



Ukrainian Genealogy Group

National Capital Region

The Ukrainian Genealogist

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November 23rd UGG-NCR Meeting/Webinar

Coverage or Cover-up?

Frederick Griffin's Soviet Stories During the Man-Made "Great Famine" in Ukraine

Our UGG-NCR monthly meeting on November 23, 2021 featured a presentation by Jars Balan entitled: "*Coverage or Cover-up? Frederick Griffin's Soviet Stories During the Man-Made "Great Famine" in Ukraine*". This topic was selected because the Holodomor Remembrance Day is held every November.

Jars Balan is Director, Kule Centre for Ukrainian Canadian Studies, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton.



November speaker: Jars Balan

Jars Balan's presentation focused on the Canadian reporter, Frederick Griffin of the Toronto Star. Griffin was born on March 5, 1889 in Newry, Ireland. He immigrated to Canada in 1912. Griffin began his journalist career as a cub reporter and eventually became a feature writer for the Toronto Daily Star and the Toronto Star Weekly.

As a Toronto Star correspondent, he visited the Soviet Union between May and July, 1932 writing about his personal observations. He was among several Canadian reporters who documented conditions in the Soviet Union at the time of the Great Famine of 1932-1933 in Soviet Ukraine.

During the presentation, Jars commented on a selection of articles that Griffin wrote during his visit to the Soviet Union and after he returned to Canada. Jars pointed out in the articles the contradictions and propaganda that was produced by the Soviets. This 'information' was recorded by Griffin and other foreign reporters often on 'guided' tours of factories and collective farms.

Griffin's generally favourable reports on the Soviet Union were published in the Toronto Star from May, 1932 until February, 1933. But Griffin's newspaper articles dealt with various issues other than the Famine. In other similar cases, news about the Famine was misrepresented or ignored by the foreign reporters. Some reporters sympathized with the Soviet 'experiment', avoided controversial subjects to appease their Soviet 'hosts' and in some cases, hoped to be invited for further 'plum assignments' in the Soviet Union that would promote their journalistic careers.

There were, however, a few reporters who did write about the Famine, the starvation and the terrible casualties it produced but these reports were contradicted by the Soviet press and by the visiting pro-Soviet reporters. In these cases, the reporters who wrote about the Famine, were banished from the Soviet Union.

After Griffin returned to Toronto, he compiled his articles and published the book, *Soviet Scene: A Newspaperman's Close-Ups of New Russia* (Toronto, 1932). As a war correspondent during the Second World War, Griffin was overseas for five years. He died on January 15, 1946 in Toronto. He was inducted into the Canadian Newsreporters Hall of Fame in 1977.

The uses and misuses of the press to document events in Ukraine is part of a larger and longer tradition during the Soviet years that extended to academic and archival research and the deliberate falsification of Ukrainian history for political ends. Only recently, the secret police (KGB/SBU) archives have been opened in Ukraine and it may be possible to study the effects of the Famine on individuals and families in some detail.

This experience may explain to some extent why Ukrainians who survived the Famine and found themselves as refugees in Germany after the Second World War, refused to return to the Soviet Union and chose to immigrate to Canada. Also, the Famine produced several generations of traumatized Ukrainians that have inherited attitudes and habits that originated while surviving the Famine.

The presentation by Jars Balan was followed by a question and answer period. Also, it is possible to view this presentation and earlier presentations on the UGG-NCR website at:

<http://ukrainiangenealogygroup-ncr.org/WebinarRecordings.html>

Next UGG-NCR Webinar

Our next webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, February 22, 2022. The presentation is entitled:

“Ukraine’s Strategic Situation: GEOGRAPHY, GERMANS, GAS, GUNS, THE KREMLIN & GUERILLAS” by Borys Gengalo.

More details will be forthcoming soon.

Community Events

Until Sept. 5, 2022

Lost Liberties : the War Measures Act.

The exhibition examines the internment of Canadians of Ukrainian origin and other nationalities during WWI, the internment of Italian Canadians and the internment and forced relocation of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, and the arrest of hundreds of people in Quebec during the 1970 October Crisis.

Canadian Museum of History, 100 Laurier St., Gatineau, QC. www.historymuseum.ca

Watch anytime!

Ottawa Chamberfest Chamber Chat

Join conductor and baritone Larry Klopoushak with host Eric Friesen for a Ukrainian Christmas. Many wonderful performance clips and lively conversation! Originally aired Thursday, Dec. 16. Click [here](#):

Ukrainian Christmas on Parliament Hill

A unique event at the Peace Tower in Ottawa named “Christmas in Ukraine!” <https://youtu.be/9c39dsBOayA>. This event featured Dr. Andrea McCrady, Dominion Carillonneur and an arrangement of God Eternal (Boh Predvichniyy; Бог предвічний) by Joanna Estelle Storoschuk.

February 7, 2022 (Monday)

Canada will participate in the Commonwealth's celebration of the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II to mark the 70th anniversary of her accession to the Throne.

Dr. Andrea McCrady, Dominion Carillonneur will perform Canada's official celebratory 1-hour recital, livestreamed to Buckingham Palace and throughout the Commonwealth from 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm EST.

Joanna Estelle Storoschuk's composition, *Faraway Star* was chosen as part of this program.

For more info and to listen, click [here](#).