

Far-right Ukrainian Canadian Congress urges Trudeau government to censor anti-war meetings and activists

James Clayton
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) is holding a meeting in Montreal this Thursday evening titled “The war in Ukraine and how to stop it.” The meeting details are as follows:

Montreal: Thursday, April 13, at 6:30 p.m.

Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

Pavillon Hubert-Aquin, local A-2835 (2e étage)

400 Sainte-Catherine Est, H2L 2C5 (Near Métro Berri-UQAM)

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The far-right nationalist Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) is pressing the federal government to censor and suppress anti-war meetings and actions on the basis of the fraudulent smear they constitute “anti-Ukrainian hate.”

In recent weeks, the UCC has been meeting with and otherwise lobbying federal Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino to demand the Liberal government “address” what it calls “the rising tide of anti-Ukrainian hate and violence targeting the Ukrainian Canadian community.”

An 11-page “briefing” document handed over to Mendicino on March 13 outlines a series of demands for a state-led McCarthyite campaign aimed at silencing and effectively criminalizing any organization or individual who speaks out against the Ukraine war or challenges the pro-imperialist narrative justifying the US, Canada and their NATO allies waging war on Russia.

Specific UCC demands include that the government: “issue a public statement unequivocally condemning the rising pattern of hate-motivated attacks against the Ukrainian Canadian community and supporters of Ukraine” and “counter” any “disinformation” which “incites hatred against Ukrainians.” The UCC also wants the government to mount a propaganda campaign to “educate” Canadians to recognize “state-sponsored” narratives and “online information that is intended to mislead,” and is urging police give special attention to the supposed “rising incidence” of anti-Ukrainian “hatred” on university campuses, and that “hate crime training” be supplied to university security personnel.

In a press release accompanying its briefing note, the UCC boasted that “the UCC leadership” has met with Mendicino “several times.” In other words, the close partnership between the Canadian state and the far-right Ukrainian nationalists, which stretches back to the aftermath of World War II, is already working out ways to censor opposition to the war.

The assertion that there is a “hate” campaign directed against Ukrainians, let alone one, as the UCC would have us believe, that is causing widespread fear and anxiety, is a flat out lie.

Despite its best efforts, the UCC could list in its briefing paper only 24 alleged “hate crimes” since the war’s outbreak in February 2022. That the list includes public meetings opposing the US-NATO war on Russia not only points to its concocted character. It lays bare the sinister, anti-democratic purpose of the entire UCC campaign.

The real crime against the Ukrainian people is being perpetrated by the imperialist powers in Washington, Ottawa and the European capitals, ably assisted by their far-right nationalist accomplices, who are forcing tens of thousands of young Ukrainians to be massacred in a conflict aimed at subordinating Russia to the status of a semi-colony and seizing control of its rich natural resources. The imperialists have no interest in “democracy” or “sovereignty” in Ukraine, which the banks and major corporations intend to plunder no less ruthlessly after its population has been bled white by the war.

Two incidents among the UCC’s alleged “hate crimes” involved anti-Nazi graffiti which sought to protest against, and draw attention to, the roots of the virulently anti-Russian and anti-communist Ukrainian nationalism espoused by the UCC and the western-aligned Ukrainian government in 20th century fascist movements. The graffiti protests also sought to point to the collaboration of Ukrainian nationalist leaders like Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, celebrated by the UCC and affiliated groups, in the crimes of the Third Reich.

Two additional incidents described as constituting “hate” were an anti-war political meeting at Carleton University in Ottawa and a Facebook post by a group at the University of Victoria in British Columbia that drew attention to the fascist pedigree of contemporary Ukrainian nationalist groups, including the Ukrainian military’s Azov Battalion. The Carleton meeting was focused on pressuring the Trudeau Liberal government to press for peace talks with Russia to end the conflict.

Nine incidents involved expressions of support for the Russian side in the war, mostly by Canadians of Russian origin and often involving graffiti using the letter “Z,” which has appeared on Russian military vehicles in Ukraine. A further six incidents described other acts of vandalism directed against Ukrainian nationalist symbols, such as Ukrainian flags being ripped down. Some allegations were based entirely on hearsay.

There were only three alleged violent incidents, including a suspected arson attempt against a Ukrainian priest in Victoria (double-counted in the UCC’s list), threats of violence allegedly made in an online chatroom by a deranged individual, and a physical altercation between Ukrainian-Canadians and Russian-speaking immigrants in

Edmonton.

Contrary to the UCC's portrayal of Canada facing a "rising tide" of "anti-Ukrainian hate," the reality in recent months has been that far-right Ukrainian nationalists, led by the UCC, have waged a systematic campaign of intimidation against any opposition to the war. At the Carleton University meeting cited by the UCC in its briefing document, the only threats were made by Ukrainian nationalists, who repeatedly sought to disrupt the event. In the days leading up to the meeting, they appealed to the university administration to ban it, based on the trumped up claim that Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Canadian students felt unsafe. During the meeting, repeated attempts were made to interrupt speakers and intimidate them. One of the speakers, the radical journalist Yves Engler, was accused of being a Russian puppet because he has been interviewed by the RT television network.

A similar experience was made by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International, at the University of Waterloo. After coming under pressure from far-right Ukrainian nationalists, the university tried to cancel the IYSSE's room booking. The IYSSE responded with an open letter to the university published on the *World Socialist Web Site* and a public campaign that forced the administration to back down. At the event, a team of UCC affiliated activists sought to physically hinder participants from entering and tried unsuccessfully to disrupt the meeting once it was underway.

This record makes clear that if the UCC's recommendations were to be adopted, the systematic suppression of anti-war voices and actions would become quasi-official state policy—as it is in Ukraine, where all opposition political speech is banned and opponents of the war regularly confront physical violence and worse.

The UCC's censorship campaign closely resembles the attempts of the Zionist political establishment in Israel, their imperialist sponsors, and much of the western media to label any expressions of support for the oppressed Palestinians under Israeli occupation as "antisemitic hate speech." The political representatives of the Canadian ruling class have embraced this reactionary campaign with the adoption of the fraudulent IHRA definition of antisemitism. It has been used to attack left-wing critics of the Israeli regime, while ignoring and covering up both the growth of a fascist far-right in Israel and a resurgence internationally of antisemitism among the so-called MAGA Republicans and other far-right forces.

The UCC campaign gives expression to anxiety within the Canadian state and ruling class that political opposition to its proxy war against Russia in Ukraine is mounting in the working class, and that any public debate over the causes of the war and the aims being pursued by the NATO powers will quickly expose the western imperialist narrative of the war as a pack of distortions and lies.

As we extensively documented in our series "Canadian Imperialism's Fascist Friends," the UCC has long served, in a subordinate role, to advance the political imperatives of Canadian imperialism. Founded in 1940 as the "Ukrainian Canadian Committee" under the direct supervision of the Canadian state to support its aims in the Second World War, the UCC merged all of the right-wing, backward and reactionary elements of the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora. During the Cold War, the Canadian state cultivated the UCC as a right-wing political instrument in its fight against socialist influence in the Canadian working class at home.

After World War II, in which Ukrainian nationalists collaborated extensively with Nazi Germany, including in the crimes of the Holocaust, the Canadian state admitted tens of thousands of Nazi

collaborators, former members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and of the Waffen SS Galizien Division, at the urging of the UCC, and over the loudly voiced objection of anti-fascist Ukrainian Canadians.

Following the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Canadian ruling elite redeployed the political descendants of the Ukrainian nationalist Nazi collaborators to assist in capitalist restoration. The nexus between far-right Ukrainian nationalists and the Canadian state grew ever stronger as Ukraine's geostrategic importance for the imperialist powers in their drive to subjugate Russia grew. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, the granddaughter of World War II Nazi collaborator Mikhailo Chomiak, editor of the fascist newspaper *Krakivski Visti*, personifies the political influence of the UCC within the Canadian state. This influence has expanded with the recent appointment of former UCC CEO Taras Zalusky to the position of Chief of Staff to Defense Minister Anita Anand. The UCC's most recent demands were doubtless coordinated with these officials, as they reinforce the Canadian state's war campaign.

The politically fraudulent campaign currently being waged by the UCC and the Canadian state is an attempt to smear all opposition to NATO's war as necessarily expressing support for the reactionary nationalist Putin regime, which represents the interests of the Russian oligarchy. The principled intervention of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the ICFI, which fights for the independent political mobilization of the working class in irreconcilable opposition to both sides in the war, demonstrates that the UCC's campaign is a filthy smear.

However, it is a filthy smear that is being readily embraced by Canada's universities and pro-war sections of the middle class. One example of this was a recent "study" of allegedly "pro-Russian" social media posts in which the notorious pro-war nationalist and apologist for Ukrainian and Estonian fascists, Marcus Kolga participated. The report, "Enemy of my Enemy" released by the Orwellian-named "Centre for Artificial Intelligence, Data and Conflict" and bearing the imprimatur of the universities of Regina and Maryland, seeks to label any and all critics of the war as Russian stooges.

These attempts by Canadian imperialism, and its openly declared stooges such as Kolga and the UCC, to smear and suppress opposition to the war must be vigorously opposed by the working class. This is possible only through the development of an international anti-war movement based upon an understanding of the historical origins of the present conflict and armed with a socialist program to put an end to the war and the capitalist system that has given rise to it.



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