschenes to widen the scope of his investigation. As it was, the inquiry focused only on the activity of the Waffen-SS, whose former members in Canada were comparably few. The Commission never investigated the OUN/UPA.

Despite the Commission's limited remit and the substantial influence granted over it by Ukrainian nationalist groups, the UCC was livid. It spared no effort in trying to discredit any and all claims that Ukrainians had collaborated with the Nazis. It established a "Civil Liberties Commission" (CLC) to lobby government officials and influence media coverage of the Deschenes Commission. The University of Alberta's Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies worked overtime to organize "academic conferences" to assist in the cover-up.

With John Sopinka acting as their legal counsel, the UCC/CLC's delaying tactics succeeded in suppressing all Soviet evidence. Under pressure from Sopinka, the Commission set strict rules for the admission of Soviet evidence, expecting these would be rejected. When the Soviet authorities accepted the Canadian terms in the summer of 1986, Deschenes averred that there was suddenly "no time" to take that evidence and moved to bring proceedings to a close. Shortly thereafter, Sopinka was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, even though he had not previously served a single day on the bench.

Lubomir Luciuk, whose maternal grandfather was in the UPA, spearheaded the campaign of the UCC against the very existence of the Deschenes Commission, chalking it up to a "Soviet smear campaign." The right-wing backlash also featured an open eruption of anti-Semitism. The newspaper *Student*, the organ of SUSK, the Union of Ukrainian Canadian Students, published an anti-Semitic cartoon and editorial, which

declared, "The few Ukrainians in any position to speak out on this matter with any degree of credibility on behalf of the Ukrainian community have, for the most part been silenced for fear of backlash from within their professional lives. They are well aware of the formidable Jewish presence in all areas of employment and avoid biting the hand that feeds them."

The Ukrainian far-right nationalists could hardly have gotten more out of the Deschenes Commission's report had they written it themselves.

The report's findings gave them essentially two "get out of jail free" cards, both of which tellingly were predicated in the commission's very terms of reference:

The first—the finding that the members of the Waffen SS Galicia Division "should not be indicted as a group"—was based on a legal technicality. Canada had not signed either the London Treaty nor the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, under which the SS as a whole, including the 14th Galicia Division, had been declared a criminal organization, making membership in it a war crime. According to Deschenes, "No Canadian court, could therefore claim to exercise jurisdiction over that particular kind offence."

Deschenes also proclaimed the blanket "innocence" of all members of the Galicia Division resident in Canada on an individual basis, on the grounds that they "were individually screened for security purposes before admission to Canada." In other words, the Canadian state's original decision to allow those who had served in the SS into the country more than three and a half decades before—a policy the Deschenes Commission was forbidden to investigate and interrogate—was invoked to exculpate them, in an entirely circular argument.

Ukrainian far-right nationalists have trumpeted this whitewash ever since.

The Canadian state's alliance with the political forces that served and colluded with the Nazis during the war of extermination against the USSR and the Holocaust meant that it could not and would not tolerate any other outcome. Moreover, as the furor over the Deschenes commission played out, Canada's political establishment was preparing to deploy its far-right Ukrainian allies back to their homeland as the crisis of the Stalinist regime in Moscow deepened.

The role of the Ukrainian far-right diaspora in and following capitalist restoration

When the Gorbachev regime adopted *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the mid-1980s, the imperialist powers began strengthening their efforts to encourage nationalist forces aimed at the breakup of the USSR. In the case of Ukraine, Canadian imperialism drew on its decades-long relations, carefully cultivated with Nazi collaborators, to send a network of spies and anti-Soviet elements to push for, and later help implement, Ukrainian "independence."

The UCC played a key role in this campaign. The *Student* newspaper urged Ukrainian students travelling to the Soviet Union to act, as they baldly put it, "as a spy" for *Student*. One of the students who answered this call was Chrystia Freeland. This was no accident, since Freeland's family was steeped in Ukrainian nationalism and had a long association with *Student*, which enthusiastically promoted the myth that Bandera and the UPA were fighters for "national liberation." Her aunt, Chrystia Chomiak, had served as *Student's* editor between 1969 and 1970.

Freeland pursued a degree in Russian literature and history at Harvard, and obtained a scholarship to study Ukrainian at the University of Kiev in 1988-89. Already fluent in the language, her true interest in studying in Ukraine was to intervene as a Ukrainian nationalist activist in Soviet politics.

In the autumn of 1988, the “Peoples Movement of Ukraine” (*Rukh*) established. Freeland was present at its founding congress. Freeland reported back from Ukraine for *Student*, noting:

“On November 13 (1988) at an ecological demonstration attended by 10,000 people, the largest mass meeting in Soviet Kiev, the formation of a popular movement was advocated as the only means of solving Ukraine’s ecological crisis. Ten days later, 33 people, including prominent writers and academics as well as representatives of ‘unofficial’ social groups and factory worker collectives, formed an initiative group, based on the Writer’s Union, to spear-head the creation of a Ukrainian popular movement.”

Sections of the middle-class *Rukh* movement called for “the active participation of the workers in the management of economic, political and cultural life,” claiming it wanted an independent Ukraine where all national minorities could live together in peace and harmony. No doubt the vast majority of Ukrainians who participated in *Rukh*, having experienced decades of Stalinist lies and falsifications, held these illusions sincerely. But more calculating actors, namely Ukrainian nationalists in the diaspora and their supporters in world imperialism, had other plans.

In 1989, open appeals to the fascist far-right in Ukraine would have been met with horror and rejection. The program of capitalist restoration and the creation of a Ukrainian state utterly subservient to imperialism was therefore given “democratic” gloss so as to disguise what was in truth a social counterrevolution in the interests of imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucrats, eager to profit from the looting of state property.

One of Freeland’s journalistic endeavours during her stay was to facilitate a story about the mass graves at Bykivnia for *New York Times* reporter Bill Keller. Freeland arranged his trip, and acted as translator. Bykivnia was, along with Vynitsia, one of the places in which Stalin’s NKVD had buried those it executed in its campaign of political genocide conducted against the leadership of the Bolshevik Party between 1937 and 1939. Keller’s story, “Behind Stalin’s Green Fence” appeared on March 6, 1989, and enraged the Kremlin, which for years had claimed that the victims had been murdered by the Nazis.

Freeland was denounced in the Soviet press, and the KGB gave her the code-name “Frida.” Freeland was indeed acting as a political agent for the Ukrainian nationalist cause. She delivered video recording equipment and money to Ukrainian nationalist activists, and cooperated with the Canadian government, even using the government’s diplomatic pouch, which could not be touched by the Soviet authorities, for her communications. She took the injunction to “Spy for *Student*” and put it into practice. She was declared an enemy of the Soviet Union for her efforts, and barred from returning in 1989.

Canada became the first government to recognize Ukraine’s independence, on December 2, 1991. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress provided \$2 million to build Canada’s Embassy in Kiev, one indication of its immense influence over Canada-Ukraine relations.

Ukraine was rapidly inundated with Canadian expatriates, including former fascist collaborators, and their familial and political descendants. Freeland’s mentor on the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, Bohdan Krawchenko, immediately moved to Kiev to take up a series of powerful advisory posts to the Ukrainian Parliament (Rada) and successive cabinets. Freeland’s mother, the lawyer and one-time NDP candidate Halyna Chomiak, travelled to Ukraine to found the “Ukrainian Legal Foundation.” The organization was involved in drafting many of its laws, including its constitution, and civil and criminal codes of procedure. But the crucial element that the Ukrainian diaspora essentially re-imported into Ukraine was its virulently right-wing nationalist politics. This malign seed took time to grow.

In her 2015 essay “My Ukraine, Putin’s Big Lie,” Chrystia Freeland remarked that in the years before and immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, “Ukraine’s national consciousness was weak.” Indeed,

a critical aim of the UCC and other right-wing émigré groups post-1991 was to promote and strengthen a right-wing, virulently anti-communist, anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalism. In doing so, they exploited the Stalinist regime’s crimes, including its revival of Great-Russian chauvinism and betrayal of the socialist-internationalist perspective that underlay the founding of the USSR. This far-right nationalism, which cast Russia and the Soviet Union as the great obstacle, now as in the past, to realizing Ukraine’s national aspirations, was tied to a “western” orientation—to an orientation to those who had supported Ukrainian “independence” in the aftermath of World War One and during the Second World War, and had kept the “flame” of Ukrainian nationalism “burning” during the Cold War.

If the UCC and their ilk were able to increasingly exert political-ideological influence, it was above all because of the wrecking operation carried out by the rival factions of the Stalinist bureaucracy. As it pressed forward with capitalist restoration, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR, as in Yugoslavia, promoted rival nationalisms as a means of justifying the looting of state assets and, no less importantly, to confuse and divide a working class that was restless and militant, but had been brutally politically suppressed and denied any access to the revolutionary opposition to Stalinism, Trotskyism, for decades.

Ukrainian “independence” under the tutelage of American and Canadian imperialism proved disastrous for the working class. Ukraine’s GDP collapsed by 50 percent from 1990 to 1994. The privatization of socialised property was accompanied by gangsterism, political murder and intimidation. The homicide rate doubled between 1990 and 2000. The living standards of Ukrainian workers plummeted, and from 1991 life expectancy stayed flat, while growing in other industrialized countries. In 1991, 38 percent of Ukrainians were living in poverty. By 2000, that rate was 50 percent, having peaked at 54 percent in 1998.

The North American and European imperialist powers grew increasingly frustrated with the close economic ties that persisted between Ukraine and Russia. Eager to bring Kiev more fully under the domination of imperialism to facilitate their drive to subjugate Russia to the status of a semi-colony and secure their unchallenged dominance over the Eurasian landmass, US imperialism and its Canadian ally funded a series of “civil society” organizations with the aim of bringing about “regime change.”

The first “regime change” operation came in 2004, when mass protests following the election victory of Viktor Yanukovich resulted in the installation of pro-US candidate Viktor Yushchenko in the so-called “Orange Revolution.” Yushchenko’s government featured no less than three openly fascist cabinet ministers from Svoboda. The “civil society” group “Pora” (It’s about time) organized these demonstrations, with the backing of more than \$14 million in US money.

The Orange Revolution also marked the beginning of a concerted campaign to openly rehabilitate the political legacy of the fascist OUN-UPA, and promote the personality cult of its leaders, especially Stepan Bandera. Monuments to Bandera were erected, and postage stamps issued. These mirrored the monuments to Bandera, Roman Shukhevych, and even the Waffen SS Galizien Division which were built in Canada decades earlier. In 2010 the UCC would petition the Canadian government to provide veterans’ pensions to UPA fighters, citing the Ukrainian government’s decision to provide UPA veterans in Ukraine a monthly stipend equal to that given the Red Army veterans who had fought them and their Nazi allies.

Yushchenko rapidly fell from power following factional disputes with his erstwhile allies and the growth of opposition to his right-wing policies. But the failure of the Orange Revolution gave new impetus to the most far-right and anti-Russian elements such as Svoboda, who were convinced that their path to power lay in a violent coup d’état, inspired by the Ukrainian National Revolution of 1941. These far-right groups draw heavily on the political traditions maintained in Canada for decades by

Ukrainian-Canadian organizations such as the UCC, the League of Ukrainian Canadians (the OUN-B), and various religious groups, with the support of the Canadian state.

The UCC also played a critical role in preparing Ukraine ideologically for the current war with Russia. The organization is controlled by devoted admirers of Bandera and the OUN, who helped the Yushchenko and Poroshenko governments rehabilitate these Nazi collaborators in a country where their legacy had met with widespread hostility. Historian John-Paul Himka, whom we have had previous occasion to quote, pointed in 2010, to the “largely successful campaign” undertaken by “former president Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress in the North American diaspora to put the glorification of these radical right nationalists at the very center of the Ukrainian national identity project.”

The Canadian government and political establishment, as we have documented, has been complicit in incubating and promoting far-right Ukrainian nationalism for decades. In May 2008, it officially recognized the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33, in which millions died throughout the Soviet Union due in large measure to the disastrous collectivization policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy, as an anti-Ukrainian “genocide.” By proclaiming a “Holodomor Memorial Day” every November, the Canadian government underscored its full acceptance of the historical revisionism of the Ukrainian far-right, which sought by referring to the famine as the “Holodomor” to relativize the Holocaust and the role of Ukrainian fascist forces in the industrial extermination of European Jewry.

As economic conditions became ever more brutal in Ukraine, the far right and their private militias grew in influence and power, backed by powerful industrialists like Igor Kolomoisky, and also by western imperialism. In 2013 American and Canadian imperialism were instrumental in providing financial and political support to the leadership of the Maidan protests, led by far-right and outright fascist groups like Svoboda and Right Sector. The fascist-spearheaded coup that marked the culmination of this regime change operation removed Yanukovich from power in February 2014 and installed a pliant regime under Petro Poroshenko that collaborated with the imperialist powers to turn Ukraine into a heavily-armed battlefield against Russia and a NATO member in all but name.

During this period, the UCC continued to have an outsized role in Canadian foreign policy. Whenever Prime Ministers Stephen Harper or Justin Trudeau visited Ukraine, they were accompanied by a strong UCC delegation. Prior to the open dispatch of military equipment and weaponry to Ukraine by the Canadian government for the waging of war against Russia, a steady flow of armaments was already under way thanks to the Army SOS group, which consisted of UCC members. Army SOS supplied rifle parts, drones, and other equipment to the military and National Guard, including the fascist Azov Battalion, founded in 2014 specifically to wage war on the Russian-speaking separatists in the Donbas, and later incorporated into the Ukrainian military.

After 70 percent of the Ukrainian armed forces in Crimea swore allegiance to Russia in 2014, the Ukrainian military was purged of close to 50 percent of its officer corps, who were replaced with far-right militants. In 2015, the maximum size of the Ukrainian army was increased from 184,000 to 250,000 soldiers. Ukrainian army reform in the ensuing period was funded and organized by western imperialism.

Once Canadian military support became more formalized with the establishment of a training mission for Ukrainian military personnel by the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), Ottawa continued its decades-long tradition of cooperating with the most reactionary political forces. Canadian military personnel trained officers from the neo-Nazi Centuria group at Ukraine’s top military college. When the Department of Defence became aware of a 2018 meeting between Canadian military “officers and diplomats” and the Azov Battalion, they sought to conceal it. The meeting only became public knowledge because Azov boasted about it on social

media.

By 2019 Canada’s ambassador to Ukraine and several CAF officers were proud to be photographed dedicating a monument to 17 OUN/UPA fighters on the site of a mass grave of Jews murdered in Sambir, in Galicia or western Ukraine. Six thousand Jews were murdered in the town by Ukrainian police divisions in a series of four massacres, from October 1942 to June 1943. The Canadian state supported a provocative campaign to erect a monument—not to the Jewish victims, but to an organization that systematically participated in the Holocaust, including in Sambir. This campaign was spearheaded by Sambir’s fascist mayor, who had previously turned the town’s former synagogue into a strip club, and by the Ukrainian Catholic Church, which in a provocation in 2000, backed by paramilitary thugs, had raised three crosses overtop the Jewish graves.

The decades-long alliance between the Canadian state and the Ukrainian far right documented in this series exposes the true character of the political forces the imperialist powers are collaborating with in the US-NATO war on Russia. Behind all the bogus propaganda about waging a war for “democracy” and “European values,” the Canadian ruling class is allied with powerful sections of the Ukrainian government, military and political elite who stand in the tradition of the Ukrainian Nazi collaborationist forces responsible for some of the worst crimes in human history. Moreover, it has played an important role in politically and ideologically cultivating these forces through its long promotion of the UCC and far-right Ukrainian nationalism. In the final part of this series, we will examine the impact that fascistic forces are having on Canadian imperialist foreign and domestic policy, and advance a socialist perspective for the working class to oppose war and the rise of the far right.



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