

Far-right Ukrainian World Congress demands Hollywood take “appropriate action” against *Top Gun: Maverick*

David Walsh
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The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) issued an open letter March 7 insisting that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences “support Ukraine” and “stop Russian influence.” The letter claimed that *Top Gun: Maverick* had been financed by Dmitry Rybolovlev, a Russian oligarch “sanctioned by Ukraine.”

The UWC expressed its “serious concerns over Russia’s influence on the Hollywood film industry,” specifically, as it related “to the nomination of *Top Gun: Maverick* for six prizes at the 95th Academy Awards.”

Astonishingly, this far-right outfit, tied to the Zelensky regime, which is corrupt to the core and infested with anti-Semites and fascists, has taken it upon itself to make demands of the film industry. This is only possible because the entire American establishment, Biden administration and Republicans alike, along with the media, has invested heavily in the bloodbath in Ukraine and the accompanying anti-Russian propaganda barrage.

On January 3, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that New Republic Pictures, which produced *Top Gun: Maverick*, was largely financed by “silent partner” Rybolovlev. The relationship became public as the result of a lawsuit filed by New Republic’s former president and chief content officer Bradley Fischer.

The UWC open letter asserts that Rybolovlev’s funding of the film “was not publicly disclosed and there is good reason to believe that his involvement may have led to censorship on behalf of the Kremlin.” The evidence? Incredibly, the Ukrainian nationalists complain, that contrary to the original *Top Gun* (1986), the sequel “makes no direct or indirect reference to

Russia. This is hardly a coincidence.”

Top Gun: Maverick, as the *World Socialist Web Site* review pointed out, “is a repugnant, empty film commissioned by the United States military to revel wholeheartedly in its war machine.” The film, we wrote, “is replete with bombastic action sequences, loving close-ups of fighter jets and other weaponry, empty bravado and little else.” All of the new *Top Gun*’s “imagery is tailored to present sanitized and mythological images of war and combat.” It is, among other things, a recruitment tool for the US military, which hopes to draw in the unsuspecting into its global aggression and violence.

The film, directed by Joseph Kosinski, was made with the full cooperation and encouragement of the Defense Department, as has been widely acknowledged.

Writing in the *LA Times* last May, Roger Stahl, director of the documentary *Theaters of War: How the Pentagon and CIA Took Hollywood* (interviewed by the WSWWS in January 2023), pointed out that when *Top Gun: Maverick* opened in movie theaters, with “Tom Cruise on screen, the multiplex will crack with high-fives and roar with F-18 fighter jets, those sleek emblems of American power. The film’s F-18s and other military gear are courtesy of the Pentagon. This is the job of the U.S. Defense Department’s Entertainment Media Office, which allows use of such assets in exchange for control of the script.”

Stahl noted that the original *Top Gun*, “which was intimately guided by the Navy, has long represented the military’s capabilities when it comes to steering pop culture.”

The militarist bombast is not enough for the UWC, which arrogantly insists that anti-Russian propaganda must be a staple of Hollywood production. Its open letter asserts that the US film industry “must be vigilant and transparent of Russian money being used to further pro-Kremlin censorship.”

The organization “calls upon” the Academy to (1) “explicitly reject films with any direct or indirect investments by Russian oligarchs or other enablers of Russia’s genocidal war on Ukraine”; (2) “review the eligibility of *Top Gun: Maverick* from participating at the 95th Academy Awards, for that same reason”; and (3) “issue a strong statement at this year’s award ceremony (!) condemning Russia’s war against Ukraine and any attempts to influence Hollywood and American society.”

The UWC denounces any outside “influence”—except, of course, its own. If the open letter’s demands were implemented, the film industry would be little more than a propaganda arm of the Ukrainian extreme right or at least its products would be subject to the latter’s veto. As the production of the new *Top Gun* under the supervision of the Pentagon demonstrates, the situation is wretched enough as it is.

The Ukrainian World Congress, a network of organizations, was founded in 1967 in New York as the “World Congress of Free Ukrainians” to oppose the Soviet Union from the standpoint of right-wing Ukrainian nationalism and anti-communism.

The March 7 UWC letter is signed by its president, Paul Grod. Grod is the former president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. As the WSWS has explained, the UCC “has played a key role in assisting the Canadian government in its staunch support for the far-right regime installed in Kiev through the February 2014 coup, including helping arm fascist-militias that are currently allied with the Kiev government through its SOS Ukraine charity.”

In 2010, Grod paid tribute to Ukrainian nationalist fighters who joined Germany’s Waffen SS during World War II as “freedom fighters.” In the immediate aftermath of the war, Grod’s predecessors in the UCC lobbied the Canadian government to accept at least 2,000 survivors from this Nazi fighting force, known as the Galicia Division. Grod and the UCC enthusiastically celebrate Stepan Bandera, the Nazi collaborator and leader of the Organization of

Ukrainian Nationalists, infamous during World War II for its genocidal massacres of the Polish and Jewish population.

This is the thoroughly reprehensible individual and organization proposing to dictate what films can and should be made.



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