

Chrystia Freeland: An “Accidental Journalist” or groomed for the job?

Chrystia Freeland’s media career began in the late 1980s with work for Ukrainian propaganda organs in which her grandfather, Michael Chomiak, was deeply involved. Her teenage entry into this service was likely eased by Chomiak who, having been a Nazi war propagandist, had become a leading fixture among Cold War Canada’s Ukrainian ethnonationalists.

Later, by 1989, at age 21, her political meddling in Ukraine’s separatist movement prompted the USSR to make an official complaint to Canada’s embassy in Moscow. By calling her a “banderite enemy of the Soviet State,” they granted her pariah status which led to instant media celebrity in Canada.¹ This publicity was leveraged to help launch her move from far-right Ukrainian media into the West’s mainstream corporate press.²

A year later she got more media praise for meddling in Ukraine, and for getting the 2020 equivalent of \$85,000 for an Oxford scholarship from the estate of Cecil Rhodes, a proud white supremacist who profited from slavery, imperialism and war.³ One reporter, noting her interest in journalism, said: “Freeland says her political activism may not make her an ideal journalist.”⁴ In reality, Freeland’s extremely biased worldview actually made her an “ideal journalist” to serve the West’s Cold War agenda. From an early age, she had proven to be a dependable advocate for the West’s deeply ingrained antiSoviet/antiRussian bias.

Another factor in her rapid success was a “chance encounter.” In describing what she



calls her days as a “kid” in Soviet Kiev, *Walrus* magazine stated:

One day, she had a chance encounter with financier George Soros.... Soros had travelled to the Ukrainian capital to investigate the possibility of bankrolling nascent pro-democracy groups, and he wanted to talk to someone with an ear to the ground. Freeland, whose mother’s family fled Ukraine and settled in Alberta after World War II, not only spoke the language but had also forged links with student activists. “I was a young, ignorant kid,” she recalls. “I had no idea who he was. It was still Soviet times and a bit dangerous to talk indoors, so we went for a walk in a park. But it wasn’t me interviewing him; it was him getting information from me.... I thought, ‘Wow, this is one of the smartest people I’ve ever met.’

The *Financial Times* soon hired her as its Moscow bureau chief. ...[S]he was ‘intensely conscious’ of [having] ... found

In 1989, Freeland’s meddling in Ukrainian elections made her a Cold-War media star in Canada and a pariah in the USSR where the press called her a “banderite enemy of the Soviet state.” Exploiting this notoriety, she launched her meteoric rise through the right-wing, corporate media. In 1990, when praised in Canadian newspapers for being awarded \$80,000 from the estate of notorious white-power imperialist Cecil Rhodes, one reporter noted with prescience:

“Freeland says her political activism may not make her an ideal journalist.”

herself in the midst of the story of a lifetime — a ‘hinge of history.’⁵

Having this “chance encounter” with a multibillionaire mentor who was funding antiSoviet activists like herself, must have opened doors for “a young, ignorant kid” like Freeland. The official story forged by Freeland is that she entered journalism at age 23 (1991) when she suddenly began writing news for top corporate media. As this legend goes “she began her journalistic career as a stringer for the *Financial Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Economist*.”⁶ In truth, she had begun her career years earlier with proNazi Ukrainian émigré media.

Freeland’s foray into Ukrainian ethnonationalist émigré media began with a 1979 interview in *Student* when she was 11. All the children of her grandfather, Michael Chomiak, were writers for this government-funded Ukrainian newspaper.

TV & film reviews... Myron Kuropus: Downplaying Holocaust; Exaggerating Holodomor

Ukrainian *Weekly* columnist Myron Kuropus was the former Special Assistant for Ethnic Affairs to US President Gerald Ford. In 1979, at Kuropus’ first lecture in Canada, he addressed the Ukrainian community at Toronto’s Albany Club (one of Canada’s oldest private clubs). Calling them “ineffectual and impotent” for not challenging a 1978 docudrama called *Holocaust*, he blasted the program saying “many scenes ... were potentially compromising” to Ukrainians and “portray[ed] facts out of context.” Ukrainians “must concern themselves continuously with machinery by which their special interests are represented, their public relations carried out, and their community image created.”¹

Historian Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe notes that NBC’s *Holocaust* miniseries, which had an audience of many millions, revealed

Ukrainians as Nazi collaborators and Holocaust perpetrators. *Holocaust* ... clashed with the ideological Bandera symbolism

and the way that the Ukrainian diaspora dealt with its past, particularly ...the denial of Ukrainian involvement in the Holocaust and collaboration with Nazi Germany.²

Rossolinski said this TV show, starring James Woods and Meryl Streep, was “the immediate trigger of the nationalists’ famine discourse” which they call the “Ukrainian Holocaust,” Holodomor or “Famine Holocaust.” Scholars Karyn Ball and Per Anders Rudling documented how the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and other nationalist groups

have often resorted to a competitive victimology as they exaggerate the death count associated with the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 ... [i.e., the Holodomor] in order to appropriate and supersede the Jewish genocide’s perceived moral capital.³

Ball and Rudling critique nationalist Ukrainians “for tripling the numbers of dead attributed to the Great Famine.” While they cite scholarly research showing that 2.6 to 3.9 million died, the UCC and the League of Ukrainian

Canadians often claim it was 7 to 10 million.⁴

An example of this hyperbole is found in a more recent Canadian melodrama, “Bitter Harvest” (2017). This thriller/romance says the Holodomor “took from 7 million to 10 million innocent lives.” One great fan of the film is Chrystia Freeland who tweeted that she was “Honoured to attend the Toronto Premiere of @BitHarvestFilm, ... with my family.”⁵ The showing at the Toronto International Film Festival was also attended by her friends, UCC president Paul Grod and Ukraine’s Ambassador to Canada, Andriy Shevchenko.⁶

The film is crossmarketed with The Holodomor National Awareness Tour, a public relations campaign of the UCC and three other Ukrainian-Canadian groups.⁷ They received \$1.45 million from the federal government⁸ to promote their version of history. It was also funded by the Manitoba and Ontario governments. In 2015, Ontario gave \$750,000 to a similar Holodomor project aimed at kids.⁹

The Encyclopedia of Ukraine

In 1986, at age 18, Freeland had a federal government-funded job with the University of Alberta's Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS). This put her to work on articles for *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*. Three years later, she got another government job on the same project.⁷

The project's creator, Volodymyr Kubijovych, was the wartime boss of her grandfather, Michael Chomiak. During the war, Kubijovych led the Nazi-collaborating Ukrainian Central Committee. Kubijovych died in 1985, one year before Freeland's first job writing for his encyclopedia. Its purpose was to entrench the cultural narratives of Ukrainian nationalism. That the encyclopedia suffers from Holocaust amnesia and the glorification of fascist armies is not surprising considering Kubijovych's key role in rallying Ukrainians to put their bodies, hearts and minds into aiding the Nazi's war efforts.

Created with Alberta-government funding in 1976,⁸ CIUS brought Kubijovych from Europe to sign a deal to copublish his encyclopedia. One CIUS cosigner was Peter Savaryn, a Ukrainian veteran of the Nazi's Waffen SS. A 1986 notice of Savaryn's retirement as the university's chancellor shared a page of the *CIUS Newsletter* which noted its hiring of Freeland and her aunt Natalia Chomiak⁹ (one of Chomiak's daughters), to work on the encyclopedia. Chomiak also worked on Kubijovych's encyclopedia. In fact, in 1978-79, Chomiak moved to Sarcelles, France, where he reunited with his wartime boss to assist with his *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*.¹⁰ When Chomiak died in

Freeland's first writing jobs were for two far-right Ukrainian-Canadian publications in Edmonton for which her grandfather, Michael Chomiak, previously worked.

1984, mourners were asked to donate to either Kubijovych's encyclopedia or to the Canadian Foundation for Ukrainian Studies,¹¹ whose president was Peter Savaryn.

The Ukrainian News

In the late 1980s, at about age 20, Freeland worked for *Ukrainian News*¹² in Edmonton. This was her second known writing job. "During the Cold War, in reporting on Soviet history," this Catholic weekly, said historian Per Rudling, "followed the standard, shrill narrative found in much of the Ukrainian émigré press."¹³ When this Canada-wide, Ukrainian-language paper covered the 1959 death of fascist leader Stepan Bandera, it gave glowing details of his heroic "national-revolutionary" efforts. But, said historian Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe, it provided "[n]o information about the atrocities that banderites committed against Jews, Poles and unsympathetic Ukrainians...."¹⁴

Freeland's work for this paper was guided by its editor/publisher, Marco Levytsky. He became editor in 1982, replacing Michael Chomiak.¹⁵ For 35 years, Levytsky used the paper to spread their community's brand of Ukrainian patriotism. In 2017, it merged with *New Pathway*, a weekly of the Ukrainian National Federation of Canada. It represents the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists' Melnyk faction.

Levytsky's editorial stance has been critiqued by scholars for repeatedly relying on forged documents that whitewash Ukrainian complicity in the Holocaust. To promote the falsehood that fascist, WWII-era Ukrainian political and military formations were not antisemitic and did not take part in the Holocaust, Levytsky has relied on two falsified documents: (1) the supposed autobiography of Stella Kreutzbach (aka Krentsbakh) and (2) the so-called *Book of Facts*.¹⁶

Levytsky has also stirred controversy with articles and editorials supporting Ukrainian-American Myron Kuropas. (See opposite.) Over the decades, Kuropas has made incessant accusations that Jews were central to victimising Ukrainians before, during and after WWII. This fixation has upset the Jewish community and scholars like John-Paul Himka, who is Freeland's uncle and Michael Chomiak's son in law.¹⁷

Working at *Ukrainian News* would have consolidated her deeply ingrained beliefs about Ukrainian politics, and proven her dedication to promoting their narrative.

Ukrainian Weekly and RFE/RL

Freeland's media career was also aided by *Ukrainian Weekly (UW)*, North America's largest Ukrainian paper. Her byline appeared in 1988 and 1990 while doing her BA in Soviet Studies at Harvard. Her views matched the paper's far-right biases. While exaggerating Soviet flaws, it always turns a blind eye from the fascist Ukrainian-Nazi alliance.

In 1988, Freeland and David Marples cowrote a *UW* article on the Holodomor.¹⁸ It concluded on the same page as an ad glorifying the Ukrainian Waffen SS as "freedom fighters." These book ads ran in 16 issues of *UW* in 1988 alone.¹⁹

For years, *UW* ran Myron Kuropas' antisemitic column. "Jews were the tools of the Polish king" and "during Soviet times," said Kuropas in 2004, they were:

loyal members of the Soviet ruling elite.... Jews were especially well represented in the Soviet secret police.... This same phenomenon is making a comeback.... The age-old Jewish strategy of clinging to those who rule.... What will happen to Jewish oligarchs...? They will simply do what their predecessors have always done: quickly join the power structure.²⁰

In 2001, Kuropas said he hoped "Jewish leaders in North America will cease harassing the Ukrainian Canadian community with canards related to the [Waffen SS] Galicia Division."²¹ Since the late 1980s, about 150 *UW* articles have whitewashed this Nazi army, or glorified it for battling Hitler's main enemy, the USSR.

The *UW* has relied heavily on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, citing it thousands of times.²² Created by the CIA in the late 1940s, it aired nonstop antiSoviet propaganda. The RFE/RL still remains a major weapon in the arsenal of Western propaganda, although it is now funded largely by the foundations of billionaire George Soros.

The RFE/RL has also played a key role in grooming and promoting journalists with Russophobic and anticommunist views. In 1990, during the USSR's final days, Freeland and Marples collaborated on an RL interview with a founder of Rukh, Ukraine's separatist movement.²³ Their interview "conducted for RL" at the CIUS, was printed in: (a) *Ukrainian Weekly* "with RL's permission," (b) an RFE/RL journal, *Report on the USSR*,²⁴ and (c) an RFE/RL book, *Ukraine: From Chernobyl to Sovereignty*.²⁵

Marples' 1980s career at RFE/RL headquarters in Germany was boosted by the US State Department.²⁶ Until the early 2000s, says historian Rossolinski-Liebe, Marples "euphemized and minimized" fascist Ukrainian "OUN and UPA crimes against Jews, Poles and Ukrainians."²⁷ Hav-

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2. Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist*, 2014, p.434. bit.ly/GRL-Bandera
3. Karyn Ball and Per Anders Rudling, "The Underbelly of Canadian Multiculturalism: Holocaust Obfuscation & Envy in Debate about the Canadian Museum for Human Rights," *Holocaust Studies*, Winter 2014, p.47. www.academia.edu/12207336
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ing written some 100 *UW* articles and worked for RFE/RL and CIUS, Marples began teaching history at the Univ. of Alberta.²⁸

In 2010, Marples noted Stepan Bandera's role in a 1941 pogrom and questioned his hero status. *Ukrainian News* editor Levvytsky then accused Marples of "Putin-style ex-KGB falsification." Toronto-based Stephen Bandera also reacted, saying his grandfather had been "cleared" of all war crimes by Canada's 1985 Deschênes Commission, and that Marples had used "misinformation" to "smear" his grandfather.²⁹

Accusations of a "smear" campaign were also thrown in March 2017 when it came out that Freeland's grandfather had been a Nazi propagandist. Joining the chorus to denounce Russian authorities who had confirmed the story's truth, were the Canadian government, far-right Ukrainian groups, and journalists. All echoed Freeland's branding of the story as a Russian "smear" to undermine Canada's democracy. While Levvytsky damned it as "Russian propaganda," Marples called it "an ominous sign"³⁰ that "Russia has interfered in our affairs."³¹ Thus defused, a chill was put on further investigations. Not one corporate media outlet has yet revealed Freeland's own work for fascist-glorifying, Ukrainian émigré groups and publications, including those for which her grandfather had also worked.

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Their article derided Soviet studies of the 1932-33 famine which detailed government flaws but said antiSoviet sabotage also caused deaths. Freeland and Marples dismissed this, calling it "an old canard." While praising far-right author Robert Conquest, they did not mention his reports that 27 million cattle and 63 million sheep were killed "in the resistance of the [Soviet] peasantry." Conquest said 48% of cattle, 63% of pigs, and 73% of sheep and goats were killed by antiSoviet saboteurs. This, he said, caused "vast economic disaster" and "the Soviet countryside was thus reduced to ruin." [*Harvest of Sorrow*, 1986, p.159.] After serving UK intelligence in WWII, he joined the IRD (1948-56), a UK agency spreading rightwing propaganda to journalists and politicians. Conquest and George Orwell worked for IRD when it "was strenuously reaching out to Ukrainian nationalists, many of whom had enthusiastically assisted the Nazi Einsatzgruppen as they went about liquidating Jews and Communists." [Ben Norton, "Hard Awakenings: George Orwell was a reactionary snitch who made a blacklist of leftists for the British government," Dec.14, 2016. bit.ly/2Se9onz]. The Einsatzgruppen of "Nazi SS,... German police [and] military units, and locally recruited collaborators killed more than 2 million Jews." [*Holocaust Encyclopedia*. bit.ly/Einsatz]
An avid promoter of the Vietnam War, Conquest's 1967 letters expressed pride in say-

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"The State Department was familiar with my work at Radio Liberty" in 1986, Marples said, "and gave my name as a source to the media." This "started the barrage of phone calls, interviews and conference invitations."
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