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Chrystia Freeland's granddad was indeed a Nazi collaborator – so much for Russian disinformation

David Pugliese • Ottawa Citizen

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Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland responds to a question during Question Period in the House of Commons, Thursday, February 2, 2017 in Ottawa. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wyld ORG XMIT: ajw111

The news conference on Monday by Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland was interesting not for the announcement that Canada was extending its training mission to Ukraine but for the questions and answers about the minister's grandfather.

There have been a number of articles circulating about Freeland's Ukrainian grandfather Michael Chomiak and his ties to the Nazis.

Some of those articles have appeared on pro-Russian websites. Freeland, who strongly supports Ukraine and is a major critic of Russia's seizure of the Crimea, suggested to journalists that the articles about her grandfather were part of a Russian disinformation campaign. (The Russian government sees Freeland as virulently anti-Russian and has placed her on their travel ban).

“American officials have publicly said, and even Angela Merkel has publicly said, that there were efforts on the Russian side to destabilize <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/chrystia-freelands-granddad-was-indeed-a-nazi-collaborator-so-much-for-russian-disinformation/>

Western democracies, and I think it shouldn't come as a surprise if these same efforts were used against Canada," Freeland told reporters after they raised questions about the articles about her grandfather.

The Globe and Mail also reported that an official in Freeland's office denied the minister's grandfather was a Nazi collaborator.

In addition, the claims were dismissed outright by those in the Canadian-Ukrainian community. "It is the continued Russian *modus operandi* that they have," Paul Grod, president of the Canadian Ukrainian Congress told the Globe and Mail. "Fake news, disinformation and targeting different individuals. It is just so outlandish when you hear some of these allegations – whether they are directed at minister Freeland or others."

Well it actually isn't so outlandish. Michael Chomiak was a Nazi collaborator.

What are the sources for the information that Freeland's grandfather worked for the Nazis?

For starters, The Ukraine Archival Records held by the Province of Alberta. It has a whole file on Chomiak, including his own details about his days editing the newspaper *Krakovski Visti*. Chomiak noted he edited the paper first in Crakow (Cracow), Poland and then in Vienna. The reason he edited the paper in Vienna was because he had to flee with his Nazis colleagues as the Russians advanced into Poland. (The Russians tended to execute collaborators well as SS members).

See archive entry below:

Chomiak, Michael, fonds

Date Range: 1919-1983

Scope and Content: This fonds contains personal papers of Michael Chomiak (1905-1984), a prominent figure in the Ukrainian Canadian community in Alberta. He grew up in Western Ukraine annexed by interwar Poland. Michael Chomiak graduated from Lviv University with master's degree in law and political science. In 1928, as a journalist, he started work in the Ukrainian daily "*Dilo*", and from 1934 to 1939 he served on the editorial staff. During the Nazi occupation, he was the editor of "*Krakovski Visti*", published first in Crakow and then in Vienna. Chomiak family immigrated to Canada in 1948. After a brief period of manual labour, Michael Chomiak found employment in Sherritt Gordon Mines Limited in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta remaining with the company until retirement.

So what was the *Krakovski Visti*? It, like a number of publications, had been seized by the Nazis from their Jewish owners and then operated as propaganda outlets.

Here is what the Los Angeles Holocaust Museum has to say about *Krakovski Visti* and a similar newspaper, *Lvivski Visti*, both publications associated with the Nazi regime.

"The editorial boards carried out a policy of soliciting Ukrainian support for the German cause," the Holocaust Museum noted. "It was typical, within these publications, to not to give any accounts of the German genocidal policy, and largely, the editions resorted to silencing the mass killing of Jews in Galicia. Ukrainian newspapers presented the Jewish Question in light of the official Nazi propaganda, corollary to the Jewish world conspiracy."

"In 1943 and 1944, both *Lvivski Visti* and *Krakovski Visti* hailed the German-approved formation of the 14th Waffen SS Division Halychyna, composed of Ukrainian volunteers," the museum pointed out.

So much for Russian disinformation.

On Wednesday the Globe and Mail reported that, "Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland knew for more than two decades that her maternal Ukrainian grandfather was the chief editor of a Nazi newspaper."

Photo below shows Chomiak at a party – he is to the right of the man smoking. On the far right (right hand lower corner of the photo) in uniform is Emil Gassner, the Nazi administrator in charge of the press for the region including Cracow.



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