

Accomplices in Genocide: Canadian imperialism and fascist barbarism

Keith Jones
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The following speech was given by Keith Jones, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada), at the International May Day 2024 Online Rally, held Saturday, May 4.

There are incidents that suddenly reveal fundamental truths about a complex social phenomenon hitherto cloaked in ruling class mystification and lies. Such an incident occurred last September 22, when Canada's parliament and assembled dignitaries, including Ukrainian President Zelensky and the diplomatic representatives of Canada's G-7 allies, rose in unison to give a standing ovation to the 98-year-old Ukrainian Waffen SS veteran Yaroslav Hunka.

Faced with an international outcry, Canada's trade union-backed Liberal government and the opposition parties subsequently claimed that their celebration of the Nazi Hunka as a "Ukrainian" and "Canadian hero" was an unfortunate mistake.

What a contemptible fraud!

The mobilization of the political descendants of the Ukrainian fascists, who collaborated with the Nazis in the Holocaust and their war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, has been pivotal to the Western imperialist powers' drive to encircle and subjugate Russia.

The Ukrainian far right spearheaded the February 2014 coup that Washington and Berlin orchestrated, with Ottawa's support, to overthrow the country's democratically elected pro-Russian president. Now fully integrated into the Ukrainian military with the assistance of Canadian Armed Forces trainers, the Azov Battalion and other fascist militia are Ukraine's shock troops in NATO's war with Russia. Partisans of the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and his fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists staff senior positions in the Zelensky regime and military-security apparatus. They are Washington's and Ottawa's staunchest supporters in waging war with Russia to the last Ukrainian.

The NATO powers' promotion of the Ukrainian fascists arises from the predatory aims and interests they are pursuing through their war with Russia. As they did in the two world wars of the last century, the imperialist powers are waging war to seize resources, markets and strategic territories—trying, vampire-like, to infuse themselves with new energy through an orgy of death and destruction.

The Canadian parliament's honouring of the Nazi war criminal Hunka also speaks to the outsized role that Canadian imperialism has played in politically and ideologically preparing, instigating and prosecuting the US-NATO war with Russia.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has extensively documented, Canadian imperialism has a more than three-quarters of a century long alliance with the Ukrainian far right. At the end of the Second World War, Canada provided refuge to tens of thousands of Ukrainian Nazi collaborators—Waffen-SS veterans like Hunka, as well as supporters of the fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and its Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

To further Canada's Cold War foreign policy against the Soviet Union and combat powerful left-wing sympathies among the country's extensive Ukrainian immigrant population, Ottawa assisted the Ukrainian fascists in whitewashing their crimes and in propagating a virulent anti-Bolshevik and anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalism. To use the words of the best-known Canadian Ukrainian historian, the government-founded and-funded Ukrainian Canadian Congress put the "glorification" of the fascist Bandera and his supporters "at the very center of the Ukrainian national identity project."

Among those involved in the export of this far-right, Western imperialist-aligned nationalism back to Ukraine following the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the USSR was Chrystia Freeland. Freeland, herself the granddaughter of a leading Ukrainian Nazi collaborator, is

today Canada's Deputy Prime Minister and the leading Ukraine war hawk in the Trudeau Liberal government.

The events of the past seven months have provided horrific confirmation of what was revealed in microcosm in the Hunka affair about the predatory nature and violent, barbaric trajectory of Canadian and world imperialism.

The Canadian ruling class stands four-square behind Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians of Gaza. The mass slaughter of civilians by 2,000-pound bombs, the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure, the levelling of entire neighbourhoods, the starvation of Gaza's population—all are justified in the name of Israel's "right to defend itself."

Meanwhile, Ottawa integrates itself ever more fully into US imperialism's global war against Russia and China and for the unbridled domination over the Middle East. Earlier this month, the Trudeau government tabled a defence policy update that announced tens of billions in additional military spending over the next decade. Canada, it asserted, must have the military capabilities to wage war on every continent and ocean so as to uphold "global stability" and the Western-imposed "international order."

The same political establishment that celebrated the Nazi SS veteran Hunka and views the Ukrainian fascists as valuable allies smears the ongoing mass protests against the genocide in Gaza and against Canada's complicity in the slaughter as antisemitic. With increasing brazenness, it is moving to criminalize and repress them.

This is a continuation of their earlier efforts to disrupt and prevent all meetings opposing the US-NATO instigated Ukraine war. Last June, the IYSSE and SEP held the first public meeting against the Ukraine war in Canada's most populous city, Toronto, defying a concerted campaign led by Ontario's Labour Minister and the government-backed far-right Ukrainian Canadian Congress to censor it.

The greatest fear of the Canadian ruling class, like its imperialist partners and rivals, is that the growing upsurge of the working class will be infused with a genuine anti-war, that is, socialist internationalist perspective.

Workers from every sector of the economy, including more than a half-million Quebec public sector workers, West Coast dockers, supermarket workers, federal government employees and National Steel Car workers, have walked off their jobs over the past 12 months to oppose government-backed, inflation-driven real wage cuts and reverse decades of concessions. Last year alone, there were more strikes than in the preceding six years

combined.

This movement—as attested by the numerous rejected union-endorsed tentative agreements and the increasingly prominent role played by rank-and-file committees affiliated with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, the IWA-RFC—is developing and can only develop as a rebellion against the corporatist trade unions and for the independent political mobilization of the working class in the fight for workers' power.

The role of the state-supported trade union apparatuses in systematically suppressing the class struggle is epitomized by the union-NDP-Liberal governmental alliance, in their propping up of the Trudeau government as it wages a two-front war, providing billions in weapons to Ukraine and backing the genocide in Gaza, while increasing worker exploitation at home through austerity and wage-cutting.

As the war clouds gathered in 1934, Trotsky counselled that our task is to follow the map of the class struggle, not the war map. Six years later at the outset of the Second World War—a war made inevitable by the Stalinist bureaucracy's strangling of the working class' revolutionary strivings in Spain, France and elsewhere—he declared, "The revolutionary party builds its entire policy upon the class consciousness of the workers, the Comintern is preoccupied with nothing but contaminating and poisoning this class consciousness."

As crisis-ridden global capitalism hurls humanity toward the abyss, it is impelling workers and young people around the world to resist. If the working class is to prevail, this resistance must be leavened by an understanding that the objective logic of workers' opposition to war, reaction and social inequality is world socialist revolution. And it must be armed with a revolutionary leadership and strategy grounded in the lessons of history. There is no better way to mark May Day 2024 than to take up this task by joining the ICFL.



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