

Latvian National Federation in Canada (LNAK)

Since its creation in 1948, LNAK has had the same political fixations as other émigré groups in Canada whose leaders also included war criminals and Nazi collaborators. Seeing Latvia as one of the many ethnic nationalities “enslaved” within the multicultural USSR, LNAK worked with profascist, Cold-War networks like the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations and the World Anti-Communist League. LNAK was also active in leading Canada’s “Captive Nations” movement and remains central to its Black Ribbon Day crusade.

Janis Niedra: LNAK’s founding president was Nazi collaborator

Although LNAK claims to hate communism and fascism, its first leader was a top Nazi collaborator. Janis Niedra (1908-69), who

fled Latvia to safety in Germany and then to Canada in 1951, was LNAK’s first president in 1954,¹ its vice president in 1961,² its chair in 1963-69³ and president in 1969.⁴

During the Operation-Barbarossa invasion the USSR in June 1941, when the Nazis entered the Latvian town of Tukums, they were aided by Janis Niedra, a former lieutenant in the preSoviet, Latvian army. Yakov Karasin, a local Jewish survivor from Tukums, said Niedra “legalized” Latvia’s proNazi “self defense” forces and reinforced them with ex-soldiers and police from fascist militias that were “ardent anti-Semites, nationalists, hating the Soviets.” After rounding up all the Jews, some were forced into slave camps while most “women, children and old people” were shot and buried in “mass nameless graves.” Karasin’s book names 350 Jews massacred in Tukums.⁵

This “Holocaust of Bullets” was repeated across Eastern Europe. Nazis and local fascists killed about 95% of Latvia’s 70,000-75,000 Jews.⁶ Communists, gypsies and other “undesirables” were also executed, bringing Latvia’s civilian death toll to 230,000. About 30,000 Soviet soldiers died during WWII to defeat Latvia’s ethnonationalist fascism.⁷ About 140,000 Latvians were soldiers in the Nazi’s Waffen SS.

At the Nuremberg trials, the USSR submitted 500 reports on the crimes of Nazis and their accomplices.⁸ The Soviets amassed Nazi files, scoured slave camps, gas chambers and mass graves, and gathered accounts from victims and perpetrators. In 1966, when publishing this data from Latvia, they exposed Niedra’s work for the Nazis and noted his 1951 escape to safehaven in Canada. Captain Benedict Zaharans, the Nazi’s Latvian army commander in Tukums gave eye-witness testimony of Niedra murdering Jews in 1941.⁹

Having proven his loyalty to Latvia’s Nazi “liberators,” Niedra was made the top official in Latvia’s second largest city, Daugavpils (Oct. 1942 - July 1944).¹⁰ Of the 16,000 Jews there when the Nazis invaded, said survivor Sidney Iwens, “less than 100 survived.”¹¹ Niedra was the key organizer of a mass Nazi rally in Daugavpils, on July 4, 1943. Gen. Otto Drechsler, Latvia’s Nazi ruler, addressed the crowd of 20,000 from a stage festooned with swastikas and Latvian flags. Film of this rally shows Latvians marching for Nazi bigwigs, and women in folk dress giving flowers to German officers that are doing the Heil Hitler salute.¹²

In August 1943, Niedra met the two top Nazi war criminals from the Ministry of

Occupied Eastern Territories: Alfred Meyer and Alfred Rosenberg,¹³ a German-Estonian who led the ministry and was executed at Nuremberg in 1946.

After WWII, Niedra fled to Toronto where he met other Nazi collaborators, like Oskars Perro, a Latvian SS *Obersturmführer* and Iron Cross recipient. His books covered up Latvia’s role in the Holocaust. Perro and Niedra worked closely together to form the Latvian Union of

Officers (LVA) to serve SS veterans. Their first meeting was in Toronto in 1951 but in view of the still unfavorable position of some Western countries against the soldiers, especially the officers who fought against the Red Army—the then Western Allies—there were fears that the establishment and affiliation of the LVA could be detrimental to the personal security of officers.¹⁴

Although continuing to meet, these officers waited until 1954 to officially form the LVA. Niedra and Perro were among its founders. LVA’s goals included to “unite Latvian officers in the whole free world” and to “celebrate those who have fought and worked for the benefit of Latvia’s freedom.”¹⁵ Canada’s LVA had a key role in creating this global network of antiSoviet Latvian veterans.¹⁶

In 1961, as LNAK’s VP, Niedra met Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and presented him with a “hand-painted scroll with the national flags and coats-of-arms of the 18 ethnic groups” in the Mutual Co-operation League (MCL). This anticommunist lobby group for “captive nations” urged Diefenbaker to deport Abraham Feinberg, the Lithuanian-American Rabbi emeritus of Canada’s largest Reform synagogue. The MCL opposed the cross-Canada speaking tour of Feinberg,¹⁷ who was chair of the Toronto Committee for Nuclear Disarmament.

In 1967, Niedra was among 13 Latvians, including five in Canada, named as war criminals by Simon Wiesenthal’s Vienna-based Centre for Jewish Victims of the Nazi Regime. Although Lester Pearson’s Liberal government was informed, it did nothing.¹⁸

Two years later, Niedra, then LNAK president, made the news, not as a war criminal but for presenting former-PM Diefenbaker with a medal and scroll for aiding the fight to “liberate the Latvian people.”¹⁹

In 1980 Weisenthal gave a new list of war criminals to Trudeau’s government but, again, to no avail.²⁰



LNAK’s profascist friends/allies

LNAK’s delegate at a 1958 meeting in Mexico, Hugo B. Atoms,¹ joined 50 others from five continents to help create the World AntiCommunist League (WACL). (p.48.) Their leaders included Lev Dobrianski (p.19), Taiwan’s Ku Cheng-kang, Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations’ president, Yaroslav Stetsko,² and retired Brazilian Admiral Carlos Botto, who supported Axis powers in WWII and “participate[d] actively in [Brazil’s] military coup of 1964.”³

The ABN’s 1986 global conference in Toronto assembled *contras*, *mujahideen* and far-right delegates from East Europe. The ABN’s Latvian delegate praised the World Federation of Free Latvians and LNAK’s Black-Ribbon-Day [BRD] efforts.⁴ This speaker, Martins Stauver, was a honorary, lifelong LNAK member and a long-time member of its council and board.⁵

LNAK has also joined other Russophobic, anticommunist émigré networks like the Baltic Federation of Canada, the Canadian Council for Free Europe, the Mutual Cooperation League, Canada’s Cttee. of Captive European Nations (Group of 7) and the International BRD Cttee.

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Media and gov't allies

LNAK enjoyed keen media support throughout the Cold War.²¹ Even when Soviet trials exposed Latvian war criminals living in Canada, LNAK saw them as victims of communism. In 1982, Haralds Puntulis, a former police chief in Latvia (1941-44) was tried in absentia by the Soviets. "After 19 days of testimony from witnesses and the

coaccused," Puntulis, who had lived undisturbed in Toronto since 1948, "was found guilty of the slaughter of 713 Jews, 28 gypsies and nine Communists."²² Canadian newspapers said that in 1941, Puntulis

and his men carried out the annihilation of all the Jews in the hamlets of Silmalas, Malta and Riebin; ... he directed the firing squad in the execution of the residents of Audrini; and ... after each salvo he shot those who still showed signs of life.²³

One witness testified that Puntulis executed an "11-year-old Jewish boy" by shooting him "in the head."

In reaction, LNAK's president, T. Kronbergs, said such cases "automatically create a situation where" East Europeans defend the accused "whether he's guilty or not because they feel insulted." Jews also felt insulted since, as Wiesenthal said, "the typical Nazi in Canada lives free for many years ... and neighbors think he's a nice old man."²⁴

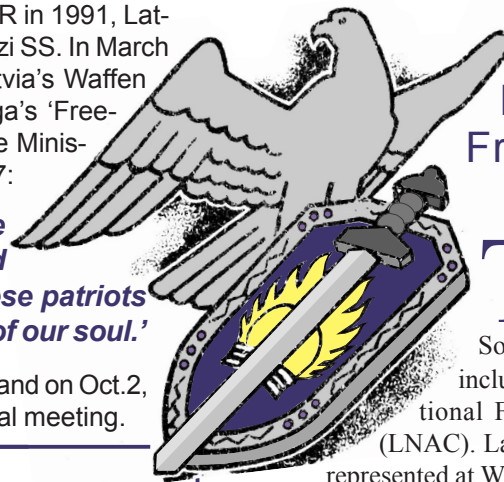
By vilifying the USSR, papers diverted attention from LNAK's Nazi past. Latvians were said to be either victims or heroes for fighting the USSR. LNAK president Linars Lukss told the Deschênes Commission: "Soviets are trying to discredit East European immigrants, by feeding rumors about Nazi war criminals ... in Canada." He said "Latvians who fought Soviet communism shouldn't be regarded as Nazi collaborators." Soviet evidence on war crimes was derided as fake news that was "'very intimidating, most unpleasant' for East Europeans...", said Lukss.²⁵ (Lukss cofounded and helped lead the Black Ribbon Day crusade.)

When the USSR asked Canada to extradite Puntulis, "the response was a firm no." Although Canada's Geneva-Conventions law obliged it to search for war criminals and put them on trial, Canada said all Nazi war crimes were exempt. Sol. Gen. Bob Kaplan said he would not "risk his political career on the prosecution of alleged war criminals living in Canada." Justice Minister Jean Chrétien said "I don't intend to introduce legislation in Canada for crimes committed 35 years ago in other nations."²⁶

Since its 'liberation' from the USSR in 1991, Latvians have 'freely' glorified the Nazi SS. In March 2019, 1,000 rallied to honour Latvia's Waffen SS at a now-annual event at Riga's 'Freedom Monument.' Latvia's Defense Minister, Artis Pabriks, said on Sept. 27:

'Waffen SS legionaries are the pride of the Latvian people and state. Our duty is to honour these patriots of Latvia from the entire depths of our soul.'

On Oct. 1, Pabriks met with the WFFL and on Oct. 2, Latvia's president opened their annual meeting.



The World Federation of Free Latvians (WFFL)

The WFFL was formed in 1956 to unite the anti-Soviet Latvian diaspora, including the Latvian National Federation of Canada (LNAC). Latvian Canadians were represented at WFFL meetings, such as

one in Washington, DC, in 1969, by LNAK chairman Janis Niedra, a Nazi collaborator.¹ (See p.38-39.) The WFFL has had only two non-US chairmen. Both were Canadians: Martinš Sausiņš (2008-11) and Linards Lukss (1988-89). Lukss was instrumental in creating and leading not only Canada's Captive Nations Committee but also the global Black Ribbon Day campaign.

WFFL leaders, publications and activities were often promoted by the profascist Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN).² For example, in 1981, the ABN's magazine had a photo of WFFL chairman, Ilgvars Spilners, at a multinational, state-sponsored security conference in Madrid. The ABN's photo caption was "Common Front ... of the Subjugated Nations."³ Posing with Spilners was Jimmy Carter's former Att. Gen., Griffin Bell, and ABN leaders Slava and Yaroslav Stetsko. Slava who edited two ABN periodicals, became its president in 1986 after her husband Yaroslav's presidency (1946-86).

In another ABN issue, celebrating its 1943 origins as a Nazi-initiated network of antiSoviet armies, then-WFFL president Olgerts Pavlovskis greeted ABN delegates by saying: "On behalf of Latvians around the world, I would like to extend ... my sincere greetings and wishes for success."⁴

The WFFL also belonged to the American Security Council's Coalition for Peace Through Strength (CPTS).⁵ Its members included Ronald Reagan and Jesse Helms. Retired US Army General John Singlaub, on the CPTS staff,⁶ founded the US chapter of the World AntiCommunist League in 1981 and led it globally (1984-86).

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