

Rubbing political shoulders with the ABN in Toronto

During the Cold War, many Canadian politicians joined forces with Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations in Toronto.

1953: After opening its first congress, Lithuanian-Canadian Josef Kaskelis, ABN-Canada's leader for the next 30 years, appointed its presidency. It included Ostap Sokolsky,¹ leader of Canada's Waffen-SS Galicia vets' association, a key group in the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC). ABN's presidency also included Ontario's first Ukrainian MPP, Ivan Yaremko, a Progressive Conservative (PC) who unseated a communist MPP, A.A. MacLeod, in 1951. Yaremko was an Ontario cabinet minister (1958-72) and Solicitor General (1972-74). In 2008, he gave the UCC \$25,000 to start an Ottawa lobbying office.² In 2010, the UCC got all Ontario MPPs to endorse a glowing tribute to Yaremko that did not mention his ABN past.³

Speakers at the 1951 congress included ABN leader Yaroslav Stetsko and George Drew, the former Ontario premier (1943-48) who led Canada's PC party. After being an MP (1948-57), Drew was Diefenbaker's High Commissioner to Britain (1957-64). Drew saw the USSR "as the greatest threat to world peace" said historian Kirk Niergarth. He also notes that Drew so admired Mussolini and Hitler, that he wanted Canada to help the UK "to ally with fascist Italy and Germany to resist the Soviet menace."⁴

1981: At this ABN congress, organised by Oleh Romanyshyn of the League of Ukrainian Canadians (LUC), émigrés from "captive nations" celebrated the 40th anniversary of supposed "Ukrainian independence in 1941 led by Mr. Stetsko." This fascist leader, who vowed allegiance to Nazi Germany, was this ABN event's key speaker. Others included leaders of ABN chapters; the World Congress of Free Ukrainians; LUC; the Canadian Anti-Soviet Action Cttee; Ron Gostick of the World Anti-Communist League-Canada; John Wilkinson, a British Tory MP (1970-74, 1979-2005) who chaired the Banderite European Freedom Council; Edward O'Connor, a presidential aide who directed Eisenhower's Cttee. to Investigate Communist Aggression (1954); and Masood Khalili,⁵ spokesman for *mujahideen* commander Ahmad Masood who later led NATO's proxy in the US-led 2001 Afghan invasion, the Northern Alliance. "From 1992 to 1996," said journalist Robert Fisk, "the Northern Alliance was a symbol of massacre, systematic rape and pillage" and left Kabul "with 50,000 dead."⁶

Yuri Shymko, MPP, read greetings from Ontario's PC premier, Bill Davis, and speakers included Etobicoke Mayor Dennis Flynn, a Liberal MP of Polish descent, Jesse Flis, and PC MPs, Michael Wilson and John Gamble.⁷

1986: ABN-Canada's Campaign Freedom Conference, co-organised by Lisa Shymko, was held Nov. 20-22, the 43rd anniversary of the ABN's Nazi-sponsored creation in 1943. ABN-Canada's chair, Orest Steciw, paid tribute to recently-deceased ABN leader, Yaroslav Stetsko, who won their Gold Medal of Freedom. Speakers included new ABN leader, Slava Stetsko, plus spokesmen from "anti-communist resistance movements" in Angola, the Baltics, Caucasus, Ethiopia, Kampuchea, Mozambique, Laos, Ukraine, Turkestan and Vietnam.⁸

Nicaraguan *contra* leader Mario Calero was there to speak about his FDN "freedom fighters." Loyal to ousted US-backed tyrant Anastasio Somoza, the FDN used terrorism to fight the popular socialist, Sandinista government. A declassified CIA report on *contra* cocaine trafficking said that "Calero has one of the most seamy reputations as being up to his knees in corruption, ... a hatchet man for the hardcore unreconstructed right, a symbol ... of all ... perceived to be rotten in the FDN."⁹

Besides hearing from MPP Yuri Shymko, cabinet minister David Crombie (ex-Toronto mayor, 1972-78 and PC MP, 1978-88), ABN delegates met Pat Boyer (PC MP, 1984-93), US congressman Jack Kemp (1971-89) and heard written greetings from top global *contra* Ronald Reagan, and PM Mulroney.²⁷

References and Notes

1. *ABN Correspondence*, May/June 1953. bit.ly/ABN-51
2. *UCC Bulletin*, Summer 2008, p.4. bit.ly/UCC08
3. "Tribute to John Yaremko in Ontario Legislature," *New Pathway*, 2010. bit.ly/JY-ON
4. Kirk Niergarth, "George A. Drew's Anti-Communist Tour of the USSR..., 1937," *Ontario History*, Fall 2015. bit.ly/G-Drew
5. "ABN Conference in Toronto," *ABN Correspondence*, Mar-Apr 1983, p.38. bit.ly/ABNcda
6. Robert Fisk, *Independent*, Nov. 14, 2001.
7. Orest Steciw, "ABN Canada 1981-1982," *ABN Correspondence*, Mar-Apr 1983, p.32. bit.ly/ABN-Cda-TO
(Gamble, a WACL director, led its affiliate, the Canadian Freedom Foundation. In 1986, Reagan's CIA chief Bill Casey linked Gamble to Iran-Contra funding, through Toronto's Vertex Investments.) bit.ly/ContrasGamb
8. Iryna Mycak, "Toronto Hosts Campaign Freedom, Nov. 20-22, 1986," *ABN Correspondence*, Jan/Feb 1987, pp.9-12. (Lisa Shymko, pp.12,25,39) bit.ly/abnswc2
Backing the US war in Vietnam, Truong Quang Si, fled there in 1975. Speaking at ABN congresses in Toronto (1981, 86, 90), he was nat'l chair of the Vietnamese American Republican Coalition.
9. Overview: Report of Investigation (96-0143-IG), CIA, Jan. 29, 1998. bit.ly/cialero
10. Mycak, *op. cit.*

The struggle continues...

Despite pledges of "truth and reconciliation" for committing genocide, and vows to stop systemic racism, the Canadian government continues its Cold War funding of East European émigré groups that still glorify Nazi collaborators as war heroes.

Cold War Canada shared the Red Scare paranoia of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) which saw the USSR and homegrown "peaceniks" as the top threats to peace, order and democracy. Their shared anti-Red psychoses justified Canadian complicity in NATO's first-strike policies, rationalised the provision of Canadian weapons and troops to wage US-led wars killing millions of civilians, and supported McCarthyesque attacks on leftwing opponents of these horrendous Cold War policies.

To spread their anticommunist myths, the ABN's diehard, East European foot soldiers locked step with their allies in government and the media. Many Canadian officials were feted at ABN meetings, rallies, conferences and banquets—where they shared photo ops with infamous Nazi collaborators like Yaroslav Stetsko.

Even now, long after the USSR's destruction, Canada's "captive nations" groups—riddled with apologists for war heroes who aided the Nazi's anti-Red cause—keep their forebears' flames alive by fanning the fire of a new Cold War against Russia and various socialist enemies. These far-right groups and their political and media allies still smear their shared enemies with deceits like Black Ribbon Day.

Virulently anticommunist and Russophobic, Canada's largest, state-supported East European émigré groups continue to hide the racist and fascist ties of their founding leaders. They also deny their roles in the political and ethnic cleansing programs of WWII that were viciously justified by conjuring up the Western elites' much-reviled Judeo-Bolshevik bogey.

Still dominating Canada's East European groups are those which the Liberal government united under the aegis of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress in 1940. By expediting the early postwar influx of 160,000 anti-Soviet East Europeans, Canada's Liberals bolstered support for their hawkish Cold War policies. Their ongoing largesse is now most blatant in the funding of Ukrainian-Canadian groups that still glorify fascist, war criminals with cult-like zeal.

Although the ABN's "captive nations" often saw success in the election of their fellow travellers, none have come closer to power than Chrystia Freeland. Given how closely she identifies with this political heritage, and given the government's ongoing, Cold War support for this far-right diaspora, Canadians need to be increasingly wary of their government's bellicose, proUS/proNATO foreign policies.