

How Russia's attack on Freeland got traction in Canada

By Terry Glavin MacLean's, March 14, 2017

Now that we're well into the second week of an imbroglio that should be remembered as one of the most disgraceful, embarrassing, or at least hilarious events in the recent history of Canadian journalism, the "Chrystia Freeland Lied About Her Family's Nazi Past" hoax is accruing to itself ever thicker layers of absurdity and silliness.

It was a hoax, we would all admit, if we were capable of resisting the inclination to double-down on the preposterous claims and dirty insinuations that have been allowed to muddy the significance of what has really happened here. It was a hoax, perpetrated on the Canadian public, in service of Vladimir Putin's gangland regime in Moscow.

Chrystia Freeland, the journalist-turned-politician who was appointed Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs only two months ago, has not been shown to have lied about anything. And as the plot thickened, Freeland found herself being accused of engaging in her own hoax by blaming the Russians for her misfortunes.

Quite apart from the adorable Canadian naïveté involved in passive-aggressively permitting the Kremlin to headline-hack itself out of a national spotlight that should have been shining last week on Putin's belligerence in Ukraine and the Baltics, there are a couple of things that distinguish this particular Kremlin caper from the run-of-the-mill jobs.

The first is that it's a textbook case of Russian disinformation by conspiracy theory. The second is that this time around, the Russians were caught red-handed.

Unfortunately, we've all spent a great deal of effort being clever in our elucidations upon how to properly distinguish between a Ukrainian patriot and a Nazi collaborator in the terror time of the 1940s, and about where one might situate the boundaries of Soviet-occupied Eastern Galicia on contemporary maps of the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands, and other such boring ephemera.

This is what Moscow wanted, and it also wanted the not-especially-bright among us to be wondering out loud and often about whether it might be true that Freeland is a Russophobic Nazi sympathizer who can't be trusted with the Foreign Affairs portfolio.

To that purpose, the *Globe and Mail's* Tuesday, March 7 article, headlined "Freeland knew her grandfather was editor on Nazi newspaper," was interpreted by the glamorous American celebrity paranoid Glenn Greenwald — the most assertive champion of Edward Snowden, the famous U.S. National Security Agency hacker who has been enjoying the perks of Russian asylum ever since he absconded to Moscow in June 2013 — in this way: "The exposé on how Canada's Foreign Minister knowingly lied for 20 years about grandfather's past, now blames Russia."

The Bolivarian catastrophe of Venezuela's own Telesur television channel handled the story exactly the same way, as did all the usual Canadian "alternative" media undertakings, even though there was nothing in Robert Fife's *Globe and Mail* story, or anyone else's reporting, that showed Freeland had lied about anything, knowingly or otherwise, much less for 20 years. And it was not Freeland who first implicated Moscow in the hubbub. She merely raised the subject of Russia's well-documented European monkey-wrenching, which she was warned to be personally on guard against at the Munich Security Conference on February 17.

As for who first noticed that Moscow was gunning for Freeland, that's something that has yet to show up in any banner Canadian headlines. It was the European Union's East StratCom Task Force, a unit of the External Action Service (the EU's foreign ministry and diplomatic branch). The Task Force was set up in March 2015 as a kind of early warning system to detect incoming Kremlin disinformation campaigns.

In its January 26 Disinformation Digest, the Task Force specifically identified the "Freeland Lied About Her Family's Nazi Past" hoax, which by then was already circulating within the nether regions of the pro-Kremlin web, under the

category of "pro-Kremlin disinformation" and "fake media stories that support Russia's policies." The Task Force flagged the Freeland smear project under the campy headline "And you are a Nazi, too!" along with several ongoing efforts to affix the Nazi tag to "anyone opposing the Kremlin's interests," especially in Ukraine and the Baltic states. Canadian Forces personnel are active in both arenas.

Usually, Moscow enjoys a degree of marginally plausible deniability by circulating its nastiest propaganda via merely Kremlin-adoring webzines and usefully idiotic "anti-imperialist" pseudo-news operations. But the effort to attack Freeland's character and undermine her credibility first came straight out of Russia's embassy in Ottawa, on January 11, the day after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appointed Freeland to the foreign-affairs post.

That was the day an embassy official shopped the purported bombshell about the Freeland family's past to Justin Ling, the Canadian features editor for *Vice News*. The official provided Ling with two academic papers written by Freeland's uncle, John Paul Himka, about Chrystia Freeland's grandfather, Michael Chomiak. A Ukrainian nationalist, lawyer and journalist, Chomiak had ended up serving as the titular editor of *Krakivs'ki Visti*, a newspaper Himka describes as "the organ of established Ukrainian nationalists operating within the limits imposed by Nazi rule."

The newspaper obligingly printed obscenely anti-Semitic material, as Himka's research shows (Freeland also assisted Himka in a 1996 study of *Krakivs'ki Visti* during Chomiak's tenure). A "Nazi collaborator," then, a term Freeland has never been known to use to describe her grandfather, who died when she was 15, and who Freeland had never mentioned except fleetingly as a grandparent who had fled the Soviet depredations in Ukraine during the Second World War. Which was true.

Ling decided to take a pass on the "story" because there really was no "story" to be told, but the smear erupted in headlines last week after Freeland and Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan announced that the Canadian Forces training mission in Ukraine, which has been besieged by Russia for the past three years, would continue until at least March, 2019. Moscow was quite unhappy about the decision.

When questioned about the lurid Secret Nazi Past smear, Freeland pointed out that it isn't exactly a secret, as several U.S. intelligence agencies have pointed out, and as German chancellor Angela Merkel has similarly noticed, that Moscow is devoting itself to the destabilization of western democracies. "I think it shouldn't come as a surprise if these same efforts were used against Canada," Freeland said, and thus, hey presto, the Kremlin-friendly spin became: Freeland Dodges Question, Blames Russia.

From its first public eruption in the Moscow blogosphere to the semi-respectability of Polish tabloids and then to its extraordinary mainstream legitimization by the *Globe and Mail*, the trajectory of the Nazi-tagging disinformation project aimed at Freeland follows an arc through a digital maze of far-right cranks, far-left tirade launchers and hopelessly disreputable Putin fanciers.

For all its shock-headline sensation, there is no real "news" involved. The content is relentlessly repetitive and usually just cut-and-pasted from one website to another, torqued up with wild headlines and sordid spins. The first Moscow blogger with the "story," for instance, claims that Freeland "stands for the same race hatred as her grandfather" and is determined to "cleanse" Ukraine of its Jews, Russians and Poles.

Ironically, the replicated content, on perhaps hundreds of websites, derives almost entirely from research undertaken by Freeland's uncle, and from archives made public years ago by Freeland's family. If Chrystia Freeland had wanted to hide some dark family secret, she and her relatives have been going about it exactly the wrong way.

One of most comical deployments of the Kremlin's "And you are a Nazi, too!" device occurred last October, when no

less a Kremlin figure than Dmitry Kiselyov, deputy director of Russian state television, took to the airwaves to personally deliver a 10-minute "documentary" about the 1956 Hungarian uprising. Contrary to the historical record, Kiselyov's documentary purported to show that the anti-Soviet, pro-democracy uprising was really a bloody rampage engineered by Nazis trained and organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Last December, the English-language channel of RT News — a Kremlin propaganda arm that masquerades as a news organization with a \$300 million annual budget from the Russian government — reported "news" from Riga, Latvia, under this headline: "Swastika-looking snowflakes pop up at Latvian Christmas market." The "swastikas" were in fact traditional Latvian folk runes. From RT News last summer: "Gardener jet off hook for mowing swastika into Latvian president's lawn." Except it wasn't a "swastika."

Moscow has waged its most vicious, sustained and transparently absurd "Nazi" smear campaigns against the Ukraine government, and it has been doing so ever since Putin lost his grip on Kyiv when Ukraine's kleptocrat-president Viktor Yanukovich fled to Moscow following the November 2013 Euromaidan uprising.

Putin has been waging a hybrid war in eastern Ukraine pitting proxy "separatists" against Ukrainian security forces in a bloody conflict in the Donbas region that has left 10,000 people dead. Moscow's military annexation of the Crimean peninsula, in violation of several international treaties, has earned Putin a suspension from the Group of Eight (G8) countries, the opprobrium of his fellow United Nations Security Council members, and a suite of international sanctions.

Moscow has responded with a cyber-warfare campaign of hacking and disinformation, and a persistent, ugly propaganda line: the Kyiv government is run by Nazis, and its international backers are Nazi sympathizers.

While it's true that the chaos in Donbas has attracted combatants from neo-Nazi Ukrainian groupuscules, the "Right Sector" coalition in Ukraine was a total bust in the May 2014 elections that cemented Yanukovich's ouster. The rightists scored less than two per cent of the national vote. That hasn't stopped Moscow's smears, however. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov insists that the Right Sector secretly controls the Ukraine government. But then, Lavrov also claims the Canadian government is controlled by a "rabid" Ukrainian diaspora.

Marko Suprun, a Ukrainian Canadian filmmaker and presenter with the StopFakeNews channel in Kyiv, says it's significant that so much of the Nazi-tagging aimed at Freeland has percolated in the alternative media in Poland. "This is a new level of targeted fake news," Suprun told me. "There was and remains a concerted effort to drive a 70-year-old wedge between Warsaw and Kyiv."

Anyone who claims that Freeland isn't being subjected to a targeted disinformation campaign doesn't understand how disinformation works, Suprun said. "Notice the attack on Freeland started just around the time when Canada was deciding to extend its military training mission in Ukraine," he said. "The Kremlin has long been trying to turn a fake stereotype into a reality, that Ukrainians are Nazis and that Kyiv was the target of a junta."

With the largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world, Canada is especially vulnerable to Russian destabilization efforts. The Communications Security Establishment is in the early stages of a threat assessment to determine whether Canada's electoral system is vulnerable to foreign disruption, and the events of the past couple of weeks will likely draw in greater resources from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the RCMP.

As for how Freeland is holding up, she seems to be taking it all in stride. "Canadians expect their government to be focused on their priorities," Freeland told me. "That's exactly what I am doing."

Himka's accusations against the OUN and the UPA are baseless

By Askold S. Lozynskiy

There should be a legitimate purpose for a serious publication purporting to be based on legitimate scholarship to venture into a new serious discussion on events three quarters of a century old. Newly discovered evidence might be a sound predicate for such a venture. But a rehash of old and in fact previously shown to be unreliable evidence, asserting old allegations never proven is quite frankly, not scholarship, but a politically motivated diatribe.

The Holocaust does not need to be fabricated. It is indisputable that in the course of World War II millions of Jews perished as a result of a Nazi policy of achieving a final solution to the Jewish problem as envisioned by Hitler and his henchman. Complicit in this were non-Germans including Jews as well acting as accomplices for various reasons including self-survival. It is important to remember this in order to honor the victims as well as to secure a world where a similar genocide does not take place, all discussion on this subject must be sincere and fair.

Northwestern University Press recently published "Lessons and Legacies XII New Directions in Holocaust Re-

search and Education". From the dedication, it is apparent that the Northwestern affiliate responsible for this publication is the Holocaust Educational Foundation founded by the Auschwitz survivor Theodore Zev Weiss. I should like to take issue with the article entitled "Former Ukrainian Policemen in the Ukrainian National Insurgency: Continuing the Holocaust outside German Service" written by John-Paul Himka.

Himka has produced many questionable writings over the years, as a beneficiary of various grants: revisionist scholarship bought and paid for. Previous to that he had written extensively on many Ukrainian topics including much accusatory material against Ukrainian nationalists. He is a self-avowed Marxist who during the period of the USSR traveled extensively there and was given access to documents and material inaccessible to western scholars. He defended Soviet agents, such as Michael Hanusiak who as far back as the 1970's wrote a rather primitive diatribe against Ukrainian nationalism entitled "Lest We Forget". Why Himka defended Hanusiak remains unclear.

Himka's writing on the Holocaust centers on Ukrainian

complicity and, in particular, the period of the summer of 1941 in the Western Ukrainian city of Lviv and, more recently, he has ventured into the region of Volyn and the period of 1943-44. In particular, he has gone after the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. Perhaps not coincidentally those two formations had been the most vehement and effective opponents of Soviet and Russian rule in Ukraine and the targets of Soviet and Russian propaganda and disinformation since the 1960's and 1970's. Previous to that the Soviets dealt with the OUN and the UPA by killing or assassinating its leadership. Marxists were and are the moral equivalent of the Nazis, equally vile. In fact, they killed more, largely, because they had more time and operated on more territory. Stalin's concentration camps became the models for Hitler's.

However, I impugn Himka's scholarship, in particular. His revisionism is redundant and tedious. He repeats the same canards and exploits the same specious sources. In the subject piece Himka's basic premise is a historiographical and

Cont. on P. 11



SUSK President Cassian Soltykevych with members of the newly formed 'Ukrainian Youth in Vancouver.'

SUSK engages BC youth community

(SUSK)—SUSK is delighted to welcome and introduce its newest Ukrainian Student Organization (USO): Ukrainian Youth in Vancouver.

The newly established USO is the first Ukrainian student organization located in Vancouver for over a decade, effectively creating linkages between Ukrainian youth all across Canada.

"We are excited to start a new student organization and connect ourselves with the British Columbian Ukrainian community," remarked SUSK President Cassian Soltykevych, "as this connection will help broaden SUSK's reach, connect us with

another province, and better understand the dynamics of our brothers and sisters who have recently immigrated from Ukraine. I look forward to working with the newly elected Executive of Ukrainian Youth in Vancouver."

SUSK would like to thank all of the young Ukrainians in Vancouver for taking charge in their local community and contributing to the rich Ukrainian youth movement across Canada. As well, SUSK would like to thank OWL - Open World Learning and Dr. Svitlana Kominko for her assistance and support in making the creation of this USO possible.

BCU Foundation invests in Canadian History Hall

(BCU Foundation)—The Canadian Museum of History is pleased to announce that BCU Foundation is donating \$100,000 in support of the Museum's new signature exhibition, the Canadian History Hall. The Hall will be the largest, most comprehensive and engaging exhibition about Canadian history ever created. It opens July 1, 2017 as Canadians celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

BCU Foundation is a leading Ukrainian-Canadian charitable institution which promotes the vibrant growth and long-term development of the Ukrainian-Canadian community. Launched in 2006, the foundation delivers assistance to cultural and educational endeavors in Canada.

"The generous support of BCU Foundation will help the Museum tell the remarkable story of Canada and its people to present and future generations," said Mark O'Neill, President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of History. "This will be an important and enduring gift to all Canadians."

"BCU Foundation is proud to make this significant investment in the Canadian History Hall. We are honoured to support the Museum as it celebrates the 150th anniversary of Confederation," said Roman Medyk, BCU Foundation Chair. "Our contribution to the Hall will honour the generations of Ukrainian-Canadians

who helped build, enrich and shape this country, and will provide a lasting legacy for all Canadians to celebrate our rich diversity."

The Canadian History Hall presents Canada's story as it's never been seen before. Visitors will encounter Canada's national history, as told through the diverse experiences and perspectives of the real people who lived it, bringing together a collective story of conflict, struggle and loss, and also of success, achievement and hope. This new signature exhibition illuminates the enduring legacy of Canada's past—a legacy that is alive, relevant and continually unfolding in the Canada we know today.

The Hall's development is being funded by the federal government and contributions from private donors across the country.

Located on the shores of the Ottawa River in Gatineau, Quebec, the Canadian Museum of History attracts over 1.2 million visitors each year. The Museum's principal role is to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the events, experiences, people and objects that have shaped Canada's history and identity, as well as to enhance Canadians' awareness of world history and culture. Work of the Canadian History Museum is made possible in part through financial support of the Government of Canada.

Himka's accusations against the OUN and the UPA are baseless

Cont. from P. 7

psychological stretch. Ukrainian policemen in Volyn, Western Ukraine, learned to kill while in the Nazis' employ and then used that savagery and tactics on their own when they joined the UPA. Some 4,000 Ukrainian policemen deserted the Germans in 1943 in Volyn and joined the UPA. According to Himka that made them killers. Forget evidence or some psychological expertise to validate that theory.

Himka's sources are two type: Soviet/Russian documents and witness testimony (actually written monologues with no questioning as to accuracy or veracity).

As to the latter he offers as evidence memoirs, statements and even video provided by Holocaust survivors and preserved today in various locations such as the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Poland, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, USC Visual Shoah Foundation Visual History Archives, etc. As one example Himka offers the memoirs of one Jacob Biber whose cousin had told him about UPA men whom he did not trust because there were too many killers among them and later the cousin told Biber that he knew a girl who had gone to work for them and then was found shot dead and then his cousin told him to be careful because the UPA men were killing any Jews they could find. Later in his article Himka acknowledged that the actual name of UPA did not show up anywhere, but the cousin and Biber referred to the men as "Bulbas", a leader of the Ukrainian insurgency. This memoir is characteristic of the evidence relied upon by Himka in his accusations. Jacob Biber wrote a memoir which referred to something he never personally witnessed, only heard from his cousin and even then, there is no way of knowing whether the cousin witnessed it or whether he heard about from yet another witness. Himka stresses that this should be believed because there is more similar testimony, even though the accusations against the UPA are in fact few considering the voluminous transcripts available from the archives of the various repositories. Frankly, speaking Biber's memoirs cited by Himka may be interesting reading, but they do not qualify as evidence.

The second type of evidence comes from Soviet Russian publications containing protocols of Soviet interrogation of alleged OUN or UPA members who impugn their organization or leaders with allegations of events or references to OUN or UPA documents which are apparently damning. But Himka does not bother to attempt to corroborate with documents from genuine OUN archives. In order to legitimize these protocols Himka disingenuously makes reference to Litopys UPA, a legitimate publication of former UPA members who included the calumny in their publication for the purpose of showing Soviet disinformation against the UPA and did not offer it for its truth. Himka knows this and intentionally attempts to mislead when he references the UPA Litopys. Yet he is selective in referencing the UPA Litopys and purports to be objective, while ignoring any documents which rebut the Soviet sources upon which he most heavily relies.

Each one of Himka's allegations and references can be impeached in similar fashion. Unfortunately, his revisionist writings have little to do with historiography, seeking the truth, ethics or objectivity. His disinformation does not honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. However, Himka is not the only one at fault here. Were this baseless nonsense not published, Himka and others like him would be out of work and bereft of an audience. Himka is engaged because the aims of his sometime benefactors and publishers are questionable as well. The accusations against the OUN and the UPA are baseless and this smear campaign dishonors all like the OUN and UPA who died fighting against both the Nazis and the Soviets, as Theodore Zev Weiss would have said, for a world without fear, without prejudice—a peaceful world.

Ed. Note: Prior to publishing this piece, we asked Mr. Lozynskij to send us a copy of the original article by Prof. Himka, in order to determine for ourselves whether his comments were justified. Having read the original we decided this commentary was worthy of publication.

EU extends sanctions over Russia's Crimea annexation

By Rikard Jozwiak

(RFE/RL)—The European Union has extended sanctions against dozens of individuals and entities over Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

EU ambassadors agreed on March 13 to prolong the sanctions against 150 individuals and 37 entities that, according to Brussels, are responsible for actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The existing sanctions were due to expire on March 15.

Asset freezes and visa bans were first imposed by the EU in March 2014 after Russia illegally annexed Crimea. Those sanctions have been continued and expanded by a series of additional votes by EU officials in Brussels.

The official sanctions list includes Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, President Vladimir Putin's adviser Sergei Glaziev, Russian Armed Forces General Staff chief Valery Gerasimov, and Dmitry Kiselyov, who many regard as the Kremlin's chief propagandist.

There also are 37 entities targeted by EU sanctions. They include companies active in Crimea and military battalions formed by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The EU's economic sanctions against Russia's energy, military, and financial sectors are up for renewal in June.