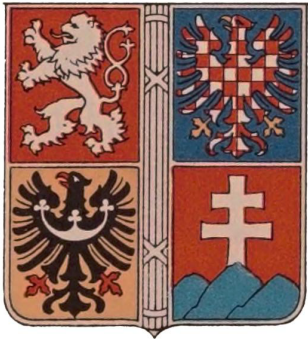


# Council of Free Czechoslovakia & the Czechoslovak National Assoc. of Canada



CFC's Coat of Arms

**Ota Hora, the founder/leader of Czechoslovakia's Anti-communist Youth Movement, fled to Canada in 1948 to escape trial for inciting police and army to revolt against the government. During the Cold War, he led Czech support for Canadian complicity in the Vietnam War, and was often heard on the CIA's "Radio Free Europe."**



CFC and CNAC leader, Ota Hora, honouring John Diefenbaker.

**H**andsomely funded by the CIA, the Council of Free Czechoslovakia (CFC) also enjoyed much support from the US State Department which pushed for its creation "as a means of coordinating exile activity."<sup>1</sup> In 1949 this fractious mix of ex-politicians met in Washington to form a "government in exile." Despite their conflicts, CFC members shared a malignant hatred of communism. This made them extremely valuable assets in the US campaign to destroy their common enemy, the USSR.

Britain also saw the CFC's Cold War value. In 1948, a top UK Foreign Office official wrote: "if we do not intend to use Czech refugees for propaganda and intelligence purposes, we would not be wise to open our doors to these Czech MPs."<sup>2</sup>

## CIA funding and support

By 1950, the CFC was getting US\$8,900/month (Cdn\$1.5 million/year in 2020 funds) through the CIA's National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE). Some CFC leaders also got CIA "stipends" of US\$400/month.<sup>3</sup> (Cdn\$53,000/year in 2020.) In return, CFC gave the CIA priceless ammo for its political warfare. As US historians Michael Cude and Ellen Paul noted, the CFC

pursued a steady program of anti-Communist propaganda, ran campaigns to gain support from Western leaders and populations, and released ... political pamphlets, histories, and serials.<sup>4</sup>

The CFC's "most effective tactic in the fight against Communism," said Czech-American historian Francis Raška, was to use Radio Free Europe (RFE). Aimed at destroying the USSR, RFE was the CIA's largest propaganda tool. RFE's Czechoslovak section was led by CFC cofounder Ferdinand Peroutka, a Czech journalist. Between 1951 and 1976, says Raška, "Peroutka wrote more than one thousand commentaries for listeners in Czechoslovakia." Most of these RFE broadcasts "focused on international events and presented and defended the interests and policies of the United States."<sup>5</sup>

In promoting US "interests and pol-

icies," the CFC allied with other CIA-funded groups like the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN). A cofounder, chair and CFC president, Stefan Osuský, also cofounded ACEN.<sup>6</sup> In 1954, he led the CFC's "first delegation to the ACEN and was an active contributor to its meetings and programs," as were other CFC leaders.<sup>7</sup> Osuský worked closely with the CIA's NCFE (1949-62) and was active in the International Commission of Jurists. Whistle-blowing, ex-CIA officer Philip Agee said it was "set up and controlled by the CIA for propaganda operations."<sup>8</sup> Osuský also broadcast on the CIA's RFE and Voice of America (1949-73).<sup>9</sup>

In 1958, the CFC delegated Vaclav Laska to attend a Mexico-City meeting for leading fascist/Nazi-linked groups, such as the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN), to form the World AntiCommunist League.<sup>10</sup> After Czechoslovakia's elected communist government consolidated power in 1948, Laska resigned as its ambassador to Mexico. Until 1958, he taught history at Mexico City College (aka "Gringo College"). As a soldier in 1918, he fought with the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia.<sup>11</sup> This 60,000-troop unit within the Russian Imperial Army formed 25% of the forces, from the US, UK, Canada, Japan, Italy and seven other countries, that invaded Soviet Russia in 1918.

## CFC leaders fled to Canada

When the CFC began in 1948, Canada's press promoted one of its top leaders, Vladimír Krajina. Taking refuge in Canada he avoided a Czechoslovak trial where he was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Instead, he began a 24-year career at the University of BC.<sup>12</sup> After fighting in Czechoslovakia's non-communist resistance in WWII, he was Sec.-Gen. of National Socialist Party which won 55 seats in the 1946 elections. Though not a fascist party, its main enemy was the Communist Party, which formed the government with 114 seats.<sup>13</sup>

Over the decades, Krajina's anticommunism was channeled through the CFC and

its affiliate, the Czechoslovak National Assoc. of Canada, CNAC (now the Czech and Slovak Association of Canada). In a 1970 letter to prime minister Pierre Trudeau, Krajina gave strong CNAC backing for the Vietnam War. The media, he wrote, had a "deliberate overemphasis of antiwar protests" that were "mostly organized under the influence of Communist or pro-Communist elements either in Europe or in North America." Krajina voiced CNAC fears that the media's "continuous brain-washing of the Canadian public"<sup>14</sup> would undermine support

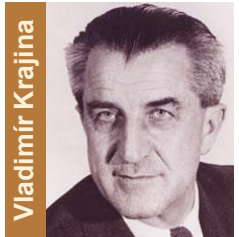
for the war against communism. He even told Trudeau to force the media to be more supportive of this war. Krajina and CNAC were so captivated by Cold-War psychoses that US war crimes in Vietnam were blissfully ignored. As Canadian historian Jan Raska put it: "CNAC members could not understand why so many individuals opposed the American presence in Vietnam."<sup>15</sup>

In 1978, as CNAC vice president and CFC vice chairman, Krajina had a letter to the editor published. While vilifying communism, he gave blind-eye support for Western militarism by calling for "increased participation of Canada in the NATO alliance."<sup>16</sup> In 1982, he received the Order of Canada from the Governor General.<sup>17</sup>

Another CFC cofounder who fled to Canada after WWII was Czechoslovakia's envoy to Ottawa, Frank Nemec. Over the decades he was quoted in many news stories that pushed the CFC's anti-Red phobias.

For example, a Canadian Press story in 1956, "Warn Against Red Agents," said he had just become CNAC president. It cited CFC warnings "to be on guard against Red agents who may try to intimidate you" because "Communist infiltration into Canadian life has risen 'very dangerously.'"<sup>18</sup>

Nemec's career in Czechoslovak politics began with work for an anti-communist union. He continued along this path in Cold War Canada. A 1960 article about "Brave" Nemec, "Labor's Crusading Czech," described his family's hardships in 1948. Resigning as Czechoslovak envoy to Canada, they suffered when having to leave their huge mansion (now Armenia's embassy) in Ottawa's "Golden Triangle" district.



**Warned Trudeau that Vietnam War protests were run by communists and that the mass media was 'brain-washing' people to oppose that war**

After 1952, the article said, Nemec wrote “political commentaries” promoting “the free Canadian trade union movement for the CBC IS [International Service].” Nemec “worked a good deal in the international field” for a union “affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions [ICFTU].”<sup>19</sup> Created in 1949 to fight the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which included communist-led unions, the “ICFTU owes its existence in large part to early CIA labor operations designed to split the WFTU,” said National Security Agency whistleblower Perry Fellwock. The ICFTU’s “early history,” he explained, was “replete with projects ... influenced or directly controlled by the CIA.”<sup>20</sup>

### Blind-eye, double standards

The corporate press and CNAC used one-sided Cold-War rhetoric. In 1956, when Nemec was CNAC president, the *Montreal Gazette* cited its “greetings to the subjugated people in the old country.” Cheering their “courageous struggle” in the “fight against Soviet colonialism and imperialism” and their “yearning for national independence,” it ended with fearful cries about “the brutal terror of international Communism.”<sup>21</sup>

Although the US waged anticommunist wars killing millions, CNAC and CFC were silent. In fact, although they cheered struggles for independence from the USSR, they vilified opposition to *Western* “colonialism and imperialism.” For example, in 1967, the *Ottawa Citizen* printed a letter from Ota Hora, a CFC and CNAC leader. He juxtaposed two responses to the Vietnam War. While decrying what he called “a small, noisy group of obviously Communist-inspired demonstrators against the war in Vietnam [who] plagued Prime Minister Pearson,” Hora quoted this CNAC resolution:

We agree with the Canadian government’s policy supporting the defence of democracy in Vietnam by the U.S. and her allies. We consider today’s conflict in Vietnam as one of the characteristic symptoms of the deterioration of Communism which poses as a liberator of the world, but which reveals its unchanging aggressive objective. We are grateful to the US and the American people for their tremendous effort and sacrifices in the fight against Communism which, through Asia, wants to conquer the world.<sup>22</sup>

Hora, said Jan Raska, “regularly broadcast to Czechoslovakia on Radio Free Europe.” This CIA propaganda was part of his work as “an influential member” of the CFC.<sup>23</sup> As a youth, just before his election as a National Socialist, Hora was “president and founder of the Anticommunistic Youth

Movement of Czechoslovakia.”<sup>24</sup> He was arrested by Czechoslovakia’s communist government in 1948 for aiding a violent revolt, and charged with “incitement of police” regarding their “military service” and “the crime of mutiny.”<sup>25</sup>

### Prague Declaration on “European Conscience and Communism”

This manifesto is still gaining ground. Initiated by the Czech government in 2008, it is being signed by more and more EU politicians. Calling for “Europe-wide condemnation of, and education about, the crimes of communism,” it insists that the EU must equate communism with Nazism. Sidelining “Holocaust Memorial Day,” it demands one day (August 23, i.e., “Black Ribbon Day”) to remember victims of Nazism and communism. It also demands the “overhaul of European history textbooks so that children could learn and be warned about Communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess the Nazi crimes.”

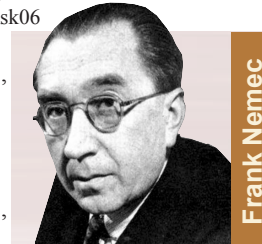
Hora and other Czech émigrés bent over backwards to show their fealty to Canada’s Cold-War agenda. In 1950, one of CNAC’s first acts, led by Frank Nemec, was a Parliament Hill rally “to affirm their loyalty to Canada.”<sup>26</sup> In 1957, an *Ottawa Citizen* photo, captioned “Czechs Loyal Canadians,” showed Liberal Immigration Min. Jack Pickersgill with CNAC delegates, including Nemec, at their convention in Ottawa’s luxurious Chateau Laurier Hotel. A CNAC leader read a glowing message from anti-Red Liberal PM Louis St. Laurent.<sup>27</sup>

In analyzing Cold War Canada’s anti-Red “moral panic,” Jan Raska said Czech émigrés “capitalized on this political climate and used their anti-communist identity to meet existing social and cultural norms.” Raska notes a Czech paper in Trenton, Ontario, that began with CFC support in 1949. Its founder, Jan Doëkálek, used it to demonstrate his loyalty to Canada and seek social and cultural citizenship within an anti-communist Cold War consensus that supported his efforts.<sup>28</sup>

Raska notes Czech émigrés’ beneficial relations with Canada’s Cold War government: Canadian authorities further legitimized the Czech refugees’ anticommunist agenda and increased their influence in Czechoslovak institutions. In turn, these organizations supported Canada’s Cold War agenda of securing the state from communist infiltration.<sup>29</sup>

### References and notes

1. Michael Cude and Ellen Paul, “Czechoslovakia,” *East Central European Migrations during the Cold War* (ed. Anna Mazurkiewicz), 2019, p.121. [bit.ly/CFC-State](https://bit.ly/CFC-State)
2. Francis Raška, “Council of Free Czechoslovakia, 1949-56,” *Prague Social Science Studies*, 2006, p.6. [bit.ly/Rsk06](https://bit.ly/Rsk06)
3. *Ibid.*, p.10.
4. Cude & Paul, *op. cit.*, p.120.
5. Raška, *op. cit.*, p.13.
6. Štefan Osuský papers [bit.ly/S-Osuský](https://bit.ly/S-Osuský)
7. Cude & Paul, *op. cit.*, p.121.
8. Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, 1975, p.611.
9. Štefan Osuský, *op. cit.*
10. “The Common Front of the Fight for Freedom and Liberation,” *ABN Correspondence*, July/Aug. 1958. [bit.ly/ABN-Laska](https://bit.ly/ABN-Laska)
11. “Laska speaks on Czech Anabasis,” *Mexico City Collegian*, Apr. 26, 1951, p.3. [bit.ly/Laska1918](https://bit.ly/Laska1918)
12. “Free Czechs form council,” *Leader-Post*, Sep. 24, 1948, p.8. [bit.ly/CFC-K](https://bit.ly/CFC-K)
13. Vladimír Krajina, UBC. [bit.ly/Kraj-UBC](https://bit.ly/Kraj-UBC)
14. Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver, *Elections in Europe*, 2010, p.471. [bit.ly/CS-1946](https://bit.ly/CS-1946)
15. Letter, Krajina to Trudeau, May 11, 1970, in Jan Raska, *Freedom’s Voices: Czech and Slovak Immigration to Canada during the Cold War*, 2013, p.304. [bit.ly/CFS-Viet](https://bit.ly/CFS-Viet)
16. Raska 2013, *ibid.*
17. “Czechoslovaks recall some sad memories,” *Vanc. Sun*, Jul. 2, 1978, p.5. [bit.ly/CFS-NATO](https://bit.ly/CFS-NATO)
18. Order of Canada [bit.ly/OrdCda](https://bit.ly/OrdCda)
19. “Warn Against Red Agents,” *Star-Phoenix*, Oct. 23, 1956, p.1. [bit.ly/CFS-Reds](https://bit.ly/CFS-Reds)
20. Phyllis Wilson, “Labor’s Crusading Czech: Anniversary for a ‘Brave’ Man,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Mar. 3, 1960, p.7. [bit.ly/Nemec-CBC](https://bit.ly/Nemec-CBC)
21. Winslow Peck [Perry Fellwock’s pseudonym], “CIA Target: Labor,” *Counter-Spy*, Fall 1974. [bit.ly/ICFTU](https://bit.ly/ICFTU)
22. “Czechs Mark Anniversary of Republic,” *Gazette*, Oct. 27, 1956, p.10. [bit.ly/RedTerror](https://bit.ly/RedTerror)
23. Ota Hora, “Czech Support,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Apr. 6, 1967, p.6. [bit.ly/Hora1967](https://bit.ly/Hora1967)
24. Jan Raska, *Czech Refugees in Cold War Canada: 1945-1989*, 2018. [bit.ly/Hora-RFE](https://bit.ly/Hora-RFE)
25. Letter, Dr. A.A. Sterns, *Ottawa Citizen*, Apr. 11, 1959, p.7. [bit.ly/HoraYouth](https://bit.ly/HoraYouth)
26. “Czech Communists Crack Down on Opposition Party,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, Mar 3, 1948, p.1. [bit.ly/HoraCrime](https://bit.ly/HoraCrime)
27. “Czechs Plan Loyalty Demonstration,” *Citizen*, Oct. 11, 1950, p.4. [bit.ly/CFS-loyal](https://bit.ly/CFS-loyal)
28. “Liberation may come from within Pickersgill tells Czech Meeting,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Apr. 1, 1957, p.3. [bit.ly/CNAC-Libs](https://bit.ly/CNAC-Libs)
29. Raska 2018, *op. cit.*
30. *Ibid.*



Frank Nemec

**“Labor’s Crusading Czech” warned that Red infiltration had risen “very dangerously” in Canada. Working with CIA-sponsored “Free Trade Unions,” Nemec’s Red baiting was often heard on CBC International**